

GALATIANS



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GLOSSARY DEFINITIONS FROM:

Wright, Tom. Paul for Everyone: Galatians and Thessalonians. London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2004.

McKnight, Scot. Galatians. The NIV Application Commentary. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1995.

Cross, F. L., & Livingstone, E. A., eds. (2005). In The Oxford dictionary of the Christian Church (3rd ed. rev., p. 912). Oxford University Press.

INTRODUCTION

Galatians is one of (if not the) earliest Christian text to make it into the New Testament. It's a fiery letter written to a group of young churches that Paul knew well. He left them to continue his missions work elsewhere and he soon heard that the path he set them on they quickly abandoned.

For Paul, the Good News of Jesus was this: *"The one creator God had unveiled his long-awaited plan for the world in his son Jesus who was executed by the Romans but raised by God. The Good News doesn't end there either. Jesus' death and resurrection mean that God is now building a new family, a single family, a family with no divisions, no separate races, no Jews at this table and Gentiles at another."*

What was true 2,000 years ago is true today – people hate change. There were new teachers coming into these churches and telling the believers that to be a true follower of Jesus they needed to keep the Jewish customs.

Today, few of us are dealing specifically with this issue of whether or not we should be keeping Jewish customs, but we do struggle in countless other ways to be the one family of God. We are really good at excluding others and making secondary issues primary issues. We love to add on to the Gospel and say: *"You're not really a Christian unless you also -----."*

Galatians is a letter that stands the test of time because the underlying question about what it takes to be a part of the family of God is one we still ask today. For Paul the answer is it takes faith in Jesus that leads to a life empowered by the Spirit.

We're excited to dig into Galatians as a church and we hope this booklet encourages you to read the letter with us. You can read it in one sitting in about 15-20 minutes. In this booklet you'll find the text of Galatians, notes from Pastor Ryan and myself, a glossary of helpful terms, and space to take notes.



Lastly, if you'd like a quick jump start to Galatians this short video from the Bible Project will catch you up!

Blessings,

Chris Chandler
Associate Pastor

GALATIANS 1

Salutation

1 From Paul, an apostle* (not from men, nor by human agency, but by Jesus Christ* and God the Father who raised him from the dead) 2 and all the brothers with me, to the churches of Galatia*. 3 Grace and peace to you from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ, 4 who gave himself for our sins to rescue us from this present evil age according to the will of our God and Father, 5 to whom be glory forever and ever! Amen.

Occasion of the Letter

6 I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ and are following a different gospel* – 7 not that there really is another gospel, but there are some who are disturbing you and wanting to distort the gospel of Christ. 8 But even if we (or an angel from heaven) should preach a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be condemned to hell! 9 As we have said before, and now I say again, if any one is preaching to you a gospel contrary to what you received, let him be condemned to hell! 10 Am I now trying to gain the approval of people, or of God? Or am I trying to please people? If I were still trying to please people, I would not be a slave of Christ!

Paul's Vindication of His Apostleship

11 Now I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that the gospel I preached is not of human origin. 12 For I did not receive it or learn it from any human source; instead I received it by a revelation of Jesus Christ.

13 For you have heard of my former way of life in Judaism, how I was savagely persecuting the church of God and trying to destroy it. 14 I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries in my nation, and was extremely zealous for the traditions of my ancestors. 15 But when the one who set me apart from birth and called me by his grace was pleased 16 to reveal his Son in me so that I could preach him among the Gentiles, I did not go to ask advice from any human being, 17 nor did I go up to Jerusalem to see those who were apostles before me, but right away I departed to Arabia, and then returned to Damascus.

18 Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to visit Cephas and get information from him, and I stayed with him fifteen days. 19 But I saw none of the other apostles except James the Lord's brother. 20 I assure you that, before God, I am not lying about what I am writing to you! 21 Afterward I went to the regions of Syria and Cilicia. 22 But I was personally unknown to the churches of Judea that are in Christ. 23 They were only hearing, "The one who once persecuted us is now proclaiming the good news of the faith he once tried to destroy." 24 So they glorified God because of me.

