Acknowledgements

Primary contributors | Authors of this project:
Matt Wallace (MW)
Jakob Guy (JG)

Editing/Compilation Work:
Sarah Willson
Joshua Whitney
Matt Grise
Tim Sewall
Liz Libbey

Cover Design:
Jon Gray

Published and Bound by:
Little Guy Press

All Scripture references in the
ESV
Unless otherwise noted

Contents

Introduction **3**

Map of Galatia **4**

Daily Study Guide **5**

Week 10 7
Gal. 4.1-7

Week 11 15
Gal. 4.8-20

Week 12 23
Gal. 4.21-31

Week 13 31
Gal. 5.1-15

Week 14 39
Gal. 5.16-25

Week 15 47
Gal. 6.1-10

Week 16 55
Gal. 6.11-18

Welcome

Thank you for joining Atmosphere Church for the second part of our study through the Book of Galatians! We are excited to see how God brings growth through this and many other things that we will be using to teach the Word.

If you have the first half of our study guide, you will notice that this is similar to that one. If you have not been coming to Atmosphere, or don't have a copy of the first booklet, we have it along with a few other documents for the series available for free at http://www.atmospherechurch.com/galatians.

Again, we hope that this is of great help to your growth in Christ, and look forward to seeing God use this to grow His Church.

Sincerely,

The Atmosphere Leadership Team

The Territory of Galatia*

*English Standard Version Study Bible. (Crossway Press 2008-2009)

Daily Study Guide

Galatians 4.1 - 6.18

Week 10
Galatians 4.1-7

<u>Gospel According to Galatians</u>

Gal. 4.4-5
But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.

Gal. 4.1-4 - *JG*

Waiting on God

These four verses refer to the people of Israel. Before Christ came they were, as Paul puts it elsewhere, *children of the promise* (Rom. 9.8; Gal. 4.28). Before Christ came, the people of Israel were under the law that God had given them at Mount Sinai (Exodus 19 through Numbers). This law was to show them how they, as God's chosen people, should live as His children. This law (as Gal. 3.24 tells us) was to be a guardian until Christ came to set them free. For thousands of years the people were looking forward to a Messiah who would come and rescue them. This Messiah, they thought, would come and set up a grand earthly reign. So they waited, and waited, and waited. The Prophets spoke more of the king to come as the failures of former kings echoed in the hearts of the people who were longing for restoration of the kingdom. Then, as it started to look better for God's faithful, the remnant of Israel was thrown into captivity (2 Chron. 34-36). After returning to Israel, they didn't hear from God as often as they had in the past. And after Malachi and the other final prophets wrote, there were 400 years of silence, captivity, plundering, and conquest at the hands of other nations leading up to the time of the Romans, or as Paul put it, "the date set by his Father... the fullness of time."

Questions- What would it have been like to wait all that time for God to send a Messiah? What are you waiting on God for? Do you think that God is late in giving you His best?

Prayer- God, help us to have patience and wait for Your Will to be done "on earth as it is in heaven." So that we can always be in Your Will and never stray from it.

Gal. 4.1-4 - *JG*

The Fullness of Time

The history of God's chosen people is a difficult one. Not a decade goes by in the story line of the Old Testament where they do not face some sort of hardship. Consider the prophecy that God revealed to Abram in Genesis 15.13-16. Here, God tells Abram that his descendants (the chosen people) are going to suffer 400 years of hardship in slavery. 400 years! If I had been in Abram's spot, I'm not sure what I would say to that. *Why are you making your chosen people suffer? What did they do wrong?* In this case, the answer is in Genesis 15.16, "They shall come back here in the fourth generation, *for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete.*" God was planning destruction for the Amorites (a neighboring nation), but He waited for the time to come. He did this so His glory may be shown. The sin of the Amorites would be punished by *God's* people, but they were not a people yet. So God grew them into a nation while they were slaves in a foreign land. In doing this, God showed His greatness to the nations. They were enslaved until the time was right for God to act.

Question- What would you do if you were just told your descendants were going to suffer for 400 years? Would you have faith in God that he knows what's best? Or would you try to take it into your own hands?

Prayer- God, help us to have faith in your Will and not let us jump ahead of your plans, because only You know what is best for us.

Gal. 4.1-4 - *JG*

What About Us?

We have looked at the nation of Israel and their expectation of the coming Messiah. But what about us? What about now? Jesus has come, and we have faith in Him. What are we waiting for? More specifically, what is He waiting for? I think our answer is found in this text. Verse two tells us that the child is under a guardian until the date set by his father. Just as Israel was waiting for a long time for the Messiah to come, those who *will be* saved are waiting. They are waiting to be born again. That is why the Father planned history the way that He did. After Jesus came, there were ample means of communicating the Gospel because the Greeks had unified the language of the known world and the Romans had unified the land with their extravagant roads. The message of the Messiah could now be spread effectively. This is one reason that God waited- He wanted to save a people for Himself from every tribe, nation, and tongue. He didn't come sooner because "God had provided something better for us, that apart from us (the Gentiles) they (the Jews) should not be made perfect." (Heb. 11.40) So now we still wait, and we ask God, "How long until Jesus returns?" But don't think of God as slow, be patient as He is and desire with Him that all would know Christ (2 Pt. 3.8-10)

Questions- If the time for Christ to return has been set by God, can we do anything to speed up or slow his coming? Are you being patient with Him as He has been patient with us? (See 2 Pet.8-10)

Prayer- God, may we be fulfilling your plan and Will in going into all the world to make disciples of You. May we preach Your Word and truth to the nations.

Gal. 4.4-6 - *JG*

How Does One Become an Heir?

