

THE LETTER OF PAUL TO THE Galatians

Notes: First of all I will tell you that Galatians is my favorite of Paul's letters, at least up to now. Perhaps that will change as we move through them. It may be the oldest of Paul's letters but most scholars believe First Thessalonians is. It was written at some point between 48 and the mid-fifties. From an historical standpoint it is incredibly important. In it we hear the early believer's struggle to define the church's mission and identity. The reason for writing the letter is that after founding the churches in Galatia other preachers have come along after Paul and challenged his theology. The later evangelists have included in their theology the need to adopt Jewish customs and laws such as circumcision, Sabbath, and food laws, among others. The number of churches in Galatia is unknown as is their exact locations. There was a Roman province called Galatia and I would assume this is the approximate location of these churches. Many scholars have attempted to correlate events in Acts with Galatians. Although this is an interesting study I don't think it enhances our examination of the letter. Paul believes that the crucifixion was an apocalyptic event that closed the door on the old age and ushered in the new age of grace. This letter, along with Romans, played a huge role in the formation of the theology adopted by the wider church.

Salutation

1 Paul an apostle Paul states clearly who he sees himself to be —sent neither by human commission nor from human authorities, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father, God not people made Paul an apostle who raised him from the dead— Raising from the dead is a liberating act for all people ²and all the members of God's family who are with me, In other letters Paul tells us some of the names of those with him but not here

To the churches of Galatia: We do not know exactly where they are or how many of them there are

3 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, ⁴who gave himself for our sins See Romans 4.25, 2 Cor. 5.21 1 Peter 2.24 to set us free from the present evil age, In Paul's mind the new age is beginning as of the moment of the resurrection when Jesus will be in charge and the world will be a better place according to the will of our God and Father, ⁵to whom be the glory for ever and ever. Amen.

There Is No Other Gospel

6 In the other of Paul's letters he starts off with a thanksgiving. In this one he lambasts the hearers I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you God not Paul – see 1.15, Romans 8.30, 1 Cor. 1.9 in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel— This gospel is being promoted by someone other than Paul ⁷not that there is another gospel only one true gospel, but there are some who are confusing you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. This is a major problem for Paul and he is writing with great urgency⁸But even if we or an angel from heaven should proclaim to you a gospel contrary to what we proclaimed to you, let that one be accursed! There is no other way to tell the story! ⁹As we have said before, so now I repeat, if anyone proclaims to you a gospel contrary to what you received, let that one be accursed! Paul could not be any plainer

10 Am I now seeking human approval, or God's approval? Or am I trying to please people? If I were still pleasing people, I would not be a servant of Christ. Scholars believe Paul has been accused of being soft on converts and not making them follow Jewish custom and law. He would be doing this to make conversion easier for gentiles. He is saying rubbish to this accusation, that he pleases God and nobody else.

Paul's Vindication of His Apostleship

11 For I want you to know, brothers (and sisters – sisters is again inserted), that the gospel that was proclaimed by me is not of human origin; ¹²for I did not receive it from a human source, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ. Think about his encounter with Jesus when he was converted – “Paul why do you persecute me?”

13 You have heard, no doubt, of my earlier life in Judaism. I was violently persecuting the church of God and was trying to destroy it. See Acts 8.3, 1 Cor. 15.9 ¹⁴I advanced meaning progress in cultivating virtue in Judaism beyond many among my people of the same age, for I was far more zealous for the traditions of my ancestors. Knowing the Torah and the interpretations of Torah – Paul is very well educated and a smart person. See Acts 22.3 ¹⁵But when God, who had set me apart before I was born and called me through his grace, this is prophetic language was pleased ¹⁶to reveal his Son to me, better – to reveal his son in me so that I might proclaim better – preach him among the Gentiles, Paul is the instrument of God's will I did not confer with any human being, nobody, not the other disciples, nobody ¹⁷nor

did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were already apostles before me, but I went away at once into Arabia, **Probably south of Damascus and east of the Jordan river** and afterwards I returned to Damascus.

