

Preaching from (to?) Galatians
An Outline with Exegetical Notes and Homiletical Suggestions

Where the Galatian churches were when Paul wrote this letter:

1. Not firmly anchored in the Gospel to which they were converted (1:6)
2. Agitated by doctrines that vied with the apostolic Gospel (1:7; 3:1)
3. Eager for reassurance that they were on God's side, and he on theirs (4:14–15; 1:6; 4:21)
4. Challenged to enter the spiritual elite and leave behind "mere" obedience to the Gospel (3:3)
5. At odds with one another over differing religious convictions which threatened to divide their fellowship (5:15)
6. Making their way in faith in the absence of direct apostolic guidance, and forced to choose between rival interpretations of the apostolic tradition (4:20)

The "works of Torah" clearly taught by the "Agitators":

1. Circumcision for gentile converts (5:2; 6:12), either as means of full entry into covenant with God or as means of perfecting their obedience (3:3)
2. Observation of Jewish holy days (4:10): "days and months and seasons and years"
3. No indications that the Agitators cited associations with Jerusalem Christian leaders, enjoined adherence to food laws (at least not yet), appealed to Abraham, taught a different eschatology, or called Paul's apostolate in question, though 5:11 may indicate that the Agitators suggested either that Paul had left circumcision out of his preaching to them (cf. 1:10–11) or that the Galatians had misunderstood Paul (Sumney, pp. 156–57)

Elements of Paul's parenetic response:

1. The offer of salvation to the nations through the death and resurrection of Christ as the gift of God inaugurating the beginning of the new age
2. Paul's apostolic preaching and ministry, and the Galatians' initial response to it, as model for their ongoing life in the faith of Christ
3. Abraham as model of trust/faithfulness apart from "works of Torah," which God will "reckon" as eschatological "justification" (cf. 1 Thess 1:9)
4. Christ's "faith working through love" within the Christian community and beyond as the completion of the work of conversion

Introduction to the Letter (1:1–9)

•Address (1:1–5)

1. Paul's antithetical description of his apostolate as "not from humankind nor through a human being but through Jesus Christ and God the Father who raised him from the dead" (1:1) need not respond to specific attacks from the Agitators but as likely serves to clarify the nature of the call to which Paul will recount his response in chaps. 1–2 (Lyons). Here Jesus is the (crucified and) resurrected Messiah; elsewhere in the letter, he will be the crucified (and resurrected) Christ (e.g., 3:1); Paul does not play crucifixion and resurrection off against one another (as later theology sometimes has) but always treats crucifixion/resurrection as the two sides of a complex saving event by which God has dealt with the problems of the old age (thus here Christ "offered himself for our sins to deliver us from the present evil age," v. 4) and inaugurated a "new creation" of eschatological blessing and salvation (6:15).
2. "The present evil age" (1:4) is "the first of numerous apocalyptic expressions in the letter" (cf. 1:12, 15–16; 2:2, 19; 3:13, 23–25; 4:4–6; 5:5, 10, 24; 6:14) supplying "an essential clue both to Paul's understanding of the human plight and to his perception of God's act in Christ" (Martyn, p. 97), as well as to Paul's reasons for responding as he does to the crisis in Galatia.

•Expression of astonishment that Galatians "are abandoning" the God who called them through Paul's proclamation of Christ (1:6–9)

1. "[W]hile the opening with θαυμάζω ('I am astonished/surprised/ amazed/I wonder') is unique among Paul's letters, it nevertheless accords with [Greco-Roman] epistolary conventions no less than an opening with thanksgiving . . . From a functional point of view, an expression of astonishment is one among several epistolary phrases that are used to express the mood of the sender and his disposition toward the addressees, sentiments of joy or grief, worry, distress, concern, and so forth. It is therefore misleading simply to say that the assertion of thanksgiving has been left out in Galatians; it has been exchanged for an expression of astonishment and disapproval" (Dahl, p. 118).
2. "Even in reproaches, θαυμάζω is mainly used when the relationship between sender and recipient is basically good or has been good in the past . . . In distinction from other forms of rebuke, θαυμάζω is an expression of disappointment; the speaker would have expected another kind of behavior" (Dahl, p. 119). An example: "I am very much surprised [πάνυ θαυμάζω], my son, that till today I have not received any letter from you, telling me about your welfare" (P.Oxy. 1.123.5–7, 3d/4th cent.).

