

PAUL'S EPISTLE TO THE GALATIANS

Galatians is to be dated early - about A.D. 48 or 49 - which means that less than twenty years after Jesus' death and resurrection, the apostle Paul wrote a very agitated letter to the Galatian churches. Previously, he had been used of God to establish these churches in South Galatia (Acts 13-14). But now he heard that they were seeking to be circumcised (Gal.5:2, 4). This raises an immediate question: Why should being circumcised upset the apostle Paul so much? Why write that if a professing Christian lets himself get circumcised, Christ is of no value to him? (Gal.5:2) After all, Paul himself circumcised Timothy in Acts 16:3. And why get so upset because people are keeping holy days (Gal.4:10-11). Is this not to brawl over secondary matters (Rom.14:1)?

The problem in the churches in Galatia was that they had heard the gospel from the great apostle Paul, but then proceeded to modify it. The Galatians began to listen to the Judaizers who were telling them that they needed to be circumcised (Gal.1:7; 2:4-5; 4:17; 5:2-4, 10, 12; 6:12-13; see Acts 15:1), keep the Jewish holy days (Gal.4:9-11), and, by implication, maintain Jewish food laws which prevented them from eating with Gentiles (Gal.2:11-14). These agitators bewitched (3:1), persuaded (5:8), and even compelled (6:12) the Galatians into following their views. Paul is not particularly specific as to their identity (e.g. 1:7; 3:1; 5:7, 10). Yet as J. Gresham Machen wrote: 'The Epistle to the Galatians is a polemic, a fighting Epistle from beginning to end.'

It is interesting that the Galatians were originally pagans, not Jews (Gal. 4:8), but they became more Judaistic than the Jews. At this stage, it is unknown whether the Galatians were worshipping the old Celtic gods or indulging in the Hellenistic cults. Whatever the case, in reacting to a former worldview, people often over-react. In the second century Justin Martyr records that Gentile proselytes who adhered to the synagogue were much more hostile to Christians than were native Jews.

Dating Galatians

The Bible records the evangelisation of the region of South Galatia in Acts 13-14. The major towns mentioned are Antioch near Pisidia, Iconium, Lystra and Derbe. Churches were founded there during the so-called first missionary journey, undertaken by Paul and Barnabas. At this stage of its history, this might be called provincial Galatia. Galatia is also mentioned in the second missionary journey in Acts 16:6, and at the beginning of the third missionary journey in Acts 18:23. This takes in more of North Galatia, and might be referred to as ethnic Galatia. If North Galatia is the destination of Paul's epistle, it must be realised that Luke - apart from the references in Acts 16:6 and 18:23 - tells us nothing of Paul's labours there. The North Galatian towns of Ancyra, Pessinus and Tavium are simply not mentioned in the book of Acts.

The issue is how to fit in Paul's two trips to Jerusalem, as recorded in Galatians 1:18-20 and 2:1-10, with the council of Jerusalem, as recorded in Acts 15. Paul was recording all his trips to Jerusalem, so Galatians 1:18-20 has to refer to the trip mentioned in Acts 9:26-28 and Galatians 2:1-10 has to refer to Acts 11:27-30. Therefore, Galatians must be dated early, before the Jerusalem council (Acts 15), which is usually dated in A.D. 49. If Galatians is to be dated before the Jerusalem council, the epistle must have been written

to the South Galatians who were evangelised in Acts 13-14. For Paul to have omitted a reference to a visit to Jerusalem would have been fatal to his argument that he was an apostle who was directly commissioned by Christ, not by any other apostle or ecclesiastical body.

Structure

In one sense, the basic structure is fairly simple - Galatians 1-2 deal with the personal narrative; Galatians 3-4 deal with the argument for the doctrine; Galatians 5-6 deal with practical Christian living. It is easy to remember as the history (Gal.1-2), the theology (Gal.3-4), and the ethics (Gal.5-6).

The Message of Galatians

Josephus tells of King Izates of Adiabene whose conversion to Judaism at first sight seems to provide some interesting parallels with the message of Galatians. Ananias advised Izates, as a Gentile convert to Judaism, not to be circumcised in order not to offend his Gentile subjects. Certainly, the Gentiles had little love for the practice. In any case, Eleazar was not so accommodating, and told Izates that to be a true Jew, he would have to submit to circumcision. As it happens, the people of Adiabene seem to have accepted their king's circumcision without too much chagrin. This took place about the middle of the first century, about when Galatians was written. However, the resemblances are more superficial than substantial. With respect to the law, Ananias and Eleazar represent the liberal and conservative wings of Judaism. Paul's message, however, is not that of conservative Judaism softened, but of conservative Judaism fulfilled.

In the second century, Justin told the Jew Trypho that those Jews who believed in Jesus as the Christ but kept the Jewish ordinances were saved provided it was not an issue for them. That reflects the position of the apostle Paul. In itself, circumcision was nothing (Gal.5:6; 6:15). It became spiritually poisonous only when one thought that it needed to be added to the work of Christ in order to be justified.

Martin Luther was to refer to Galatians as 'my own Epistle, to which I have plighted my troth. It is my Katie von Bora.' Galatians takes us to the very heart and core of the message of God to us in Jesus Christ. Ultimately, its message is simplicity itself: Law condemns, Jesus saves.

PAUL'S COMMISSION AND MESSAGE (Galatians 1:1-5)

1. How does Paul introduce himself? (1:1) Why do you think he emphasises that his authority comes from the risen Christ? _____

2. Who was with Paul, and to whom was he writing? (1:2) _____

As a missionary, Paul was set apart by the church at Antioch (Acts 13:1-12), As an apostle, he was directly commissioned by Christ (1:1). In many ways, his credentials must have seemed rather weak: he was a latecomer, he was not one of the Twelve, he may never have laid eyes on Christ in his public ministry, and he was initially a fierce persecutor of the Christians.

'Paul' means 'little'. Augustine suggested that Saul chose the name Paul that

he might 'oppose such as plume themselves on their own works, in order that he may commend the grace of God'. Yet the main thought behind the name change may have been as much physical as spiritual. Physically, the great apostle was less than imposing (2 Cor.10:10; note that at Lystra in Acts 14:12 he was mistaken for the little messenger, Hermes, while Barnabas was mistaken for the main god, Zeus).

John Stuart Mill, referred to Paul as 'the first great corrupter of Christianity', while Friedrich Nietzsche wrote: 'The "glad tidings" were followed closely by the absolutely worst tidings - those of St Paul. Paul is the incarnation of a type which is the reverse of that of the Saviour; he is the genius in hatred, in the standpoint of hatred, and in the relentless logic of hatred.'

William Perkins: 'Seeing then the writings of the Apostles are the immediate and mere word of God, they must be obeyed as if they had been written without man by the finger of God.'

3. What does Paul wish for in the lives of the Galatians? (1:3) What is his summary of the gospel? (1:4) Who is the deliverer, and who planned it? Noting the one preposition what do you make of J. Gresham Machen calling verse 3 'the most stupendous ascription of deity to our Lord'? _____

Calvin: 'While man remains in his natural condition, he is rotten to the core and, of necessity, displeasing to God.'

Martin Luther on verse 4: 'These words are very thunder-claps from heaven against all kinds of righteousness.'

4. Granted the nature of the gospel, to whom does the glory belong? (1:5) __

Calvin: 'All pride is beaten down; man cannot boast of anything save the free grace of God.'

ONLY ONE GOSPEL (Galatians 1:6-10)

1. Look at 1 Corinthians 1:4 and Romans 1:8, and compare to Galatians 1:5-6. What is missing between Galatians 1:5-6? Given the context of Galatians why do you think this note is missing? _____

2. Why is Paul astonished? (1:6; for the word, see Mark 6:6) What has happened? _____

3. How many gospels are there? (1:7) What has happened in the Galatian churches? How quickly can churches lose the gospel? (see e.g. Judges 2:7-13) _____

Martin Luther: justification is 'a very brittle matter, because we are brittle'.

To cite Luther again, some 'unlearned idiot' can undo the work of a decade.

John Brown: 'It is a most hazardous thing to tamper with the gospel of Christ. It must neither be abridged nor enlarged.'

William Perkins: 'if Christ have a partner in the worke of justification, and salvation, he is no perfect Christ.'

William Perkins: 'All visible churches upon earth ... are subject to apostasy.'

4. What truth is Paul emphasising in verse 8-9? Why does he repeat himself? How vital is this issue? Can any being in heaven or on earth 'correct' the gospel? What is God's judgment on such people? (Lev. 27:29; Josh.6:17-18; 7:11-13, 15; Rom.9:3; 1 Cor.16:22) _____

John Chrysostom: 'That his words might not seem to be spoken in anger, or with exaggeration, or with recklessness he now repeats them.'

Joseph Smith says that an angel, Moroni, appeared to him to give him the *Book of Mormon*. Muhammad claims much the same thing about the Qur'an, that it was conveyed to him by the angel Gabriel. If the devil cannot persecute and destroy, he will undermine by pretending to correct and refine.

Martin Luther's Dominican opponent, Silvester Prierias, had sought to answer Luther's appeal to Scripture by asserting that 'He who does not accept the doctrine of the Church of Rome and pontiff of Rome as an infallible rule of faith, from which the Holy Scriptures, too, draw their strength and authority, is a heretic.'

Luther: 'That which does not teach Christ is not apostolic, even if Peter and Paul be the teachers. On the other hand, that which does teach Christ is apostolic, even if Judas, Annas, Pilate or Herod should propound it.'

Thomas Aquinas: 'I answer that nothing is to be taught except what is contained, either implicitly or explicitly, in the Gospels and epistles and Sacred Scripture.'

Billy Graham: 'If a man accepts the deity of Christ and living for Christ to the best of his knowledge, I intend to have fellowship with him in Christ.' Is that what Paul is saying?

5. What does Paul say about his motives? (1:10) What are the two possibilities? Reconcile this with 1 Corinthians 10:32-33. What is the right way and the wrong way to please people? _____

Calvin: 'This text exhorts all ministers of the Word to shut their eyes to the sinful desires of men if they wish to carry out their duty faithfully.'

PAUL'S GOSPEL COMES FROM CHRIST (Galatians 1:11-24)

1. From where did Paul obtain his gospel? (1:11-12) What other possibilities are excluded? _____

Seyoon Kim's thesis is that Paul is referring to what took place on the Damascus Road (Acts 9). To which we might add the abundance of revelations that he received about the year A.D. 43 - well after his conversion but fourteen years before he wrote 2 Corinthians (see 2 Cor.12:1-7).

Christ directly commissioned his apostles as his authoritative eyewitnesses (Acts 1:21-22; 1 Cor.9:1-2). They were then given power to perform miracles such as the Messiah himself performed (2 Cor.12:12). As such, the apostles possessed unique authority - to receive them was to receive Christ and the Father (Matt.10:40). Paul was not one of the twelve, but he claims the same authority. Christ is both the source and the object of Paul's gospel.

From here to the end of the chapter, Paul makes three main points, dealing with his life before he was converted, when he was converted, and what happened after he was converted.

2. What does Paul say about his former life in Judaism? (1:13-14) Did Paul expect the Galatians to know of his Judaistic fanaticism? _____

Note Phil.3:5-6; 1 Cor.15:9; 1 Tim.1:13-15.

3. How does Paul explain his conversion? (1:15-16) _____

In verses 13-14 it is all 'I' - I was persecuting, I was advancing, I was zealous. In verses 15-16 it is all God - God set apart, God called, God revealed, God commissioned.

4. What did Paul not do immediately after his conversion and commissioning? (1:16b-17) Where did he go, and where to after that? What point is he making? _____

J. B. Lightfoot: 'A veil of thick darkness hangs over St Paul's visit to Arabia.'

James Haldane: 'How he was engaged in Arabia it is vain to conjecture.'

Lightfoot, Gresham Machen, Hendriksen, Boice, Ridderbos, Cole, Stott, and John Brown all say that Paul was communing with God in the rugged and barren regions of Arabia. To cite William Blake:

Great things are done when men and mountains meet;

This is not done by jostling in the street.

In 391 Augustine was selected to be the presbyter at Hippo, but he first asked for and was granted leave to study the Scriptures. Augustine recorded: 'I feel like a man who is ignorant of the very nature of an oar but is suddenly called upon to act as mate on a vessel.'

John Chrysostom, Martin Luther, William Perkins, Ben Witherington III, Philip

Graham Ryken, Leon Morris, Ronald Fung, F. F. Bruce, and Seyoon Kim are more likely to be correct, when they say that Paul was visiting the populated areas and preaching the gospel. That would fit in with Luke's recording that immediately after his conversion, Paul proclaimed Jesus in the synagogues, saying, 'He is the Son of God' (Acts 9:20). The king was Aretas IV (9 B.C.-A.D. 40), and Paul seems to have antagonised him through his preaching (see 2 Cor.11:32-33).

5. What happened three years after Paul's conversion? (1:18-20) Whom did he see, and for how long was he there? Whom did he not see? Why does Paul add the oath in verse 20? _____

This visit is described in Acts 9:25-30.

