The Epistle of Paul to the GALATIANS

Introduction

Salutation

1 [1]Paul, an apostle—not from men nor through a man,[1] but through Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised Him from among the dead[2]—[2]and all the brothers with me,[3] to the congregations in Galatia:[4] [3]Grace to you and peace from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ, [4]who gave Himself[5] for our sins, so that He might deliver us out of this present malignant age,[6] according to the will of our God and Father, [5]to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen.

Paul is disappointed

[6]I am sadly surprised that you are turning away so quickly from the one who called you by the grace of Christ, to a different gospel—[7]it is not a mere variation, but certain people are unsettling you and wanting to distort the Gospel of the Christ. [8]Now even if we, or an angel out of heaven, should preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed! [9]As we have just said, I here emphatically repeat: If anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed!![7]

[10]Am I just now appealing to men, or to God?[8] Or am I trying to please men? You see, if I were still pleasing men, I would not be a slave of Christ.[9]

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[1] Paul's apostleship did not depend upon human ordination or recognition. So what about apostleship today?

[2] The resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead is absolutely central to the Christian Faith (1 Corinthians 15:14,17).

[3] It would be interesting to know who those "brothers" were.

[4] "The congregations in Galatia"—Paul evidently intended that the letter be widely circulated. Would not each congregation want its own copy?

[5] In John 10:17-18 Sovereign Jesus made this clear.

[6] The word 'malignant' properly refers to Satan, the 'god of this world', so "this present malignant age" presumably refers to the whole world system controlled by Satan. All human cultures have suffered satanic influence, and all true followers of Sovereign Jesus should place biblical values above those of their surrounding culture. The second (last) Adam came to recover all that the first Adam lost—precisely the will of the Father.

[7] 'Other gospels' would seem to be in plentiful supply; those who promote them are under a curse. Note that Paul is claiming to be competent to define the only true Gospel of Christ, and he can only do so genuinely by divine inspiration.

[8] Since it is God who applies the curse, he is appealing to God to back him up. I myself do this habitually.

[9] Oops! Come on Paul, you cannot be serious. Do you really mean that pleasing men and being a slave of Christ are mutually exclusive? On the basis of my experience, I would have to agree with Paul, with the understanding that fellow-slaves are not included in the 'pleasing men'. (When I am pleasing Christ His other slaves should be pleased as well.)

Paul's credentials

11Now I want you to know, brothers, that the Gospel preached by me is not according to man; 12because I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it; rather it came through a revelation from Christ.[1]

How he was before

13You have heard of my former conduct while in Judaism, how I was rabid in my persecution of God's Church and tried to annihilate it; 14indeed I was advancing in Judaism beyond many Jews of my own age, being far more zealous for the traditions of my forefathers.

How he was re-cycled

15But when God—who set me apart from my mother's womb and called me through His grace—resolved 16to reveal His Son in me so that I might proclaim Him among the nations/Gentiles, I did not start by consulting with flesh and blood, 17nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before I was; rather I went off into Arabia,[2] and then returned to Damascus.

A new life and ministry

18Subsequently, after three years,[3] I went up to Jerusalem to compare notes with Peter,[4] and stayed with him fifteen days. 19(I saw none of the other apostles except James, the Lord's brother.[5] 20Really, before God, I am not lying in what I write to you.) 21Then I went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia. 22So I remained unknown by face to the congregations of Judea (those in Christ)[6] 23—they just kept hearing that "He who once persecuted us now proclaims the faith he formerly tried to destroy." 24And they glorified God about me.

How he was recognized by the apostolate

2 1Fourteen years later I went up to Jerusalem again, with Barnabas, taking Titus along as well. 2I went on the basis of a revelation and set before them [the main apostles] the Gospel that I proclaim among the nations/Gentiles.[7] Now I did this privately to those with influence, lest somehow I might run, or had run, in vain.

3(However, not even Titus, who was with me, was compelled to be

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1 I follow what I understand to be the best line of transmission (though in a minority here, 30%) that reads 'Christ' without 'Jesus'. I take it that 'Christ' is in the ablative case: 'from' rather than 'of'. Paul is claiming revelation—this is the plain meaning of verses 11-12. Saul of Tarsus got his training in Judaism at the feet of Gamaliel, but his understanding of Christianity came from no such human teacher.