*see definition in glossary

PASTOR CHRIS' NOTES

V.1 - Whenever we read epistles/letters in the New Testament we have to remember we are only getting half the conversation—like listening to one side of a phone call. We can use clues and history to try and piece the context together, but it's never perfect. In Galatians, the issue becomes pretty clear as we'll see soon.

V.4 - I love how simple and straightforward this verse is. Paul boils down what Jesus did in his death and resurrection. This is the Good News/Gospel for Paul and what he hopes the churches understand. We have been rescued in the same way the Israelites were rescued from Egypt. You could spend a lot of time just unpacking this verse!

V.6 - Paul skips his normal order here. Usually, he greets the church and gives thanks for them. No thanksgiving here! Straight to the problem and Paul is not pulling punches.

This verse also reminds me of how the Israelites turned away from God so quickly after being rescued from Egypt (Exodus 32:8). The Christians in Galatia have so quickly turned away from the one who rescued them.

V.7 - Gospel means "good news." Paul is clear, when you dig into it, this new message that others are teaching might mention Jesus, but it is not good news. The rest of the letter will show why.

V.8-9 - The NET translation we're using here misses the mark. Most translations say "let them be accursed." This "curse" or "ban" is an ancient idea also called the anathema. N.T. Wright says, "in Paul's Jewish world it was like a public health warning. When there are dangerous germs around it isn't arrogant or bossy to tell people to wash their hands." In short, Paul thinks that those who are teaching this false Gospel should be held accountable. At least not allowed to teach and possibly removed from the church.

V.10 - A question we should often ask ourselves. Who am I trying to please?

V.17 - A rare biographical moment for Paul. In verse 17 Paul says he goes to Arabia. Some have speculated that he goes to visit Mt. Sinai (the place where God gave the 10 commandments). It's also where Elijah goes when everything is falling apart and God tells Elijah to go back and anoint a new king. Perhaps Paul goes to the same places to start a new chapter and returns to declare the good news of a new King—Jesus.

GALATIANS 2

Confirmation from the Jerusalem Apostles

1 Then after fourteen years I went up to Jerusalem again with Barnabas, taking Titus along too. 2 I went there because of a revelation and presented to them the gospel that I preach among the Gentiles. But I did so only in a private meeting with the influential people, to make sure that I was not running – or had not run – in vain. 3 Yet not even Titus, who was with me, was compelled to be circumcised*, although he was a Greek. 4 Now this matter arose because of the false brothers* with false pretenses who slipped in unnoticed to spy on our freedom that we have in Christ Jesus, to make us slaves. 5 But we did not surrender to them even for a moment, in order that the truth of the gospel would remain with you.

6 But from those who were influential (whatever they were makes no difference to me; God shows no favoritism between people) – those influential leaders added nothing to my message. 7 On the contrary, when they saw that I was entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised just as Peter was to the circumcised 8 (for he who empowered Peter for his apostleship to the circumcised also empowered me for my apostleship to the Gentiles) 9 and when James, Cephas, and John, who had a reputation as pillars, recognized the grace that had been given to me, they gave to Barnabas and me the right hand of fellowship, agreeing that we would go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised. 10 They requested only that we remember the poor, the very thing I also was eager to do.

Paul Rebukes Peter

11 But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he had clearly done wrong. 12 Until certain people came from James, he had been eating with the Gentiles. But when they arrived, he stopped doing this and separated himself because he was afraid of those who were pro-circumcision. 13 And the rest of the Jews also joined with him in this hypocrisy, so that even Barnabas was led astray with them by their hypocrisy. 14 But when I saw that they were not behaving consistently with the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas in front of them all, "If you, although you are a Jew, live like a Gentile and not like a Jew, how can you try to force the Gentiles to live like Jews?"