Epiphanius said the siblings of Jesus were children of Joseph by a previous marriage. Jerome made the alternative claim that they were actually cousins, children of Alphaeus (who is often identified with Clopas) and another Mary. About A.D. 380 Helvidius put forward the obvious interpretation that James and the other brothers of Jesus were actually children of Joseph and Mary, born after Jesus, the firstborn (see Matt.13:55). That also appears to have been the view of Tertullian. A major difficulty with it is that Jesus' dying committal of the care of Mary to His disciple John rather than to Mary's other children (John 19:25-27).

Regarding Paul's meeting with Peter, C. H. Dodd remarked: 'We may presume they did not spend all the time talking about the weather.'

Regarding oaths, see Rom. 1:9; 9:1; 2 Cor. 1:23; 11:31; 1 Thess. 2:5.

6. Where did Paul go after Jerusalem? (1:21) What did mean for how well he was known in Judea? (1:22) What was the response of the Judean churches? (1:23-24) _____

The renowned nineteenth century liberal scholar, Wilhelm Wrede, asserted that Paul was 'the second founder of Christianity', and he obscured the first founder, Jesus. Liberal theology leads away from Paul, and away from Christ.

ALL APOSTLES OF GRACE (Galatians 2:1-10)

On one occasion at Haverhill in Suffolk in the nineteenth century Charles Spurgeon arrived at the chapel to find that his grandfather was already in the pulpit and preaching to the congregation. When the old man saw young Spurgeon, he said, 'Here comes my grandson! He may preach the gospel better than I can, but he cannot preach a better gospel'. Paul too is saying that his gospel is the same as that preached by Peter, James and John.

Paul's second visit as a Christian is this one in Galatians 2:1-10, and it is mentioned in Acts 11:27-30.

1. What did Paul do after fourteen years? (2:1) With whom did he come? ____

Titus is not mentioned in Acts, but he was much involved with the Corinthian church and with the Jerusalem collection (2 Cor.2:12-13; 7:5-16; 8:16-24; 9:1-5; 12:18)

Jews counted part of a year as a year so the fourteen years could refer to fourteen years (or so) after his conversion (as Ramsay, Morris, Stott, Barnett, and Longenecker think) or fourteen years (or so) after the trip mentioned in Galatians 1:18 (as Lightfoot, Machen, Ridderbos, Boice, Hendriksen, and Witherington think). It is impossible to be certain, but the former view is favoured by the chronology.

2. Why did they go up to Jerusalem? (2:2) Paul has maintained his apostolic independence, but not his apostolic isolation. Of what does he seek to be reassured? _____

Paul does not mention the Jerusalem decrees of Acts 15 in the epistle to the Galatians. He never mentions them, even in the letters that can definitely be dated after the Jerusalem council where its decisions might have been expected to have made some impact (e.g. Romans 14-15; 1 Corinthians 8-10). As one with apostolic authority, he seems to have felt no need to refer to a council that in any case may have only been adopting an interim measure.

Michael Goulder tries to revive the old Tübingen view that Paul and Peter preached different gospels, so he writes of Paul's 'ill temper' here. He paints a picture of what he calls 'Paulines' (e.g. Mark and John) and Jewish Christians (e.g. Matthew) hating each other with 'equal ferocity'. Napoleon is supposed to have said that 'In politics, an absurdity is not a handicap.' Neither is it necessarily a liability in critical biblical scholarship.

Don Carson captures the right nuances regarding 'the men of repute': 'Paul wants to use language flexible enough to show respect without betraying subservience'.

F. F. Bruce: 'His commission was not derived from Jerusalem, but it could not be executed effectively except in fellowship with Jerusalem.'

3. What does Paul say about Titus, who was with him? (2:3) What would this indicate? _____

Luther and Stott say that Titus was deliberately taken along as a test case, but it is more likely that he proved to be a test case.

It is virtually certain that Paul is saying that Titus was not circumcised, not that he was circumcised although he did not have to be (as G. S. Duncan and D. W. B. Robinson tried to maintain).

4. Who intervened at this time, and how did they get into the Christian community? (2:4-5; note 2 Peter 2:1) What were they seeking to do? What was the response of Paul and Titus to them? What effect did Paul and Titus consider that this should have on the Galatians? How is this freedom related to the truth of the gospel? _____

The NEB calls them 'sham Christians'; J. B. Phillips says 'pseudo-Christians'. William Perkins: 'The time when a shippe sinketh, we often observe: but the time when it first drew water, we doe not.'

Circumcision was not an issue that had emerged during Christ's public ministry on earth. Christ disputed with the Jews over his claims to deity (e.g. John 5:16-18), his attitude to the temple (John 2:13-22), the Sabbath (Matt.12:1-8), and Old Testament food laws (Mark 7:1-23), but not specifically the issue of circumcision. Having said that, Christ does praise the faith of the Roman centurion in Matthew 8:10, and he would not have been circumcised. Luther said that the early reformers would have kept the papal feasts were they not compelled to do so.

Calvin: 'Peace and friendship amongst men is a wonderful thing ... At the same time, however, God's truth ought to be so precious to us that even if we had to set the whole world on fire in order to promote it, we should be only too willing to do so!'

5. What did Peter, James and John mean to Paul in the sense of affecting his standing as an apostle? (2:6) In a rough sort of way, how were the apostolic fields divided up? (2:7-8) How did Peter, James and John respond to Paul and Barnabas? (2:9) Were the apostles teaching different messages? (note 1 Cor.15:11) _____

'Cephas' is Peter, and James is the Lord's brother, not the brother of John. God literally 'does not receive man's face' (Lev.19:15; Deut.1:17; 10:17; Job 13:10; Acts 10:34; Rom.2:11; Eph.6:9).

Solomon's temple was noted for two pillars, named Jachin and Boaz (2 Chron.3:15-17), installed in front of it. However, the new covenant church was not to be seen as having three prominent pillars.

Having given nothing to the false brothers in verses 3-5, he gained nothing from the true apostles in verses 6-9.

Josephus calls the right hand of fellowship 'the highest assurance of security'. Galatians 1:7 spoke of one gospel; Galatians 2:7 speaks of two spheres.

6. What one obligation did the three 'pillars' seek from Paul? (2:10) What was Paul's attitude to this? How does grace lead to works? _____

According to Acts 11:29-30, the collection was the reason for Paul's being there in the first place. Apparently the Galatians proved to be responsive in helping Paul with his collection for the Judean saints (see 1 Cor.16:1).

Looking after the poor is a very important biblical injunction (see Lev.19:9-10; Deut.24:10-22; Gal.6:10; Rom.15:26-27), but it is not the gospel.

Luther: 'After the preaching of the Gospel, the office and charge of a true and faithful pastor is, to be mindful of the poor.'

Paul's eagerness to remember the poor is a reflection of two things: his compassion and his desire to promote a fellowship of love between Jewish and Gentile Christians.

CONTENDING FOR SALVATION BY GRACE (Galatians 2:11-14)

The 'wounds' from Antioch with Barnabas (2:13) may have also been a factor in the post-council dispute between the two great figures of the first missionary journey (Acts 15:36-41).

Peter had come to Antioch - which may be that referred to in Acts 12:17 as 'another place' - and begun to withdraw from eating with Gentile Christians.

Peter had already received the vision of Acts 10.

1. What happened when Peter came to Antioch? (2:11) What did Paul think of him? _____

2. What had Peter been doing? When did he stop, and why? (2:12) _____

3. What followed after that? (2:13) How does Paul view them? _____

4. What did Paul do? (2:14) Why was it all played out in public? What is Paul's argument to Peter? _____

John Brown says that the eating refers to ordinary meals, not the Lord's Supper. F. F. Bruce considers that the Lord's Supper is meant, and Alan Cole is certain: 'it cannot have failed to include the Lord's Supper'.

Christmas Evans wandered for about five years into 'the frigid zone' of Sandemanianism, the belief that faith was simply the intellectual acceptance that Christ died for sinners.

Chrysostom and Jerome said that the whole dispute was stage-managed, and that Peter and Paul were play-acting. In response, Augustine thought that 'This shatters and diminishes the authority of the Scriptures.'

Calvin says: 'And here the Roman Papacy is struck down by another

thunderbolt.'

'Rabbi' Duncan: 'I cannot love a man and love his sin.'

Luther: 'If Peter fell, I may likewise fall. If he rose again, I may also rise again.'

In the 250s the bishop in Rome, Stephen, used to receive schismatics by the laying on of hands; there was no repeat baptism. Cyprian, the bishop of Carthage, argued that any baptisms performed outside the Church were not true baptisms, so returning schismatics were baptized again (although, of course, in Cyprian's view, this was their first and only valid baptism).

Cyprian pointed out that when Peter and Paul argued at Antioch (Gal.2:11-14), Peter 'did not claim insolently any prerogative for himself nor make any arrogant assumptions nor say that he had the primacy and ought to be obeyed'. Cyprian tilted at Stephen: 'For neither does any of us set himself up as a bishop of bishops, nor by tyrannical terror does any compel his colleague to the necessity of obedience; since every bishop, according to the allowance of his liberty and power, has his own proper right of judgment, and can no more be judged by another than he himself can judge another.'

Arriving in India in 1793, William Carey utterly refused to compromise with the Hindu caste system. Brahmins who professed conversion to Christ were not accepted as genuine converts unless they broke bread with all, including the lower castes. Carey knew the implications of salvation by grace.

JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH (Galatians 2:15-21)

The NIV and the NKJV treat the next section, Galatians 2:15-21, as a part of what Paul said to Peter when he administered this rebuke. This is also the view of John Brown, Albert Barnes, J. Gresham Machen, and Mark Seifrid. However, the ESV, JB, RSV, NRSV, and REB treat verses 15-21 as another section. Alas, the Greeks had not invented quotation marks, so there is some uncertainty here. F. F. Bruce suggests: 'He probably summarizes his rebuke to Peter and then develops its implications, thus passing smoothly from the personal occasion to the universal principle.'

For whatever reason, Paul does not simply cite Mark 7:15-19 to Peter, and so end the debate.

1. Who are the 'we' in verse 15? What Paul say about them? Despite being Jews, what do they know, both negatively and positively? (2:16) Can there be justification through works of the law? _____

Psalm 143:1-2 seems to be the basis for Paul's statement in verse 16, with 'no one living' becoming 'no flesh', probably to emphasise the weakness and corruption of fallen humanity. The Psalmist had prayed for salvation by God's righteousness, even though we human beings are not righteous.

Martin Luther: 'Most necessary it is that we should know this article well, teach it unto others, and beat it into their heads continually.'

The phrase 'works of the law' occurs eight times in Paul's letters (Gal.2:16 thrice, 20; 3:22; Rom.3:22, 26; Phil.3:9).

Calvin: 'It is devilish blasphemy to presume that we are virtuous when we do

not even possess a single drop of righteousness.'

2. What misunderstanding might come from believing in justification by faith? (2:17) What is Paul's immediate response to this? _____

Paul often had to deal with false inferences drawn from his teaching (see Gal.5:13; Rom.3:7-8; 6:15).

Calvin: 'The law on its own brings a curse, but Jesus Christ brings the remedy.'

3. What point is Paul making in verses 18-19a? What did the law do to him, and for what purpose? _____

Paul speaks of himself, and so in effect protects Peter from criticism. To go back to observing the Jew-Gentile distinctions of the law would imply the new age of the Messiah had not come.

When a person becomes a Christian, he dies both to sin (Rom.6:1-2) and to law (Rom.7:4-6). Paul's testimony is that he died to the law to live to God in Christ Jesus (see too Rom.6:10-11; 14:7-8; 2 Cor.5:14-15).

Robert Traill: 'faith is a lost, helpless condemned sinner's casting himself on Christ for salvation.' Paul did not reject good works as such, but rejected good works in justification.

4. What does Paul say about himself as a Christian? (2:19b-20; see Eph.5:25) What has happened to him, and how does he now live? How does he describe Christ? _____

Union with Christ is basic to the whole Christian doctrine of salvation.

Luther advises us to read the 'me' in Galatians 2:20 with vehemence.

In 1738, just before Charles Wesley was converted, he wrote: 'I spent some hours this evening with Martin Luther [i.e. with Luther's commentary on Galatians], who was greatly blessed to me, especially his conclusion of the second chapter. I laboured, waited, and prayed to feel "who loved *me* and gave himself for *me*."'

C. S. Lewis: 'It is when I turn to Christ, when I give myself up to His Personality, that I first begin to have a real personality of my own.'

Augustine: 'For where I am not I, I am more happily I.'

Robert Traill: 'No man can be a believer on Jesus Christ, but he that despairs of righteousness by his own doings.'

5. If we hold to justification through keeping the law, what are we actually saying? (2:21) Explain how this would be. _____

Either the cross accomplishes everything or it accomplishes nothing. It is grace or works, not both (Rom.11:6). We do not have two saviours. That which condemns cannot justify.

Paul engages in a word play here - the one Greek word for 'in vain' can also be translated 'freely' as in Romans 3:24.

Calvin: 'Do we wish to come to him? Then let us come empty-handed, for whatever we bring to him will be like smoke in our hands.'