Consider orphans. There are millions of fatherless children in the world- all in need of love. They cannot find this love on their own, love needs to come to them in order for them to be considered "adopted". How is this similar to the way our Heavenly Father adopts us? Consider how you are saved. Jesus says that no one comes to Him unless the Father draws him in (Jn. 6.43-45). Put another way, this means that only those who God has drawn to Himself will come to know Christ. We cannot cross the great divide that separates us (in our sin) from the Father (in His holiness) without Christ. But by listening to Romans 3 on this, we don't want God's help because we are sinners. That is why God redeemed us by His Son. He placed His Spirit upon us so that we might desire help from Him.

Questions- What if God never drew people to Himself and just left salvation up to us? Are you looking to control your destiny? According to Romans 3, what happens if you try to be in control?

Prayer- Heavenly Father, thank you that you have chosen to adopt us by your grace! I understand that I would never desire you unless you first loved me (1 Jn. 4.19).

Gal. 4.4-6 *JG*

The Role of the Spirit

So we know that without the love of the Father coming into our lives first we would never love God. But is that the end of the equation? No. Verse six says, "And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, 'Abba! Father!'" Do you see that? The *Spirit of the Son* is in our hearts as believers and by that we can call out to the Father claiming complete dependence on the Him! So the Father adopts us, the Spirit cries out to the Father for us making us one with Christ and therefore no longer a slave but an heir through God! Paul explains the role of the Son further in Romans 8.34 when he says, "Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us." So by that Spirit of Christ, we have a mediator- someone to go between us and the Father to save us from His punishment. And God planned the whole thing out!

Questions- What does it mean to claim complete dependence on God? Is that something that you have done in your life? Do you need Him?

Prayer- Thank you, Father, for the Holy Spirit coming to cry out to you for us. Thank you that you rescue us by your own Will and not because of what we have done.

Gal. 4.4-7 *JG*

Eternally an Heir

If it is true that our coming to Christ is God's plan, then what does that mean for our being heirs with Christ? It means that our being sons and daughters of God is not cancelled if we mess up. Just as man cannot save himself, he also cannot remove that salvation (if it was truly there to begin with). Those who have been chosen of God can not have that choosing revoked. As Paul says in Romans 8.33-34, "Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died..." So when Christ died for the sins that had been committed against God, He took the condemnation for us- making sure that His blood was sufficient to cover over all our sins. The space between God and us was wide, and by Christ's blood we crossed it- for those who are in Christ, there is no condemnation (Rom.8.1), there is no going back.

Questions- Are there times when you feel like your sin is too great for God to save you? Are you in Christ and repenting of these things? Or are you just letting them control you.

Prayer- Holy God, you saved me and are making me like your Son. I pray that you will change my cold heart of stone and bring me to a place where I am more like you.

Week 11
Galatians 4.8-20

<u>Gospel According to Galatians</u>

Gal. 4.9
But now that you have come to know God, or rather be known by God, how can you turn back again to the weak and worthless elementary principles of the world, whose slaves you want to be once more?

Gal. 4.8 *MW*

Sin is Slavery

That which keeps us from knowing and loving God is sin and it shackles the soul. The things, activities, and people that we substitute for God are many and seductive. False religions, worldly philosophies, sports, relationships, movies, money, music, video games, and just wasting time can all be elevated and worshipped as only God should be. The essential point is that human beings take what God has created and worship it instead of worshiping Him. We worship the creature not the Creator. This bent in human nature has been twisted beyond the power of man. Only God can root out our pride, our addiction to media, our desire for fitting in, and our self-centered lives.

Question- What parts of God's creation does this our culture value more than God (Money, Body image, Success, etc)? How does our culture promote these gods through advertising, movies, and music? Why do we love 'things' more than God?

Prayer- God, please illuminate our minds through your Word to help us see the idols in our hearts and lives. Please cleanse our hearts from idolatry by helping us know and love you.

Gal. 4.8-11 *JG*

Turning from Sin

We know that the Spirit comes upon those whom the Father has adopted- but what does that look like in the life of a believer? Paul asks the question, "How can you turn back again to the weak and worthless elementary principles of the world, whose slaves you want to be once more?" These are Christians who have been set free from their slavery to the law- but they were turning back to their sin and legalism. It is as if Paul is (again) saying, "You foolish Galatians! (Gal. 3.1) You are free in Christ! You have been adopted into His family by the blood of His Son! Why are you returning to your sinful ways again?" This is how we are sometimes. We neglect the Spirit by turning back to our sinful ways after we have been saved. We need to be focused on being open to the Spirit's guidance- and not turn away His power.

Questions- Are you turning from sin as a believer in Christ? How can you tell if you are? (See Gal. 5.19-24).

Prayer- Spirit, don't let us turn back towards our sinful ways. Work in us for salvation and growth in you.

Gal. 4.12-20 *MW*

Leadership

What makes a good pastor, spiritual mentor, or small group leader? Imagine reading this Resume: *I'm an intellectual, I love to read, and I was a terrorist against the church. I persecuted and killed innocent people. I witnessed the execution of Stephen. I'm a very intense but poor public speaker, I have a bodily aliment which will be a trial to you tempting you to scorn and despise me. I'd like to be your pastor.*

Would you hire this guy? If not, you would be rejecting the great Apostle Paul, one of the best pastors to ever walk this earth. Often we miss real wisdom and guidance because we look at leadership and authority from the world's perspective: how they dress, how funny they are, their age, or how they look.

Question: How do you evaluate the authorities in your life, your parents, teachers, pastor, etc? Would you have hired Paul?

Prayer- Lord, help us to be guided by scripture to evaluate leadership.