“The Present Evil Age?”
Notes Towards a Sermon

Sermon Text: Galatians 1:1-12

Next few weeks: Paul’s letter to Galatians, the most difficult letter Paul ever had to write.

Problem the letter deals with is (I think) one that will seem strange to us, but Paul’s solution is an answer to problems we face living the Christian life, as much as Galatians of the 1st century.

Paul introduces the problem in vv 6-10: Galatians are Gentiles (non-Jews) who have heard Paul preach Christ; they’ve believed him, left their idols and been baptized into Christ, they’ve become a church.

But now other Christians (Jewish Christians, apparently) have told them: if you really want to please God and obey his teaching in the Law of Moses – if you really want to fit in with the original apostles in Jerusalem – you won’t stop with the obedience to Christ that Paul preached – you’ll become Jews. “A Different Gospel”

The question the Galatians are asking is about the rules of the game, what we have to do to please God and qualify as subjects of his eschatological kingdom.

Paul’s answer to Galatians is introduced in vv. 1-5, 11-12: At its heart is the reminder of the Gospel Paul had preached to the Galatians and they had embraced in vv 3-5: the death of Christ and his resurrection began our liberation from the present, evil order of things; by trying to fulfill the obligations the Law of Moses places on Gentiles who want to enter God’s covenant people Israel, the Galatians are running back to the system that God the Father and Lord Jesus Christ have begun liberating them from.

But enough about the Galatians – what does Paul say to us? How do his words help us to see our life before God?

“Present Evil Age” – what’s so evil about it?

Hot/cold running water; central air and heat; 36 channels of basic cable, more on satellite; high definition coming to all by next year.

So when Paul tells us about present evil age, isn’t he a bit out of date?

I was thinking about this the other night as I was reclining in front of the TV. I’ve just upgraded to digital so I was enjoying the unparalleled clarity of picture and sound; resting my neck in my new Intellifoam pillow; drinking a cup of cocoa I’d microwaved, with

little marshmallows right in the mix – at the moment, evidence sure ‘nuff seemed to go against Paul: the present age is really pretty good.

And then I saw a promo for a show that was coming on later in the week. The show that I was watching had a serial killer as the bad guy – the ad was for a show with a serial killer as the *good* guy. I gather he hunts down other (worse?) serial killers. If you go to the website for the show, you’re invited to ponder whether he’s a bad person doing good things or a good person doing bad things. I’m not sure whether he’s turning over a new leaf, or just trying to eliminate the competition. (If you know, don’t tell me; I already know more than I want to.)

Roger Shattuck’s book *Forbidden Knowledge* surveys the literature of the world and finds that, until recently, the wise of all ages had agreed that there are things nobody needs to know. Our age lives by a different rule: there’s nothing we shouldn’t want to learn. As Shattuck puts it, the philosopher who inspires our age is the Marquis de Sade.

Maybe Paul’s notion of the “present evil age” isn’t so out of date after all . . .

After the promo, I caught part of an interview with Ted Turner. Do you know Ted, the founder of CNN? When he speaks, America holds its breath to find out just how dumb a billionaire can be. “Within a few decades global warming will be so severe that crops won’t grow, civilization will be in ruins, and everybody left alive will be cannibals.” (Ted’s more entertaining than the entertainment programs.) In spite of himself, Ted reminds us of two truths about the world we live in.