Jews and Gentiles are Justified by Faith

15 We are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners, 16 yet we know that no one is justified* by the works of the law but by the faithfulness of Jesus Christ. And we have come to believe in Christ Jesus, so that we may be justified by the faithfulness of Christ and not by the works of the law*, because by the works of the law no one will be justified. 17 But if while seeking to be justified in Christ we ourselves have also been found to be sinners, is Christ then one who encourages sin? Absolutely not! 18 But if I build up again those things I once destroyed, I demonstrate that I am one who breaks God's law. 19 For through the law* I died to the law so that I may live to God. 20 I have been crucified with Christ, and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. So the life I now live in the body, I live because of the faithfulness of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. 21 I do not set aside God's grace, because if righteousness could come through the law, then Christ died for nothing!

*see definition in glossary

PASTOR CHRIS' NOTES

V. 1-2 - Here Paul has to go to the church leaders in Jerusalem to make sure the Gospel he is preaching is true. Can you imagine how this would feel to Paul? He's been preaching for 14 years at this point and he has to go and bend his knee to Peter. Paul does this even though it clearly annoys him (you can really pick up on the sass in vv.1-11). One of my professors used this passage as an example of what it looks like to be under leadership. Paul knows that Peter is the one who Jesus set as the leader so Paul will fall in line as long as Peter isn't contradicting the Gospel.

V.4 - "false brother" refers to Paul's opponents - who are sometimes called Judaizers. This is referring to a group of Christians who believed that followers of Jesus still needed to keep all the Levitical laws in order to be saved.

V.11-14 - This is a SHOWDOWN. Peter is the leader of the church but Paul does not bend to the leadership of Peter at this point. He calls him out for his hypocrisy. For Paul this is about the Gospel. Jesus and the Spirit are enough. I love what Scot Mcknight says, "Legalism was wrong not because laws are somehow wrong, but because legalism supplanted Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit...The essence of Christianity, then, is straightforward: it is not living by the law; it is living in trust in Christ and depending on the Holy Spirit. The Judaizers were wrong because they sacrificed Christ and the Spirit on the altar of Judaizing legalism."

V.12 - Jews were not supposed to share a table with gentiles. Peter may have agreed with Paul in theory that in Christ we are one people, but when the pressure to keep the peace is strong Peter caves.

V.15-16 - is the heart of Paul's message. Faith in Jesus saves us. Nothing else.

V.19-21 - these are some of the richest verses in Galatians. The self-giving love shown on the cross ought to be the driving force and motivator for all Jesus followers. Sadly, this is not often what the world experiences.

GALATIANS 3

Justification by Law or by Faith?

1 You foolish Galatians! Who has cast a spell on you? Before your eyes Jesus Christ was vividly portrayed as crucified! 2 The only thing I want to learn from you is this: Did you receive the Spirit by doing the works of the law or by believing what you heard? 3 Are you so foolish? Although you began with the Spirit, are you now trying to finish by human effort? 4 Have you suffered so many things for nothing? – if indeed it was for nothing. 5 Does God then give you the Spirit and work miracles among you by your doing the works of the law or by your believing what you heard?

6 Just as Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness, 7 so then, understand that those who believe are the sons of Abraham. 8 And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, proclaimed the gospel to Abraham ahead of time, saying, "All the nations will be blessed in you." 9 So then those who believe are blessed along with Abraham the believer. 10 For all who rely on doing the works of the law are under a curse, because it is written, "Cursed is everyone who does not keep on doing everything written in the book of the law." 11 Now it is clear no one is justified before God by the law, because the righteous one will live by faith*. 12 But the law is not based on faith, but the one who does the works of the law will live by them. 13 Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us (because it is written, "Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree") 14 in order that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham would come to the Gentiles, so that we could receive the promise of the Spirit by faith.

Inheritance Comes from Promises and not Law

15 Brothers and sisters, I offer an example from everyday life: When a covenant has been ratified, even though it is only a human contract, no one can set it aside or add anything to it. 16 Now the promises were spoken to Abraham and to his descendant. Scripture does not say, "and to the descendants," referring to many, but "and to your descendant," referring to one, who is Christ. 17 What I am saying is this: The law that came four hundred thirty years later does not cancel a covenant previously ratified by God, so as to invalidate the promise. 18 For if the inheritance is based on the law, it is no longer based on the promise, but God graciously gave it to Abraham through the promise.