18 Then after three years **Scholars debate – 3 years after his call or 3 years after he went to Damascus?** I did go up to Jerusalem to visit Cephas **Remember Cephas is Peter's nickname, Rocky** and stayed with him for fifteen days; **Ok stop for a minute – think about this – this is monumentally important – why?** ¹⁹but I did not see any other apostle except James **This is the brother of Jesus – see Mark 6.3 the Lord's brother. See Acts 15.13, 21.18** ²⁰In what I am writing to you, before God, I do not lie! **Don't doubt me. My credentials are good.** ²¹Then I went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia, **Area around Antioch and Tarsus – see Acts 15.23, 41** ²²and I was still unknown by sight to the churches of Judea that are in Christ; **Jerusalem is in Judea so Paul is telling us he did visit any of the churches there** ²³they only heard it said, 'The one who formerly was persecuting us is now proclaiming the faith he once tried to destroy.' ²⁴And they glorified God because of me. **Holy cow, can you believe it? We wonder how Paul heard about this.**

Paul and the Other Apostles

2 Then after fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas **Ok let's do some math – when was Jesus crucified and then add 3 years and 14 years, taking Titus He was an uncircumcised gentile as we will shortly see along with me.** ²I went up in response to a revelation. **He means a revelation from God – See Acts 15.1-3** Then I laid before them (though only in a private meeting with the acknowledged leaders) **Let's think about the acknowledged leaders and who they were** the gospel that I proclaim among the Gentiles, in order to make sure that I was not running, or had not run, in vain. **Note the Greek metaphor. Paul was seeking the leaders' approval and remember they were with Jesus throughout his ministry. They have firsthand knowledge.** ³But even Titus, who was with me, **an uncircumcised gentile** was not compelled to be circumcised, though he was a Greek. **Greek is synonymous with Gentile** ⁴But because of false believers **The folks in Galatia preaching a wrong gospel** secretly brought in, who slipped in to spy on the freedom we have in Christ Jesus, **The freedom from having to follow Jewish law and customs** so that they might enslave us— **Return us to those customs and laws** ⁵we did not submit to them even for a moment, **We did not**

acknowledge any rightness in their theology so that the truth of the gospel might always remain with you. Paul's truth ⁶And from those who were supposed to be acknowledged leaders (what they actually were makes no difference to me; God shows no partiality See Deut. 10.17)—those leaders contributed nothing to me. This seems like an arrogant statement on the surface but Paul is telling his audience in Galatia that those who knew Jesus personally could add nothing to what Paul had been teaching ⁷On the contrary, when they saw that I had been entrusted with the gospel for the uncircumcised, just as Peter had been entrusted with the gospel for the circumcised These are two distinct groups of people ⁸(for he who worked through Peter making him an apostle to the circumcised also worked through me in sending me to the Gentiles), ⁹and when James and Cephas and John Son of Zebedee – see Mark 1.19, who were acknowledged pillars the supports of the church as a spiritual temple, recognized the grace that had been given to me They are acknowledging that God/Jesus has been working with Paul, they gave to Barnabas and me the right hand of fellowship, agreeing that we should go to the Gentiles Paul and they to the circumcised Peter and the other pillars/apostles. Paul is saying that they are in complete agreement with him and the gospel he is preaching ¹⁰They asked only one thing, that we remember the poor, which was actually what I was eager to do. He is referring to the poor in Jerusalem which was a real problem at that time. Paul carried out this request as we see in Romans 15.25-27 and 1 Cor. 16.1-4

Paul Rebukes Peter at Antioch

¹¹ Paul includes the following section in his letter to demonstrate the problem the Galatians face is analogous with a confrontation between himself and Peter. But when Cephas Peter came to Antioch, A major center of early Christian activity – See Acts 11.19-26 and 13.1-3 I opposed him to his face, He called him out and spoke directly to him because he stood self-condemned; ¹²for until certain people came from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles. Obviously not Jewish custom and what Paul is making part of his gospel But after they came, he drew back and kept himself separate for fear of the circumcision faction. He is calling Peter a hypocrite and the circumcision faction are folks, probably Jews, who are saying that part of following Jesus means following Jewish custom and law ¹³And the other Jews joined him in this hypocrisy, so that even Barnabas was led astray by their

hypocrisy. Barnabas is one of Paul's guys – even he was led astray¹⁴ But when I saw that they were not acting consistently with the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas before them all, **Imagine this scene with Paul and Peter in front of everybody else** 'If you, though a Jew, live like a Gentile and not like a Jew, how can you compel the Gentiles to live like Jews?' **Peter has been trying to have it both ways depending on who he is with. We are reminded of Peter denying Jesus three times aren't we?**