1. We habitually put our own interests above others (maybe not to the ludicrous extent Ted imagines...)
2. There is no place in this world that supplies a firm foundation for our dearest hopes. It may not be global warming that defeats our dreams – but it’ll be something: earthquake or flood or fire, heart disease or cancer or Alzheimer’s, misunderstanding or betrayal or divorce, the death of one we love and can’t imagine doing without. And there is finally no fixing what is wrong with this age; we can argue about things we see that ought to be changed and call the argument “politics”; we can spend our lives shuffling the deck chairs on the *Titanic*, and we may succeed in making the lives of our fellow passengers more tolerable, but we will not stop the ship from going down. Is there a solution to the problem of the creation as a whole?

Gal 6:14-15: The answer of the gospel to the problems of this world is a whole new world, a reality in which the only law is the one Paul states in Gal 5:14, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”

Christ Jesus died and God raised him from the dead to make that world a reality. From the throne of grace, he sends his Spirit to make us into people who can live according to that law. His Spirit calls to us today.

I. Paul's Apostolic Autobiography (1:10–2:21)

- A. Thesis (1:10–11): Paul has lived his life and conducted his ministry in obedience to the call of God and in accordance with his will for the salvation of all peoples through Christ, not in quest of the favor or popularity of other people; his converts in Galatia (as elsewhere, cf. 1 Thess 1:6; Phil. 3:17; 4:9; 1 Cor. 4:14–17; 10:31–11:2) should imitate his example of obedience to God's will revealed in Christ, regardless of the response of peers or opponents. "Paul presents his 'autobiography' as a paradigm of the gospel of Christian freedom which he seeks to persuade his readers to reaffirm in the face of the threat presented by the troublemakers" (Lyons, p. 171).
- B. Crucial episodes from Paul's ministry illustrating the thesis (1:12–2:21)
1. Paul's abandonment of Judaism for the sake of the call to be an apostle and preach the Gospel of Christ (1:12–14)
 2. First contact with Paul's apostolic predecessors (1:15–24)
 3. Second meeting with Cephas, James, et al. (2:1–10)
 4. Paul's willingness to oppose Cephas and the Jewish majority at Antioch for the truth of the Gospel (2:11–21): the most important disagreement we know about in the first Christian generation.
 - a. Background to the dispute: "From a Jewish perspective Gentile life often seemed characterized by sexual promiscuity, sometimes in the context of religious cults, and various sexual aberrations, such as homosexual practices. The common practices of abortion and exposure of newly born infants, abhorrent to Jews, could, in their eyes, make ordinary Gentiles guilty of shedding innocent blood. The common Jewish characterization of Gentiles in general as sinners was not only [per James D. G. Dunn] a matter of social boundary-drawing, in that Gentiles lived outside the bounds of the Torah, but also of concrete practices which were indeed widespread in non-Jewish societies and regarded by Jews not as minor deviations but as major offences rendering Gentile society as a whole iniquitous and abhorrent to God," as most influentially taught in Leviticus, chaps. 17–18 (Bauckham, p. 97; note especially the summary conclusion in Lev 18:24–30). In light of evidence that first-century Jews regarded Antioch as part of the Land of Israel (collected by Bockmuehl, pp. 61–70), the rules for observing Passover in Exod 12:43–49 (esp. "no uncircumcised person may eat of it," v. 48) may also have been a factor leading "those from James" (Gal 2:12) to suggest "separate but equal"

meals (and most likely Eucharists) for Jewish and Gentile Christians in Antioch.

- c. Paul's response builds on the foundational promise to Abraham that through his offspring God's blessing would come to all the nations (Gen 12:3 LXX et al.) and on the prophets' expectation that in the last days the nations would be gathered with Israel at the temple to worship and learn the will of the one true God (Isa 2:2-4//Micah 4:1ff; Isa 25:6; Zech 8:23). The key distinction is between Gentile "conversion to Judaism" (or perhaps better, Gentile acquisition of citizenship in the nation of Israel) and God's inclusion of Gentiles within his eschatologically renewed people. "[T]hose [Gentiles] who would gain admission to the [eschatological] Kingdom once it was established would enter as Gentiles. The God they worship, the God of Israel, will have redeemed them from the error of idolatry [and related moral impurity]; he will have saved them—to phrase this in slightly different form—graciously, apart from the works of the Law" (Frederiksen, p. 247). Paul saw that a failure of Jews who acclaimed Jesus as God's Messiah to accept Gentiles who also confessed Christ was to deny the saving work of God in Christ's death and resurrection and to fail to "walk rightly in relation to the truth of the gospel" (2:14).

