

Exploring Galatians

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PREFACE

The book of Galatians describes the most important doctrine in Christianity, which is justification by God's grace alone, through faith alone, and in Christ alone. This is what make Christianity distinct from other religions. We are justified by God, not because of our works, but because God imputes the righteousness of Christ to us. Prior to being justified by God, all our works are sinful before God, because they are not done (1) from a heart that has been purified by faith, (2) with the right manner according to God's word, and (3) with the purpose for God's glory. The righteousness of Christ that is imputed to us is the basis of our righteousness before God. We receive this by faith alone in Christ alone.

There were false teachers who taught Galatian Christians that faith in Christ is not enough for their justification. They insisted that circumcision had to be practiced as a part of their justification. Paul admonished them to throw away this enslaving teaching. Christians are sinners saved by God's grace and have been freed from a rule-keeping religious system. To practice legalism is to bring bondage again.

"For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery" (Galatians 5:1).

Soli Deo Gloria
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Lesson 1 – What is the Gospel of Christ?

Galatians was a letter written by the Apostle Paul to the Galatian Christians in 49-55 AD. Paul planted churches in Galatia during his missionary journeys. Ancient Galatia was located in present-day Turkey. Galatian churches were attacked by false teacher with their false teachings that were contrary to the gospel of Christ. Paul was concerned with the influence of false teachings in Galatian churches. Paul explains that we are saved and justified not by our works, but by God's grace alone, through faith alone, and in Christ alone. Paul clarifies that obedience to God is the evidence of and not the grounds for our salvation.

Read Galatians 1:1-5

What is the significance of Paul's explanation that his apostleship is "not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father (v.1)?"

What is grace? What is peace? Why are they important subjects in the life of Christians (v.3)?

From whom can we get grace and peace (v.3)?

Why is Christ called *the Lord* (v.3)?

What has Christ done for us and for what purpose (v.4)?

What does it mean that Christ's sacrifice for us is "according to the will of our God and Father (v.4)?"

The gospel is the good news that God has a plan to save us from sin and evil. It is not our works but God's work for us. God's salvation work for us is twofold. First, our sin brings condemnation to us. We deserve death as punishment from God—being completely separated from him and all his goodness. Christ took this punishment for us. He died on the cross to receive God's judgment in our place, bearing the penalty of our sin. He was completely separated from God and all his goodness on the cross. Christ experienced hell on the cross, so that we will not experience it. By believing, trusting, and surrendering our lives to Christ, God forgives our sin and gives us a new life in Christ. Second, God also saves us from the slavery of sin. The evil spirits use this sinful world and our sinful nature to make us sin against God. When God unites us with Christ, he gives his Holy Spirit to dwell in us, enabling us to overcome sin and temptations and to please him with our words, thoughts, and actions. The Holy Spirit sanctifies us continuously, renewing our whole being after the image of God and enabling us to be more and more able to die to sin and to live to righteousness.

Why should we give God all the glory (v.5)?

Our salvation from sin and evil is completely based on the grace of God for us. Christ died in our place to bear the penalty of our sin and to receive the judgment of God, so that by trusting and surrendering our lives to him, we can live a new life in him. God has sent and sacrificed his Son to die as our substitute. He has rescued us from the slavery of sin and evil. He alone deserves all the glory forever and ever.

Read Galatians 1:6-10

What happened in the Galatian churches that made Paul astonished (v.6)?

Why are there people who want to distort the gospel of Christ and to trouble believers (v.7)?

As God uses us as his agents to spread the gospel truth of God, the devil uses false teachers to spread false teachings that are contrary to the gospel truth of God.

What are the impacts of false teachings to those who believe them?

Why did Paul strongly emphasize that anyone who preached a different gospel “let him be accursed (v.8-9)?”

As servants of Christ, should we please people or Christ (v.10)?

In what circumstances are we tempted to try to seek the approval of man rather than of God (v.10)?

Read Galatians 1:11-17

How did Paul receive the gospel (v.12)?