19 Why then was the law given? It was added because of transgressions, until the arrival of the descendant to whom the promise had been made. It was administered through angels by an intermediary. 20 Now an intermediary is not for one party alone, but God is one. 21 Is the law therefore opposed to the promises of God? Absolutely not! For if a law had been given that was able to give life, then righteousness would certainly have come by the law. 22 But the scripture imprisoned everything and everyone under sin so that the promise could be given – because of the faithfulness of Jesus Christ – to those who believe.

*see definition in glossary

Sons of God Are Heirs of Promise

23 Now before faith came we were held in custody under the law, being kept as prisoners until the coming faith would be revealed. 24 Thus the law had become our guardian until Christ, so that we could be declared righteous by faith. 25 But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian. 26 For in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God through faith. 27 For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. 28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female – for all of you are one in Christ Jesus. 29 And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendants, heirs according to the promise.

PASTOR RYAN'S NOTES

V.1 - Paul is incredulous. He wants to get their attention because he's in disbelief that the Galatians are drifting away from the truth. He's not just calling them to believe, though, Paul reminds the people of what they have already known and experienced.

V.2-5 - There is a vast difference between living to fulfill the law and living to follow Christ. Even our most Christ-like acts are for nothing if they are done simply to fulfill an obligation or "check a box."

V.6-14 - Abraham's story reminds the Galatians that our right-standing before God comes in faith, not through keeping the law. Jesus accepted the curse of the law on our behalf and now gives us the spirit to show us the way.

V.23-29 - I've never thought of the law this way, but it totally makes sense.

"The law had become our guardian..."

Left to our own devices, sin would abound. With the law as our guardian, we were protected from ourselves. Like having a parent, you know?!? And when faith arrived, we no longer needed to be held back because in Christ, we are set free. We are heirs with Christ, sons and daughters of God.

Living under the law is bondage, living in faith is freedom.

GALATIANS 4

1 Now I mean that the heir, as long as he is a minor, is no different from a slave, though he is the owner of everything. 2 But he is under guardians and managers until the date set by his father. 3 So also we, when we were minors, were enslaved under the basic forces of the world. 4 But when the appropriate time had come, God sent out his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, 5 to redeem those who were under the law, so that we may be adopted as sons with full rights. 6 And because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, who calls "Abba! Father!" 7 So you are no longer a slave but a son, and if you are a son, then you are also an heir through God.

Heirs of Promise Are Not to Return to Law

8 Formerly when you did not know God, you were enslaved to beings that by nature are not gods at all. 9 But now that you have come to know God (or rather to be known by God), how can you turn back again to the weak and worthless basic forces? Do you want to be enslaved to them all over again? 10 You are observing religious days and months and seasons and years. 11 I fear for you that my work for you may have been in vain. 12 I beg you, brothers and sisters, become like me, because I have become like you. You have done me no wrong!

Personal Appeal of Paul

13 But you know it was because of a physical illness that I first proclaimed the gospel to you, 14 and though my physical condition put you to the test, you did not despise or reject me. Instead, you welcomed me as though I were an angel of God, as though I were Christ Jesus himself! 15 Where then is your sense of happiness now? For I testify about you that if it were possible, you would have pulled out your eyes and given them to me! 16 So then, have I become your enemy by telling you the truth?

17 They court you eagerly, but for no good purpose; they want to exclude you, so that you would seek them eagerly. 18 However, it is good to be sought eagerly for a good purpose at all times, and not only when I am present with you. 19 My children – I am again undergoing birth pains until Christ is formed in you! 20 I wish I could be with you now and change my tone of voice, because I am perplexed about you.

An Appeal from Allegory

21 Tell me, you who want to be under the law, do you not understand the law? 22 For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by the slave woman and the other by the free woman. 23 But one, the son by the slave woman, was born by natural descent, while the other, the son by the free woman, was born through the promise. 24 These things may be treated as an allegory, for these women represent two covenants. One is from Mount Sinai bearing children for slavery; this is Hagar. 25 Now Hagar represents Mount Sinai in Arabia and corresponds to the present Jerusalem, for she is in slavery with her children. 26 But the Jerusalem above is free, and she is our mother.