Gal. 4.19 *MW*

Learning from a Loving Leader

Paul tells the Galatian Church that he is in the "anguish of childbirth" for them. This comparison would remind the Galatian community that Paul is not a false teacher or false apostle, but is called by God to care for and serve them as a mother giving birth, that is, with extreme effort! This passionate concern and effort for the souls of the Galatian church is touching. Paul's love was expressed in action as he gave his life for the church as did his Lord, Jesus. Is your love expressed in action? God's grace not only forgives our sins, but also creates a new love in our hearts for God and humanity to the point that we work hard for others.

Question- How can you work hard to serve your parents, your teachers, your peers, your church, and the needs in your community and the world to the glory of God just as Paul did?

Prayer- Lord, create in us the willingness to work hard to meet the needs of those around us.

Gal. 4.19 *MW*

Learning from a Focused Leader

We have learned the effort a great pastor as being described as a mother giving birth. But what was Paul's goal as a pastor. It wasn't to gain money, to earn fame, or to win a debate for pride's sake, but to help the Galatians know God through the Gospel and to have Christ be formed in them. Paul labored and focused on the Galatians growth in purity and love-maturity. What is the real focus of your life? Is it entertainment? Facebook? Movies? Friends? Seeking to fit in or look a certain way? Or is it to grow in purity and find your calling? Like Paul, Atmosphere labors to help you focus on what really matters: having a personal relationship with God through Christ and being set free from sin and growing in love. This growing in love means loving God and man by finding God's call in your life, discovering your spiritual gifts and growing in every area of your life for your joy in the pleasure of God.

Question- What is the focus of your life?

Prayer- God, free us from the distractions and help us to be focused on growing in love through your plan for our lives.

Gal. 4.20 *MW*

Expect Trials

Paul had a great motive: for Christ to be formed in the churches in Galatia; his method was right: effort in teaching the Word of God; his focus was right: the Gospel. However, he is still perplexed about the Galatians.

What is important to note is that Paul's ministry had serious trials. This shows that we will face hardships as we seek to grow in Christ. Following the steps of Christ will engage the intellect, challenge emotions, require imagination, and tire the will. But it will also be joyful, rewarding, and fulfilling. Some people think teens aren't up for this calling, but who is? It is God's work, when it comes to Christian love, age doesn't matter (consider Daniel's young age in the book of Daniel). What does matter is seeking to please God by His grace through faith. What matters is the amazing grace of God.

Question- Will you allow trials to stop your growth in Christ?

Prayer- Lord, give us hope and fellowship with others as we face the trials that come our way.

Week 12
Galatians 4.21-31

<u>Gospel According to Galatians</u>

Gal. 4.26, 31
But the Jerusalem above is free, and she is our mother... so, brothers, we are not children of the slave but of the free woman.

Gal. 4.21 *MW*

How not to be a Christian

In this section of Galatians, Paul transitions from his personal appeal to a final argument against living under the law. What follows is an allegory comparing the two sons of Abraham (found in Gen. 21). The wrong way to live is the way of the flesh. It is called the way of the slave woman (22) the flesh (v.23), Mount Sinai (v.24), slavery (v.24), the son of Hagar (or Ishmeal) (v.24) is located in Jerusalem, the line of persecution (v.28), the cast out (v.30) and disinherited line (v.30).

All of these are Paul's ways of saying the grace of God is not by birth, location, or status. Likewise you are not a Christian because you have Christian parents, go to church, go to Atmosphere, or do "good' things. This proves that by human performance no one can earn the promise of God. The promise of justification is by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone.

Question: What makes you a Christian?

Prayer: God, help us to understand that being a Christian does not depend on human standards, but on your grace shown at the cross.

Gal. 4.21 *MW*

How to be a Christian

Yesterday we looked at the allegorical argument made by Paul to prove that we cannot earn grace. Today we will look at the other of the two covenants (v.24,), one of promise (v.23), and the free woman (v.22); of Isaac (v.28) and the children of promise (v.28). God's blessing came through Sarah by the birth of Isaac because of God's gracious promise, not by human effort. This summarizes in a unique way, the thrust of this section of Paul's argument that we must depend on God's grace for our justification! To be free heirs of the promise, we must rest entirely on God's saving grace expressed to us in the cross and forsake the way of human effort for justification. Seeking to be justified by obeying the 10 Commandments, by human effort, is to cancel out the cross and reject God's grace.

Question- Imagine someone saying to you, "If I do more good than Bad, I will go to heaven." What would be your response?

Prayer- God, Thank you for your gracious effort's on our behalf to save us from certain doom and giving us a privileged destiny as your children in Christ.

Christ and the Old Testament

Paul viewed the Old Testament in light of the teachings and resurrection of Christ. Christ's resurrection proved that what Jesus claimed about himself was true. Thus, Jesus taught the Old Testament as the Word of God. He also taught that scripture points to him. If we plug Christ into the Old Testament we see that it points to Jesus. Not only did the Old Testament point to Jesus from the beginning (Gen 3:15), but it also gave us a framework by which to interpret his work on our behalf. That is why Paul cites so many Old Testament passages, not only because the Galatians (rightly) viewed the Old Testament as authoritative, but they were misinterpreting and misunderstanding the Old Testament. Paul helped the church to see that God's work of grace was offered to the Old Testament saints from the beginning as a pointer to the cross, that law based justification was impossible for rebels, and that we need a savior. Paul helped the Galatian church interpret the Old Testament through the teaching of the resurrected Christ, so they would see both the foolishness of living under the law and that our only hope is the gracious promise of God in Christ, who fulfilled the Old Testament promises.

Question- Does the Old Testament seem confusing? Please tell us, and we will be happy to help you see Christ in the Old Testament.

Prayer- Lord, thank you for giving us a long history of both the inability of man to live up to the law and a long history of grace in the Old Testament as interpreted through the life and teachings of Jesus.

Gal. 4.24 *MW*

How does this Relate to Me?