What did Paul do before he became a Christian (v.13-14)?

When did God decide to set Paul apart to be a Christian (v.15)?

God will call his chosen people to repentance and faith in Christ. This is the grace of God for us. “But 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 with Christ—by grace you have been saved” (Ephesians 2:4-5).

Do you believe in the gospel of Jesus Christ? Do you love him for what he has done for you?

Lesson 2 – The Gospel for All People

Read Galatians 1:1-17 for review

Read Galatians 1:18-24

After Jesus Christ revealed himself to Paul and called him to be an apostle, Paul spent three years in Arabia and Damascus to learn and be equipped by Christ for the work of the gospel ministry to the world. Most likely he spent time with Christ in prayer and in studying the scriptures. Then Paul went to Jerusalem to meet the other apostles (v.17-18).

What do we get by having a daily quality time with Christ in prayer and in studying the Bible?

Cephas was Peter's Aramaic name. James was Jesus's half-brother (v.18-19).

What did the Christians in Judea hear about Paul (v.22-23)?

Have you been involved in the gospel ministry? Can other Christians glorify God because of what you do for him?

Read Galatians 2:1-5

Paul went back again to Jerusalem after fourteen years. This time, he met the other apostles. He gave a report to them about his gospel ministry among the Gentiles (non-Jewish people). Paul brought Barnabas and Titus, who were faithful members of his missionary team. Paul and Barnabas were Jewish, but Titus was a Greek (v.1-3).

Was Titus required by the apostles to be circumcised (v.3)? Why?

Many Jewish false teachers taught that circumcision was required in order for a person to be saved by God (v.4). They tried to corrupt many Gentile Christians in the early church with their teaching that salvation by God's grace alone, through faith alone, and in Christ alone was not enough, and it must be accompanied by circumcision—man's work.

How do false teachers get into the church and what is their purpose (v.4)?

We should preserve the truth of the gospel and not yield to false teachings (v.5).

What contemporary false teachings teach salvation by works?

Read Galatians 2:6-10

When Paul said that the other apostles and leaders of the church in Jerusalem who were influential did not make any difference to him, he did not mean to disrespect them. He meant that his apostleship, authority and ministry to the Gentiles were directly from Christ himself. He wanted the Galatian Christians to understand that he did not act on his own authority. In addition, the other apostles gave him the right hand of fellowship, approving his ministry among the Gentiles (v.6-9).

God shows no partiality (v.6). God sees all of us as equal, regardless of our job positions or social status.

Based on this truth, what comfort do ordinary people have in God?

James, Cephas, and John were the pillars or leaders of the first church, the church in Jerusalem.

What did the other apostles ask Paul to do as part of his ministry among the Gentiles (v.10)?

Read Galatians 2:11-14

Why did Paul oppose Cephas in Antioch (v.11-12)?

In the Old Testament time, God gave the Jews three categories of laws—moral, civil, and ceremonial—to guide their lives as God’s covenant people. They had regulations on which food they could and could not eat—clean and unclean food according to the religious ceremonial laws. The civil and ceremonial laws only applied to God’s people in the Old Testament time, but the moral laws—as summarized in the Ten Commandments—still apply to God’s people, Jews and Gentiles, to the present time.

In Acts 10, God had taught Peter that all food is clean. Peter ate freely with the Gentile Christians in Antioch, until a group of Jewish men *came from James*—from the Jerusalem church. They were certainly not sent by James. They came from *the circumcision party*, a party of Jewish Christians who believed that circumcision was necessary for salvation. Peter was apparently afraid of these men.

What was the further impact of Peter’s hypocrisy (v.13)?

Why was “their conduct not in step with the truth of the gospel” (v.14)?

Church leaders—even the Apostle Peter—are not perfect people. They also can fall into temptations and sin. They can receive heavy pressure and act foolishly, without consulting with God through prayer and meditating on his word. As church members, we must pray for our church leaders on a regular basis.