Jews and Gentiles Are Saved by Faith

15 Paul begins to explain his theology of the good news We ourselves are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners; **It seems that Paul continues to see the advantages to being Jewish over being a gentile ☺**¹⁶ yet we know that a person is justified not by the works of the law **Circumcision, dietary laws, Sabbath observance – the covenant obligations of being in relationship with God** but through faith in Jesus Christ. **This is the whole enchilada – faith trumps works – the foundation of the Christian belief system** And we have come to believe in Christ Jesus, so that we might be justified by faith in Christ, and not by doing the works of the law, because no one **those days are done** will be justified by the works of the law. **He has just said it again just in case the hearer missed it – See also Romans 5.18-19 and Philippians 3.9**¹⁷ **The following question and answer is typical Greek philosophical argumentation and continues to be used for several more centuries by the great thinkers** But if, in our effort to be justified in Christ, we ourselves have been found to be sinners, is Christ then a servant of sin? Certainly not! **Let's think about what Paul has just said. We have been saved by the cross of Christ but we continue to be found guilty of sin. Does this mean that Jesus failed? Paul says no of course not.**¹⁸ But if I build up again the very things that I once tore down, **Paul refers to the old barriers between Jews and Gentiles** then I demonstrate that I am a transgressor. **If we go back to the old ways of making the law the point of interaction with God then we lose the ground we have gained by faith in grace through Christ.**¹⁹ For through the law I died to the law, so that I might live to God. **My priorities have changed** I have been crucified with Christ; **Not literally but this is where Paul's faith now finds its' cornerstone – see Romans 6.5-11 and 2nd Corinthians 4.7-12**²⁰ and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me. **We are changed through the relationship with Christ who lives within us as the result of our acceptance of the free gift of grace through the**

actions of Christ – see Romans 8.9-11 and 2nd Corinthians 13.5 And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. What you see is the fruits of my relationship with Christ
²¹I do not nullify the grace of God; for if justification comes through the law, then Christ died for nothing. Hugely important statement and Paul may also be saying that going backwards to find justification through the law is to nullify the grace of the cross

Law or Faith

Paul has made his basic theology clear once again to these folks in Galatia. Now he wonders aloud what the heck happened to them. They were fine last time he saw them and the presence of the Holy Spirit was evident.

3 You foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? Who did this to you? It was before your eyes that Jesus Christ was publicly exhibited as crucified! Paul is probably not saying that they personally witnessed the crucifixion of Christ, although some may indeed of done just that, but is referring to his presentation of the facts – see also 1st Corinthians 2.1-5 ²The only thing I want to learn from you is this: Did you receive the Spirit by doing the works of the law or by believing what you heard? This previous clause is a tough translation – better is “by hearing of faith”. Never the less we understand what Paul is saying. Did you receive the Holy Spirit through works or grace? ³Are you so foolish? Paul is not a happy camper Having started with the Spirit, are you now ending with the flesh? You are going back to believing in works? ⁴Did you experience so much for nothing?—if it really was for nothing. Was my work a waste of time? ⁵Well then, does God supply you with the Spirit and work miracles among you by your doing the works of the law, or by your believing what you heard? Apparently the miracles etcetera keep happening so is that because of work or grace? See 1st Corinthians 12.4-11, 2nd Corinthians 12.12

6 This is where Paul begins a complex argument from scripture to demonstrate that God always intended the salvation of the Gentiles. We also get to experience firsthand the intelligence and the great education that Paul possesses. Paul is a very bright man. We can find a similar argument in Romans 3.27-4.25 which we shall save for when we are studying Romans. (Unless of course you sneak a peek) Just as Abraham `believed God, and it

was reckoned to him as righteousness', **Think faith or trust when you hear believe** ⁷so, you see, those who believe are the descendants of Abraham. **See Genesis 12.3, 18.18, 22.18** ⁸And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, **not the law** declared the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, 'All the Gentiles shall be blessed in you.'
⁹For this reason, those who believe are blessed with Abraham who believed **Better translation "the believing Abraham"**.