Do you want to be in a personal relationship with God? Do you want to be forgiven? Do you want to overcome discouragement? Do you want to know why you are on earth? Do you want to know God's Will for you life? Do you want to know about your destiny? Do you want to have supernatural power of the Spirit in your life? Do you want to enjoy deeper relationships? Do you want to stop hating? Do you want to know how to live? Do you want to know how to be a good mom or dad some day? Do you want to find peace and joy? Do you want to learn to handle your money? Do you want to overcome sin and temptation? Do you want to be free, confident, and fearless? Do you want to find yourself? Do you want to be free from guilt? Do you want to fight injustice? Do you want to know how to find deep community? Do you want supernatural peace?

It is all in God's letter to you and his church- the Bible. But to read the Bible you need to learn to grow in your reading of scripture. Only the Holy Spirit will strengthen this desire and ability in you.

Question: Do you need help to find the Bible's answers to any or all of these questions? If you want answers, will you please let us know?

Prayer: Lord, help us to be careful students of your Word.

Gal. 4.28-31 *JG*

Isaac and Ishmael: Brothers at Arms

Ishmael was the first born son of Abraham. Legally, he would have received the greatest inheritance from his father. But when Isaac (the son through whom God promised Abraham a nation) was born, Ishmael was cast away. Ishmael learned early on that he was not the one who would be chosen by God, so he began to persecute Isaac (Gen. 21.8-9). Paul is echoing this when he writes this book. He says that he (Ishmael) who was born according to the flesh (or who was outside of the Will of God) was persecuting him who was within the Will of God (Isaac). Now, those who are trying to add the law to faith in Christ Jesus are persecuting those who know what true saving faith is. So what does Paul tell the Church to do? "Cast out the slave woman and her son, for the son of the slave woman shall not inherit with the son of the free woman." In other words- those who add or subtract to the Word of God and His requirements for salvation will not inherit the kingdom of heaven with the children of promise.

Questions- Read Matthew 25.31-46. What does Jesus say about those who think they will gain entrance into heaven? What does a child of promise (a believer in Christ) look like? What is our comfort in all of this? (See Phil. 2.12-13)

Prayer- Father, please keep me in Your Will and don't let me add anything to Your Word.

Gal. 4.28-31 *JG*

Jacob I Have Loved…

After yesterday, you may be tempted to think that God is cruel. We saw that Ishmael was the rightful heir of his father's blessing and land, but it was given to Isaac (and thus to us, the children of promise). How could God do something like that? We can gain great insight into His Will by looking at Isaac's sons Jacob and Esau. We know that we who are God's children are loved by God. But how do we know that? He tells us. Look at Malachi 1.2-3. God says, "I have loved Jacob, but Esau I have hated." How can this be? Looking even farther back, we see that this was God's position even before they were born (Gen. 25.23). Paul explains this further in Romans 9.11: "though they were not yet born and had done nothing either good or bad- in order that God's purpose of election might continue not because of works but because of him who calls- she (Isaac's wife, Rebekah) was told, 'The older will serve the younger.'" God has been working to see His plan revealed and lived out by His people. He has ordained that things will take place in our lives so that we can see His plan, He has also brought people to be His children and allowed others to be cast out as the slave woman was in this Galatians passage.

Questions- Do you still see God as being a cruel tyrant? Or do you see a Father lovingly adopting those who would otherwise be His enemies? What is your response to this? If it is, "I can't believe in a God who would do this" is it possible that you think yourself to be holier than God?

Prayer- God, help us see that only you are truly holy- and that we are terribly sinful in our deeds. Fill our hearts with your love and love for your glory.

Week 13
Galatians 5.1-15

<u>Gospel According to Galatians</u>

Gal. 5.13
For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only
do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh,
but through love serve one another.

Gal. 5.1 *MW*

Freedom

Paul comes to an important point in the letter. Paul has been clear; Justification comes by faith alone in the work of Christ's cross alone. (Justification is God's legal declaration that we have been forgiven and Christ has been punished for our sin). His conclusion is that we are free, that we are no longer slaves to the law, and the basis of such blessings is the work of Jesus. Paul tells the church that we are not to submit again to a yoke of slavery. This means although the law guides and convicts, it will never condemn us as guilty before God. Why? Jesus took the curse of the law on the cross. How? By his death he took the death we deserve as law breakers. So the law has killed us because it killed Jesus who bore our sins under the wrath of God. Now we are free from the law's death sentence! It is like someone doing your homework for you, when it's done, it's done.

Question- Do you understand what it means to be free from the threat of the law? Does it drive you to praise God's glorious grace? If not read the 10 Commandments (Ex. 20) and the sermon on the mount (Matt. 5-7) and Romans 1-3, and 7 and ask yourself, "Have I always followed the whole law?"

Prayer- Father, convict us of our sins through the law so that we will flee to Christ for our justification. Help us to praise you for our freedom.

Gal. 5.1 *MW*

Freeing the Soul

Not only are we free from the law's sword, but we are also freed from the un-Biblical cultural laws around us. Our culture has its own method of salvation according to the rules of man. These 'cultural laws' also 'get in our heads' and enslave us. These laws are developed and designed according to the groups, people, and things that draw us.

Consider the following rules: we must drive the right car, live in the right kind of house, and wear certain clothes. In addition to that, the friends you have, your sexuality, your gender, your calling, your self identity, the college you select, your body image, the phone you have, and the songs you listen to all enslave you. We are to seek freedom from their grasp and rest in the finished work of Christ.

Question- In addition to being free from the punishment of Biblical law, what unbiblical and man made cultural laws tell you how to live and enslave you? How do you free yourself from them?

Prayer- Lord, help every student reading this know that they are free from the penalty of sin and free form un-Biblical rules of living that are promoted by the world.

