

Galatians

Week 6 – Chapters 5&6



Chapter 5:

This section really begins with verse 2, verse 1 being the end of Paul's discussion in chapter 4.

Having established that the law, while not a bad thing, is now no longer doing its job, Paul sets out what are the results of following the law by being circumcised.

V3

The most important idea that Paul wished the Galatians to know is that if they go back to using the law for the basis of how they are to behave then they will be obligated to keep the whole law.

Romans 7:6

⁶ But now we have been released from the law, for we died to it and are no longer captive to its power. Now we can serve God, not in the old way of obeying the letter of the law, but in the new way of living in the Spirit.

V4

The word for 'severed' is *katargeo* meaning to 'render inoperative or abolish.

The word for 'fallen' is *ekipto* meaning to lose or become ineffective.

Remember that the reason for the law was to keep the Jews separate from the nations around them; this is not what faith in the Messiah does. Believing in the Messiah is for all the nations, for the entire world, which of course was the original covenant with Abraham.

V5

This sentence is a summary of the Christian faith. We are waiting eagerly for the time in the future when the kingdom of God is completely installed. As we wait we are empowered by the Holy Spirit to live a life worthy of being a member of the family.

This hope is the hope in the 'new creation' (6:15) This term is a Second Isaiah term and is first used in connection with the result of the Servant completing his task.

V6

'Faith working through love' is the center of the Christian faith; loving my neighbor.

VII

“In that case ^othe offense of the cross has been removed.”

The scandal of the cross – the crucified Messiah redefines who are the people of God. No longer are the Jews God’s special people. All people everywhere can be God’s people. 1 Cor. 1:23

V13-15

Called to freedom but not to doing whatever you want. ‘An opportunity for the flesh’ - flesh as a subhuman or semi-human existence.

1 Cor. 9:19 ¹⁹ Even though I am a free man with no master, I have become a slave to all people to bring many to Christ.

The command to love is the very heart of the law.

V16-18

Paul sets up two opposing forces in life; a life lived through the Spirit and a life lived through the flesh.

Paul’s argument against the law is not an argument against moral behavior. But it is against the markers for who is in the family. If we are in the family then we are called to live a life of genuine humanness – and this is what it looks like. The title that Jesus takes, ‘Son of Man’ is a title that suggests ‘look at how I live because this is what it means to a real son of man, a real human.

V19-21

How do we understand each of the terms Paul uses in 18-20? This list may be divided into 4 sections: (the word in *italics* is the Greek word used in the text)

- Sexual related activity:
 - sexual immorality – *porneia*
 - sexual sin of a general kind, that includes many different behaviors
 - impurity – *akatharisa*
 - impure, unclean things these are practices that brought about religious impurity such as ???
 - licentiousness
 - *aselgeia* - be unrestrained in moral attitudes and behaviours. The emphasis here is on the lack of self-discipline on the part of the person
- Religious related activity:

^o 1 Cor. 1:23; See 1 Pet. 2:8

- Idolatry – *eidololatria*
 - worship of idols
- sorcery – *pharmakeia*
 - witchcraft or black magic
- Societal actions
 - Enmity – *echthreia*
 - hostility, antagonism
 - strife – *eris*
 - dissension, conflict
 - jealousy – *zelos*
 - extremely, intensely, fierce, raging devoted zeal
 - outbursts of Anger – *thymoi*
 - fury, wrath, anger, rage
 - Selfish ambition – *eritheia*
 - rivalry, hostility, a feeling of strife towards another
 - dissension – *dichostasia*
 - discord, division
 - factions – *haireseis*
 - divisions, separate groups
 - envy – *phethonos*
 - sadness occasioned by the thought of another's good
- to do with alcohol;
 - drunkenness – *methē*
 - being affected by alcohol
 - carousing – *kōmos*
 - revelry, a drunken dinner party

Each of these sections and their associated sins have to do with the de-humanizing that the practice of such sins have on the individual.

- ❖ Sexual sins place the sexual satisfaction of one individual over and above another: my needs are more important than your needs.
- ❖ Religious actions place the individual above God. This is ultimately what idol worship represented. The person would make the idol and then worship the idol; they placed themselves in the position of having the ultimate authority. This is the sin of Adam and Eve.
- ❖ Societal actions are about placing the individuals need for being right and in charge over the group's needs. The emphasis here is the intensity of the feelings and the fact that the feelings are ruling not logical discussion and debate. This is not about having different opinions but about how these differences are discussed.

- ❖ Use over of alcohol is the removal of self-discipline and through this the carrying out of actions that may injure another person.