The gospel is for all people, regardless of their nationality and cultural backgrounds.

Think of how you can plan to share the gospel to someone you know.

Lesson 3 – Justification by Grace Alone, through Faith Alone, and in Christ Alone

Read Galatians 1:18—2:14 for review

Read Galatians 2:15-21

How is a person justified by God (v.16)?

There are no Jews who can be justified by obeying their religious laws, such as by being circumcised or by eating only clean food. This teaching extends to any form of salvation by good works.

Why can't a person be justified by obeying God's law or by doing good works (v.16)?

God is a just God and therefore he must punish our sin. All of us are sinners, guilty, and condemned to death by God. Justification is an act of God's free grace, by which he forgives all our sins and accepts us as righteous in his sight, because the righteousness of Jesus is imputed to us. Justification is a gift of God and we can receive it by faith alone. God imputed our sin to Jesus, who took our condemnation and died for the punishment of our sin on the cross. God declares that we are no longer guilty and condemned, but legally righteous before him, not because of our own righteousness—which we do not have—but because he imputes the righteousness of Jesus to us. We are righteous before God because we have the righteousness of Jesus.

When we repent from our sin and put our faith in Jesus, trusting and surrendering our lives to him, God forgives our sins, gives us the righteousness of Jesus, and unites us with Jesus. In our union with Jesus, we have a new identity and life. All Jesus has, we have it all in him.

Did Christ come to promote sin and be a servant of sin (v.17)?

If Paul had abandoned justification by works, but then went back to this belief system again, then he proved himself to be a transgressor (v.18). Many Galatian Christians fell into this trap and so do many Christians today. If we have been justified by God's grace through faith in Christ, it is useless if we try to be justified by good works again. We have died to the law and live to God (v.19).

What does it mean that we have been crucified with Christ (v.20)?

What do we have in our union with Christ (v.20)?

Christ has sacrificed himself to be our substitute, bearing the punishment of our sin on the cross. He died for us, so that we can have a new life in him. Being united with Christ is the basis of our justification. God sees us as holy and righteous because we are in union with Christ.

If righteousness can be gained by good works, what is the purpose of Christ's sacrifice for us (v.21)?

Read Galatians 3:1-9

It is foolishness for Christians, who have been justified by God's grace, to embrace the teaching of justification by works. To trade in God's grace for works is absurd. Paul had publicly preached to them about Jesus Christ who was crucified for their sin (v.1).

Do we receive the Holy Spirit by our own works or by God's grace through faith in Christ (v.2)?

Our salvation and justification is completely God's grace for us. For Galatian Christians, trying to perfect or complete their salvation by the works of the flesh—such as circumcision—was foolishness (v.3). We are foolish if we try to perfect God's grace with our works.

The Galatian Christians experienced the supernatural work of God who saved them from sin and brought them to union with Christ. They believed in Christ by faith, trusting and surrendering their lives to him (v.4-5). However, they fell into works-based salvation and self-righteousness teaching.

How do many present-day Christians fall into this teaching?

Abraham put his faith in God and "it was counted to him as righteousness" (v.6). "How then was it counted to him? Was it before or after he had been circumcised? It was not after, but before he was circumcised. He received the sign of circumcision as a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised. The purpose was to make him the father of all who believe without being circumcised, so that righteousness would be counted to them as well, and to make him the father of the circumcised who are not merely circumcised but who also walk in the footsteps of the faith that our father Abraham had before he was circumcised" (Romans 4:10-12).

Who are the spiritual sons of Abraham (v.7)?

God directly told Abraham about the gospel, "In you shall all the nations be blessed" (v.8 and Genesis 12:3). God promised Abraham that the Christ, the Messiah, would be a descendant of him, through whom all the nations be blessed. Those, who put their faith in Christ, are blessed (v.9). They are justified by God because of their union with Christ.