Body Image

Let's take one of these cultural rules and apply Biblical freedom to it: body Image. I have spent the past 15 years working with the body and body image issues as a personal trainer. Some people want to look like the models on the cover of the magazines. To many people, these images stir up lust, they become false gods. They crave conformity to worldly forms of beauty. But has our Culture stopped to ask what true beauty is? Has the Christian community clearly defined biblical beauty and fought against unbiblical concepts of beauty that enslave millions of people? Of course there is nothing wrong with seeking to be beautiful and fit, but when that quest becomes a god, when it becomes a priority over seeking spiritual beauty, and when it binds our conscience it disfigures the shape of the souls. We may never see the true ugliness and deformity of the soul that is enslaved by the culture view of beauty, but God does and he has given up his son to free us.

Question- Where are you tempted to follow the crowd? When does enjoying our culture cross the line between enjoying our freedom in Christ and being enslaved by culture?

Prayer- Lord, give us penetrating illumination (discernment) as to what binds, drives, and enslaves our souls. Help us to hate that which enslaves our souls.

Dealing with Sexuality

Another example of uncritical acceptance of cultural laws is the defining of human sexuality. Our culture's view of sexuality has broken free from God's love. As the story goes, biblical authority is rejected, evolution is affirmed and people get the idea that there are no absolute ethics (truths on what is right and wrong). Instead ethics are relative (not fixed) and based on what we feel like doing. The effects are sad: "unwanted pregnancies", millions of abortions and the grief that comes from them, the spread of sexually transmitted diseases, and an apparent increase in pedophilia. The irony of the so called freedom is that it degrades women, devalues sexuality into animal-like unnatural lust, and causes social tyranny as we try to find a way to pay for this disobedience. The so called fix is to use birth control, to vaccinate and, as a last fix, abort the baby.

Again God makes foolish the wisdom of the world. God shows us our stupidity, in that, by violating his plan for sexuality and by accepting the gospel of sexual freedom, we are willing to kill innocent babies. God has a beautiful plan for sexuality in the context of marriage between a man and a woman.

Question- Who shapes, defines, and controls sexuality?

Prayer- Lord, Help us see the sadness of rejecting your plan for sexuality, but also help us to understand your plan and know you're the God who forgives and restores.

Gal. 5.7 *MW*

Who is Slowing You Down?

The Galatian church was doing well until false teachers came into the community and by persuasion (5:8) misled the Churches for fame and personal gain (6.12-13).

Who slows you down? One barrier may be advertising. The heart of advertising is to create and fill a need. Since we all have real needs, advertising helps us seek out those services. But who creates the needs, what is our culture's philosophy and priority of needs, and by what means do they promote the product? We need to be very critical about advertising and how it shapes our needs and desires. Most advertising lines claim, "if you buy this product, you'll be cool, satisfied, dignified, and even glorified". There is a reason billions of dollars are spent on advertising, especially on teens, because it works. But young Christians must not be tricked into shelling out the money God has given them as stewards to buy into the hype of the market place. You must outwit the modern false teachers' goal of separating you and your money by the false gospel of consumerism (seeking purpose in the purchase) and materialism (viewing material goods as ultimate pleasure). These remove from the freedom of the Gospel. Don't be taken by their, 'smoke and mirrors' because they just want your cash! To get it, they will try to convince you how much you need their product.

Question- What television ads, magazines, movies, television programs, and web sites deflect your desires away from living in the Spirit?

Prayer-Lord, give us insight to the ways this cultures tries shape us to through the use advertising.

Gal. 5.13 *MW*

Misunderstanding Freedom

In Christian circles our freedom in Christ is often cited as a reason for almost any activity. But freedom from the law's penalty is not freedom from what God's law is pointing to. In other words, the ministry of the Spirit helps us fulfill the end of the law, which is to love God and man. So the mature Christian seeks to diligently study, be taught by, and to see deeply into God's heart by the 10 commandments. The heart of Christian freedom is that we have been set free from the dominion and slavery of sin so we can love God and humanity through the Spirit, and so fulfill the righteous law of God, meanwhile, not misusing our freedom as an excuse to sin. The 10 Commandments still guide us, convict us, restrain us, and help us know God, but they don't empower us and we must never to seek to obey the 10 Commandments for our justification. That was accomplished at the cross.

Question- What role does the law play in the Christian life? Does Christian freedom mean you are free to sin?

Prayer- Lord, help us know the greatness of our freedom, that through the love of Christ, we are free from sin's grip, and are empowered to live a life of love for your pleasure.

Week 14
Galatians 5.16-26

<u>Gospel According to Galatians</u>

Gal. 5.24
And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the
flesh with its passions and desires.

Gal. 5.16 *MW*

How Should We Live?

Every worldview has tried to answer what humans are, why we are here, and what we are made of. Some worldviews say humans evolved from the ooze, have no real function on earth, and are just made up of chemical elements controlled by the laws of physics. In this section, Paul tells the Galatian church some of the answers to the life's greatest questions. The key issue Paul was addressing was, if the Galatians are not to live by the law, then how are they to live? In providing the answer, Paul gives us deep insight into our daily life. The key point is that Christians don't live by the law! Why? The law brings wrath. The law doesn't change us, nor does the law empower us. Is the law to be thrown aside? God forbid! The law points us to Christ for justification (being declared forgiven and righteous) and sanctification (growing in purity). The law shows us the holy Character of God. The law leads us grace restrains the evil. We need the law to guide us, convict us, and push us toward grace, but the law doesn't empower us, the Spirit does.

Question- What role does the law have in the Christian life? What role doesn't it have?

Prayer- Lord, help to use the law and love the law, but not seek to be justified or sanctified by the external law. Teach us to live in the Spirit.

