



BE
GOD'S

Family

VOLUME 5
READINGS, DEVOTIONS, POEMS

Fishers United Methodist Church

Introduction

Over the previous three years, we have taken a sweeping overview of the entire Bible with studies on the four Gospels (“Be with Jesus”), the rest of the New Testament (“Be on Mission”), and the Old Testament (“Be God’s Light”).

Now we slow down and go deeper. Our focus in 2025 will be on the New Testament books that focus on Jewish people who had accepted Jesus as the Messiah. Throughout the Bible, the Hebrew people are considered children of God, that is, His family. Through the birth, life, death and resurrection of Jesus, believers in Him are grafted in. Hence, this year’s study: “Be God’s Family.”

First, we look at the Gospel of Matthew, written for a Jewish audience who had become Christian. It draws on many Old Testament and Jewish traditions, texts, concepts, customs, and more. Matthew clearly points to Jesus as the long-awaited Messiah for the Jews and the entire world.

Second, we will spend several weeks exploring the book of Hebrews, which by its title alone is very Hebrew. This New Testament book examines the person and work of Jesus through the lens of numerous Old Testament people, practices, sacrifices, holy days, and more.

Finally, we will close out the ten-month study by examining two shorter New Testament books: Galatians and James. In Galatians, Paul addresses whether Jewish circumcision and the law of Moses are prerequisites to faith in Jesus Christ. In James, the brother of Jesus discusses whether works or faith are most essential to Christian living.

One of the great bonuses this year is that a number of people from our church are joining me in writing the devotionals for this study. They will bring fresh insights and perspectives to our devotion time. Each of them is engaged in training by me, a small cohort with one another, and personal prayer as they produce what you will read and reflect on. Make sure to thank them throughout the year as you are impacted by their words.

There are several components to this year-long exploration:

1. **Daily Scripture Readings** – Actually, they are five days a week. Consider reading each weekday to anchor your day in Scripture.
2. **Daily Devotions** – These are written by others and me, and correlate with the daily Scripture to help you think more deeply about what you are reading.
3. **Daily Poems** – These are written by my sister-in-law, Rev. Dr. Martha FrizLanger. They will help you imagine the Scripture through poetry. This year, the poems will be based on a portion of a Psalm or other literature from the Old Testament that connects with the theme of that day’s New Testament reading.
4. **Weekly Studies** – These studies, written by my colleague Rev. Dr. Ben Greenbaum, are great tools for small groups and classes.
5. **Weekly Sermons** – If you cannot attend worship with us in person, you can always watch them online, visit fishersumc.org/begodsfamily for easy access, or view them in the Fishers UMC app.
6. **Weekly Podcasts** – Ben and I and some special guests will spend some time each week dialoguing about that week’s readings, visit fishersumc.org/begodsfamily for easy access or your favorite podcast platform.

The hope is that we are all drawn to God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in this study as One who is Holy, yet approachable through His kindness and salvation. All Scripture references are NIV unless otherwise noted.

It is my prayer that you will be motivated to embrace the fact that you are a child of God, called by Him to “Be God’s Family” in the world.

Enjoy the journey!

Rev. Mark A. Ellcessor

Senior Pastor, Fishers United Methodist Church



8/18/2025 - WEEK 33 DAY 1

Jesus Rescued Us from Our Sins

SCRIPTURE: GALATIANS 1:1-5

Devotional By: Mark Elcessor

This year we are studying books of the Bible which are addressed to or deal with challenges raised by Hebrew Christians. So far, we have looked at Matthew (the most Jewish of the Gospels) and the book of Hebrews (which connects Old Testament priestly duties to Jesus, the Great High Priest).

Now we turn our attention to the book of Galatians, a writing addressed to a collection of churches in a Roman province known as Galatia (in modern-day Turkey). These communities had both Gentiles who practiced pagan worship of Greek gods and goddesses, as well as Jews who practiced Judaism.