10 For all who rely on the works of the law are under a curse; **The curse of course being that being cursed is the inevitable outcome for not following every jot and tittle of the law** for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who does not observe and obey all the things written in the book of the law.' **See Deuteronomy 27.26 and 28.58** ¹¹Now it is evident that no one is justified before God by the law; **Thank you captain obvious** for 'The one who is righteous will live by faith.' **See Hab. 2.4** ¹²But the law does not rest on faith; on the contrary, 'Whoever does the works of the law will live by them.' **See Leviticus 18.5 and Romans 10.5** ¹³Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us— **took our sins for us** for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree'— **See Gen 12.3 and Deut. 21.23 and 27.15-26** ¹⁴in order that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith. **Paul sees the presence of the Spirit in the gentile communities as proof that his argument, and the predictions he has found in scripture, are true and have come true.**

The Promise to Abraham

15 Brothers **and sisters**, I give an example from daily life: **The prior is an idiom – the Greek really says "according to man I say" the correct meaning is as translated once a person's will διαθηκην is the word in the original Greek and can be translated either as will or covenant – Paul is making a play on words here** has been ratified, no one adds to it or annuls it. **Paul says the covenant/will between God and Abraham includes the Gentiles and cannot be changed or understood in any other way.** ¹⁶Now the promises were made to Abraham and to his offspring **Literal "seed"**; it does not say, 'And to offsprings', as of many; but it says, 'And to your offspring', that is, to one person, who is Christ. **See Genesis 17.8 and 2nd Samuel 7.12-14.** Paul is connecting Jesus to these texts concerning and eternal kingdom for David's seed, **This stuff is really murky to us twenty centuries later. Thankfully Paul**

now gets to the point ¹⁷My point is this: the law, which came four hundred and thirty years later, This is the time of the exile in Egypt and the writing of Torah does not annul a covenant previously ratified by God, so as to nullify the promise. Paul wraps up his case – God made the promise and doesn't take back the promise ¹⁸For if the inheritance comes from the law, it no longer comes from the promise; but God granted it to Abraham through the promise. The promise of God predates the law. The promise is fulfilled through Jesus Christ.

The Purpose of the Law

19 Why then the law? So why does the law even exist you ask? It was added because of transgressions, Scholars argue whether this means in response to transgressions and others say to encourage. The only interpretation that makes sense to me is in response until the offspring would come to whom the promise had been made; Paul refers to Jesus and it was ordained through angels See Acts 7.53 by a mediator. The mediator refers to Moses and was developed by Philo who lived at the same time as Paul in his *Life of Moses* from Deut. 33.2, Lev. 26.46, Numbers 36.13 ²⁰Now a mediator involves more than one party; but God is one. Most scholars take this verse to mean that we may contact God directly without a mediator, but it is a very obscure verse. We may also remember the Shema – “The Lord our God is one.....”

21 Is the law then opposed to the promises of God? Certainly not! Again classic Greek thought – asked and answered For if a law had been given that could make alive, so we ask ourselves, what can make something live? then righteousness would indeed come through the law. Many scholars believe that Paul saw the law as something that was temporarily necessary until the coming of Christ, a yardstick to measure how one was doing in relationship with God while the world waited on the ultimate act of grace ²²But the scripture has imprisoned all things under the power of sin, Because it was impossible to live that purely so that what was promised through faith in Jesus Christ planned from the beginning of time might be given to those who believe. See Romans 11.32

23 Now before faith came, we were imprisoned and guarded both imprisoned and guarded – interesting concept don't you think? under the law until faith would be revealed. Jesus Christ is faith revealed ²⁴Therefore the

law was our disciplinarian **The Greek disciplinarian was a slave who guarded and supervised children** until Christ came, **like we deal with children until they are matured** so that we might be justified by faith. ²⁵But now that faith has come, we are no longer subject to a disciplinarian, **The rules have changed and we are mature** ²⁶for in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith. **When Paul says all he literally means all the nations, everybody, the actual term in Greek that has been translated as gentiles** ²⁷As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed **In early Christian baptism services the newly baptized was clothed within a white garment – see Romans 13.14 and Ephesians 4.24** yourselves with Christ. **On union with Christ see Romans 6.3-5** ²⁸There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus. **The former verse was probably a baptismal saying during the liturgy – also see 1st Cor. 12.13** ²⁹And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's offspring **literal is seed**, heirs according to the promise. **The original promise made to Abraham**