"Who Was Paul?"

(Notes Towards a Sermon)

Paul was one of those preachers people were always talking about (like Batsell, Rubel, Max).

I teach Paul regularly and am sometimes surprised by the strength of the reaction he provokes: "I just don't like Paul." In Gal 1-2, we get Paul's autobiography, or a good bit of it. So if we want to find out what makes Paul tick, this is a good place to start.

So, who was Paul?

1. *A religious enemy of God vv. 13-14.*

Looking back on his life before he became an apostle, Paul links his study and practice of the law of Moses ("Judaism") with his persecution of church. What these followers of Jesus taught seemed like heresy – no, like blasphemy. Imagine: God had raised up a disgraced false prophet, a man condemned to death for preaching insurrection, a crucified and seated him on his own divine throne, so that he should be worshipped alongside God himself.

Paul wasn't the last person to oppose the work of God out of religious motives.

2. *The Jew whom God called to preach his Son, his Messiah, to the Gentiles, to all the nations of the earth.*

Who could have predicted this? How can you explain it? Paul knew only one way to explain it, which he learned from the prophets Jeremiah and Isaiah: “God had chosen me from before my birth” (1:15).

Paul not unique in this; all Christians are chosen by God

Eph 1:4 – God “chose *us* in Christ before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless in his presence.”

Eph 2:8-10 – All of us Gentiles who have been saved by grace are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.”

As unlikely as it was, Paul found the good work that God had prepared for him and devoted himself to it and became an example for Christians who follow.

3. *One who put obedience to the call of God above everything else.* In first two chapters, especially stresses how he didn’t put other people’s opinion of him ahead of the call of God; as he says in 1:10, he didn’t spend his days trying to please people or seek their favor – did what God had called him to do, and he let others think about that as they liked. If we look through the events from his career that he recalls in chapters 1-2, we find Paul returning to that point over and over.

Tells us in vv 13-14 he was well regarded among students and teachers of the Law – on his way to a tenured professorship at Jerusalem Jewish University. There is no cushier life, yet when the call of God came, Paul walked away from a promising academic career without a second thought.

When called to be an apostle, Paul could have gone at once to Jerusalem, gotten himself introduced to established apostles, started cultivating his reputation. But God had called him to preach, so he preached.

When he went to Jerusalem, three years, met only two of the movers and shakers (vv. 18-19).

2:1 – Waited another 14 years before going back (not the most effective plan for networking). Went back only because God told him to (“by revelation,” 2:2). Went up to confer with leaders of church – didn’t trim he message.

Most dramatic episode from his life that he recounts: 2:11 ff. Paul stands alone against Peter and the other Jewish leaders of church – opposes “separate but equal” observance of the Lord’s Supper.

Who was Paul? God's unlikely servant, in whom God was glorified (1:24).

“How odd of God to choose the Jews,” a minor (and politically incorrect) poet wrote. How curious that God should call Paul. And how amazing that God would entrust the proclamation of the gospel to such unlikely servants as us.

He did so that it's clear: the surpassing power comes from him, not from any of the vessels through which he conveys his grace.

God continues to call unlikely servants to do his work.