Gal. 5.18 *MW*

Not By the Flesh

If we don't live by the law, how should we live? Paul tells us we need to first understand that we have two warring programs in our soul called the flesh and the Holy Spirit. The Flesh is the part of us that thinks, desires, and wills to do that which violates God's law. The Flesh seeks to call the shots, to run the show. The Flesh seeks to please itself not God. The flesh is at war with God. The law helps us see that we covet, that we have other gods, that we distort God's Word, that we don't honor God's Sabbath, that we don't honor authority, that we hate, that we have lust, and break God's plan for sexuality, that we take other people's property by stealing, that we cover up the truth with lies, and that we seek and love our passions rather than God by coveting iPods, cell phones, fashion, etc.

See how the law acts like a mirror by showing us our spiritual blemishes and exposing the flesh. But this should push us to the Grace of God for growth in the Spirit. These two parts of our souls are at war with each other, that is why it is so hard to live the Christian life. In fact, we cannot live the Christian life. We need to learn how to walk in the Spirit.

Question- Do you find living the Christian life hard? Good, I do too! We really need God!

Prayer- Lord, help us see our need of your grace through the law. Help us to see the depth of our depravity through your law, so that we turn to your Gospel.

Gal. 5.16 *MW*

By the Spirit

The other actor inside of the Christian soul is the Spirit, or the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Holy Trinity. This passage means that God the Holy Spirit actually indwells the soul of the believer. The Holy Spirit gives us new life and faith in Christ. He continues his work as he dwells within us by working in us through the Word to help us know and love God so that we seek to please him with our whole souls and entire lives. Paul tells us to walk in the Spirit. Paul means that we should be constantly living under the Spirit's power, control, and influence. How do we do this? If the Spirit dwells within us, we need to keep the Word of God before us.

Imagine standing in a river and your fighting to walk up-stream in the dark. The current is the flesh that is pushing you back. But there is a boat ahead of you with a rope. If you reach the rope you will be connected to the powerful engine, and so go up-stream. The Bible tells you where the rope is, when you let the rope pull you, then are walking in the power of the Spirit who is like someone shining a light on the rope. The Spirit uses the Word to show us the beauty of God and his plan for us. When we see God, we will follow him.

Question- What role does Bible study have in you life? If you're struggling, please let us know and we will help.

Prayer- Lord, give us the discipline to keep to the Word of God before us always.

Gal. 5.16 *MW*

Virtue and Jesus

This work of the Spirit in our hearts makes us want to follow God's law, the law of love. By walking in the Spirit (being pulled by the rope), he forms a new conscience in us through the Word and helps us to want to produce Fruits/virtue to please God. The result of his work is the fruit of the Spirit. The Spirit also helps us dislike our sins and so we put sin and vice, the manifestation of the flesh, to death. So the Spirit forms us into the image of God and conforms us to the virtues of Jesus, by transforming our minds through the Word.

Back to the boat, the direction the boat pulls us is the fruit of the Spirit. That path is also called virtue, the way of Christ, being restored in the image of God, our purpose for being, the fulfillment of the law and the way to glorify God. Our role is to seek the rope daily through the Word!

Question- Has your life seemed joyless and discouraging? If so, seek God through his Word and prayer-seek the rope. Please contact us if you have any questions!

Prayer-Lord, give us eyes to see you through the storm.

Making this Practical

So what is our responsibility? If (in the boat analogy) you want to go upstream you need to reach for the rope. If the rope is Scripture, then your role is to prayerfully seek God through his Word, meditate on his Word, memorize his Word, and obey His Word. But the power to obey comes as the Spirit does His work shining the light on the rope so that you will grab it. (Theologically speaking the Spirit is within you and guiding you). The power comes as God's Word reveals to your heart that God is delightful, lovely, and worthy. As this revelation comes, you will follow. That is what the Bible means by, 'the transforming by the renewing of your mind' (Rom.12.1,2). So you must be actively reading the Bible. But you are also relying on the Spirit's power to shine his light, that's why we need his work in souls. The real problem is that there is a part of us that still wants to go downstream, with the flow, the easy way. But that leads over the waterfall.

Question- How much time do you spend in Bible study, prayer, and service vs. texting, or being on facebook, twitter, watching movies, or listening to music? In other words, are you seeking the rope? We invite you to get in touch, if you need any help.

Prayer- Lord, help us center our lives on seeking you.

Life Views

So how will you live? Let's review some of the different ideas that influence us

1. Some say we should live by how we feel. But our feelings change. Plus, what if we feel like listening to our CDs and someone feels like stealing them from us?

2. Some say we should live by reason? But whose reason: Hitler's or Gandhi's?

3. Some say we should live by what works. But what works and for who? Bank robbers may pull off the heist or the terrorist's plan might work perfectly.

4. Some say we should live by love, but what is love based on? *Whose* love is it based on?

5. Others say there is no one way to live, that there is no right or wrong. But they will cry foul if someone steals from them.

6. Some say no one knows how we should live, that there is no truth. But if that statement is true, then it's also false.

These all prove that the world has no answers that don't end in logical problems or outright contradictions. This demonstrates the foolishness of rejecting God's plan for living. God has made foolish the wisdom of the world (1 Cor. 1:20). A Christian's life is a life based on God, who is love. Love is exists because God is love (Gal 5:14). We have a foundation in the Bible to show us what it means to love. That example is Jesus, who gave his life to save others.

Question- How do you live your life?

Prayer- Lord help us see the foolishness of the world's thinking and the beauty and purity of your call to walk in the Spirit and live a life of love.

Week 15
Galatians 6.1-10

<u>Gospel According to Galatians</u>

Gal. 6.2
Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.