4My point is this: heirs, as long as they are minors, are no better than slaves, **the metaphor continues** though they are the owners of all the property; **or will be owners when they grow up** ²but they remain under guardians and trustees until the date set by the father. **The date being the resurrection of Jesus Christ** ³So with us; **same with us, both Jews and Gentiles** while we were minors, we were enslaved to the elemental spirits **There are two interpretations: one is "the basic principles" and the second are spiritual beings that mess with humans. I am tempted to say I prefer the second interpretation as the most popular at the time. However we must remember that although Paul is trained in Greek logic he is also a very good Jew so he may very well mean the first definition. You pick of the world.** ⁴But when the fullness of time had come, **see Mark 1.15** God sent his Son, **see John 3.16-17, Romans 8.3-4** born of a woman, **this emphasizes Christ's humanity** born under the law, **emphasizes his Jewishness** ⁵in order to redeem **think what redeem means** those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as children. **See Romans 8.14-17** ⁶And because you are children, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, 'Abba! **See Mark 14.36** Father!' ⁷So you are no longer a slave but a child, and if a child then also an heir, through God. **Paul's comforting concluding statement**

Paul Reproves the Galatians

8 Formerly, when you did not know God, **before showed up and preached the Gospel** you were enslaved to beings **elementals?** that by nature are not gods. **Paul is calling them former pagans** ⁹Now, however, that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, **What is Paul saying here?** how can you turn back again to the weak and beggarly **poor is a better translation** elemental spirits? How can you want to be enslaved to them again? **Let's stop for a moment and think about this. Does Paul believe in these elemental spirits or is he just acknowledging their belief in them? I think the later** ¹⁰You are observing special days, and months, and seasons, and years. **This refers to the Jewish calendar of events and observations** ¹¹I am afraid that my work for you may have been wasted. **Holy cow people what are you doing? Paul equates starting to follow the law again with worshipping elemental spirits.**

Paul now begins to ask them to return to their previous thinking and belief system as he had taught them.

12 Friends, I beg you, become as I am, **See 1st Cor. 11.1 and 1st Thessalonians 1.6** for I also have become as you are. **See 1st Cor. 9.21** Paul who was an observing Jew no longer is bound by the law You have done me no wrong. **Perhaps Paul means him personally but that he cares deeply about what they are doing to themselves** ¹³You know that it was because of a physical infirmity that I first announced the gospel to you; **Here we learn something about Paul – we cannot be sure what his physical problem was but we know Galatia is at a higher altitude so this might be the reason he was there. Also he may have had poor eyesight as we shall see later – see 6.17 later, 2nd Cor. 11.23-27, 12.7-10** ¹⁴though my condition put you to the test, you did not scorn or despise me, **whatever the problem is it must have been very obvious and not pretty to look at. I am reminded of the Jewish purity and cleanliness laws. Perhaps Paul was projecting some of that thinking onto these people** but welcomed me as an angel of God, as Christ Jesus. **He gives them great credit** ¹⁵What has become of the goodwill you felt? **What happened that you have lost that loving feeling for me?** For I testify that, had it been possible, you would have torn out your eyes and given them to me. **Paul speaks to the solidarity he had felt with them when he was there** ¹⁶Have I now become your enemy by telling you the truth? ¹⁷They make much of you, but for no good purpose; **These guys are con**

artists – you can't believe them they want to exclude you, so that you may make much of them. They exclude you through demanding you take on Jewish customs – let's reread 2.12 ¹⁸It is good to be made much of for a good purpose at all times, and not only when I am present with you. Please be the same people when I am not there as you are when I am ¹⁹My little children see 1st Cor. 4.14, 2 Cor. 6.13, 1st Thess. 2.11-12, for whom I am again in the pain of childbirth Paul is going through the pain of bringing them to Christ again – see Romans 8.22-23, 1st Thess. 5.3 and Mark 13.8 until Christ is formed in you, see Romans 8.29²⁰I wish I were present with you now and could change my tone, for I am perplexed about you. We hear the emotion clearly – Paul is upset about them and worried and wishes he could speak with them directly

The Allegory of Hagar and Sarah

Again we see Paul's education in the scriptures as he uses the two sons of Abraham metaphorically for the Jews and the Gentiles. When Paul thinks of the law he is talking scripture. To properly prepare for this we should review Genesis 16 and 21.