Robert Traill: 'The righteousness of God is such an awful thing, that no natural man can understand it, but he must be presently confounded.'

John 'Rabbi' Duncan: 'There is nothing but Christ between us and hell; and, thanks be to God, we need nothing else.'

APPEALING TO EXPERIENCE (Galatians 3:1-5)

John Stott: 'Experience must never be the criterion of truth; truth must always be the criterion of experience.' Nevertheless, Paul seeks to prove his point by appealing to both experience (3:1-5) and Scripture (3:6-18).

1. How does Paul address the Galatians? (3:1a) How exasperated is he? Reconcile Matthew 5:22 and Luke 24:25. _____

Leon Morris translates the word as 'mindless'. The Galatians were 'without nous'. J. B. Phillips takes a few liberties with the text: 'O you dear idiots of Galatia'. 'O thoughtless Galatians,' says John Wesley; 'You witless Galatians!' says Tom Wright. 'O senseless Galatians,' says Aquinas.

Calvin: 'Let us not be like the cow who, having produced much milk, then breaks the churn and spills its contents!'

2. What does Paul ask? (3:1b) What had the Galatians experienced in hearing the gospel preached to them? (3:1c) Should they have known better? _____

Alan Cole has 'hoodwinked'.

Luther and Calvin say that Paul 'painted' Christ crucified before them. His preaching was a vivid verbal picture whereas the Judaizers were like graffiti artists let loose on a masterpiece. J. B. Lightfoot says that it was not a case of painting but of 'placarding' in public.

William Perkins used to say of preaching: 'the plainer, the better'.

Were you there when they crucified my Lord? asks the old song. Paul was not so much asking about the Galatians' conviction of sin ('Can you see yourselves at Calvary?') but their grasp of what Christ was achieving on the cross ('Can you by faith see Christ crucified in the place of sinners?').

Someone (in the singular; in 5:12 we find the plural) had bewitched or hypnotised the Galatians.

3. How does a Christian receive the Holy Spirit? (3:2) Why does Paul chastise the Galatians? (3:3) If we began in the Spirit, can the flesh mature us? _____

All Christians have the Holy Spirit (cf. Rom.8:9).

Calvin: 'faith looks at nothing but the mercy of God, and Christ dead and risen.'

From here on, the epistle to the Galatians will greatly emphasise the role of the Holy Spirit (3:2-3; 4:5-6; 5:16-18, 22-23, 25; 6:8).

By 'flesh', Paul does not mean 'human effort', as the NIV has it. Paul is not saying that sanctification is by faith, as in the original Keswick teaching, where one was supposedly consecrated by simply 'letting go and letting God'. The great apostle is equating 'flesh' and 'law' (note 'desires of the flesh' in 5:16 and 'law' in 5:18).

John Stott: 'Grow in Christ, yes! Additions to Christ, never!'

On 20 December 1784 Charles Simeon rode over to Hinxworth where the veteran evangelist, John Wesley, was conducting meetings. Simeon asked Wesley a few questions: 'Pray Sir, do you feel yourself a depraved creature, so depraved that you would never have thought of turning to God if God had not first put it into your heart?'

'Yes, I do indeed.'

'And do you utterly despair of recommending yourself to God by anything that you can do; and look for salvation solely through the blood and righteousness of Christ?'

'Yes, solely through Christ.'

'But, Sir, supposing you were first saved by Christ, are you not somehow or other to save yourself afterwards by your own works?'

'No; I must be saved by Christ from first to last.'

'Allowing then that you were first turned by the grace of God, are you not in some way or other to keep yourself by your own power?'

'No.'

'What then, are you to be upheld every hour and every moment by God, as much as an infant in its mother's arms?'

'Yes, altogether.'

'And is all your hope in the grace and mercy of God to preserve you unto his heavenly kingdom?'

'Yes, I have no hope but in him.'

This satisfied Simeon that Wesley owned that salvation is all of God's grace from beginning to end.

4. What does Paul mean by the question in verse 4? _____

The RSV has: 'Did you experience so many things in vain?' At first sight, this fits the context better - and Machen, Witherington, Betz, Cole, Longenecker, and Morris favour it - but it is not the usual meaning of the word.

5. What two things does God do amongst them? (3:5) What are the two possible options? Which is the true one? _____

The ESV and the NIV omit to translate the 'therefore', but Paul is drawing this section to a conclusion so it is better to translate it. To ask Paul's question is to answer it.

Martin Luther refers only to the miracles of a new life and fruitful living - and indeed they are the greatest miracles. But this was still the age of apostolic miracles done in the name of Jesus the Messiah.

There is a right appeal to Christian experience.

ABRAHAM BEFORE GOD (Galatians 3:6-9)

Paul sets out to make his case from the Old Testament, and he will remain on this point until the end of chapter 4.

1. Why does Paul begin verse 6 with 'just as'? What is the connection between Abraham (3:6) and the Galatians (3:1-5)? How was Abraham counted as righteous before God? (3:6, citing Gen.15:6; see also Rom.4:3) ___

One of the Qumran texts from the Dead Sea Scrolls, known as the Damascus Document, declares of Abraham: 'he was accounted a friend of God because he kept the commandments of God' (CD 3:2). Jubilees 23:10 says: 'For Abraham was perfect in all his deeds with the Lord, and well-pleasing in righteousness all the days of his life.' Sirach says that Abraham 'kept the law of the Most high' (Sir.44:20). Paul had to deal with Abraham, and in Galatians he mentions him nine times.

Contrary to much evangelical opinion, it is clear that Genesis 15:6 is not referring to Abraham's conversion. Abraham was already a believer when he obeyed God, and he left Haran for an unknown Promised Land, armed only with the somewhat unlikely promises of God (Gen.12). He did all this 'by faith' (Heb.11:8-9).

In Psalm 32, David can describe forgiveness from his great sins of adultery and murder by proxy in terms of justification. He writes: 'Blessed is the man against whom the Lord counts no iniquity' (Ps.32:2; see Rom.4:5-8). So Genesis 15 does not describe Abraham's first-time justification but the on-going effects of his justification.

Martin Luther: 'a Christian man is both righteous and a sinner, holy and profane, an enemy of God and yet a child of God.'

Abraham, from one perspective, was a frail man who originally served other gods (Josh.24:2). Even as a believer, he capitulated to fear on more than one occasion (Gen. 12 and 20), and listened to his wife's ungodly advice (Gen.16). But he was accounted righteous in the sight of a righteous God by faith in the promises of God.

2. Who are the sons of Abraham? (3:7) What did the Scripture do

beforehand? (3:8; Gen.12:3; 18:18; 22:18) Whom would God justify? How? What gospel was preached to Abraham? What great error did the Jews make in debating with Jesus? (cf. John 8:33, 39, 44). When Zacchaeus was converted, what did Jesus declare him to be (Luke 19:9)? _____

3. Augustine is often paraphrased as saying 'what Scripture says, God says'. In fact, in his *Confessions*, Augustine thought of God saying to him: 'Man, O man, what my Scripture says, I say.' Illustrate this from Galatians 3:8; and Romans 9:17 and Galatians 3:22. _____

4. What, then, is Paul's conclusion? (3:9) What continuity is there between Abraham and the Gentile believers? _____

The way of salvation is the same in both Testaments, as Paul was to explain at some length in Romans 4. There cannot be one way of justification for Abraham, and another way for the Galatians.

John Flavel: 'If Abraham's faith be not in your hearts, it will be no advantage that Abraham's blood runs in your veins.'

*No more, my God, I boast no more
Of all the duties I have done;
I quit the hopes I held before,
To trust the merits of Thy Son (Isaac Watts).*

THE MEANING OF THE CROSS (Galatians 3:10-14)

J. Gresham Machen on the doctrine of the atonement: 'It is mysterious, but it is not intricate; it is wonderful, but it is so simple that a child can understand.'

1. What does Paul say about those who are of the works of the law? (3:10) What is his authority for saying this? (see Deut.27:26) _____

Deuteronomy 27:26 was originally the last of the twelve curses pronounced on Mt Ebal.

The Roman Catholic Council of Trent declared in 1547: 'If anyone says that the commandments of God are, even for one that is justified and constituted in grace, impossible to observe, let him be anathema.' The assumption seems to be that God does not command impossibilities, but God is not obliged to trim His demands to our abilities (although note Matthew 19:8 and

Deuteronomy 24:1-4).

Calvin: 'it is accidental that the law should curse, though at the same time perpetual and inseparable. The blessing which it offers us is excluded by our depravity, so that only the curse remains.'

Samuel Rutherford: 'God punishes sin by no necessity of nature. Nay, if He chose, He might leave it altogether unpunished.' That is not so. He cannot look on wickedness (Hab.1:13); He cannot deny himself (2 Tim.2:13); and He cannot lie (Heb.6:18; Tit.1:2). He cannot dwell with unatoned for sin.

Medieval sophists claimed that:

*God will no more require of man,
Than of himself perform he can.*

Not so - God demands more than our best; He demands complete and total obedience. James 2:10 says: 'For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become accountable for all of it.'

2. How are we not justified? (3:11) What text does Paul cite? (Habakkuk 2:4)

Habakkuk 2:4 is cited three times in the New Testament - here in Galatians 3:11, and also in Romans 1:17 and Hebrews 10:38.

Luther: 'the promise is not apprehended by working, but by believing.'

William Perkins: 'For faith doth not cause, effect, or procure our justification and salvation, but as the beggar's hand, it receives them, being wholly wrought and given of God.'

3. What other verse does Paul cite? (3:12; Lev.18:5) What does this teach? What are the two possible ways of salvation? (3:11-12) How are they brought together? _____

Luther: 'Indeed it is true that a man doing these things shall live in them, that is, shall be blessed: but such a one cannot be found.'

Calvin: 'This is a wonderful promise, but what good will it do us?'

4. How does Christ redeem sinners? (3:13) What is the curse of sin? What verse does Paul cite? (Deut.21:23) _____

Quintilian: 'Whenever we crucify the condemned, the most crowded roads are chosen, where the most people can see and be moved by this terror. For penalties relate not so much to retribution as to their exemplary effect.'

Augustine says that in his day some of his own people were unduly fearful about this passage and thought that it was so contrary to piety that it had to refer not to the Lord but to Judas his betrayer!

'Rabbi' Duncan: the cross is to be understood as 'damnation taken lovingly.'

Beth Hutt: 'the wrath of love did smite him'.

Luther even spoke of Christ's becoming 'the greatest transgressor, murderer, adulterer, thief, rebel, and blasphemer, that ever was or could be in the world' - language which made Albert Barnes cringe, but which pungently

makes the point about what it meant for Christ to be forsaken by God. Martin Luther wrote of the 'sweet exchange' between Christ and the sinner: 'Therefore, my dear brother, learn Christ and Him crucified; learn to pray to Him despairing of yourself, saying, "You, Lord Jesus, are my righteousness and I am Your sin; You have taken on Yourself what You were not, and have given to me what I am not.'

5. What results from this? (3:14) How is there a continuity between Abraham and Christ? How is the blessing received? To whom is it given? _____

Ephesians 2:14-18 says: 'For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility by abolishing the law of commandments and ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility. And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near. For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father.'

LAW AND PROMISE (Galatians 3:15-18)

The Sinaitic covenant obviously has some similarities with a covenant of works (cf. 2 Cor.3:6-9; Heb.8:9), yet to understand the Sinaitic and the Adamic covenants in the same way is to misunderstand them.

Martin Luther: 'unless the Gospel be plainly discerned from the law, the true Christian doctrine cannot be kept sound and uncorrupt.'

1. What human example does Paul use? (3:15) What point does he make from that? _____

Paul often speaks using a human example (cf. Rom.3:5; 6:19; 1 Cor.9:8; 2 Cor.11:17; also Heb.6:16).

In everyday life one cannot add to a covenant or testament or will (RSV, NEB). In Hebrews 9:15-17 there is a play on the word 'covenant' which can also mean 'testament'.

2. What was given to Abraham? (3:16) To whom else? _____

Paul plays on the ambiguity of the word 'seed' or 'offspring' (*sperma* in Greek). It is similar to a word like 'sheep', which can be singular or plural. 'Seed' is plural in 3:29, and Rom.4:13-18; 9:7). The Good News Bible has 'descendant' in Galatians 3:16, which is confusing because it is not ambiguous. The seed from Abraham will be a multitude as numerous as the dust of the earth, the stars of the heavens, and the sand of the seashore (Gen.13:15-16; 15:18; 17:8; 22:18; 26:4; 28:14). However, the seed will culminate in the coming of the Messiah, who is both Lord of Abraham and descendant of Abraham. Similarly, the seed of David refers to many kings of

Judah and yet would culminate in the one great king, the Messiah (2 Sam.7:12-16) who would be both Lord of David and Son of David (Ps.110:1; Matt.22:41-46).

All promises are fulfilled in Christ (2 Cor.1:20).

As a parallel example, Psalm 8 is fulfilled in some way for all people, whether Christians or not. But the New Testament applies this Psalm to Christ first in 1 Corinthians 15:27 and Hebrews 2:6-8.