II. Paul's Gospel of the Eschatological Inclusion of Gentiles in the One Messianic People of God (2:15–4:31)

A. The significance of the Gospel for national identity (2:15–21): “We who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles,¹⁶ Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith [trust—JP] of Jesus Christ, even we have believed [trusted] in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith [trust] of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.¹⁷ But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, is therefore Christ the minister of sin? God forbid.¹⁸ For if I build again the things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor.¹⁹ For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God.²⁰ I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith [trust] of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.²¹ I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.” (KJV)

1. The phrase here translated “the faith/trust of [Jesus] Christ” (taking the genitive case of “Christ” as stating the subject of the action, i.e., Christ's own faith) is more often translated “faith in [Jesus] Christ” (which takes the genitive as stating the object of (our) faith. “Trust of [Jesus] Christ” is a more literal translation and conveys the ambiguity of the expression. If it takes it to refer to Christ's trust (of God), expressed in his death (as here vv. 20–21 especially suggest), then Paul stresses that the salvation of Christians (Jewish and Gentile) depend on what God has accomplished in Christ's death and resurrection; Christ's faith is made active in us by the Spirit of Christ which indwells us (v. 20). See Hays, pp. 239–40, 246–47.
2. The phrase “works of the Law/Torah” is similarly ambiguous and can refer to (1) all the commands of the Torah, which one might seek to fulfill

order to gain salvation through our own merit (Luther); (2) the specific commands the Law enjoins for Gentiles who wish to become proselytes, i.e., members of the present nation of Israel (Dunn); (3) the effects of the Law in the human life, to which Paul refers in 2:19; 3:13–14, 22, 23–25). Owen makes a good a case for the third interpretation; on this interpretation Paul would be contrasting two epochs, the present evil age, dominated by sin and death but being brought to an end through Christ's death and resurrection, through which God has inaugurated a new age of blessing and eschatological deliverance from the tyranny of sin and death.

3. The phrases “objective genitive” and “subjective genitive” figure appropriately in a sermon only when preaching to a grammarians’ convention; and grammarians already know all about them!

“The Faith of Jesus Christ”
Notes Towards a Sermon

Sermon Text: Galatians 2:11–21 (KJV)

Argument at Antioch (You thought church fights began in 20th century? As we discussed last week, Paul saw that “separate but equal” isn’t good enough for fellowship in the body of Christ.

Peter and others living as though nothing had changed – as though we’re still part of present evil age, as though in Christ God hasn’t begun to save and sanctify the nations. Paul saw that Peter and Jews in Antioch falsified what God has done in Christ – they “weren’t walking rightly in relation to the truth of the gospel.”

Talks about this in vv. 14-21.

Took reading from KJV this AM not because I have a thing for antique books (okay, not *just* for that reason) but because it’s the only version that gets the translation of a crucial phrase right: vv. 16, 20 not “faith *in* Christ” but “faith/trust *of* Christ”

The faith/trust of Christ is elaborated on in v. 20: “he loved us and gave himself for us.” We trust Christ (v. 16) and take hold of him, and he comes to live in us (v. 20). Justification, our standing before God, comes to Christians as a result of Christ’s trust/faith/faithfulness – not a result of a code or rule.” “Works of law” — what law produces in our lives – problem isn’t that works of law are bad, they’re just not enough. Law, even the best law, even God’s law, is inadequate to save us from evil.

•I’m blessed with three children who love the game of basketball, and if you’ll forgive a father’s pride, they’re pretty good at it. Didn’t inherit their abilities from their parents (though that is where they get their commanding height). If you’ve seen me play basketball, you know: what’s wrong with my game is not going to be fixed by getting me

a better rule book, an improved instruction manual. The ones I've seen are plenty adequate – the problem has to do with my ability and my will.

- Of the making of many diet books there is no end, or doesn't seem to be: but if we want to lose weight, what most of us need isn't the perfect plan; it's the will power to stick to the plan we've picked.

- I notice there's a lot of bad driving when you people are out there on the highways; sometimes I notice that I'm the one doing it. How much would regular mailings of the Highway Code do to correct that? We have to *want* to be better drivers.

- Now a serious example: for many Christians the most distressing question in American life for almost 40 years has been legalized abortion. They are vexed by 40 million lives extinguished before being born. If you ask them, they will tell you that abortion is to the America in the 20th and now the 21st century what slavery was in the 19th – a stain on our national conscience; a denial of this country's founding conviction that all human beings are created equal in the sight of God and all deserve equal protection under the law; a mockery of any notion we have that ours is a Christian nation. Speaking for myself, I cannot see that these Christians are wrong.