21 Tell me, you who desire to be subject to the law, will you not listen to the law? Ok folks you want the law then I will teach you from it. ²²For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by a slave woman Hagar/Ishmael and the other by a free woman Sarah/Isaac. ²³One, the child of the slave, was born according to the flesh; the other, the child of the free woman, was born through the promise. Let's talk about this – all of this comes back to their impatience with the promise of God ²⁴Now this is an allegory: these women are two covenants. One woman, in fact, is Hagar, from Mount Sinai, Paul is equating Hagar with the law bearing children for slavery to the law. ²⁵Now Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia and corresponds to the present Jerusalem, for she is in slavery with her children. ²⁶But the other woman corresponds to the Jerusalem above the heavens; she is free, and she is our mother. Mother Zion see Psalm 87.5 ²⁷For it is written, see Isaiah 54.1 and Isaiah 51.1-3

'Rejoice, you childless one, you who bear no children,
burst into song and shout, you who endure no birth pangs;
for the children of the desolate woman are more numerous
than the children of the one who is married.'

²⁸Now you, my friends, are children of the promise, like Isaac. ²⁹But just as

at that time the child who was born according to the flesh persecuted the child who was born according to the Spirit, **The idea that Ishmael persecuted Isaac is found in the Rabbinic Midrash and based on Genesis 21.9. We will discover this is a hard case for us to make. Something is missing.** so it is now also. **Paul speaks to the persecutions he and the church are enduring**
³⁰But what does the scripture say? 'Drive out the slave and her child; for the child of the slave will not share the inheritance with the child of the free woman.' **Genesis 21.10** ³¹So then, friends, we are children, not of the slave but of the free woman. **This must be understood as metaphorical**

5¹For freedom Christ has set us free. Stand firm, therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery. **The yoke of slavery being the law**

The Nature of Christian Freedom

2 Listen! **Ok here we go. Paul drives his lesson home** I, Paul, am telling you that if you let yourselves be circumcised, Christ will be of no benefit to you. **It is no longer meaningful and perhaps harmful to do this as an act of Judaism** ³Once again I testify to every man who lets himself be circumcised that he is obliged to obey the entire law. **Not just some – all** ⁴You who want to be justified by the law have cut yourselves off from Christ; you have fallen away from grace. **Could he make his position any plainer?** ⁵For through the Spirit, by faith, we eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness. ⁶For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything; **it's meaningless now!** the only thing that counts is faith working through love.

7 You were running well; **note the Greek metaphor** who prevented you from obeying the truth? **Who is this scoundrel?** ⁸Such persuasion does not come from the one who calls you. **This does not come from the Holy Spirit, Jesus Christ, or God** ⁹A little yeast leavens the whole batch of dough. **See 1st Cor. 5.6-8** ¹⁰I am confident about you in the Lord that you will not think otherwise. But whoever it is that is confusing you will pay the penalty. **Ther one that leads you astray will be punished** ¹¹But my friends, why am I still being persecuted if I am still preaching circumcision? **The persecution then is for not preaching the law** In that case the offence of the cross has been removed. **If I did that this silly grace thing wouldn't bother anybody**¹²I wish

those who unsettle you would castrate themselves! Think Paul is upset with what happened?

13 For you were called to freedom, brothers and sisters; only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for self-indulgence, but through love become slaves to one another. This reflects the teaching of Jesus ¹⁴For the whole law is summed up in a single commandment, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' Do the loving thing - See Leviticus 19.18 – let's think about Rabbi Hillel ¹⁵If, however, you bite and devour one another, take care that you are not consumed by one another. The arguments and divisions within the churches can tear them apart

The Works of the Flesh

Paul begins to tell the readers what a successful, spirit led congregation will look like.