2 Do you suppose he went to Mt. Horeb?

3 The Text does not say that he spent three years in Arabia; part of the time he was in Damascus.

4 98% of the Greek manuscripts have "Peter", not 'Cephas'. In 2:1 below it is 93%.

5 Note that this James, though not one of the Twelve, is declared to be an apostle.

6 Every town with a synagogue would have a local congregation, but usually not "in Christ".

7 The details here do not agree with the account of the Council in Acts 15. I take it that Paul refers to a visit he made several years after that council.

circumcised, for being a Greek. 4This came up because of the false brothers who were smuggled in[1]—who stole in to spy out our freedom, that we have in Christ Jesus, so as to reduce us to slavery—5to whom we did not yield, even for a moment, so that the truth of the Gospel might continue with you.)

6Now from those who seemed to be important *I received nothing* (whatever they were makes no difference to me; God shows favoritism to no man). Those with influence contributed nothing to me, 7but on the contrary, upon seeing that I had been entrusted with the Gospel for the uncircumcised, just as was Peter for the circumcised 8(for He who was at work with Peter for the apostleship to the circumcised was also at work with me for that to the Gentiles), 9and upon perceiving the grace that had been given to me, James and Cephas and John, those reputed to be pillars, gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, that we should go to the Gentiles, while they to the Jews.[2] 10They did ask us to keep remembering the poor, the very thing I also was eager to do.[3]

Paul has to rebuke Peter

11But, when Peter came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he was blameworthy. 12Before certain men came from James,[4] he used to eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he began to draw back and separate himself, fearing those of the circumcision party. 13And the rest of the Jews played the hypocrite with him as well, so that even Barnabas was carried away with their hypocrisy.[5] 14So when I saw that they were not walking straight according to the truth of the Gospel, I said to Peter in front of them all: "If you, being a Jew, live like a Gentile and not like a Jew, why do you compel the Gentiles to live like Jews? 15We natural Jews (and not 'Gentile sinners'),[6] 16knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, we ourselves have believed into Christ Jesus, so as to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law; because no one will be justified by works of law.[7] 17But if[8] while seeking to be justified in Christ we

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1 Who was responsible for the smuggling? And in whose service were they, really, even though they were evidently part of the Christian community?

2 Literally, 'circumcised'.

3 The early Church did not ignore the physical needs of the poor.

4 Note that in verse 9 James is listed before Peter and John, and in Acts 15:13 it is James who gives the verdict. James became the boss in Jerusalem, and I gather from what is recorded in Acts 21:18-25 that he was sliding back toward Judaism.

5 That even Barnabas went along shook Paul up; the situation had gotten out of hand. Someone had to take a stand.

6 My impression is that Paul is being a little sarcastic here, since the Jews liked to think that they were better than the Gentiles.

7 This point is so important that Paul says it three times!

8 We have here what in Greek grammar is called a 'condition of fact'—the protasis is presented as being true—so that often 'if' should be 'since'. By using 'we', Paul is associating himself with Peter and the others as a sinner (a nice touch), but they are

ourselves were discovered to be sinners, then is Christ a minister of sin? Of course not!

18"Now if I rebuild the things that I destroyed, I acknowledge that I am a transgressor.[1] 19For through the law I died to the law in order to live to God.[2] 20I have been crucified with Christ, so it is no longer I who live but Christ lives in me; what I now live in this body I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself in my place.[3] 21I do not nullify the grace of God; for if righteousness is through the law, then Christ died for nothing!"[4]

Law or faith

3 1O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you that you not be persuaded by the Truth[5]—Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed among you as having been crucified, before your very eyes![6] 2Just tell me one thing: Did you receive the Spirit by works of law, or by hearing of faith? 3Can you be so foolish? Having begun in spirit, do you now finish in flesh? 4Have you suffered so much for nothing—if it really was for nothing? 5Furthermore, He who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you, *is He activated* by works of law, or by hearing of faith?[7]—6just as Abraham 'believed God and it was credited to him as righteousness.'[8]

7Now you must know that only those who are of faith are 'sons' of Abraham. 8Further, the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the nations by faith,[9] proclaimed the Gospel in advance to Abraham: "All the

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already Christians, so he goes on to reject the notion that Christ could be viewed as an accomplice to their sin.