It is by God's grace alone, through faith alone, and in Christ alone that we are justified. When we repent from our sin and put our faith in Christ, trusting and surrendering our lives to him, we are justified by God. Our justification is permanent. We are legally righteous permanently. The result of our justification is our union with Christ, which is inseparable. In our union with Christ, we are sanctified from the inside out. God, who has justified us, sanctifies us, and will glorify us. "...he [God] who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ" (Philippians 1:6).

How should we live our new life in Christ in light of this?

Lesson 4 – By Faith and Not by Works

Read Galatians 2:15—3:9 for review

Read Galatians 3:10-14

Many Jews believe that they can be justified by their own works—by obeying God’s law.

Why are those Jews under a curse (v.10)?

The same truth applies to all people who are not Jews. Those, who do not have the written law of God, also know the law of God because God has put his law in nature and in their hearts (Romans 2:14-15). God reveals that every person in this world is a sinner and has broken his law (Romans 3:9-18). Sin is disobeying or not conforming to God’s law in any way. Therefore, every person is under the curse for sinning against God’s law. The curse is death, a complete separation—physical and spiritual—from God and all his goodness.

What does “the righteous shall live by faith” mean (v.11)?

Those who live by the law do not live by faith, because they rely on their works—by obeying the law to earn their justification or God’s blessing for them (v.12).

How did Christ redeem us from the curse of the law (v.13)?

“For our sake he [God] made him [Christ] to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God” (2 Corinthians 5:21). God treated Christ, who was not a sinner, as if he was a sinner. Christ sacrificed himself as our sin-bearer, bearing our curse and dying on the cross for the punishment of our sin as our substitute. When we repent from our sin and believe in Christ by faith, trusting and surrendering our lives to him, God justifies us. He forgives all our sins and imputes the righteousness of Christ to us. God legally accepts and treats us as righteous people, not because of our own righteousness, but because we bear the righteousness of Christ.

What is the result of Christ’s sacrifice for us (v.14)?

Read Galatians 3:15-29

A covenant is a binding agreement with a promise of faithfulness. We cannot change a binding agreement we made with another party unless by mutual consent, such as in marriage or in loan. God, who is holy and not a sinner like us, will much more bind himself to a covenant he has made with us.

What did God promise in his covenant with Abraham (v.16)?

Why does God’s law not annul his covenant with Abraham (v.17-18)?

Why did God give his law then (v.19)?

The law of God reveals our sins and our corrupted hearts and minds. The law of God shows that we are not capable of meeting God’s righteous standard and that we sin in many ways—in our thoughts, words, and actions. The law of God reveals our need for God’s mercy and forgiveness for our sins. None of us can be justified by our own works—by trying hard to do good. Even our good works are imperfect and often times corrupted with self-centeredness—thinking we need to get something in return, such as a good life or a credit to heaven.

God used Moses to lead the Israelites out of slavery in Egypt and to give his law to them. Moses was the intermediary between God and the people of Israel (v.19-20).

Is God’s law contrary to his promises (v.21)?

The written law of God is scripture, which not only reveals our sins, but also condemns and imprisons us under sin. We are law-breakers imprisoned for death punishment. The law cannot save us, but only condemns us. The law shows us that we cannot be justified by obeying the law—because we are sinners and law breakers—but only by faith in Christ, who obeys the law perfectly for us. The law shows us our need for Christ, the Savior whom God has promised for us (v.22-23).

What was the role of the law (v.24)?

This metaphor teaches us that we are like children having a guardian—the law—who teaches us the way of God and punishes us when we disobey instructions. Since Christ has come and justified us, we do not need to be supervised by the law any longer, along with the condemnation that it brings to us (v.24-25).

What is our status in our union with Christ (v.26)?

Because we are in union with Christ—the only Son of God—we become sons of God in him. Baptism symbolizes our union with Christ. In our union with Christ, we “have put on Christ”—being clothed with Christ’s righteousness (v.27). God, not only justifies us, but also adopts us as his sons.

What is the significance of “we are one in Christ Jesus” (v.28)?