Gal. 6.1 *MW*

Gentleness

In this section, Paul gives us both the manner and a warning about helping a friend who has been caught in sin. First, we will talk about the manner: gentleness. To help a friend caught in sin, we should be spiritual, that is, we must be living in the Spirit, and the evidence of the Spirit's activity is one of gentleness. Reaching out to a friend must be done with gentleness. Gentleness is expressed in a caring, steady, and understanding manner as we call our loved ones back to God. If we lack gentleness, we risk pushing the entangled soul deeper upon the spider web of sin and open up ourselves for the charge of hypocrisy. But, if we express gentleness we will reflect both humility and safety. These two virtues will help to keep the focus where it should be: turning back to God and away from a knee jerk reaction to harshly judge our broken friend.

Question- Has anyone ever been unkind to you when you were struggling? Have you been unkind to someone struggling? What does 1 Cor. 12.26 say about the family of Christ?

Prayer- Father, thank you for your gentleness toward us in your son. As you are the source of gentleness, please create a gentle heart in me.

Gal. 6.1 *MW*

Paul's Warning: Watch Yourself

What great practical advice! If you are seeking to reach out to and restore a brother to the Gospel remember that his trouble could become yours. In other words, don't get sucked in to sin. Does this mean we stop our outreach? No, it just means we have to peruse our course very carefully. This might mean a phone call, seeking wise advice, meeting in neutral territory, enlisting another friend for support and extended prayer. But watching yourself means you can continue to restore without falling victim to the very same trap of the victim. This warning applies as well to the manner of our restoration. We could be tempted by pride to hypocrisy, gossip, anger, slander, and bitterness in judging them or being frustrated by them.

Question- How do you react when a Christian friend sins?

Prayer- Lord, grant us discernment as we seek to restore a loved one, for you are the great restorer.

Gal. 6.2 *JG*

Bearing Burdens: The Law of Christ

There is a saying that goes something like this: 'Jesus can only help those who help themselves'. I hope that you recognize this as the lie that it is. Why would Jesus, who is the everlasting king of the universe, limit His 'ability' to help people to only helping those who help themselves? Again, consider how you were saved! Paul says in Ephesians 2.4,5 that "God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together in Christ-- by grace you have been saved..." Can dead people help themselves? When Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead in John 11, did He ask Lazarus if he wanted to be raised? Did Jesus say, "Ok now Laz, I'm going to raise you from the dead, but you have to walk the first couple of feet before I step in and help." NO! Jesus had them open the tomb and said, "Lazarus, come out (!)" So, is it true that Jesus can only help those who help themselves? No. I would assert that these are the people who will not be helped. We cry 'Abba, Father' and by so doing become heirs, but we only cry out by the help of the Spirit!

Question- How dependent on the Spirit are you?

Prayer- My savior, my God, thank you that you are able to help those who cannot help themselves! That is a great gift of grace!

Gal. 6.2 *JG*

Bearing Burdens: Individualism Revisited

In addition to needing to correct others when they go astray, Christians in community *must* be willing to bear the burdens of each other. But which burdens? What do we have to do for other Christians that we are in community with? Other places in the New Testament have much to say in this area. For instance, Paul says in 1 Corinthians 12.26, "*If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together.*" So here we see that we are meant to support other Christians emotionally, rejoicing as they do, and crying with them.

What about physical needs? James tells us, "whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin." (Jas. 4.17). So if a brother has a need, we are to help meet that need. But we cannot know the needs of others if we are not living in community with them. People don't always tell others what is going on so, as brothers and sisters in Christ, let's begin caring for each other so much that we can't help but know what the needs of others are.

Question- What are some needs around you that you can meet but haven't tried to meet yet? Are there any that you have simply decided to ignore?

Prayer- Jesus, thank you for meeting our needs. I pray that I will fulfill your holy law and meet the needs of my brothers and sisters in you. To God alone be the Glory!

Gal. 6.8 *MW*

Using God's Tools for Growth

Paul gives us a wonderful summary of Christian living: we sow and reap in the flesh or we sow and reap in the Spirit for God. Paul uses language from an agricultural based community to illustrate the essence of the Christian life: we live in the Spirit. The message is clear, we are dependent on the Spirit's work in us, but we are also active in our Christian life and growth, which is why we sow. Sowing is working the field, planting the seed, and pulling up the weeds. Just as sowing is a daily and disciplined activity we must also sow to the Spirit. How can we do this? By a disciplined and daily use of the tools God has given us to grow. What are these tools? They are God's means of communion with him. That communion-relationship is expressed in listening to God (Bible study), talking to God (Prayer), and walking with God (Obedience). Think about the disciples walking with Jesus. How did they relate with him? They listened, talked, and walked with Jesus. We basically do the same.

Question-How diligently do you seek God by hearing Him through Bible study? How earnestly do you seek God in prayer? Do you follow God's plan for spiritual growth?

Prayer- God, we confess our sowing to the flesh. We get distracted and tempted by our passions, pleasures, and popular culture. Create in us a deeper desire for you.

Gal. 6.9 *MW*

Are You Tired

Spiritual growth can be a wearisome process. Why? Because growing in Christ is the hardest thing in the world to do. In Fact, without God it is impossible. Consider the letter to the Galatians alone. Paul wonders if he labored in vain for them (5.11). He wonders if he has become the church's enemy (5.16). He is in anguish for them (5.19), and he is perplexed by them (5.20). Growing in Christ can make us weary, but Paul encourages the Galatian church to stand up and live in the Spirit and to take on the challenges of service by telling them in due season they will be fruitful, if they do not give up. The Christian life brings us joy and it pleases God. In addition, when we die we take our good works with us to be inspected by our Father. God will reward our labors for his glory (which come from His grace). So we must always keep the rewards and blessings of our ministry and calling before us to prevent our hearts from being discouraged. Paul is a realistic pastor dealing with the realities of serving God in a fallen world and reminding us that one day all the hardships will be over and God will graciously reward our works done through Christ.