1 Whereas he had once tried to destroy the Church, he is now building it, which amounts to recognizing that he had been wrong before, a transgressor.

2 He thought he was serving God before, persecuting the Church in his zeal for the law. But 'the law' crucified Christ, and in declaring allegiance to the crucified Christ he died to the law, so that he could really live for God. Galatians 4:4 says that the Son was "born under law".

3 A tremendous statement, and when we allow it to function in our lives it is an equally tremendous truth! Those who try to live the Christian life in their own strength generally make a poor job of it; when I allow Christ to live His life through me He makes a good job of it (to the extent that I stay out of the way).

4 This is a very serious statement! Anyone who can save himself does not need Christ's sacrifice.

5 Perhaps 3% of the Greek manuscripts omit "that you not be persuaded by the Truth" (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.), which weakens the statement considerably.

6 It almost sounds like there was a dramatic demonstration.

7 Although I have capitalized the pronoun, there must have been a human being involved as well.

8 This is a quote from Genesis 15:6, but is not presented as such.

9 The form of the verb is ambiguous as to mood; it could be either Indicative or Subjunctive. The Indicative would give a direct quote, "God justifies the nations by faith", but we don't find this quote in the O.T., so I chose the Subjunctive. Notice that 'the Scripture' is personified! It/He sees/knows in advance what God is going to do.

nations will be blessed through you."[1] 9So then, those who are of faith are blessed along with Abraham, the faithful.

The curse of the law

10Now as many as are 'by works of law' are under a curse; because it stands written, "Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all the things written in the Book of the Law, to do them."[2] 11Further, it is evident that no one is justified by law before God, because "the righteous one will live by faith."[3] 12While the law is not of faith but, "the man who does them will live by them."[4]

13Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse in our place—because it stands written, "Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree"[5]—14so that the blessing of Abraham might come to the nations/Gentiles through Christ Jesus; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through the faith.

The covenant with Abraham

15Brothers: as a man I speak a covenant; though only of a man, once it has been ratified no one annuls or adds to it. 16But to Abraham were spoken the promises,[6] and to his Seed. He does not say "and to seeds," as about many, but "and to your seed," as about one, who is Christ. 17Further, I say this: a covenant confirmed beforehand by God in Christ[7] cannot be annulled by the law that came four hundred and thirty years later,[8] so as to make the promise of no effect. 18For if the inheritance were of law, it would no longer be of promise, but God granted it to Abraham by promise.

The law was a guardian

19Why then the law? It was added on account of the transgressions, until the Seed should come to whom the inheritance had been promised;

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1 This is a direct quote from Genesis 12:3, which, of course, had not been written yet in Abraham's day (in his day the only written Scripture available was the book of Job). Notice that the personification of 'Scripture' continues; It/He is the One who said this to Abraham, so all we need to do is go back to Genesis to find out who it is—Jehovah Himself, presumably the Son!

2 This is a direct quote from Deuteronomy 27:26.

3 This is a quote from Habakkuk 2:4.

4 This is a quote from Leviticus 18:5.

5 This is a direct quote from Deuteronomy 21:23.

6 Paul draws a contrast between a hypothetical covenant he might speak as a man, and the promises actually spoken to Abraham and his Seed.

7 Less than 3% of the Greek manuscripts, of inferior quality, omit "in Christ" (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.). Without Christ, the Seed, there would have been no promise. The incarnation of Jehovah the Son was in the Plan before the creation of this world (1 Peter 1:19-20).