3. What came first: the promise to Abraham or the law to Moses? (3:17) How far apart were they separated? What can the law not do to the promise? _____

Note Exodus 12:40. For well over four hundred years God's covenant people worshipped the Lord without any tabernacle, with no detailed offerings, and no priests; indeed, with nothing but the promises that God gave to Abraham. The covenant with Moses did not annul the covenant with Abraham but continued it and gave it another dimension (cf. Ex. 2:24-25; 6:2-8).

4. What would it mean if the inheritance came by the law? (3:18) What would this do to the promises to Abraham? _____

WHERE DOES THE LAW FIT IN? (Galatians 3:19-25)

Looking over Galatians 3:1-18, one might get the impression that the law of Moses is being disparaged. The law does not confer the Spirit, faith in Christ does (3:1-5); the law did not justify Abraham, faith did (3:6-9); the law brings a curse to all who rely on it while Christ brings righteousness, blessing and life (3:10-14); and the law came after the promises to Abraham and in no way added to them or annulled them (3:15-18). Hence the questions: 'Why then the law?' (3:19a) and 'Is the law then contrary to the promises of God?' (3:21a)

1. What question does Paul raise? (3:19) What is his first answer? Who would come? (see 3:16; the ESV's 'offspring' is probably not as good as 'seed') What would He do to the law? _____

John Brown: 'The promise is the principal transaction, the law is secondary and subservient.'

The law was given by 'messengers' in the view of Ambrosiaster, by which he means human messengers such as Moses, Joshua and John the Baptist. But angels are said to have mediated the law at Sinai in Deuteronomy 33:2; Psalm 68:17; Acts 7:38, 53; Hebrews 2:2. The law was mediated to Moses via angels, but Christ is divine, and hence above the angels (see Heb.1).

2. What is Paul's point in verse 20? _____

The intermediary or 'mediator' is said by Augustine and Calvin to be Christ (as 1 Tim.2:5), but it is surely Moses (as in Heb.8:6). Paul is dealing with the Mosaic covenant, not the new covenant in Christ.

One wit has quipped that there are as many interpretations of verse 20 as there were years between the promise and the law! James Montgomery Boice thinks that this is probably the most obscure verse in the entire New Testament, while John Brown goes further, and calls it 'one of the most perplexing passages in the whole "Book of God."'

Charles Simeon confessed that he looked at difficult passages in the apostle Paul 'as a dog looks at a hedgehog: he knows not what to do with it'.

The law requires two parties whereas the promise is simply given by God.

Zechariah 14:9 says: 'And the Lord will be king over all the earth. On that day the Lord will be one and his name one.'

3. What is Paul's next question? (3:21) What is his emphatic answer? What does he say about the capabilities of the law? _____

In the light of what has said previously, 3:21 might strike us as surprising - rather like Romans 3:31.

4. What has the Scripture (i.e. God) done? (3:22) For what purpose? How do we receive this? _____

5. What does Paul mean by 'before faith came'? (3:23) What took place then? In what condition were God's people? What would happen later? _____

Faith is equated with Christ.

Alan Cole says that they were 'in protective custody'. It was all rather tedious and onerous - bulls, goats, lambs, holy days, the lighting of candles, food laws, circumcision, priests, and the temple upkeep. Imagine making the journey to Jerusalem three times a year for the great Jewish feasts of Passover, Weeks and Booths!

The NIV paraphrases here, and refers to the law as being put in charge and exercising supervision. The word is actually a noun, and is variously translated - as 'schoolmaster' (KJV, Calvin, William Perkins), 'custodian' (RSV, ESV, Dunn), 'disciplinarian' (NRSV), 'baby-sitter' (Wright), 'supervisory guardian' (Longenecker), 'a child-custodian' (Boice) or 'a strict governess' (J. B. Phillips). Augustine even writes of 'the terrifying schoolmaster'.

6. How is the law described? (3:24) How was it our guardian? For what purpose? _____

There is no need for the pedagogue, the tutor, the slave attendant, today; he was only ever meant to be temporary. This is often understood as meaning that the law was given to bring us to Christ or lead us to Christ (NKJV, NIV, Alan Cole). In Bunyan's allegory, the law sweeps a dusty room but does not cleanse it. Indeed, there is so much dust flying about that Christian almost chokes, until the damsel sprinkles the room with the water of the gospel.

This makes for good theology (e.g. Rom.3:20) but the context favours the view that the law was given 'until Christ came' (ESV, RSV, JB, NEB, GNB, John Brown, F. F. Bruce, Richard Longenecker, Hans Betz).

7. What does Paul mean by 'now that faith has come'? (3:25) What is the result? _____

The law is not to be rejected (as with Marcion), nor embraced (as with the Judaizers) nor allegorised (as with Philo). Rather, it is used by God for 'leading into' Christ; one historical period is to give way to another, to the last stage of God's revelation in the coming of the Messiah.

Paul often saw patterns in history, and in the life of Christ, reflected in the spiritual experience of believers (e.g. Rom.6:10-11). One can detect a parallel between the various aspects of the Christian faith - the historical and what the Puritans called 'the experimental'.

'In speaking of a new covenant, he [God] makes the first one obsolete. And what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away' (Heb.8:13).

In a mysterious way, the law uncovers sin (Rom.3:20), arouses sin (Rom.7:5, 8) and restrains sinners (Gal.3:12, 23; 1 Tim.1:8-10).

Timothy George compares the law to chemotherapy - it kills and is not able to confer life, but to the stricken cancer patient it is necessary for life.

Calvin: 'God granted us his law in order to pierce us through with a sword, as it were, and leave us mortally wounded to constrain us to take refuge in him.' Rabbi Hillel said that 'the more Torah, the more life'. Paul says that the law is God's law but it cannot bring life because we are sinners (Rom. 3:20; 4:15; 5:20; 7:7). Hunger is the best cook.

This does not mean that *only* the law is capable of convicting of sin. Both law and gospel play their part in God's gracious plan of salvation. Peter was once convicted of his sinfulness by a display of Christ's power and goodness rather than an exposition of the law (see Luke 5:1-8). In 1746 David Brainerd testified of his experience amongst the American Indians: 'It was remarkable, from time to time, that when I was favored with any special freedom, in discoursing of the "ability and willingness of Christ to save sinners," and "the need in which they stood of such a Savior;" there was then the greatest appearance of divine power in awakening numbers of secure souls, promoting convictions begun, and comforting the distressed.'

Luther, John Stott, F. F. Bruce, and Philip Ryken apply this both to history and to personal spiritual life, and that is true - the law does imprison the individual soul. Charles Spurgeon: 'It is the black dog to fetch the sheep to the shepherd, the burning heat which drives the traveller to the shadow of the great rock in a weary land.'

The 'paidagogos' was the slave attendant who restrained and disciplined the child from about the age of six until he grew up and reached about eighteen. Alexander the Great, for example, is well-known for his deep attachment to his aged pedagogue, Lysimachus. He led, taught, admonished, helped, ruled, protected, guarded, and disciplined the child in his care. An early second-century papyrus refers in a proverbial way to the 'paidagogos' as a 'lover of fault-finding'. One of their favoured methods of discipline was to twist the youngster's ear.

Plato: 'And of all wild creatures, the child is the most intractable; for insofar as it, above all others, possesses a fount of reason that is yet uncurbed, it is a treacherous, sly and most indolent creature. That is why the child must be strapped up, as it were, with many bridles - first, when he leaves the care of nurse and mother with pedagogues to guide his childish ignorance, and after that with teachers of all sorts of subjects and lessons, treating him as becomes a freeborn child.'

ONE IN JESUS CHRIST (Galatians 3:26-29)

Tom Wright's assertion that 'A passion for Paul's gospel translates directly into a passion for the unity of the church' is both true and false - profoundly true, yet not on the basis on which he proposes it.

1. What are all Christians, and how did they become so? (3:26) _____

Paul switches from the first person plural in verse 25 to the second person plural in verse 26. He is applying his message home to the Galatian Christians. The emphasis is on the 'all'.

We are not all children of God by nature, except in the sense that we are all created by God. In 1899-1900 at the University of Berlin, the renowned German liberal theologian, Adolf Harnack, gave a famous series of lectures that asked: *What is Christianity?* He then proceeded to give the wrong answer. He said that Christianity consisted of three things: the fatherhood of God, the brotherhood of man, and the infinite value of the human soul. That is not what Paul is saying. Paul is saying that all who believe in Christ - whether they are circumcised or not - are God's sons. Christ is God's Son by nature; Christians are God's sons by adoption.

2. What does sonship entail? (3:27) What image is used for the baptized person? _____

Ben Witherington III and James Dunn say that Paul is referring to Spirit baptism, not water baptism (e.g. 1 Cor.12:13). Martin Luther, on the other hand, says that baptism is 'a thing of great force and efficacy.'

Justification by faith can be signified by this kind of imagery (e.g. Isa.61:10; Zech.3:3-4), but so too can sanctified living (Rom.13:13-14).

Paul is hardly saying that the rite of circumcision does not save or add to salvation, but the rite of baptism does!

John Stott: 'Faith secures the union; baptism signifies it outwardly and visibly.' Faith does not abolish baptism any more than baptism abolishes faith. Baptism signifies the truth of justification, although it rarely takes place at the same time as justification.

Calvin: 'this text cannot apply to all without exception. It is not for those who have only experienced the outward sign of baptism, but for those who truly understand its spiritual significance.'

Circumcision too had a spiritual meaning even though the infant of eight days would not have known that (e.g. Jer.9:25-26).

3. What is said about all who are in Christ? (3:28) _____

Ben Witherington III makes the wide-ranging claim that Galatians 3:28 leads to Martin Luther King's sermon, *I have a Dream*, in Washington, and to John Wesley's setting up orphanages, his opposition to slavery, and his use of women preachers.

William Tyndale: 'The most despised person in the realm ought to be treated as if he were the king's brother'. Paul is dealing with unity, not equality.

There is no more Jew/Gentile distinction in Christ (Eph.2:15) nor any slave/master distinction (Col.3:11). But this does not mean that functions are now all the same (see Col. 3:22; 4:1; 1 Cor.11:2-16; 14:33-35; 1 Tim.2:11-15).

Paul is talking about accessibility to salvation, which is signified by baptism. All - Jew and Gentile, male and female, slave and free - can come to faith in Christ. Similarly, all are to be baptized (only males, of course, were circumcised in the Old Testament).

In Christ, there is no racism, no snobbery, no social status, no misogyny, no feminism - none of those things count for anything. As the old preacher said, 'the ground is level at the foot of the cross'.

4. What does it mean to belong to Christ? (3:29) Why the emphasis on Abraham? _____

FROM SLAVERY TO SONSHIP (Galatians 4:1-7)

Paul has already said that being under the law is like being under a prison warden (3:22-23) and a slave attendant (3:24-25). Now he compares it to like being a minor under guardians and trustees (4:1-3).

Calvin:

Some apply the comparison to any particular man, whereas Paul is speaking of two nations. What they say is, I acknowledge, true, but it has nothing to do with the present passage. The elect, they say, although they are the children of God from the womb, nevertheless remain under the law like slaves until by faith they come to the possession of freedom; but once they have known Christ, they no longer require this kind of tutelage. Granting all this, I still deny

that Paul is here treating of individuals; I deny that he distinguishes between the time of unbelief and the calling to faith... Let this be settled first of all, that Paul here compares the Israelite Church which existed under the old covenant with the Christian Church.

1. What does Paul say about an heir as long as he is a child? (4:1) How is he similar to a slave, and how is he different? (4:1) _____

2. In what state is the child-heir? (4:2) When will that change? _____

3. What comparison does Paul make in verse 3? To what were the Jews enslaved? _____

The Jew was like a minor (as in 1 Cor.13:11; Eph.4:14). Paul is not referring to individuals being immature but to the old covenant containing a strand of elementary training. There was a sonship in the Old Testament (Deut.14:1a; Ex.4:22; Hos.11:1), but it was also like a kind of slavery.

As a child obeys elementary rules, so the Jew too had to learn his ABC, as it were. The same expression is in Hebrews 5:12, 'For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again *the basic principles* of the oracles of God. You need milk, not solid food'.

Note Acts 15:10. Food, drink, festivals, new moons, and Sabbaths are only shadows of the things to come whereas the substance belongs to Christ (Col.2:16-17). Regulations of this type were only imposed until the time of reformation (Heb.9:10). The Lord of glory calls His disciples 'friends' (John 15:15).

4. What is the fullness of time? (4:4; note Mark 1:15; 1 Cor.10:11) What did God do? How did His Son come into the world? (see Job 14:1; Matt. 11:11) What did it mean for Him to be born under the law? _____

It is right and proper that we divide history into B.C. and A.D. - a system which the abbot Dionysius Exiguus worked out in A.D. 525. The God-man Jesus Christ is the centre of all history. BCE and CE are faintly ridiculous.

5. Why was the Son of God born under the law? (4:5) _____

Augustine: 'For we are sons of God through his generosity and the condescension of his mercy, whereas he is Son by nature, sharing the same

divinity with the Father.' William Perkins: 'Christ is made bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh, by his incarnation, that we might be made bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh by regeneration. The Sonne of God was made the sonne of man, that we which are the sonnes of men might be made the sonnes of God.'