Some of them think that the thing that is most needed to remove this blot on our national life is a change in our laws – overturn a decision of the Supreme Court, amend the Constitution, change the laws of our state, and all will be as it should. I don't think so. All will be as it should when people are different, when men and women take seriously their responsibilities to each other and to the children they conceive; when families are more concerned with welcoming a new life than with preserving reputation or avoiding inconvenience; when churches make it their business to encourage and support fathers and mothers in this kind of life. All will be as it should when we are different people than we are.

Paul offers us a vision: 2:20 – not remote, not a theory, not future, but what Christian life can be *now*.

Ought to be warning labels on *churches* – “Do not enter unless you want to be changed.” Ought to be warning labels on *Bibles* – “Do not read unless you want to live Christ's life, and for him to live his life in you.” Ought to be warning labels on *Christians* – “Do not associate with these people unless you want love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, self-control to overflow in your life – all the Fruits of the Spirit Paul lists in Chapter 5. We can put that point another way: Christians ought to be the sort of people *who need to wear warning labels* like that.

Challenge of gospel is to live in the whole new world that God began to create when he raised the crucified Christ from the grave and sent his Spirit into the hearts of all who call on his name. The church in this place encourages you to come and be transformed along with us.

B. The testimony of the Galatians' own experience to the eschatological gospel of grace: the Galatians' initial response to Paul's preaching and its effects (3:1–5)

C. The testimony of Scripture to the eschatological gospel of grace: the promise to Abraham and its fulfillment in Christ (3:6–22)

Gen 15:6 (3:6)—>Gen 12:3//18:18 (3:8) —>Deut 27:26 (3:10)—>Hab 2:4 (3:11)

—>Lev 18:5 (3:12)—>Deut 21:23 (3:13)—> Gen 13:15//17:8//24:7

D. The significance of the Galatians' reception of Christ: heirs of God's promises to Abraham, sons in the Son (3:23–4:7)

“Children of Abraham”
Notes Towards a Sermon

Got some criticism for use of KJV last week, so this week the reading is from the Geneva Bible.

Sermon Text: Galatians 3:1-9, 26-29

Who are these Christians? It's a question you can hear people asking these days; and you can hear answers, too:

Christians are people who think they're better than everybody else – you know, “holier than thou.”

Christians are the ones who are always minding somebody else's business – won't keep their laws off my body.

Christians are a superstitious and ignorant lot – don't realize that science has moved on, and they can't give up their attachment to a view of the world that primitive and obsolete.

Christians can't face hard realities of life – so they spend their lives telling themselves bedtime stories every night before they turn in and Sunday too.

Most popular answer: Christians are hypocrites.

Now there are a lot of Christians – surely no one would say that there aren't any Christians who answer to one of those descriptions. But it's curious that often Christians are defined by those of our numbers who embody Christian ideals the worst rather than those who reflect Christian ideals the best.

We don't define most other groups by their least exemplary members, do we?

No doubt there are doctors who do a poor job listening to their patients – but we don't go to our doctor assuming that our complaint won't be heard – or if we do, we quickly find a better doctor.

In a nation of 300 million, of course there are lawyers who care nothing for their clients but only for what they can win on contingency – but again, if we find out that we've got a lawyer like that, we go looking for a better one.

There are teachers who find their subject boring and pointless, who are only in the classroom for the summers and retirement benefits – but we don't define the whole teaching profession by their bad example.

I expect somewhere there's a Jew who spends every sabbath playing golf and when he's done heads to the clubhouse for a ham and cheese sandwich, but we don't let him define Judaism for us.

There are politicians who think mostly about what their country can do for them, almost never about what they can do for their country, but we don't – okay, bad example.