Just as Abraham, who was justified by faith in Christ, we are justified by faith in Christ and become spiritual children of Abraham and heirs of the covenant promise of God (v.29, 3:7-9).

How should we live our lives as sons of God?

Lesson 5 – We are Sons and Heirs of God’s Kingdom

Read Galatians 3:10-29 for review

Read Galatians 4:1-7

Paul uses an illustration of a father and his son, who inherits his estate. Since the son is still young, he is incapable of managing the estate. Therefore, he needs to be instructed by guardians and managers who work for his father. In this sense, he is not different than a slave, who receives instructions and orders (v.1-2).

How does Paul use this illustration to explain our condition (v.3)?

“The elementary principles of the world” may refer to the basic teaching in our cultures that good actions and behaviors bring good rewards in life—which is the concept of salvation by works in essence. The religious systems in our world teach this principle. In contrast to this, the Bible explains that, as sinners condemned to death, none of our works are good before God. According to God, good works are done: (1) from a heart that has been purified by faith, (2) out of love for him, and (3) with the purpose for his glory. God justifies us by his grace through our faith in Christ, and not by our works. Without Christ, we are all spiritually enslaved by the teaching of this world—good actions bring good rewards and bad actions bring bad rewards in life. We live wanting good rewards and fearing punishment. Just as slaves, we live with anxiety and without security. This is the condition of both the Jews and the Gentiles who live with the belief system of salvation by works. However, Christ came to redeem and set us free from this slavery (v.4-5).

What status will we receive when we repent from our sin and put our faith in Jesus, trusting and surrendering our lives to him (v.5)?

God not only justifies us, but also adopts us as his sons. He gives us the security and confidence of our status before him. He makes us belong to him.

As sons of God, whom do we receive (v.6)?

“For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, ‘Abba! Father!’” (Romans 8:15).

“Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words” (Romans 8:26).

As sons of God, what are we also (v.7)?

God’s heavenly kingdom is our inheritance. The Holy Spirit who dwells in us and sanctifies us “... is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it ...” (Ephesians 1:14).

How do you see the work of the Triune God (the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit) in this passage?

Read Galatians 4:8-20

In the Roman Empire, many people, including Galatians, worshipped many gods. These gods were not real gods (v.8).

Why is it enslaving to follow and worship false gods (v.8)?

What does it mean by “Christians have come to know God, or rather to be known by God” (v.9)?

Paul was very concerned with the influence of false teaching among the Galatian Christians. They were saved and justified by God’s grace through faith in Christ, but they wanted to go back to the idea of legalistic practices—trying to get God’s favor or blessing through good works, such as celebrating the Jewish religious festivals and practicing circumcision. There were Jewish false teachers who tried to convince the Galatian Christians to adopt the Jewish customs. Paul was worried that his labor among the Galatians would be in vain (v.9-11).

Galatians 5:1 “For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.” Many Christians today have fallen to legalism—celebrating Easter or Christmas, going to services or events at the church, or getting baptized in order to earn God’s favor. Observing religious rituals is good if done with the right motive, but if it is done with a wrong motive, it is a sin. God sees the internal motive of our hearts. He delights when we do everything out of love for him and for his glory.

What did Paul ask of the Galatian Christians (v.12)?

Paul had practiced freedom from the Jewish customs in order to be with the Galatians. He asked them to practice freedom from legalistic bondage as well.

Paul had an illness when he went to share the gospel to the Galatians. Regardless of Paul’s condition, the Galatians nicely treated Paul as if he was an angel or even Christ himself. They were even ready to do anything for Paul. However, their attitude towards Paul changed (v.14-16).

What was the intention of the false teachers (v.17)?

How much did Paul care about the Galatian Christians? How did he express it (v.19-20)?

How is Christ formed in us (v.19)?

How can we help one another to have Christ formed well in us?

Lesson 6 – Christ Has Set Us Free

Read Galatians 4:1-20 for review

Read Galatians 4:21-31

Paul was very concerned of the influence of false teaching among the Galatian Christians. They were saved and justified by God’s grace through faith in Christ, but they wanted to go back to the idea of legalistic practices—trying to get God’s favor or blessing through observing the Jewish Mosaic law.