8 Abraham left Haran in 1921 BC, when he was 75. The Exodus occurred in 1491 BC. 1921 – 1491 = 430. For an explanation of these dates see the excellent discussion by Floyd Nolen Jones in his *Chronology of the Old Testament: A Return to the Basics*, Kings Word Press, 1999 (14th edition).

and it was ordered through angels by the hand of a mediator.[1] 20(Now that mediator is not for just one, but God is one.)[2] 21Is the law then against the promises of God? Of course not! Rather, if a law had been given that was capable of imparting life, truly righteousness would have been by the law. 22But the Scripture imprisoned everything under sin,[3] so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.

23Now before this faith came, we were kept in custody under the law, in confinement until the coming faith was revealed. 24So then, the law became our guardian until Christ, so that we might be justified by faith. 25Now that the faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian.

26So all of you are sons of God through the faith in Christ Jesus. 27As many of you as were baptized into Christ[4] have clothed yourselves with Christ 28—there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no 'male and female';[5] all of you are one in Christ Jesus[6]—29so if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed[7] and heirs according to the promise.

Sons or slaves

4 1To proceed, as long as the heir is a child, he is no different from a slave, though he is owner of all, 2but is under guardians and stewards until the time appointed by the father. 3Similarly, when we were

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[1] "By the hand of a mediator" would presumably refer to Moses, since he passed the Law on to the people, but the reference to "angels" puzzles me. The O.T. account has God dealing directly with Moses, or so it seems to me. Perhaps God used angels to communicate some of the lesser details, or to refresh Moses' memory.

[2] I take this verse to be parenthetical because it does not seem to contribute to the argument. The word 'mediator' that ends verse 19 gives rise to the parenthetical comment, because Paul then used the definite article with the same word at the beginning of verse 20, which is why I render "that mediator". Paul then states the obvious—for someone to be a mediator there must be at least two parties at odds—which he contrasts with something even more obvious—God is one. Perhaps the point is that which lies behind the question in verse 21: since God is the source of both Law and Promise, and He being one cannot be at odds with Himself, then Law and Promise cannot be at odds. Moses functioned as mediator between God and the people.

[3] "Everything", not 'everyone'—that is what the Text says. Romans 8:19-22 spells it out—the consequences of Adam's fall extended to and included the creation. How could a perfect world be administered by a fallen man?

[4] See 1 Corinthians 12:13.

[5] The Text does not have 'neither male nor female'; the formula changes, as I have indicated. I suppose the reference is to Genesis 1:27, and the reason for the female in Genesis 2:18. All are saved on the same basis.

[6] The reference is to the spiritual realm, not the physical—a Jew who believes into Jesus does not stop being a physical Jew, a slave who believes into Jesus does not automatically change social status, a male who believes into Jesus does not stop being a physical male, etc. But if we are all "clothed with Christ", verse 27, we will all look alike, at least from a distance. People looking at us should think about Jesus.

[7] Abraham's seed, not Jacob's.

children we were in slavery under the basic principles of the world.[1] 4But at just the right time God sent out His Son, born of a woman, born under law, 5so that He might redeem those under law, that we might receive the adoption as sons. 6And because you are sons,[2] God sent out the Spirit of His Son into your[3] hearts, calling, "Abba, Father".[4] 7Therefore you are no longer a slave but a son,[5] and if a son, also an heir of God through Christ.[6]

Paul's concern

8But at one time indeed, when you did not know God, you were slaves to those that by nature are not gods.[7] 9But now that you know God—better, are known by God—how can you turn back to those weak, yes decidedly inferior, basic principles, to which you wish to be enslaved all over again? 10You are observing days and months and seasons and years. 11I fear for you, lest somehow I have labored over you in vain.

12Brothers, I plead with you, become as I am, for I became like you. You did me no wrong. 13Rather, you know that I preached the Gospel to you the first time in spite of a physical infirmity.[8] 14Also, you did not despise or recoil at my physical trial, but you received me as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus. 15So what about your blessedness? Because I can testify that if it were possible you would have plucked out your own eyes and given them to me. 16Have I now become your enemy by telling

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1 The only true freedom available in this life is to be a slave of Jesus Christ. In John 8:34 the Lord Jesus said, "whoever commits sin is a slave of sin", and in verse 36, "if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed". Sin gives Satan an entrance, and he has various instruments for binding people (see verse 8 below).