Question- Does it seem strange that God will reward our good works?

Prayer- God, motivate us with your greatest promise...to reward the church with your very presence, face to face.

Week 16
Galatians 6.11-18

<u>Gospel According to Galatians</u>

Gal. 6.14
But far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.

Gal. 6.14 *MW*

Boasting in Christ

In contrast with the false teachers who boasted over their new converts, Paul boasts in the cross of Christ. What we boast about is that which we value. (Who boasts about bad breath?) The funny thing is that Paul boasts about the ancient practice of crucifixion. Crucifixion was horrible, bloody, and terrible, yet it was Paul's boast. Our world boasts in wealth, status, accomplishment, and beauty, but Paul says all these things are nothing when compared to the cross. Why? Because of the cross of Christ is the most valuable work in human history for it saved countless from the wrath of God. The cross was the most beautiful art in history as it painted, with blood, the deepest love humanity has ever seen.

Question- What do you boast about? How does that compare with the value of the cross?

Prayer- God, open our eyes to see the value of the cross so that we may boast only in the cross of Christ.

Gal. 6.15 *MW*

Spiritual Pressure

The false teachers at Galatia were compelling the community to reject the cross and the Gospel. Every stage of church history has faced spiritual pressures. Some Christians were pressured to reject Christ as lord, some were burned alive for translating the Bible into English, and today all over the world Christians are still being persecuted and killed. Today in America, although there are pressures, we are free to own and read Bibles, to freely gather and worship. I wonder how God looks at our generation with all the free time, the Bibles, and with the freedom to assemble. Can boredom and distraction be the 'thing' that keeps us from a deeper relationship with God?

Question- Do you think God is ever bored with himself?

Prayer- God, please wake us up to your Holiness!

Gal. 6.18 *MW*

Gospel Centered Hope

How does Paul end his letter? In closing, Paul ends with praying that the grace of Jesus Christ would be with their spirit. Paul prays that Christ's supreme and all sufficient work of grace would minister to their spirit. Paul, as their pastor, knew their deepest need is the Gospel; it was the heartbeat of his letter. Paul's final address to them is as brothers. Paul is optimistic that his pastoral care was effective because he knows he presented this clear Biblical truth with love. We should be optimistic about our lives and ministries as well because God controls all. The basis of Biblical optimism is not humanistic make believe, but is based on God's consistent nature. The path of Gospel optimism is simply seeking to please God by living out Biblical truth and to leave the rest and the results to God's fatherly care and goodness. This Paul seems to do by his closing, "Amen".

Question-Are you optimistic or you pessimist? How should the Gospel influence your attitudes?

Prayer- Lord, free us from being negative and pessimistic. Please give us a Gospel based hope for our work and our future.

Gal. 1-6 *MW*

Gospel Centered Worldview

What is truth? How do we know anything? Who is God? How do we live? What is beauty? Why are we here? Why is there so much suffering? These are some of the BIG questions that we all face in life. Our culture tries to answer these for you. Their answer, in short: we are big bacteria, we come from nothing, live for pleasure, then we die and we are no more. On the other hand, The Gospel preached to the Galatians teaches we are in the image of God, that we have a responsibility and are accountable to God to love him and each other. To rebel from love is sin.

Because God is morally perfect he must separate form sin *and* be the judge of sin. But he is also the God of Love who has reached out, chased us, and even died for us to remove our sin and cover our shame. He did this to recreate the image of God within us and to some day return with his kingdom, bringing an eternal prison to the rebellious and his eternal presence to those who trusted in the cross and served him in love. One worldview is full of desperation, chaos, war, and death. The other teeming with truth, purpose, hope, power, freedom from guilt, a relationship with God, guidance, community, and a promise to see God. One is the way of the flesh, and slavery, the other way by the Spirit and freedom.

Question- How will you live your life?

Prayer- God, help the youth across the nations see your love for them through the Gospel.

Gal. 1-6 *MW*

Gospel Centered Community

What does the Gospel have to with community? Everything! The cross teaches us that we must forgive each other; it teaches that we must love each other; it teaches that we must meet each other needs and that we must encourage each other with the hope that flows from the death and resurrection of Jesus. The cross teaches that we are children of God and that we are justified sinners. It teaches us, not to focus only on ourselves, but to build others up. The cross teaches us that the Christian community should hang out, break bread, and reach out to the world with the Gospel, good works, and justice. It isn't a perfect community (we should expect sin) but we should be quick to grant forgiveness and turn form our sin. The church is a called out people, owned by God, bought with the cross, and called to live lives of love until we meet him again.

Question- How does the cross help you look at the church?

Prayer- God, give us a deep love for you people.
.

What did they do?

What did the Galatians do with this letter? Paul wrote, sent it through a messenger who hand delivered it to the Galatian church. Someone broke the seal and unrolled the letter, and read it out loud. What did the Galatians do with the message contained in this book?

What will you do with this letter? Do you believe it? Do you reject it or see the face of God behind its truths? Every day you have choices to make, but will you live by the Gospel or by some other message? There is no neutrality: you have a Gospel centered life or not. The key question is: will you let the Gospel inform your view of God, the world, humanity, your self, your sin, your future, your calling, your spirituality, your sexuality, the pressure you will face, the grief, the anxiety, the fear, the uncertainty of life, and the high calling God has for you in Christ? It is your choice and someday you will be held accountable as image bearers of God.

As John Piper has written, "Don't waste you life!" You won't waste your life if you center it around the Gospel, which is so clearly show to us in the letter to the Galatians.

Question- What will you do with the message of Galatians?

Prayer- God, open our eyes to see the good news of your beloved son, thank you for the book of Galatians.