6. What does it mean for those who are saved sons of God? (4:6; Mark 14:36; Rom.8:15) Where has the son come from and what is he destined for? (4:7) _____

H. B. Swete: 'The purpose of the Son's mission was to give the rights of sonship; the purpose of the Spirit's mission, to give the power of using them.' The Spirit of God is also the Spirit of Christ (Rom.8:9; Phil.1:19).

Basil of Caesarea: 'I testify to every man who is confessing Christ and denying God, that Christ will profit him nothing; to every man who calls upon God but rejects the Son, that his faith is vain; to every man who sets aside the Spirit, that his faith in the Father and the Son will be useless, for he cannot hold it without the presence of the Spirit. For he who does not believe the Spirit does not believe in the Son, and he who has not believed in the Son does not believe in the Father.' He added that 'it is impossible to worship the Son, save by the Holy Spirit; impossible to call upon the Father, save by the Spirit of adoption' (Basil of Caesarea, *On the Spirit*, XI,27).

John Gill points out that *Abba* is the same whether read backwards or forwards, thus teaching that God is the Father of his people in adversity as well as in prosperity. The theology is biblical, but the method is, as John Brown says, 'a striking instance of learned trifling'.

SLIPPING BACK TO SLAVERY (Galatians 4:8-11)

The great apostle agonised over his Christian charges e.g. 'For this reason, when I could bear it no longer, I sent to learn about your faith, for fear that somehow the tempter had tempted you and our labour would be in vain' (1 Thess. 3:5).

1. What were the Galatians before becoming Christians - Jews or Gentiles? (4:8) How does Paul describe their spiritual condition? _____

2. What has happened to them? (4:9) How does Paul correct himself, and why? How does he imply that there is a sense in which Old Testament law like circumcision, food laws, and the Jewish calendar are like pagan rituals? _

The RSV and NEB take the weak and miserable elements in verse 9 to refer to the elemental spirits or astral bodies of the universe. It is far more likely that Paul is referring to the elementary principles, the ABC.

Emperor worship was popular, complete with temples and priests. At Lystra, Paul and Barnabas had been treated as Hermes (the messenger) and Zeus (the main god) by the locals (Acts 14:8-18). The worship of Apollo was very popular. There were also near eastern mystery religions such as the cult of Cybele - the Great Mother in whose worship one was baptised in the blood of a bull. The Galatian Christians would have had backgrounds in this sort of paganism.

A Judaistic kind of Christianity based on works righteousness is a form of paganism - to embrace Judaism is to lose the God of Israel.

3. What were the Galatians doing now? (4:10) How does Paul respond to this? (4:11) How this fit in with Romans 14:5? _____

James Dunn calls it 'a heavy sigh' - but the apostle is more hopeful in 5:10. There is anxiety in the apostle's heart (see 2 Cor.11:28). The great apostle is afraid not *of* the Galatians, as the KJV has it, but *for* them.

Augustine initially thought that Paul was referring to the astrological days of the Chaldeans, but later saw it as referring to Jewish holy days, although in his commentary on Galatians he did not commit himself strongly to either view. Derek Thomas tries to maintain that Paul had pagan holy days in mind. It is far more likely that Paul was referring to Jewish holy days. The Galatians were on the way to observing the Jewish new moons (Num.28:11), the great Jewish feasts (Passover, Pentecost or Weeks, the Feast of Tabernacles or Booths), and sabbatical years and the Year of Jubilee (note, for example, Deut.16:1-17; Lev.19:23-25; 25:1-22).

The Galatians were returning in a sense to where they had come from - rather like, to use Richard Hays' illustration, the rescued maiden who goes back to the dragon.

In the late second century Victor I, the bishop of Rome (189-198), tried to bring all churches into line with the Roman practice of celebrating Easter on the Sunday following the 14th day of Nisan (Passover Day). The churches of Asia Minor, however, continued to observe the Quartodeciman custom of 14th day of the month of Nisan, no matter what the day of the week. This would mean that the churches of Asia Minor could be keeping what we would call Easter Sunday (the celebration of Christ's resurrection) on a Monday or Tuesday or whatever! That is a bit odd, but it is hardly heretical. Victor excommunicated them, but Irenaeus of Lyons intervened. It is clear what Victor thought, but it not clear how Victor responded to Irenaeus. The whole episode is an indication that leaders in the Church - notably the bishop of Rome - were losing the notion of salvation by God's free grace.

LOSING THE PLOT (Galatians 4:12-20)

Now we have an emotional appeal to the Galatians to think through their relationship with Paul. As Chrysostom points out: 'For as to do nothing but conciliate causes negligence, so to be constantly talked at with sharpness sours a man; so that it is proper to observe due proportion.' Hence Galatians

contains entreaty and rebuke, appeal and criticism, argument and affection, teaching and exhortation, tenderness and firmness - a one-sided approach to the faith is not Paul's approach.

1. What is Paul's appeal in verse 12? What does he mean? To what is he appealing? _____

He urges them to become like himself, the one who had become like them in not pressing circumcision and Jewish ritual laws. Paul's missionary strategy - as opposed to his apostolic message - knew a measure of flexibility: 'To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some' (1 Cor.9:22). Paul became like the pagan Gentiles - without pressing circumcision - in order that they would become like him - believing in Christ and seeing no need of circumcision.

2. What was Paul's condition when he first arrived in Galatia? (4:13) How did the Galatians receive him? (4:14) What does this indicate? _____

The RSV has 'a bodily ailment', the NRSV 'a physical infirmity', the NEB 'bodily illness', the ESV 'a bodily ailment', while the NIV has 'illness'. The GNB has the paraphrase: 'because I was ill'. The issue of persecution through hostility to the gospel is certainly raised often enough in the epistle (cf. 3:4; 4:17, 29-30; 5:11; 6:12, 17).

3. What is Paul's question in verse 15? How had the Galatians formerly treated him? How strong was their affection? _____

Paul was knocked around when he came to the Galatians. He may well have been suffering from a long-term problem if this 'weakness of the flesh' is to be identified with 'the thorn in the flesh' in 2 Corinthians 12:7. Tertullian thought the Corinthian thorn in the flesh was a headache or earache, while John Chrysostom considered that Paul had to be referring to his opponents, such as Alexander the coppersmith, Hymenaeus and Philetus. Herman Ridderbos says it was the stoning at Lystra, while Luther thinks that Paul was referring to his sufferings as an apostle. Lightfoot said that Paul suffered from recurring epilepsy, but Sir William Ramsay suggested that the apostle may have caught malaria (Pisidian Antioch is about 3,600 feet above sea level, and so there are no mosquitoes there - and no malaria). Some - including James Dunn and the medical doctor-turned-evangelist, Dr Martyn Lloyd-Jones - have pointed to Galatians 4:15 and 6:11, and have concluded that Paul had ophthalmia, an eye-disease. Against this, William Perkins, Ronald Fung and Richard Longenecker say that this is just a graphic and proverbial image - like 'giving the shirt off one's back', but rather more vigorous. James Haldane brusquely says that it is 'vain to conjecture'.

In verse 14, the NKJV says that this was Paul's trial; the NIV and ESV say that it was the Galatians' trial. In a sense, Paul's trial was the Galatians' temptation. Certainly, there were difficulties. In most cultures, it is akin to swimming upstream to speak of the defeat of Satan and death while you yourself are sick. Literally, the Galatians did not 'spit out' at him. Instead, they treated Paul as though he were an angel or even greater, as Christ himself.

Where is the blessedness I knew

When first I saw the Lord? (William Cowper)

That is Paul's question to the congregations of Galatia.

4. How did Paul go so quickly from being treated as an angel to being treated as an enemy? (4:16) What does it tell us about what our priority should be? _____

See Ahab's attitude to Micaiah in 1 Kings 22:8.

5. Of what does Paul accuse the Judaizers? (4:17) What is their method of working, and what is their desired outcome? _____

The false teachers were zealous and winsome. J. B. Lightfoot: 'they pay court to you'; the NKJV: 'they zealously court you'. See the tactics of Absalom as he undermined his own father, David (2 Sam.15:2-6).

'Faithful are the wounds of a friend; profuse are the kisses of an enemy' (Proverbs 27:6).

Luther: 'Cursed be that charity and concord which cannot be preserved but at the peril of the Word of God.'

At Marburg University in 1905, J. Gresham Machen encountered German liberal Protestantism in the form of Wilhelm Hermann, the Professor of Dogmatics. Machen was quite captivated at first, and wrote to his brother: 'Herrmann affirms very little of that which I have been accustomed to regard as essential to Christianity; yet there is no doubt in my mind but that he is a Christian, and a Christian of a peculiarly earnest type ... It is inspiring to see a man so completely centered in Christ, even though some people might wonder how he reaches this result and still holds the views that he does about the accounts of Christ in the New Testament.' He took a while to work through this.

6. How does Paul add to what he has just written? (4:18) What difference should his presence make? _____

Those who had been warm in Paul's presence had grown cold in his absence (4:18). Absence can be a test for any ministry (see Phil.2:12).

7. How does Paul describe his pastoral anguish? (4:19) What is he yearning for? What is his great aim in pastoral ministry? _____

As a pastor, Paul could describe himself as a father (1 Cor.4:15) or a nurse (1 Thess.2:7). But here he is like a mother in labour.

John Brown: 'A more beautiful picture of pastoral affection is perhaps not to be found in the sacred volume.'

Luther declared that he was grateful to Johann von Staupitz, the vicar of the Augustinian order, 'for he bore me in Christ.'

Calvin: 'This is a remarkable passage on the efficacy of the ministry ... If ministers wish to be something, let them labour to form Christ, not themselves.' Paul did not preach himself (2 Cor.4:5); he wanted no 'Paul party' (1 Cor.1:12); he wanted to present converts to Christ, not gather them for himself (2 Cor.11:2).

8. What was Paul wishing for? (4:20) What is his state of mind? _____

'For such is love,' says Chrysostom, 'it is not content with words but seeks also to be personally present.'

Richard Baxter: 'The whole of our ministry must be carried on in tender love to our people. We must let them see that nothing pleaseth us but what profiteth them; and that what doeth them good doth us good; and that nothing troubleth us more than their hurt.'

FREEDOM AND SLAVERY ILLUSTRATED (Galatians 4:21-31)

Galatians 4:21-31 represents Paul's last attempt to show in a sustained argument how the law and gospel are related. The apostle does it by appealing to the account in Genesis of Abraham's siring of two sons by two women. The fact that Abraham had other children after Sarah's death is beside Paul's point (Gen.25:1-4).

The Judaizers asked: 'Who are the true children of Abraham?' And they answered: 'Those who came through Isaac, not Ishmael. Isaac fathered the Jews, Ishmael the Arabs. Salvation is of the Jews.'

Paul becomes quite assertive here: 'Tell me'. He is commanding their attention. He writes of two women (Sarah and Hagar), two sons (Isaac and Ishmael), two covenants (Abrahamic and Mosaic), two mountains (Zion and Sinai), two cities (the heavenly Jerusalem and the earthly Jerusalem), and two spiritual conditions (freedom and slavery).

1. What is the issue at hand? (4:28, 31) _____

2. To what does Paul appeal in responding to those who desire to be under the law? How is this a shrewd strategy? In what two senses is 'law' used? (4:21) _____

3. How many sons did Abraham have? (4:22) To which two women? _____

4. Who was the son of the slave, and how was he born, and who was the son of the free woman, and how was he born? (4:23) _____

5. How does Paul interpret this? (4:24) What do Sarah and Hagar represent? What is the covenant from Mount Sinai? Why is it so startling that Paul should identify her with Hagar? How does Sinai correspond to Jerusalem? (4:25) What is the state of her children? _____

The story of Sarah and Hagar is symbolic (NKJV), or something that is to be taken figuratively (NIV) or allegorically (ESV). It is not an allegory in the sense that John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress* is an allegory. E. Earle Ellis considers that it is more typology than allegory. Ronald Fung prefers to call it analogy. In this sense, it is not unlike Ezekiel's story of the two sisters, Oholah and Oholibah, who represent Samaria and Jerusalem (Ezek.23).

Luther and Lightfoot regard the passage as more accessory and decoration rather than substantial argument.

Isaac and Ishmael were conceived and born in the natural way, of course, but Isaac was conceived according to God's promise whereas Ishmael - despite being the recipient of real but limited promises (Gen.16:10) - was conceived contrary to God's saving and gracious promise. Sarai suggested to Abram that the Lord had prevented her from bearing children, so she hoped to obtain a child through Hagar, her Egyptian servant girl (Gen.16:1-2). Abram sinfully agreed, and the result was Ishmael. Nevertheless, the promise remained, and God's saving covenant would be established with Isaac (Gen. 17:15-21).

6. How does Paul describe Jerusalem above? (4:26) _____

To Paul, it is not a matter of a shared physical descent but a shared view of salvation. There are two covenants - of works and of grace. There are two Jerusalems - the earthly with its temple, its feasts, sacrifices, circumcision, and all the rest of it, and the heavenly one which is all of grace. This heavenly Jerusalem is also located on earth; it consists of all who are redeemed by the blood of the Lamb.