2 If you have the Holy Spirit in your heart, it is because you have been adopted into God's family; you are a 'son'.

3 Perhaps 6% of the Greek manuscripts read 'our' instead of "your", setting up a conflict with the verb "you are" at the beginning of the verse (as in NIV, NASB, TEV, etc.).

4 "Father" is a translation of "Abba".

5 Here Paul switches from plural to singular.

6 Evidently 1½% of the Greek manuscripts, of inferior quality, read "through God" instead of "of God through Christ" (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.). Romans 8:17 says we are "heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ".

7 The reference is presumably to demons. Since the 'world' (verse 3) is controlled by Satan, his agents impose the 'principles'.

8 It will be observed that I have rendered "in spite of" a physical infirmity, whereas most versions have "because of", in accordance with the normal meaning of the grammatical construction here (*δια* with the accusative is the usual way to express cause). What troubles me is that the normal meaning does not make much sense here; how could an infirmity be the cause of his preaching the Gospel to them? A counter-cause would make better sense, but I am not aware of any way to express it in Greek; the closest thing appears to be *καιπερ* 'although', that occurs all of five times in the N.T. In spoken English 'raise' and 'raze' are pronounced the same, but have opposite meanings, and this sort of thing is not rare in language. An ironic inflection reverses the meaning of what is said. I assume that something of the sort has occurred in this verse, and I have given the assumed intent. However, in defense of 'because of', it is possible that Paul got sick there in Galatia; he couldn't continue his journey, but he could evangelize.

you the truth?[1]

17They zealously court you[2]—not for good but intending to isolate you, so that you may seek them. 18Now it is good to be zealous in a good thing at any time, and not only when I am present with you.

19My little children, for whom I am again in travail until Christ is formed in you 20—I wish I could be present with you now and change my tone; because I am perplexed about you!

'Hagar' VS 'Sarah'

21Tell me, you who desire to be under law, do you not heed that law? 22For it is written that Abraham had two sons: one by the slave woman and one by the free woman. 23However, the one by the slave woman was born according to the flesh, while the one by the free woman was through the promise.[3] 24I will now allegorize them—these are two covenants: one is from Mount Sinai, bearing children into slavery, which is 'Hagar' 25(for this 'Hagar' is Mount Sinai in Arabia[4] and corresponds to the present day Jerusalem,[5] and is in slavery with her children); 26while the 'Jerusalem' that is above is free, which is the mother of us all.[6] 27For it is written: "Rejoice, barren one, who does not give birth; break forth and shout, you who have no labor pains; because the abandoned woman has many more children than she who has the husband."[7]

28Now we,[8] brothers, like Isaac, are children of promise. 29But, it is the same now as it was then: the one born according to flesh persecutes the one born according to Spirit. 30However, what does the Scripture say? "Expel the slave woman and her son, because the son of the slave

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1 In this fallen world, telling the truth does have a habit of making enemies.

2 Paul contrasts himself with the proselytizers: he tells them the truth, even if unpleasant; they start by 'buttering up' their intended victims, but then move to create a dependency so they can control them.

3 For Sarah to conceive required a miracle.

4 I do not know Paul's definition of 'Arabia', but what the maps call 'Mt. Sinai' probably is not the real one; consider: When Moses fled from Pharaoh he stopped in Midian (Exodus 2:15). Midian lies on the east side of the eastern 'rabbit-ear' of the Red Sea (the Gulf of Aqaba), in present day Saudi Arabia. It has never been part of the so-called 'Sinai Peninsula'. It was at "Horeb, the mountain of God" that Moses saw the 'burning bush' (Exodus 3:1), and in verse 12 God tells Moses: "when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall serve God on this mountain". Mt. Horeb has always been in Midian. For a complete discussion please see: "Where is Mt. Sinai?" on my website: www.prunch.org.

5 The Jerusalem of Paul's day was in slavery to Rome.

6 Perhaps 3% of the Greek manuscripts omit "all" (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

7 The quote is from Isaiah 54:1—in that chapter Jehovah is telling Israel, His abandoned 'wife', that He is going to take her back, restore her, and her future felicity will make her forget the pain of rejection. However, that restoration will presumably be based on the new covenant (Jeremiah 31), as is Christ's Gospel.