16 Live by the Spirit, I say, and do not gratify the desires of the flesh. ¹⁷For what the flesh desires is opposed to the Spirit, and what the Spirit desires is opposed to the flesh; Paul talks of this war between the flesh and spirit often and we know all too well what he is talking about for these are opposed to each other, to prevent you from doing what you want. So is law versus grace ¹⁸But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not subject to the law. See Romans 6.14 ¹⁹Now the works of the flesh are obvious: fornication, impurity, licentiousness, ²⁰idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, anger, quarrels, dissensions, factions, ²¹envy, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these. This is a common and obvious list I am warning you, as I warned you before: those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. This is strong language and since Paul is a grace believer he must be assuming that if you are doing these things you are not leading a spirit led life. What do you think about that?

The Fruit of the Spirit

So here we go. What are the results of a spirit led life?

22 By contrast, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, ²³gentleness, and self-control. Again, pretty obvious list There is no law against such things. It's ok to be nice ²⁴And those who

belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. **See Romans 6.6 and 8.13** ²⁵If we live by the Spirit, let us also be guided by the Spirit. **This is where the right way of being comes from – the spirit** ²⁶Let us not become conceited, competing against one another, envying one another. **We hang together or we hang separately**

Bear One Another's Burdens

6 My friends, if anyone is detected in a transgression, you who have received the Spirit should restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness. **Be kinds when you admonish another for wrong thinking or action – see Lev. 19.17, Matt. 18.15-22, Luke 17.3-4** Take care that you yourselves are not tempted. **Don't let them lead you astray** ²Bear one another's burdens, **When did we see thee Lord?** and in this way you will fulfil the law of Christ. **The law of love – see Romans 15.1-7 and 1st Cor. 9.21** ³For if those who are nothing think they are something, they deceive themselves. **Paul refers to everybody not just some of the people** ⁴All must test their own work; then that work, rather than their neighbor's work, will become a cause for pride. **First remove the log from your own eye before you remove the mote from your neighbor's** ⁵For all must carry their own loads. **Be responsible for yourselves.** Paul often mentioned that he made his own living and was not a burden on the community.

6 Those who are taught the word must share in all good things with their teacher. **However, he also believes that preachers should be paid in some way. See 1st. Cor. 9.3-14**

7 Do not be deceived; God is not mocked, for you reap whatever you sow. **Paul never really gives up works, he just gives himself over to the spirit in order to produce them – see Job 4.8 and Prov. 22.8** ⁸If you sow to your own flesh, you will reap corruption from the flesh; but if you sow to the Spirit, you will reap eternal life from the Spirit. **The never ending battle between the flesh and the spirit** ⁹So let us not grow weary in doing what is right, for we will reap at harvest time **Almost sounds like a metaphor of Jesus,** if we do not give up. ¹⁰So then, whenever we have an opportunity, let us work for the good of all, and especially for those of the family of faith. **Do the loving thing, and especially for the household of the faithful.**

Final Admonitions and Benediction

Paul is basically done. He ends his letter with this final passage which is a summation of sorts. From it we know that he has dictated everything previously and we know that his eyesight is poor. But he is a well-educated man and unlike 90% of his fellows can read and write.

11 See what large letters I make when I am writing in my own hand! People with poor eyesight make large letters. It was common at that time for the letter sender to write the last few lines in their own hand. ¹²It is those who want to make a good showing in the flesh They are concerned about this life not the next one that try to compel you to be circumcised follow Jewish custom—only that they may not be persecuted for the cross of Christ. They avoid persecution but they also miss the point ¹³Even the circumcised do not themselves obey the law because obeying the law is an impossibility, but they want you to be circumcised so that they may boast about your flesh. Sort of like the TV evangelists? ¹⁴May I never boast of anything except the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, This is the final point for Paul and his way of thinking by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. The cross draws the line between works and grace ¹⁵For neither circumcision nor uncircumcision is anything; He repeats a prior point but a new creation is everything! Jesus within oneself makes the new creation ¹⁶As for those who will follow this rule—peace be upon them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God. Congratulations to those that understand and the church is the true Israel.

17 From now on, let no one make trouble for me; for I carry the marks of Jesus branded on my body. Paul refers to the beatings he has taken in the name of the Gospel – see 2nd Cor. 6.4-5, 11.23-25

18 May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brothers and sisters. Amen As compared to other letters this is a short and terse ending. Paul has softened a little but remain upset with them it would appear.