What is the difference between Abraham’s two sons, Ishmael and Isaac (v.22-23)?

Hagar was a slave of Abraham and his wife, Sarah. Sarah was barren and was no longer able to conceive, because she was 90 years old. However, God promised that she would conceive a child. Sarah did not believe the promise of God, instead she asked Abraham to have a child through Hagar. Hagar bore Ishmael. Later, God opened Sarah’s womb and fulfilled his promise. Sarah conceived and bore Isaac.

Hagar represents the old covenant, the covenant God made with the people of Israel at Mount Sinai after delivering them from slavery in Egypt. At Mount Sinai, God gave his law to the people of Israel through Moses. The old covenant is a covenant of works which states God’s blessing is given to those who obey his law and his punishment is given to those who break his law. Hagar “corresponds to the present Jerusalem”—the Judaism belief system that teaches salvation by observing the law. We have learned that God’s law condemns and imprisons us under sin (3:22). God’s law shows us that we are slaves of sin. As a slave, Hagar corresponds to those who live under the Judaism belief system. Just as Hagar bore children of slavery, so does Judaism. We become like Ishmael, children of slavery, if we believe in salvation by works (v.24-25).

Sarah represents the new covenant in Christ—a covenant of promise—which states that God’s blessing is given to us by his grace through our faith in Christ. Sarah “corresponds to the Jerusalem above”—the spiritual Jerusalem, the church of Christ. We become like Isaac, children of promise, if we believe in salvation by God’s grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone, and not by works. Unlike the old covenant and rule-keeping religious system that lead us into slavery, the new covenant in Christ leads us to freedom (v.26-28).

How does Ishmael’s persecuting Isaac illustrate unbelievers’ persecuting believers (v.29)?

What should we do to false teachers in the church (v.30)?

Read Galatians 5:1-15

What has Christ done for us and what should we do therefore (v.1)?

In Christ, we are free from law-keeping or rule-keeping enslaving religious salvation systems.

Why should Galatian Christian not accept circumcision as a religious ritual required for salvation (v.2-4)?

If God has justified us by grace, it is foolishness for us to go back to the slavery of a law-keeping system. Christ has set us free from the obligation and condemnation of the law. Our works or obedience to God's law will not and cannot save us. We will not and cannot be righteous on our own, because we are sinners and filthy with sin. We are law breakers. We are saved by God's grace alone through the work of the Holy Spirit in us—regenerating us, making us alive from being dead in sin, leading us to Christ, and enabling us to trust him by faith. The Holy Spirit then sanctifies us, renewing our whole being in the image of God and enabling us to be more and more able to die to sin and to live to righteousness. Finally, the Holy Spirit will glorify us, making us in complete righteousness and holiness without sin and its corruption. This is our hope and we eagerly wait for this (v.5).

What is the only thing that counts in Christ (v.6)?

The Galatian Christians were running well—trying to live out their Christian faith. Paul illustrates the Christian life like a race where we run towards the finish line. We have opponents or enemies whom we need to overcome and defeat. False teachers are the Galatian Christians' opponents who tried to persuade them that circumcision was required for salvation. Christ, who called the Galatian Christians to faith in him, did not teach them this (v.7-8). If some of the Galatian Christians started to accept this teaching, it could impact the whole church (v.9).

In whom did Paul put his confidence that the Galatian Christians would stand firm in Christ (v.10)?

Paul was very angry towards the false teachers, who accused him and tried to destroy the faith of the Galatian Christians who were new believers. Paul wished these false teachers would emasculate themselves and stop destroying others (v.12).

What should we do with the freedom we have in Christ (v.13)?

How does loving others as ourselves fulfill the whole law of God (v.14)?

Jesus says, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets" (Matthew 22:37-40).

What should we be careful of (v.15)?