8 Perhaps 8% of the Greek manuscripts read 'you' for "we" (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

woman absolutely must not inherit with the son of the free woman!"[1]
31So then, brothers, we are not children of a slave woman, but of the free woman.

Freedom in Christ

5 1Stand firm therefore in the freedom with which Christ has made us free,[2] and do not be burdened again with a yoke of slavery. 2Listen! I, Paul, say to you that if you get circumcised, Christ will profit you nothing. 3Further, I testify again to every man who gets circumcised that he is obligated to keep the whole law.[3] 4You who are 'being justified' by law have been alienated from the Christ; you have fallen away from the grace.[4] 5For we through the Spirit eagerly wait[5] for the hope of righteousness by faith. 6Because in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but faith working through love.

7You were running well; who hindered you from obeying the truth? 8This persuasion is not from Him who calls you. 9A little yeast leavens the whole batch of dough. 10I have confidence toward you in the Lord that you will not think differently; but he who troubles you will bear the penalty, whoever he may be.

11But I, brothers, if I still preach circumcision, why am I still being persecuted? In that event the offense of the cross would have been removed. 12I do wish that those who are upsetting you would just remove themselves![6]

13Now you, brothers, have been called to freedom; only do not use that freedom as an opening for the flesh, but slave for one another through love. 14For the whole law is fulfilled in one word, namely: "You

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[1] The quote is from Genesis 21:10, where Sarah is demanding this of Abraham, but God backs her up (verse 12).

[2] 6-7% of the Greek manuscripts replace this first half of the verse with, "for freedom Christ has made us free; stand firm therefore" (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

[3] In the context it is clear that Paul is not decrying physical circumcision, that has an important side benefit—women with circumcised husbands don't get cervical cancer. He is combating the idea of spiritual benefit from the practice, as claimed by the Judaizers, and in particular the 'necessity' that they claimed. The procedure is for eight-day-old babies, not adult men.

[4] They have regressed from the covenant of grace to the covenant of law.

[5] "Eagerly wait for"—I love it! Those who are trying to be justified by works don't 'eagerly wait' for anything; the future accounting is a source of apprehension. On the other hand, we who understand that we are justified by faith in the Christ do indeed have a hope we can 'eagerly wait' for.

[6] It will be observed that my rendering of this verse differs significantly from that of the better known versions: they have Paul wishing that they would castrate themselves, or commit suicide! The verb is in the middle voice, hence reflexive; it means to 'sever' or 'amputate', but can also mean to 'exclude'. I take it Paul is wishing that they would 'amputate' or exclude themselves from the situation—he wants them to go away and leave the Galatian believers in peace!

shall love your neighbor as yourself."[1] 15But if you bite and tear at each other, beware lest you be consumed by one another!

Spirit VS flesh

16I say then: walk in the Spirit, and you will not fulfill any lust of the flesh.17Because the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh; they oppose each other; it follows that you may not do the things that you wish. 18However, if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under law.[2]

19Now the works of the flesh are obvious, namely: adultery,[3] fornication, uncleanness,[4] licentiousness, 20idolatry, sorcery, hatred, strife, jealousies, fits of anger, selfish ambition, dissentions, factions, 21envyings, murders, drinking bouts, orgies, and the like; about which I am warning you beforehand, as, in fact, I did before, that those who practice such things will not inherit the Kingdom of God.[5]

22But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23gentleness, self-control—against such things there is no law.[6] 24Further, those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.[7]

25Since we live by the Spirit, let us also conform to the Spirit.[8] 26Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.

Practical instructions

6 1Brothers, if a man is actually caught in some wrongdoing,[9] you, the spiritual ones, should restore him in a spirit of gentleness, watching out for yourself lest you also be tempted. 2Bear one another's heavy burdens, and so fulfill the law of the Christ. 3For if anyone thinks himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself. 4Let each one

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[1] In the context Paul is referring to that part of the law that deals with interacting with other human beings (not the part that deals with interacting with God). See Leviticus 19:18.