27 For it is written:

"Rejoice, O barren woman who does not bear children; break forth and shout, you who have no birth pains, because the children of the desolate woman are more numerous than those of the woman who has a husband."

28 But you, brothers and sisters, are children of the promise like Isaac. 29 But just as at that time the one born by natural descent persecuted the one born according to the Spirit, so it is now. 30 But what does the scripture say? "Throw out the slave woman and her son, for the son of the slave woman will not share the inheritance with the son" of the free woman. 31 Therefore, brothers and sisters, we are not children of the slave woman but of the free woman.

PASTOR RYAN'S NOTES

V.1-7 - The process of growing up is something we can all relate to. We have all done it. We have seen our children or our nieces and nephews or other children do it. Growing up is a process of becoming, marked by increasing independence and responsibility. As we mature and age, we gain the freedom to make our own choices.

This is the picture Paul is painting. When Jesus came, the opportunity for redemption followed. We went from being shackled to experiencing freedom and life.

The redemption of Christ brings us into the family, making us sons and daughters.

V.8-12 - When you join the family, why would you ever turn back? When you've seen the benefits of freedom, we've you've tasted the goodness of grace, why would you ever want to return to your former ways?

V.12-14 - The Galatians were a hospitable people. Through their love for Paul, they have shown the love of Christ. Accepting those whose differences challenge us helps us grow in our Christlikeness.

V.21-31 - Paul argues strongly for the Galatians to continue to live for Christ and not to consider returning to following the law. Paul doesn't say it directly here, instead he tells them a story so that they can draw their own conclusions.

Paul tells them a story and as the tension builds it becomes clear how they should choose to live. The resolution comes in verse 31, "we are not children of the slave woman but of the free woman."

GALATIANS 5

Freedom of the Believer

1 For freedom Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not be subject again to the yoke of slavery. 2 Listen! I, Paul, tell you that if you let yourselves be circumcised, Christ will be of no benefit to you at all! 3 And I testify again to every man who lets himself be circumcised that he is obligated to obey the whole law. 4 You who are trying to be declared righteous by the law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace! 5 For through the Spirit, by faith, we wait expectantly for the hope of righteousness. 6 For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision carries any weight – the only thing that matters is faith working through love.

7 You were running well; who prevented you from obeying the truth? 8 This persuasion does not come from the one who calls you! 9 A little yeast makes the whole batch of dough rise! 10 I am confident in the Lord that you will accept no other view. But the one who is confusing you will pay the penalty, whoever he may be. 11 Now, brothers and sisters, if I am still preaching circumcision, why am I still being persecuted? In that case the offense of the cross has been removed. 12 I wish those agitators would go so far as to castrate themselves!

Practice Love

13 For you were called to freedom, brothers and sisters; only do not use your freedom as an opportunity to indulge your flesh, but through love serve one another. 14 For the whole law can be summed up in a single commandment, namely, "You must love your neighbor as yourself." 15 However, if you continually bite and devour one another, beware that you are not consumed by one another. 16 But I say, live by the Spirit* and you will not carry out the desires of the flesh*. 17 For the flesh has desires that are opposed to the Spirit, and the Spirit has desires that are opposed to the flesh, for these are in opposition to each other, so that you cannot do what you want. 18 But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. 19 Now the works of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity, depravity, 20 idolatry, sorcery, hostilities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish rivalries, dissensions, factions, 21 envying, murder, drunkenness, carousing, and similar things. I am warning you, as I had warned you before: Those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God!

22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, and self-control. Against such things there is no law. 24 Now those who belong to Christ have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. 25 If we live by the Spirit, let us also behave in accordance with the Spirit. 26 Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, being jealous of one another.