But when it comes to Christians, the worst examples set the impression of the whole group. One thing that means: if we are about the church and her ministry, if we care about Christ and the honor of his name ...then we'll be the best Christian examples we can be; because our failures won't be held just against us. They'll be held against the whole body of Christ.

But it means something else too: means we have more work to do if we want to understand who Christians are than just opening up the pages or tuning in the news or trying to pick up the word on the street. If we want to know who these Christians are, need to seek out some good Christians, some people really trying to live by the Sermon on the Mount and the teachings of the apostles – spend some time with them.

One Christian we would do well to seek out and get to know is Paul. We've been spending some time in Paul's letter to a group of confused young Christians in Galatia. (We'll be taking a break from that for most of May, as we'll be hearing from the ministers of this church about milestones in the work they and those they minister with are doing). So if you've not found time to read Galatians, May is your chance to catch up!

This AM we find Paul talking to confused Christians about what a Christian is.

1. *People whose lives are defined by trust in God.*

Word translated faith in most English translations (Geneva Bible included) might better be translated “trust.”

Not just matter of opinions we hold – attitude of soldier to the general he’s willing to follow into battle; attitude of mountain climber to rope that he grabs hold of.

Last week we saw that “faith” is the attitude that Paul sees exemplified in Christ; in today’s passage, offers Abraham as another example.

2. *Children of Abraham*

Christians are honorary Israelites, Israelites by adoption, Israelites by incorporation into the person of God’s Messiah

If children, then heirs

1. Inherit promise of blessing ourselves
2. Inherit promise that “through us God will bless all nations”

3. *New humanity – one new man (v. 28) in person of Christ.*

Called to live by a new rule: Chapter 5:14: Not “What’s the minimum I have to do to belong to this club?” but “What’s your need? What has God put in my trust that can address it? How can I help?”

Christians don’t need anyone to tell us that we don’t always manage to live by that rule; but anyone who has by God’s grace experienced life together where it obtains for any length of time knows just how rare and precious and truly new such fellowship is.

“Peace be on everyone who walks by this rule, upon the Israel of God.”

- E. The pending disinheritance of the Galatians through the ministry of the Agitators and the inconsistency of their response with the Gospel they embraced (4:8–5:12)
1. The Galatians' abandonment of eschatological heavenly citizenship for citizenship in the earthly Jerusalem (4:8–20)
 2. A scriptural allegory: two sons, of flesh and of promise; two mothers, slave and free; two Jerusalems, present (earthly) and heavenly (future); two covenants (4:21–31).

“A Tale of Two Cities”
A Note Towards a Sermon (Gal 4:21–31)

Focus on 4:24–25 and on the new Jerusalem revealed in the fullness of time through the mission of God's Son and Spirit (4:4–6), the heavenly city in which the gospel offers citizenship to all who hear it and receive the Spirit. “Salvation” in Pauline perspective means life as a citizen of the heavenly Jerusalem (cf. Phil 3:20–21) and eventual deliverance when Christ leads his holy ones in an invasion of the rebellious earth, defeating even cosmic enemies and uniting all things by filling them with the Spirit of Christ, so that “God will be all in all” (cf. 1 Cor 15:20–28; Eph 1:10). For the Galatians of the first century, and for Americans of the twenty-first, salvation means assuming the responsibilities of citizenship in the heavenly Jerusalem rather than uncritical acceptance of the folkways and laws of any earthly city. Cf. Augustine, *City of God*, the most influential appropriation of this perspective in the Western church.