The book of Hebrews also speaks of the heavenly Jerusalem: 'But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, and to the assembly of the first-born who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel' (Heb.12:22-24).

As one little ditty, cited by William Hendriksen, puts it:

*Hagar, Horeb, earthly Salem,
Works of flesh will not avail them.
Sarah, Zion, heavenly Salem,
Christ, their Lord, will never fail them.*

7. Why does Paul go back to Isaiah 54:1 and see cause to rejoice? (4:27)
How has God done the unexpected? _____

Isaiah 54 deals with the creator of the whole world as the redeemer of his people. The God of the whole earth is the husband of his people, and the Holy One of Israel is their redeemer (Isa.54:5-8). With the coming of the Messiah, the Gentiles have been called to faith, and have become part of the heavenly Jerusalem.

8. How are the Galatian Christians like Isaac? (4:28) _____

9. How do religious people born according to the flesh treat those born according to the Spirit? (4:29) _____

Paul is going back to Genesis 21:9 where the RSV has 'playing', the ESV 'laughing' and the NKJV 'scoffing'. The context tells us that Sarah was upset with what the big bully Ishmael was doing to her little Isaac (there was an age gap of about 13 years). Ishmael was laughing in a mocking and jeering way. Before his conversion, Paul himself had been a persecutor of God's people (Acts 8:1-3; 9:1-5; 22:4-5; 26:15; 1 Cor.15:9; Gal.1:13; Phil.3:6; 1 Tim.1:13; note too 1 Thess.2:14-16).

During the night before the crucifixion, Jesus warned his disciples: 'They will put you out of the synagogues. Indeed, the hour is coming when whoever kills you will think he is offering service to God' (John 16:2).

William Perkins derived from Galatians 3:23-25 that 'in a godly and Christian Common-wealth where true religion is established, there may be no toleration of any other religion'. How Reformed evangelical Christians should exercise political power, should it ever come their way, is a subject requiring great understanding, discernment, and graciousness, with respect both to the Word and the world.

10. What does Paul do with the record in Genesis 21:10-12? (4:30) What is the essential difference between Isaac and Ishmael? _____

Sarah spoke more truly than she knew - a little like Caiaphas (see John 11:49-52).

11. Again, what is the link between Isaac and Gentile Christians? (4:31) _____

John Calvin: 'Jesus Christ is not half a saviour, he is the Saviour!'

FREEDOM AND LOVE (Galatians 5:1-6)

All the world responds to 'love' and 'freedom'. But they are words that can lead us astray. Paul stands fast against legal bondage in verse 1 and against selfish libertinism in verse 13.

Paul seems to be concluding the exposition and beginning the exhortation.

1. What has Christ done? (5:1) Therefore, what should Christians do in response? _____

William Perkins says that this is 'a repetition of the principall Conclusion of the whole Epistle'. James Montgomery Boice sees this as 'at once a summary of all that has gone before and a transition to what follows.'

Paganism and Judaism are forms of bondage (4:9; Acts 15:10).

Perkins says that we are delivered from four things: the curse of the law for breaching it (Rom.8:1; Gal.3:13); the obligation of the law whereby it binds us to perfect righteousness in order to obtain everlasting life; the obligation to observe the ceremonial law (Col.2:16, 20); and the tyranny and dominion of sin (Rom.6:14).

2. What does Paul tell them about their acceptance of circumcision? (5:2) Why is he so decided and blunt? _____

'Mark my words!' (NIV, NEB) is something of a paraphrase, but Paul is drawing attention to what he is about to say.

The problem is not circumcision itself but trusting in it. William Hendriksen: 'A Christ supplemented is a Christ supplanted.' John Stott: 'If you add anything to Christ, you lose Christ.' William Perkins: 'he must be a perfect Saviour, or no Saviour'. To insist on circumcision is to insist on the sign and seal of the old covenant, and, in effect, to say that the Messiah has not come.

3. What is logically entailed if one accepts circumcision? (5:3; note James 2:10) _____

The Jerusalem Bible has: 'With all solemnity I repeat my warning'. It is repeated either from verse 2 (Lightfoot), or from 3:10 or his preaching delivered when he was in Galatia (Thomas Schreiner).

James Haldane: 'The smallest reliance on the law, makes men debtors to the whole.'

Today, the Western world tends to take morality in bits and pieces, and it is becoming increasingly arbitrary. We have little concept of unified Law from the absolute Lawgiver. So if a political leader commits adultery, that is okay, but if he gets drunk and abusive, that is not. Homosexual sex at 16 is all right; homosexual sex at 15 is paedophilia. Max Lucado was sitting in a

plane next to a woman, and he asked her what was her hope of heaven. She was confident that she would get there. Her profession was: 'Well, I'm basically good. I don't smoke more than a pack a day. I exercise. I'm dependable at work and I made my boyfriend get tested for AIDS.'

J. B. Lightfoot: 'Circumcision is the seal of the law. He who willingly and deliberately undergoes circumcision, enters upon a compact to fulfil the law. To fulfil it therefore he is bound, and cannot plead the grace of Christ; for he has entered on another mode of justification.'

To take on circumcision without the rest of the Mosaic law is not unlike saying: 'I want the wedding ring but not the marriage.'

4. How are 'Christians' severed from Christ? (5:4) What does Paul mean by this? _____

G. G. Findlay cites the comment that circumcision was 'the sacrament of their exclusion from grace'.

5. What do we look to receive through the Spirit by faith? (5:5) How are faith and hope connected? (see also Rom.8:24; 2 Cor.5:5) _____

Justification received now means justification recognised at the Last Day.

6. Is circumcision good or bad in and of itself? (5:6) What counts in the Christian life? What do you learn from looking at 1 Corinthians 7:19; Galatians 5:6; 6:15) _____

Chrysostom makes the quaint observation that circumcision is as irrelevant as the length of a wrestler's nose or the colour of his skin!

Robert Murray M'Cheyne in one of his 'Songs of Zion':

Learn, O my soul, what God demands

Is not faith like barren sands,

But fruit of heavenly hue.

By this we prove that Christ we know,

If in His holy steps we go:

Faith works by love, if true.

WHAT WENT WRONG? (Gal.5:7-12)

Even on a temporal level, there are few things more disappointing in life than putting one's heart and soul into a project, and then to see it fall to pieces. In 1812 a fire in Serampore broke out which destroyed the printing house used by William Carey and his fellow missionaries. They lost virtually all of their presses, paper, books, and manuscripts. It seems to have been an accident and not a case of arson. Carey responded: 'The Lord has laid me low, that I might look more simply to him.' He pressed on, being helped by

sympathy in Calcutta and gifts from England. As his sister commented: 'Whatever he began he finished: difficulties never seemed to discourage his mind'

1. How were the Galatians running at first? (5:7) What question does Paul throw at them? _____

Paul was fond of using athletic imagery (Gal.2:2; 1 Cor.9:24-26; 2 Tim.4:7; Acts 20:24). This hardly makes Paul 'a big sports fan', as Philip Ryken thinks. The NIV paints a picture of one runner cutting in and hindering the course of another runner. There were rules in Greek festivals about doing this. Somebody obstructed the Galatians in their Christian race. J. B. Phillips asks: 'who put you off course?'

2. Where did this deviation come from? (5:8) _____

Satan delights in sin and he delights when we have confidence in our own righteousness.

3. What is Paul's warning in verse 9? What does it mean? _____

John Brown considers it a Greek saying, but it surely goes back to the feast of unleavened bread. In the feast of unleavened bread, as part of the feast of Passover, Israelites would get rid of leaven in their houses, as a symbol of getting rid of evil and corrupting influences (Ex.12:14-20).

Paul later warned the Corinthians that a little immoral leaven would leaven the whole lump (1 Cor.5:6). In the Corinthian context, Paul means that to allow one professing Christian to live in an ungodly relationship will have the effect of lowering the spiritual and moral temperature of the whole congregation. In the Galatian context, the issue is more doctrinal than moral. Add anything to grace, and you undermine it. A micro-addition has macro-consequences.

It is possible, but less likely, that Lightfoot and Morris are correct in saying that Paul has a small number of persons in mind rather than the pernicious effect of a small deviation in doctrine.

4. What does Paul profess in verse 10? What does he say about the one who was troubling them? (5:10) Does Paul know who he is? _____

John Brown: 'To address a man who is but doubting as if he were a confirmed infidel is a very likely method of making him one.'

He also refers to 'the one', which is in the singular, but the plural is used in 1:7 and 5:12. Perhaps Paul had a ringleader in mind.

5. What is Paul's argument in 5:11? What would preaching circumcision mean, and what would preaching the cross mean? _____

Alan Cole: 'Jewish riots follow Paul across Asia Minor like a trail of bushfires.'

The cross is an offence, a scandal; circumcision is the soft option.

Charles Wesley:

*Behold Him, ye that pass Him by,
The bleeding Prince of life and peace!
Come, sinners, see your Maker die,
And say, was ever grief like His?
Come, feel with me His blood applied:
My Lord, my Love is crucified.*

6. What do you make of Paul's outburst in 5:12? _____

Paul is being sarcastic - he is not simply saying that he wishes these circumcisers would be cut off in excommunication (KJV, NKJV, J. B. Phillips, John Calvin, James Haldane, John Brown, Sir William Ramsay), that the rite of inclusion would become the rite of exclusion. Rather, he is saying, as most translations now make clear, that he wishes that they would go the whole way and castrate themselves.

It might be compared to 1 Corinthians 11:6.

Augustine is embarrassed, and insists that Paul 'inserted a blessing under the appearance of a curse'. His novel explanation is as follows: 'Not merely "circumcise", he said, but *castrate* themselves. For thus they will become eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven and cease to sow carnal seed.'

Luther comments that charity suffers much but faith nothing. J. Gresham Machen: 'One wobbly evangelical often does more harm to the cause of the gospel, and leads more of Christ's little ones astray, than do a dozen Modernists.'

SERVICE IN LOVE (Galatians 5:13-15)

To the unregenerate, freedom means freedom to sin, not freedom from sin. Christ came to set us free, and we need to stand firm in that freedom (5:1). But what does that mean in day-to-day life? It is not a case of automatic justification, automatic sanctification, no problems at all.

The possibility of misunderstanding what Paul means by grace is a constant danger (note Gal.2:17; 5:13; Rom.3:8; 6:1, 15; 1 Cor.6:12).

In Paul's view, the gospel of free grace leads to graciousness, love and unity in Christ; the proclamation of law leads to pride, distinctions, and discord.

1. To what were the Galatian Christians called? (5:13) What is that freedom not to be used for? And how is it to be used? _____

There are those who promise freedom, but who usher in slavery to depravity (2 Peter 2:19; Jude 4).

Brother, let me be your servant is the song of a free man, or, more correctly, a freed man. John Chrysostom: 'The mother of heresies is desire for power.'

2. How is the whole law fulfilled? (5:14) Does this mean 'abolished'? What does it mean for us today? _____

Augustine: 'The law was therefore given, in order that grace might be sought; grace was given, in order that the law might be fulfilled.'

Paul quotes from Leviticus 19:18 where the 'neighbour' obviously refers to any Israelite. Jesus in the parable of the Good Samaritan extends the definition of 'neighbour' to include anyone (Luke 10:25-37). Luther says that 'my neighbour is every man, especially who has need of my help'.

The law does not tell us how to be saved but how to live the law in love.

Paul treats Old Testament law positively in a number of places (e.g. 1 Cor.9:8-14; 14:34; Eph.6:1-3; 1 Tim.5:18).

Paul could speak of keeping the commandments of God while abandoning circumcision (Rom.2:25; 1 Cor.7:19).

The moral commandments are not discarded but lived out in a loving spirit (Rom.13:8-10).

Luther: 'Now when he has heard and received the Gospel, let him give thanks to God with a joyful and a glad heart, and afterwards let him exercise himself in those good works which are commanded in the law, so that the law and works may follow the hearing of faith.'

3. What specific warning does Paul give in verse 15? Why do you think he issued this? _____

Alan Cole reminds us of the Kilkenny cats in the days of Cromwell who fought so ferociously that not even a scrap of fur remained from either of them. The beginning of strife is like letting out water (Prov.17:14).

THE HOLY WAR (Galatians 5:16-18)

John Bunyan wrote *The Pilgrim's Progress* and *The Holy War*, which tells of the city of Mansoul which is attacked by Diabolus (the devil) but which is won by Prince Emmanuel (Christ) and secured by his Lord Secretary (the Holy Spirit).

Blaise Pascal: 'The most cruel warfare which God can wage on men in this life is to leave them untouched by the conflict which He came on earth to unleash.' J. B. Lightfoot says that on this earth it is 'an interminable, deadly feud'.

1. How are Christians meant to walk, and how not to walk? (5:16) _____

God told his people to walk according to his law (Ex. 16:4; Lev.18:4;

Jer.44:23; Ezek.5:7). He also promised that in the new covenant, with the coming of the Messiah, he would place his Spirit within his people to enable them to walk in his statutes (Jer.31:31-34; Ezek.36:25-27).