Loving and serving one another is the key to living in peace and for mutually building others up.

How can we be an encouragement to one another?

Lesson 7 – Spirit-Empowered Life

Read Galatians 4:21—5:15 for review

Read Galatians 5:16-26

What does “gratify the desires of the flesh” mean (v.16)?

The flesh refers to the sinful nature that is still attached in our body.

Why are *the desires of the Spirit* against *the desires of the flesh* (v.17)?

Once we repent from our sin and put our faith in Jesus, trusting and surrendering our lives to him, we become a new person in him. The Holy Spirit dwells in us, guiding and sanctifying us. We no longer live under a law-keeping or rule-keeping enslaving religious salvation system, but under the grace of God in which the Holy Spirit has led us to saving faith and freedom in Christ (v.18).

What are the works of the flesh (v.19-21)?

What happens to people who continuously live in these sins (v.21)?

True Christians are in union with Christ through the Holy Spirit who dwells in them. True Christians will produce fruit of the Holy Spirit in their lives. Everyone will produce fruits, although some will produce more than others.

What is the fruit of the Holy Spirit (v.22-23)?

The fruit of the Holy Spirit is one fruit with nine “flavors” or godly characteristics. Another interpretation is the fruit of the Holy Spirit is love that comes with the other godly characteristics. The Holy Spirit produces these God-like characteristics in us to make us more and more like Christ.

In our union with Christ, we are united with him in his crucifixion and death on the cross, as well as in his resurrection and new life. Therefore, our sinful nature, with its sinful passions and desires, has been crucified. We now have a new life in Christ, capable of bearing God-like characteristics (v.24).

What should we do (v.25-26)?

Since our lives are led by the Holy Spirit, we need to submit to his guidance and to work alongside him. That is how we grow in our sanctification and produce much fruit of the Holy Spirit in our lives. As Christ’s church and a covenant community of believers, we will grow healthier if everyone lives faithfully in obedience to the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Read Galatians 6:1-10

What should we do as a covenant community of believers (v.1-2)?

Christ has taught us to love one another. When a brother or a sister in Christ is tempted to sin or dealing with a particular sin, we must help by praying for, encouraging, and protecting him/her from sinning. This is how we fulfill or obey Christ's command for us.

What should we do and not do (v.3-4)?

We should not boast or take pride that we are better than other people. We are all sinners saved by grace. Each of us will stand before God and be responsible for our own conducts (v.5). We should do all things out of love for Christ, who loves us so much and has sacrificed himself for our justification. We are righteous before God not because of our own righteousness, but because God has imputed the righteousness of Christ to us. On our own, we are *nothing*.

What else should we do (v.6)?

This is another principle for the Christian life. As a church, Christians are to take care of, support, and *share all good things* with their ministers who labor sacrificially for them. We need to be careful not to interpret this verse as sharing every single thing we have. The command here is we are to take care the well-being of our ministers, who labor for our well-being as well. God is not to be mocked. This is indeed his command. We will reap the consequences of our actions. God promises immeasurable blessings for us as a church, if all of us, including the ministers, obey his commands in unity (v.7-8).

What should we continue on doing (v.9-10)? Why?

Read Galatians 6:11-18

The false teachers, who taught the Galatian Christians that they must be circumcised after believing in Christ, might try to avoid persecution from the radical Jewish nationalists, such as the Pharisees who did not believe in Christ. These false teachers wanted to protect and receive praise for themselves by trying to convince the Galatian Christians to add Judaism's circumcision law to their faith in Christ (v.11-13).

Many Christians in this world still syncretize their faith in Christ with something from their cultural or religious backgrounds, either for a lack of understanding or to avoid persecution from their society.

What does it mean that a person who is justified by God is "a new creation" (v.15)?

Paul gives a blessing for all Christians who believe that their justification is in Christ alone. Paul had scars on his body due to persecution he received for the sake of the gospel, so that others could be saved by believing in Christ, trusting and surrendering their lives to him alone (v.16-18).

Resources

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