All of these examples are about how not to live as a true human being. It is recognized that we don't have to try very hard to engage in these activities.

More simply, we may say that 'the flesh' stands for what we are by natural birth, 'the Spirit' what we become by new birth, the birth of the Spirit. And these two, the flesh and the Spirit, are in sharp opposition to each other.¹

V21- 26

How do we practice the fruit of the Spirit?

These are not actions in life that come naturally. Remember that 'self control' does not work without self discipline and self reflection.

Fruit trees require action if they are going to produce fruit;

V24, 25

A life determined by the cross and energized by the resurrection and Spirit.

Now that we are 'in Messiah' we can begin to work towards living the Messiah life, living the son of man life, living the fully human life.

Is this work? Yes but not work for salvation; it is work to live a fully human life.

Doing all these things means that we, as followers of Messiah, are bringing the Kingdom life to people's worlds.

¹ John R. W. Stott, *The Message of Galatians: Only One Way*, The Bible Speaks Today (Leicester, England; Downer's Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1986), 146.

Chapter 6

Paul ends his letter with some pastoral advice. How are we to deal with people when there is uncomfortable controversy in the family?

VI-5

Paul gives a number of pieces of advice;

1. When you are speaking with a person about something controversial, do it with gentleness. “Kindness allows the truth to make it through the conversation.”
2. Remember that the goal is restoration to the family, not just being right.
3. Be careful that you don’t fall into the same mistake.
4. Bear each other’s burden; that is love my neighbor as myself. How do we bear a burden? By looking for ways to deal with the person that makes their problem less.

The principle, then, of restoration is loving one another. Christians are responsible for one another and, because of the love of God that comes to them through the Spirit, they carry one another’s burdens when those burdens are too difficult for one person to carry.²

5. Don’t let pride in one’s self be any part of the conversation.
6. Be sure to keep my own life right and look for ways of solving the challenges I have because I am also responsible for my own burdens.

Here is the paradox of genuine community living. All for each and each for all; but one cannot slide through, hoping that other people’s devotion and godliness will suffice, and that one does not need to worry about oneself. When it comes to my neighbour, I must be sure to remain humble if I offer help; when it comes to myself, I must recognize my own responsibility for my actions. ‘Bear one another’s burdens’ (verse 2) is balanced by ‘each of you must carry your own load’ (verse 5).³

V6-10

Paul turns to a very practical area, money.

² Scot McKnight, *Galatians*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1995), 285.

³ Tom Wright, *Paul for Everyone: Galatians and Thessalonians* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2004), 76.

There is, of course, at least one important principle underneath all this. The Christian view of money is that it is a responsibility given by God. It is never purely for one's own enjoyment; it is held in trust. If used wisely ('sown', in the picture Paul is using) it will produce a harvest of good things, in terms not so much of straightforward financial investment (using money to make money—something the church at its best has always warned against) as in terms of the good things that can be done with it, things of lasting benefit to individuals and the community.⁴

However the idea of 'sowing to the flesh' may have some more subtle meanings.

- ❖ It may hint at the circumcision controversy. If you accept circumcision then you are sowing to the flesh.
- ❖ It may also mean getting caught up in the works of the 'flesh' rather than the works of the Spirit.

VII-13

Paul explains that he is writing this part himself rather than using a scribe. The use of a scribe was common practice. The writer would dictate his thoughts and the scribe would write them, though in practice there was some latitude with exactly what the scribe wrote.

Paul goes over the central argument one last time; those who wish you to be circumcised are doing so because;

- a. They want to avoid persecution.
- b. They want to be able to boast about what great evangelists or biblical teachers they are because they have convinced the Galatians to be circumcised.

VI4-18

Conclusion:

Paul's concern with the Galatians is that they understand what is required and what is not required to live a life as a member of the Messiah's family. He paints this picture as part of the gospel story about the family which began with Abraham, moved on to the nation of Israel and is now inclusive of anyone who calls Jesus Lord.

⁴ Tom Wright, *Paul for Everyone: Galatians and Thessalonians* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2004), 79.

The law is not and never has been the way people are made right in their relationship to God but was important to show the Jews how to live different lives to their neighbouring nations. This purpose is no longer needed because the Messiah has come to say there are no longer any national boundaries between people. Anyone can be a member of the Messiah's family.

However being a family member brings responsibilities as to how we are to treat other people; it requires us to live a life based on Jesus' command to 'love our neighbours as we love ourselves.' This way of living is empowered in us because we have Holy Spirit living in us to help us live a Kingdom life.

What is your most important 'take away' idea from this letter?