*see definition in glossary

PASTOR CHRIS' NOTES

V.1 - Paul uses such strong language to make the point of Galatians clear -- don't nullify what Jesus has done for us by ADDING to the Gospel. Today, few (if any) of us are facing the exact situation Paul is addressing here, but we also can be guilty of adding things to the Gospel. This chapter offers us a good opportunity to reflect on ways we add to the Gospel today.

V.12 - Paul could be pretty witty/sarcastic in his arguments! This is an example of him being hyperbolic...probably.

V.13 - In the West "freedom" is perhaps the value we prize more than anything else. Paul here is not talking about civic freedom, but a freedom in Christ that leads us to serve others. Ben Witherington says it well: "Freedom to serve others, not freedom from others, is his point. Paul is suggesting that what the world calls freedom is just another form of slavery. Even submitting to the disciplined rigor of God's good Mosaic Law doesn't bring freedom."

V.14 - Paul will show in chapter 6 what it looks like to love others as yourself (Gal 6:1-2).

V.15-26 - It's easy to think that flesh and spirit mean physical vs non-physical, but that not Paul's point is here. For Paul "flesh" is the corruptible world and human life. "According to the flesh" to Jews basically mean "according to the way of Adam." Paul explains this more in his list of works of the flesh and fruits of the spirit.

V.22 - interesting that the fruits of the Spirit aren't just individual virtues, but "social characteristics that enhance and maintain a community" (John Barclay). It's easy to just want to focus on our own improvement, but Paul sees the Christian life as community life.

GALATIANS 6

1 Brothers and sisters, if a person is discovered in some sin, you who are spiritual restore such a person in a spirit of gentleness. 2 Pay close attention to yourselves, so that you are not tempted too. 3 Carry one another's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ. 4 For if anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself. 5 Let each one examine his own work. Then he can take pride in himself and not compare himself with someone else. 6 For each one will carry his own load.

7 Now the one who receives instruction in the word must share all good things with the one who teaches it. 8 Do not be deceived. God will not be made a fool. For a person will reap what he sows, 9 because the person who sows to his own flesh will reap corruption from the flesh, but the one who sows to the Spirit will reap eternal life from the Spirit. 10 So we must not grow weary in doing good, for in due time we will reap, if we do not give up. 11 So then, whenever we have an opportunity, let us do good to all people, and especially to those who belong to the family of faith.

Final Instructions and Benediction

12 See what big letters I make as I write to you with my own hand!

13 Those who want to make a good showing in external matters are trying to force you to be circumcised. They do so only to avoid being persecuted for the cross of Christ. 14 For those who are circumcised do not obey the law themselves, but they want you to be circumcised so that they can boast about your flesh. 15 But may I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. 16 For neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything; the only thing that matters is a new creation! 17 And all who will behave in accordance with this rule, peace and mercy be on them, and on the Israel of God.

18 From now on let no one cause me trouble, for I bear the marks of Jesus on my body.

19 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brothers and sisters. Amen.

PASTOR RYAN'S NOTES

V.1-5 - Paul closes his letter by encouraging those who have chosen to follow Christ and live in freedom to walk as though they actually are. These thoughts, though strong, are not original to Paul. The themes of living in community and encouraging others in their faith are traced back to Jesus' sermon in Matthew 5-7.

V.9-10 - It would be really nice if choosing to be healthy were a one time decision, wouldn't it? How much easier would the whole healthy thing be if it only took one day of eating salad or one trip to the gym? Instead, it's a series of choices made day-by-day, maybe even moment-by-moment.

Following Jesus is like that. It's a series of decisions that we must make, even when we are tired of making them.

V.11 - You can learn a lot about people from their handwriting. Graphologists examine handwriting and make determinations about personality or psychological tendencies based on the writing. This is a field that is more adjacent to science than actual science, but it is interesting and many of their conclusions resonate with me.

That's why Paul's comment here grabs my attention. It's likely that, to this point, Paul has been dictating his letter, writing with an assistant or amanuensis. But as the letter closes, Paul begins to write in his own handwriting. These words are the final instructions to the church at Galatia, Paul's last chance to be sure they hear what he's saying.