Calvin claims that Paul is not here referring to the Holy Spirit but to the renewed nature, revealed in a new frame of thought and affection, that is produced by his agency. This is probably not correct.

J. Gresham Machen: 'The contrast between *flesh* and *Spirit* ... is not the contrast between matter and spirit; it is a contrast between human nature, of which sin has taken possession, and the Spirit of God.'

All through this part of Galatians, the NIV has 'sinful nature' instead of 'flesh' (5:16, 17, 19, 24; 6:8). Douglas Moo regards this as 'very misleading', and certainly it can be. It is not the nature of the person which is changed, but the 'power-sphere' in which the person lives. Paul is referring to those who are in their 'natural' state after the Fall - those who are not regenerate, without the Spirit of God, and outside of Christ.

2. What battle goes on within the Christian? (5:17) How has this come about? What is one of its results? _____

The body is not opposing the soul but the old man - man's nature apart from the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit - battles with the new creation. Verse 17 has traditionally been understood in three different ways. So far as Augustine made himself clear, he seems to have considered that it worked both ways - the Spirit keeps us from fully carrying out evil desires, and the flesh keeps us from fully carrying out righteous desires. E. De Witt Burton, F. F. Bruce, J. D. G. Dunn, and Ronald Fung also hold this view. In Burton's words: 'Does the man choose evil, the Spirit opposes him; does he choose good, the flesh hinders him.'

The second view is that of John Wesley, John Brown, George Duncan, Geoffrey Wilson, Gordon Fee, Ben Witherington III, David Wenham, and (with qualifications) John Barclay. Their interpretation is that Paul is saying that the Spirit keeps the Christian from doing as he pleases, that is, the Spirit keeps the Christian from doing what is sinful. They say that the context is positive; Paul is telling us about walking in the Spirit.

The third view is that of Luther, Calvin, Perkins, Haldane, Lightfoot, and Hendriksen. This says that it is the flesh which keeps the Christian from doing what is right and good. It is saying what Romans 7:15 has been traditionally understood to be saying: 'I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate.' Gerhard Ebeling writes bleakly that 'For Paul ... the ethical realm as such is far from being a realm of triumphs; it is rather a realm of repeated defeats'.

William Perkins: 'So the regenerate man, for affection inclines to the best things: and yet by reason of the flesh, failes in the dooing of them.'

Calvin: 'Even when we are resolved upon full submission to the Word of God and to his righteousness, the devil still has many ropes to drag us in one direction or another.' Charles Wesley wrote after his conversion: 'I never knew the energy of sin till now that I experience the superior strength of Christ.'

This should make us realistic, and keep us from hypocrisy.

Calvin says that even true Christians can only approach God 'limpingly'.

Calvin also calls perfectionism 'a diabolical blasphemy'.

3. What does 5:18 mean to the Christian? And what does it not mean? (see the discussion below) _____

This looks, says Chrysostom, like 'a high and striking eulogy on the law'. If we are led by the Spirit, we are not under the law (5:18); we are not under law but under grace (Rom.6:14); and we have freedom (2 Cor.3:17).

Thomas Schreiner: 'Love without specific and concrete moral explication easily becomes a plastic notion which is molded in the way each person desires.' Paul is not writing the first century equivalent of Hugh Mackay's *Right & Wrong: How to Decide for Yourself*.

What is the approach today? People realise, in part, that something terrible is happening. Their response is often: 'We need a law against it.' By the Spirit, the Christian is no longer under the law, but is to fulfil the law.

Pascal: 'True eloquence has no time for eloquence, true morality has no time for morality.'

C. S. Lewis too made the provocative comment that 'There is no morality in heaven.'

Thomas Chalmers found - in his experience as a preacher of moralism, then after his conversion, as a preacher of the gospel - that 'to preach Christ is the only effective way of preaching morality'.

WORKS OF THE FLESH (Galatians 5:19-21)

'The good person out of his good treasure brings forth good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure brings forth evil' (Matt.12:35). The fruit reveals the tree. Paul contrasts the works of the flesh with the fruit of the Spirit. These kinds of lists of vices are fairly common in the New Testament (e.g. Mark 7:21-23; Romans 1:29-31; 1 Cor.6:9-10; Rev.21:8). In one work, *The Sacrifices of Abel and Cain*, Philo lists about 150 vices!

John Brown warns: 'To enter into a minute description of the different crimes which are here mentioned, could serve no good purpose, and might serve some bad ones.' To give too many details does harm, but to pretend sin does not happen is unrealistic.

Grace leads to good works (Titus 2:11-14).

1. Why does Paul describe these sins as 'the works of the flesh' (5:19a)? In what way are they evident? _____

Jesus told Nicodemus: 'That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit' (John 3:6). The potential for any sin is in each of us. C. S. Lewis wrote to an American lady: 'I find it easier to understand the great crimes, for the raw material of them exists in us all; the mere disagreeableness which seems to spring from no recognisable passion

is mysterious.' He was referring there to a man on the train who refused to tell him when the train would reach Liverpool because he was not paid to tell people the timetable - that was the guard's job.

2. List the works of the flesh from verses 19b to 21a, and explain each one. Is the list exhaustive? _____

To this woeful list, the NKJV adds 'adultery' at the beginning, and 'murder' in v.21, but these are probably additions. Fifteen sins are listed. They are not given at random, but there does not seem to be a strict order. Calvin says that Paul moves from the grosser sins to the lesser ones. But Calvin includes 'murders' in verse 21! J. B. Lightfoot sees 'a partial and unconscious arrangement', but he discerns four kinds of sins:

(a) *Sexual sins;*

(b) *Religious sins;*

The emperor Domitian (A.D. 81-96) insisted on being addressed as 'Lord and God', also refused to meet the famed magician, Apollonius of Tyana, unless Apollonius divested himself of all amulets and writings.

(c) *Violations of brotherly love;*

(d) *Intemperance.*

3. What had Paul done before? (5:21b) What is his warning? What is this telling us? _____

There is a similar warning in 1 Corinthians 6:9-10.

THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT (Galatians 5:22-23)

Having described the works of the flesh, Paul then goes on to describe the maturing Christian character. In fact, what we have here, along with Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 13, might almost be called a character sketch of Christ himself.

1. Why are these nine attributes called 'the fruit of the Spirit'? (5:22) Why does Paul say 'fruit', not 'fruits'? What is the difference between gifts and fruit? Are all Christians to exhibit all nine fruit? Do all Christians possess all gifts? (see 1 Cor.12:11, 29-30) _____

One should not try to derive too much theology from alleged semantic differences between 'fruit' and 'works'. 'Fruit' can be used, as here, to denote what is good, or, as in Romans 6:21, to denote what is evil. Similarly, 'works' can have evil connotations, as here, or good connotations as in Ephesians 2:10.

2. Go through each fruit, and explain briefly what it means (5:22-23)

John Stott says that the first three fruit are God-ward, the second three are man-ward, and the last three are self-ward. Derek Thomas follows suit. That makes for easier memorisation and a structure for preaching, but it is not convincing.

(a) _____

Jerome: 'From love is born all that is good.' Note Rom.5:5; Matt.5:43-48; 1 Thess.3:12; Col.3:14; 1 Cor.13:13; John 13:34; 15:9-10. Derek Prime cites one little girl who said: 'Love is when the person reading you a bedtime story doesn't skip any of the pages.'

(b) _____

Thomas Watson: 'There are two things which I have always looked upon as difficult. The one is, to make the wicked sad; the other is, to make the godly joyful.' William Morrice has pointed out that there are 326 'joy' words in the New Testament. See Rom.12:12; 14:17; 15:13; Acts 8:39; 16:34; Neh.8:10; Habakkuk 3:17-18; Phil.4:4; 1 Thess.5:16. Heaven is a place of great joy (Rev.19:7).

(c) _____

Peace, perfect peace, in this dark world of sin?

Note Rom.5:1; 12:18; John 14:27; 16:33).

(d) _____

The NKJV translates the word as 'longsuffering', and Leon Morris suggests 'longanimity' and F. F. Bruce has 'long-tempered'. If one wanted to coin a word, 'macro-tempered' would be close to the Greek. J. B. Lightfoot defines it as 'patient endurance under injuries inflicted by others'. God is slow to anger, and is longsuffering with the likes of us (Ex.34:6; Ps.103:8).

(e) _____

'Let us with a gladsome mind, praise the Lord for He is kind,' wrote John Milton, paraphrasing Psalm 136. Albert Barnes: 'Religion makes no one crabbed, and morose, and sour. It sweetens the temper; corrects an irritable

disposition; makes the heart kind; disposes us to make all around as happy as possible.'

(f) _____

In the full sense only God is good, as Jesus informed the rich young ruler (Mark 10:17-18). Being good is more than being righteous or just (Rom.5:7). We are to be good, as was Barnabas (Acts 11:22-24).

(g) _____

God himself is utterly faithful (1 Cor.1:9). This has implications for how he treats us (1 Cor.10:13; 1 Thess.5:24). We are all somewhat moody - up one day, down the next. But God is forever faithful to his character and to his Word. That is what we rely on (2 Tim.2:13). Christ is therefore described in the same terms, as the faithful one (Rev.1:5). Erasmus said that a good servant should be 'faithful, ugly and fierce'. Paul might say that the latter two are optional, but the first one is compulsory. Be faithful in little things (Luke 16:10).

(h) _____

Moses was the meekest or gentlest of men (Num.12:3). But nobody would look at this man, who spent forty years in the desert, leading two or three million complaining Israelites, and accuse him of being insipid or spineless. Nietzsche complained of Christians: 'They are lacking in clenched fists', but that is a distorted view of what it means to be strong. Christ is meek and lowly (Matt.11:29; Isa.42:1-4; Zech.9:9-10).

(i) _____

The Christian is to work at being self-controlled in all things (1 Cor.9:25-27). The Buddhist says: 'Suppress all desire.' The Christian says: 'Make sure all desires are godly.'

Felix lacked self-control (Acts 24:25). Even a believer can exhibit a lack of self-control. This surely was Samson's besetting sin. He was outwardly strong, but not inwardly strong - although he was saved (Judges 13-16; Heb.11:32). Christians are to grow in self-control (2 Pet.1:6). We might consider four areas: our tempers (Prov.16:32); our tongues (Prov.12:18; James 3:2; Ps.140:1-3; 141:3); our sexual desires (1 Cor.6:12); our use of alcohol and drugs (Prov.23:29-35).

3. What does Paul mean by saying there is no law against these things? _____

Leon Morris calls this 'a masterly understatement', said for rhetorical effect.

WALK BY THE SPIRIT (Galatians 5:24-26)

We cannot exhibit the fruit of the Spirit if we do not have the Spirit, and we can only possess the Spirit - or be possessed by him - if we are in Christ.

1. What has happened to the Christian, by definition? (5:24) What are the implications of this? (see Mark 8:34) _____

The experience of the Christian corresponds in some way to the pattern of the life of Christ (cf. 6:14; Rom.6:10-11; 2 Cor.1:9-10; 4:10-12; Phil.2:5-11). John MacArthur tells how he once appeared on a radio talk show run by a popular female Christian counsellor. As the programme unfolded, MacArthur began to have doubts about how much she understood about basic Christian doctrine. Off the air, during a commercial break, he asked her how she became a Christian. She replied: 'It was cool. One day I got Jesus' phone number and we've been connected ever since.' That sort of answer does not inspire confidence that the person knows what he is talking about.

2. How does Paul structure his point in verse 25? What does this mean for the Christian? _____

The believer is to keep in step with the Spirit.

As John G. Paton made his way to Glasgow to begin his theological studies, his father walked with him for six miles, weeping with emotion, praying fervently, and giving his son godly counsel. Finally, the time came for the two to part. Paton wrote later: 'I watched through blinding tears, till his form faded from my gaze; and then, hastening on my way, vowed deeply and oft, by the help of God, to live and act so as never to grieve or dishonour such a father and mother as He had given me.' He added: 'It is no Pharisaism, but deep gratitude, which makes me here testify that the memory of that scene not only helped, by God's grace, to keep me pure from the prevailing sins, but also stimulated me in all my studies, that I might not fall short of his hopes, and in all my Christian duties, that I might faithfully follow his shining example.'

3. What dangers does Paul warn against? (5:26) Why do you think he becomes so practical here? _____

Hugh Binning's lament was that 'now, self-love having enthroned itself, every man is for himself, and strives by all means, to make a concurrence of all things to his own interest and designs.'

There is an episode in *The Pilgrim's Progress* where Christian meets up with Faithful, and overtakes him. Bunyan writes: 'Then did Christian vain-gloriously smile, because he had gotten the start of his Brother: But not taking good heed to his feet, he suddenly stumbled and fell, and could not rise again, until Faithful came up to help him.' Bunyan knew that this was a sin which can easily infect Christians; he wrote here of Pilgrim after the burden had fallen from his back, not before. We are to serve, not to envy, one another.

William Hendriksen: 'God does not approve of windbags.'