III. The Ethics of God's Eschatological Israel (4:13; 5:1–6:10)

- A. The general frame of the ethics in Galatians set in 4:13: imitating Paul's response to the gift of God in Christ will restore the Galatians to a proper relationship with the Father through the Son in the power of the Spirit
- B. Resumption of the rebuke and curse of 1:6–9 provides a transition to the ethical exhortation.(5:1–12). In the course of this rebuke, Paul states the rule that should characterize life in the Galatian (and all Christian) churches: neither circumcision nor uncircumcision "has force/exercises power/avails/prevails," but "faith working through love (5:5–6); in light of 3:28 and 6:15 (and also 1 Cor 7:9), we may substitute any social distinction that potentially divides brothers or sisters in the family that God has adopted through Christ.
 - 1. "[F]aith in Galatians is not just 'believing the gospel'; it also includes a commitment to 'obey the truth', and cannot be distinguished from the constant attempt to 'walk in the Spirit'" (Barclay, 236).
 - 2. "Love" in Scripture is not primarily a matter of feeling but of will expressed in action (as with us). C. S. Lewis's advice: act in a loving fashion toward the person you have trouble loving; feelings more often than not will follow, and in any case one will live as the Gospel calls us.
- C. In ancient political theory, "freedom" doesn't mean individual freedom to do whatever I want but the freedom of one people from rule by another (the opposite of the situation described in Neh 9:35–37). So in opening the exhortation Paul calls the fractious Galatians to live lives of service to one another in love (5:13–15).
- D. The distinction Paul draws between Spirit (and its fruit) and the Flesh (and its works) marks out the difference between moral dispositions and actions that build community and those that tear it down (5:16–25). Whereas immorality and the idolatry in which it was at home result lead to division (5:19–21), the fruit of the Spirit begins with equal regard for other members of God's family ("love") and ultimately expresses itself in restraint ("self-control"; 5:22–23).
- E. Spirituality and concern for others in the family that forms a colony of the coming kingdom of God (5:21b) expresses itself the structure and order of the community, as well as in individual dispositions.
 - 1. In the restoration of those publicly "detected" in an offense against the norms laid down in 5:19–23 (6:1a) and in appropriate humility regarding our own standing as we each seek to traverse the path to the kingdom (6:1b–5). The "law of Christ" (6:2) = "the law as redefined [via Leviticus 19:18] and fulfilled by Christ in love," for which cf. Rom 15:1–3 (Barclay, 134).

2. In supplying the needs of the body for the one(s) in the community who supplies the needs of our souls (6:6–9).
3. In doing whatever good for others we find it is in our power to do (6:10). This was very clear in antiquity and focused on hospitality, the supply of food and shelter. We have more resources, a greater challenge figuring out how to use them for genuine good, and a greater responsibility to do so.

“Same Old Gospel”

A Note Towards a Sermon (Gal 6:1–10)

Paul’s exposition in Galatians runs from his apostolic ministry, to the Galatians’ conversion and its significance, to the life called forth by the apostolic gospel they formerly embraced but are now abandoning. The evidence of the Christian faith that has always been publicly significant has been the life of the Christians, the good works done for one another and for all. Cf. *Epistle to Diognetus*, chap. 5.

Conclusion (6:11–18)

- Written in Paul’s own hand as he takes the stylus from his secretary to visibly display his personal commitment to the appeal of this letter (6:11; cf 1 Cor. 16:21; Col 4:18; 2 Thess 3:17; Philem 19). No indication of travel plans to these churches, so the letter must carry the full weight of Paul’s personal intervention in the Galatian crisis.
- Criticism of the motives of the Agitators, who would avoid persecution by abandoning the “new world order” created by the cross (and resurrection; 6:12–13).
- The theological “so what” of the letter: circumcised or uncircumcised status is reduced to insignificance in the face of the New Creation God had inaugurated through the cross of Christ (6:14–15), the inclusive Israel of God on whom his eschatological blessing rests (6:16).
- In contrast to the Agitators, Paul supplies the Galatians a model in his willingness to accept “the marks of Jesus” in his flesh (6:17).
- A concluding blessing (6:18) indicating that the fellowship is not broken from Paul’s side, or from God’s; the Galatians status in Christ will be determined by their response to the appeal in this letter. The churches of Galatia were perhaps the first Christian tragedy, in light of Rom. 15:25 (cf. Gal 2:10; 1 Cor 16:1). Ministry doesn’t always have a happy ending; the test of its value is whether, like Paul, the minister remains true to the call of God that we have received through Jesus Christ our Lord.

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