Paul's final words can be summarized like this: follow Jesus. Don't be pressured to be someone you aren't. Here's what matters, Jesus Christ and him crucified. Live like that's true.

HELPFUL TERMS FOR READING GALATIANS

APOSTLE -- literally 'one who is sent'. It could be used of an ambassador or official delegate. In the New Testament, it is sometimes used specifically of Jesus' inner circle of twelve; but Paul sees not only himself but several others outside the Twelve as 'apostles', the criterion being whether the person had personally seen the risen Jesus

CHRIST/MESSIAH -- Literally means "anointed one." Messiah is mostly restricted to the notion, which took various forms in ancient Judaism, of the coming king who would be David's true heir, through whom YHWH would rescue Israel from pagan enemies. There was no single template of expectations.

CIRCUMCISION -- The cutting off of the foreskin. Male circumcision was a major mark of identity for Jews, following its initial commandment to Abraham (Genesis 17). A line of thought [across scripture] speaks of 'circumcision of the heart' as God's real desire, by which one may become inwardly what the male Jew is outwardly, that is, marked out as part of God's people.

FAITH -- For Paul, 'faith' is both the specific belief that Jesus is Lord and that God raised him from the dead (Romans 10:9) and the response of grateful human love to sovereign divine love (Galatians 2:20). This faith is, for Paul, the solitary badge of membership in God's people in Christ, marking them out in a way that Torah, and the works it prescribes, can never do.

FLESH -- the label Paul uses for activity, power, and meaning outside of Jesus and the power of the Spirit. It's how life looks before we are reordered in Christ.

GOSPEL -- literally means "good news." Historically it was about victories in battle. The gospel is the good news that God in Jesus Christ has fulfilled his promises to Israel, and that a way of salvation has been opened to all.

GALATIA -- a region in modern-day Turkey. Paul mentions multiple churches in chapter 1 so the letter would have been circulated around all the churches in the region.

JUDAIZERS / FALSE BROTHERS -- In the early Church a section of Jewish Christians who regarded the OT Levitical laws as still binding on all Christians. They tried to enforce on the faithful such practices as circumcision and the distinction between clean and unclean meats. Their initial success brought upon them the strong opposition of St. Paul, much of whose writing was concerned with refuting their errors. The views of the Judaizers are explicitly cited in Acts 15:1, 5 and can be inferred from Galatians, Philippians 3 and Romans 2:25–29; 4:1–12.

JUSTIFICATION -- God's declaration, from his position as judge of all the world, that someone is in the right, despite universal sin. This declaration will be made on the last day on the basis of an entire life (Romans 2:1–16), but is brought forward into the present on the basis of Jesus' achievement, because sin has been dealt with through his cross (Romans 3:21–4:25); the means of this present justification is simply faith. This means, particularly, that Jews and Gentiles alike are full members of the family promised by God to Abraham (Galatians 3; Romans 4).

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LAW -- literally "Torah" means instruction or teaching. Many Jews in the time of Jesus and Paul regarded the Torah as being so strongly God-given as to be almost itself, in some sense, divine; some identified it with the figure of 'Wisdom'. Doing what Torah said was not seen as a means of earning God's favor, but rather of expressing gratitude, and as a key badge of Jewish identity.

LEGALISM -- From Scot McKnight, "Legalism, according to Galatians, was a religious system that combined Christianity with Mosaism (the teachings of Moses) in a way that demanded total commitment to Israel's law as the climax of one's conversion to Christ. In other words, the legalism of the Judaizers is more than a problem: it has become a new message, a different gospel.

SPIRIT -- The Spirit enabled [the disciples] to live out a holiness which the Torah could not, producing 'fruit' in their lives, giving them 'gifts' with which to serve God, the world, and the church, and assuring them of future resurrection. From very early in Christianity (e.g. Galatians 4:1-7), the spirit became part of the new revolutionary definition of God himself: 'the one who sends the son and the spirit of the son'.

WORKS OF THE LAW -- these were the "boundary markers," such as circumcision, Sabbath regulations, and food laws, by which Jews were distinguished from Gentiles.

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