DEALING WITH ANOTHER'S SIN (Gal.6:1)

Paul gives concrete examples in 6:1-10 of what it means to exhibit the fruit of the Spirit and to walk by the Spirit. Here is love, peace, gentleness, goodness and self-control at work in the everyday life of the Christian community.

Augustine: 'nothing proves that a man is spiritual like his handling of another's sin'.

1. What does Paul tell the brothers to do if anyone is caught in any transgression? (6:1) Who is to act? What is the aim? How are the spiritual ones to act? Why? _____

Elsewhere, Paul warns against busybodies (2 Thess.3:11; 1 Tim.5:13).

Galatians 6:1 is not necessarily dealing with the full implementation of Church discipline, but with sins that are offensive enough to harm the cause of Christ. In principle, any sin can be reprov'd, but we need to recall that love covers a multitude of sins (1 Pet.4:8).

The spiritual could refer to those who have the Spirit as opposed to those who do not i.e. to those who are converted (e.g. 1 Cor.2:14; Gal.3:3; 4:6) or those who are mature (1 Cor.3:1).

It is a blessed thing when a sinner is restored to Christ (James 5:19-20).

John Brown comments: 'Let a sense of your own weakness induce you not indeed to spare the fault, but to pity the offender.' Calvin: 'we need to have a warm affection for the well-being of those who need warning and exhortation because of their sin.' He adds: 'It is impossible to curtail such excesses, where people desire to rebuke and devour others, unless firstly men are purged of the foolish lust to be important and to hold superior rank.' There is not a sin which anyone has done which I may not do.

Augustine: 'Let peace and love, then, be preserved in our hearts by the thought of the common danger.'

Martin Luther: 'Therefore if you see any brother cast down and afflicted by occasion of sin which he has committed, run unto him, and reaching out your hand, raise him up again, comfort him with sweet words, and embrace him with motherly arms.'

Frances Ridley Havergal:

*Lord, speak to me, that I may speak
In living echoes of Thy tone;
As Thou has sought, so let me seek
Thy erring children lost and lone.*

BEARING BURDENS (Galatians 6:2-5)

Paul continues with the subject of how the fruit of the Spirit is to be exhibited in concrete situations of life. We see here the interplay of corporate responsibility and individual responsibility. We are to be concerned for the sins of others, but only after we have first faced the fact of our own sins

and culpability before God.

1. How are we to treat one another's burdens? (6:2) In doing this, what would we be doing? _____

Alan Cole sees 6:1-6 as verses on the one subject of 'How to deal with the offender'. John G. Strelan has argued that the burden is financial, and that the whole section up to verse 10 is about pulling one's financial weight (note the financial 'burdens' in 1 Thess.2:9; 2 Thess.3:8; 2 Cor.12:16). Related to these two approaches is the interpretation of 'the law of Christ'. C. H. Dodd thinks that 'the law of Christ' is Matthew 18:15-17; J. G. Strelan thinks it is Luke 10:7.

Calvin speaks of the need to 'each hold one another's hands'. Philip Ryken: 'Every believer is called to be one of God's bellhops, always ready to pick up someone else's baggage.'

Christians are not under the law of Moses, but they are under the law of Christ (Rom.8:2-4; 1 Cor.9:21; 1 Thess.4:2).

2. What is one of the easiest ways in which we can deceive ourselves? (6:3)

3. What must we do first, and then what can we do? (6:4) _____

Calvin quotes a 16th century proverb, that we are all coal-sacks that blacken one another. James Haldane: 'We are apt to be pleased with the slips of others, as if we were elevated by their defects.' We all like to make-believe that we are our own reference points. See Luke 15:29-30; 18:11.

J. B. Lightfoot: 'In Christian morality self-esteem is vanity and vanity is nothingness.'

4. Compare verse 2 to verse 5. What does verse 5 mean? _____

The word for 'load' in verse 5 is not the same as that for 'burdens' in verse 2. We are to pity others but not ourselves. J. B. Phillips says that 'every man must "shoulder his own pack"'. A Christian is not to be one who leans unnecessarily on others and becomes a burden to them (Phil.4:11-13; 2 Thess.3:10).

Alan Cole and Herman Ridderbos see this as a declaration of individual responsibility before God. John Stott too draws attention to the Day of Judgment, and says: 'On that day you cannot carry my pack and I cannot carry yours.' On this view, it is not specifically financial (Rom.14:12).

SUPPORTING GOSPEL WORK (Galatians 6:6)

1. What does Paul say about the relationship between the Christian teacher and the ones being taught? (6:6) _____

It is an example of the mutual burden-bearing advocated in verse 2, and is a corrective of a possible misapplication of verse 5.

John Brown: 'Nothing is more obvious than that the Author of Christianity intended his followers to associate themselves together for the purpose of promoting their religious and moral improvement by a joint observance of certain institutions, and by mutual superintendence and incitement, warning and encouragement.'

Paul is referring firstly to financial support (Luke 10:7; 1 Cor.9:11, 14). Paul can speak freely here and assert the principle because he did not take advantage of this right (Acts 20:34; 1 Cor.9:15-18; 2 Cor.11:7-12; 1 Thess.2:9; 2 Thess.3:6-13). Preaching in 1531, Luther said that he now understood why Christians were commanded to support their pastors.

In the Old Testament, priests received of the tithes and ate of the sacrifices. God specifically warned the Israelites not to neglect the Levites (Deut.12:19).

Robert Dabney has a pungent essay on *The Influence of the German University System on Theological Literature*, where he traces the baneful effects of state-supported theological faculties. This meant, for example, that in Germany in 1930s theologians were in the pay of the Nazi state. The state was used to having the final say over what the Church could or could not do or say. So in October 1937 Himmler ordered that Finkenwalde seminary (which was led by Dietrich Bonhoeffer) be closed, and arrested the 27 students. State support of pastors has the tendency of taking away the freedom to proclaim the full gospel.

SOWING AND REAPING (Galatians 6:7-10)

Verses 7-10 are unified by the Christian notion of sowing and reaping.

1. Why does Paul tell the Galatians not to be deceived? (6:7a) Of what does he remind them? _____

Jerome and Thomas Aquinas say that we are not to excuse ourselves by pretending poverty. Luther too thinks that Paul was still speaking on the maintenance of the minister in verses 7-8. John Brown does not particularly link verse 7 to verse 6, and this is more convincing.

The Bible often warns us against being deceived (Luke 21:8; 1 Cor.6:9; 15:33; 1 John 3:7; James 1:16). Calvin says: 'There is none so evil that he does not have a clever way of concealing his shamefulness from men.' He goes on to speak of a bad motive being painted with make-up.

2. How does God order His providence and His judgment? (6:7b-8) _____

Sowing and reaping refer to some kind of proverbial saying (see Job 4:8; Ps.126:5; Prov.22:8; Jer.12:13; Hos.8:7a; 10:12-13; 2 Cor.9:6).

James Haldane: 'Life is the seed time, eternity the harvest.' Also, 'To suppose that sin can end in happiness, is as absurd as to suppose that tares will produce wheat.' There is a divine law at work, as in agriculture, so

too in the spiritual life.

3. What is one of the most obvious dangers in the Christian life? (6:9) What must we do to combat it? _____

See Luke 18:1; 2 Cor. 4:1, 16; Eph. 3:13; 2 Thess.3:13.

George Whitefield used to say that he would rather wear out than rust out - and he lived out this approach to life. His journal for 30 December 1738 records: 'Preached nine times this week, and expounded near eighteen times ... I am every moment employed from morning till midnight.'

Adoniram Judson was mocked by a fellow prisoner in a Burmese gaol concerning the prospects for the conversion of the heathen. Judson replied: 'The prospects are as bright as are the promises of God.'

4. What are we to do as we have opportunity? (6:10) In what proportion, again as is appropriate? (6:10) _____

Albert Barnes cites Cotton Mather: 'The opportunity to do good imposes the obligation to do it.' Calvin: 'we are all of one flesh, and we bear a mark which ought to induce us to do all that we possibly can for one another.'

James Haldane: 'As children of the same family, and members of the same body, they are, therefore, laid under the strongest obligation to love and to do good to each other.'

BOASTING IN THE CROSS (Gal.6:11-14)

Jeremiah told of wise men who boasted in their wisdom, mighty men who boasted of their might, and rich men of their riches. However, the one who boasts ought to boast that he understands and knows the Lord (Jer.9:23-24).

1. What does Paul do in verse 11? (assuming it has been written up to then by an amanuensis) What characterizes Paul's handwriting? Why does he write this? _____

Paul went to some pains to make sure that his readers could be assured that his letters were in fact his (2 Thess.2:1-2; 3:17).

'Rabbi' Duncan referred to Paul as 'the little rickety man of the big strong fist'. Plutarch was another ancient writer whose handwriting was large.

In Paul's case, this large handwriting might be related to eye troubles, or to his tent-maker's hands (as Adolf Deissmann thought), or simply to the fact that some people have large handwriting.

2. What are the motives of the circumcision party? (6:12-13) _____

The Judaizers were wanting to preserve their own hides. Perhaps they had persecution by Zealots in mind, or perhaps the fact that Jews were exempt from the imperial cult.

In verse 13 Paul is not so much referring to the impossibility of keeping the law (as in 5:3) but to the fact that the Judaizing teachers were not even walking down that path. They were not earnest souls, but were insincere and corrupt.

3. In what is Paul's boast? (6:14) What does it mean for him? _____

Paul is saying: 'May it never be true for me that I glory in anything except the cross of Christ.'

Cicero: 'How grievous a thing it is to be disgraced by a public court; how grievous to suffer a fine; how grievous to suffer banishment; and yet in the midst of any such disaster we retain some degree of liberty. Even if we are threatened with death, we may die free men. But the executioner, the veiling of the head and the very word "cross" should be far removed not only from the person of a Roman citizen but his thoughts, his eyes and his ears. For it is not only the actual occurrence of these things but the very mention of them, that is unworthy of a Roman citizen and a free man.'

Isaac Watts:

*Forbid it, Lord, that I should boast,
Save in the death of Christ, my God;
All the vain things that charm me most,
I sacrifice them to His blood.*

By 'cross', Paul means not so much the piece of wood as the doctrine that the Son of God suffered and died for sinners. In the cross alone there is salvation. It does not contribute to salvation; it saves. To the world complacent in its own sin, it is nothing; to sinners convicted by the Holy Spirit, it is everything.

James Haldane: 'The cross was not only the ground of all the Apostle's boasting, the foundation of all his hopes; it was the grand subject of his ministry.'

Dietrich Bonhoeffer: 'The figure of the Crucified invalidates all thought which takes success for its standard.'

When Amy Carmichael was included in the Royal Birthday Honours List, she was horrified: 'It troubles me to have an experience so different from His Who was despised and rejected, not kindly honoured.' In her powerful little book, *If*, she writes: 'If I covet any place on earth but the dust at the foot of the Cross, then I know nothing of Calvary love.'

Chrysostom asked: 'And what is the boast of the cross?' He answered: 'That Christ for my sake took on him the form of a slave, and bore his sufferings for me the slave, the enemy, the ingrate; yes, he so loved me as to give himself up to a curse for me.' A saved sinner has nothing more to say.

THE NEW CREATION AND GRACE (Gal.6:15-18)

1. What is Paul's final word about circumcision? (6:15) What matters in comparison? _____

The *Testament of Levi* 6.3 says that circumcision saves from God's wrath. Paul says that it does nothing - neither harm nor good.

2. What is Paul's prayer for the Galatians? (6:16) What does he call them? What are the implications of this? _____

O. Palmer Robertson vigorously declares that 'Israel of God' 'cannot refer to the Jewish people as a community distinct from the Gentile world' for that would 'flatly contradict' Paul's whole argument in Galatians. 'Israel' surely refers to the Church (Gal.3:29; Rom.11; 1 Cor.10:18; Phil.3:3).

3. What are the marks of true discipleship? (6:17) What does Paul tell the Galatians? _____

The Greek word here is 'stigmata'. The most famous claim to a stigmata is probably that of Francis of Assisi. But here Paul is not referring to miraculous marks supposedly inscribed on his hands, but to his sufferings as an apostle of Jesus Christ. From the beginning of his Christian life, Paul was told that he would be the chosen instrument of Christ, who would suffer for his name (Acts 9:15-16).

The Judaizers embraced circumcision and avoided the cross; Paul discarded circumcision and embraced the cross.

4. What is Paul's final prayer-wish (benediction) for the Galatians? (6:18) How is this so appropriate? _____

We do not find, as we usually do in Paul's other letters, announcements of travel plans, final greetings, or prayer requests. Nor do we find a doxology (although there is one back in 1:5).

Robert Traill: 'Righteousness comes not by the law, to any man out of Christ: and there is no condemnation comes by the law, to any man in Christ.'

John Calvin: 'May we open our eyes to see our depravity and be ashamed of it, and not only so, but also to recognise that this life is nothing, and that God has placed us here as on a journey, so that he can test whether or not we are following him. May each of us therefore come aside, both morning and evening, to consider our sins, and may they be like goads to prick us and encourage us to come to God. May we not be like brute beasts, tied to this world, but may our need lead us to come to the Lord Jesus Christ. This is what it is to glory in the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ.'