[2] What the flesh wants is bad for you; what the Spirit wants is good for you. To be led by the Spirit is not to be under a set of rules; it is a relationship.

[3] Perhaps 5% of the Greek manuscripts omit "adultery" (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.). This statement holds also for "murders" in verse 21. This is one of several lists containing both 'adultery' and 'fornication', side by side, which indicates that they are distinct concepts.

[4] This appears to be a cover term for other misuses of sex; for instance, so-called 'oral sex' does not receive specific mention in Scripture, but would be included in 'uncleanness'.

[5] Here is a plain statement (see also 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 and Revelation 21:8). Religious communities that condone or permit such practices are deceiving their constituents; at the Judgment they will get a very nasty surprise. The list refers to what we might call rather obvious forms of sin; there are also the more subtle forms.

[6] Paul was not referring to certain satanically inspired regimes, that may actually preach hate and violence.

[7] Another strong statement: a dead desire does not ask to be gratified.

[8] I believe the idea here is similar to that in 5:18 above. Conforming to, or perhaps seeing eye to eye with, the Spirit represents a higher level of spiritual experience.

[9] He is ruling out hearsay.

test his own work, and then do his 'boasting' only within himself, never to someone else.[1] **5**For each one must carry his own normal load.[2]

6Let him who is taught the Word share all good things with him who teaches.[3] **7**Do not be deceived, God does not allow Himself to be treated with contempt; because whatever a man sows, that he will also reap—**8**he who sows to his own flesh will reap deterioration[4] from that flesh; he who sows to the Spirit will reap eternal life from that Spirit.

9Let us not lose heart while doing good, for we will reap in due season, if we do not give up.[5] **10**So then, as we have opportunity, let us do what is good toward everyone, but especially toward those who are of the household of the faith.

Boast in the cross

11See with what large letters I have written to you with my own hand.[6] **12**Those who want to make a good showing in the flesh are pressuring you to be circumcised, but only so as not to be persecuted for the cross of Christ. **13**For not even those who are circumcised keep the law themselves, yet they want you to be circumcised that they may boast in your flesh.[7] **14**But as for me, may I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. **15**Because in Christ Jesus[8] neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but a new creation.[9] **16**Now as for those who conform to this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God.[10]

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[1] Again, my rendering is unusual. My difficulty with the usual 'in himself' and 'in another' is that in both cases the preposition is 'into' (εις), not 'in' (εν). If someone forms an exaggerated notion about his work (verse 3) and then starts boasting out loud, he will look stupid.

[2] There is a contrast between "heavy burden" (verse 2) and "normal load" (verse 5). We should help each other with the really 'heavy' stuff.

[3] Teachers are people; they too need food, clothes, shelter…

[4] If the deterioration is never checked, guess what happens.

[5] So what happens if you give up?

[6] This verse, coupled with 4:15 above, gives credence to the idea that Paul's physical infirmity had to do with his eyes.

[7] Again Paul makes clear that he is referring to the religious exercise when practiced on adults, not the physical fact (that is properly practiced on eight-day-old babies).

[8] Some 3% of the Greek manuscripts omit "because in Christ Jesus" (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

[9] If you are not a new creation, you are not saved.

[10] According to Greek grammar, the repetition of the preposition 'upon' in two phrases joined by 'and' makes clear that the objects of the prepositions refer to distinct entities. Hence, "the Israel of God" cannot be a reference to the Church, assuming that "those who conform to this rule" refers to those who are "in Christ Jesus". I take "the Israel of God" to refer to sincere, devout Israelites.

17Finally, let no one cause me trouble, for I bear on my body the brand marks of the Lord[1] Jesus.[2]

Sign off

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

[1] Perhaps 1% of the Greek manuscripts, of inferior quality, omit "Lord" (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.). I would say that the eclectic Greek text that these modern versions generally follow is mistaken at over eighty (80) points in Galatians, of which I mentioned only twelve (mainly the more serious ones).

[2] This is an interesting claim. I suppose him to be saying that he deserves respectful treatment because of what he has suffered for Christ's cause.