When Paul and Barnabas first took the gospel to Galatia (Acts 14), many Jews and Gentiles in the city of Iconium believed, while others stirred up a plot against them. In the neighboring city of Lystra, people were so impressed by the miraculous work of the evangelists that they compared them to their Greek gods, Hermes and Zeus. Paul and Barnabas refuted their adoration, and for their trouble Paul was stoned and dragged out of the city, left for dead. In yet another Galatian city, Derbe, Paul and Barnabas won many disciples. One of them was Timothy, whose mother was a Jewish believer and whose father was a Greek (Acts 16:1).

When Paul writes his letter to the churches in Galatia, he opens by boldly stating that Jesus was raised from the dead, something that set Him apart from the Greco-Roman gods and confirmed that He was the Jew's Messiah. Indeed, Paul states that Jesus "gave himself for our sins to rescue us from the present evil age." The pagan practices and religious rituals of the Galatian people could never do that.

What are some of the pagan practices and religious rituals that people in your culture participate in? What are they hoping these things will help them do or be? What are some of the cultural customs you have found yourself doing? Are any of them in conflict with the Gospel of Christ?

If Paul were to write a letter to the region where you live, what might he say? More importantly, what is the Holy Spirit saying to you?

Poem

You Came To Me; You Rescued Me
Galatians 1:1-5, Psalm 71

In your righteousness, rescue me and deliver me; turn your ear to me and save me. Be my rock of refuge, to which I can always go; give the command to save me, for you are my rock and my fortress.
Psalm 71:2-3

*O Great Life-Guard,
When the under currents
Drug me out to sea
Where fierce waves threatened
Where drowning pulls suctioned me down
You swam to me
You came to me
You rescued me*

*O Strong Fireman,
When my life's house was ablaze
Smoke screens choking my exit
Where foundational beams fell
Where tongues of fire burned my flesh
You crashed through to me
You came to me
You rescued me*

*O Mighty Prince,
When the thorns of cursing blocked the sun
As I lay asleep in death
Where no one else dared the challenge
Where Evil had barred the way
You advanced into the fray with sword swinging
You came to me
You rescued me*



8/19/2025 - WEEK 33 DAY 2

Warning Against Turning to a Different Gospel

SCRIPTURE: GALATIANS 1:6-10

Devotional By: Wilbur Sutton

Paul warns churches, in Galatians 1:6-10 to be wary of others that try to turn us from the Gospel. Today, many organizations, religions, political parties, interest groups, movies, social media posts, etc. want to have us lean toward directions that stray from the Gospel of Jesus Christ. They seem to have convincing arguments that can harden our hearts for the purpose of steering us away from the Gospel. They preach the gospel of “popular choices.”

I love the fact that our pastors preach and teach from the Gospel. They don't pick and choose what might be most comfortable for us to hear, but they share the wisdom of what the Word calls us to do. They often call us to step outside of our comfort zone. They teach us, as is shared in 1 Corinthians 3:10-15, that our foundation of faith, as was given to us by Jesus Christ, is the foundation we should build upon. We should follow the path that the Scriptures lay out for us. We should follow the wisdom of the Word that God gave us.

When the Pharisees and Sadducees asked Jesus “By what authority do you teach?” I think of the Gospel of John 1:1-2 when he wrote “In the beginning was the word and the word was with God. He was with God in the beginning.” I believe the Word was both Jesus and Wisdom. Jesus delivered us that wisdom through the Scriptures and that should be the foundation that we build our spiritual growth upon.

Prayer: Loving God, we ask for your discernment in our choices. Holy Spirit, guide us as we choose to understand your Word and its application to our lives. Help us grow in our spiritual faith and our understanding of the Word in our lives. Amen.

Poem

How To Deal With Lies
Galatians 1:6-10, Psalm 59

For the sins of their mouths, for the words
of their lips, let them be caught in their
pride. For the curses and lies they utter,
consume them in your wrath, consume
them till they are no more.
Psalm 59:12-13b

*Why is it, LORD,
That lies speak louder than truth
That my soul shakes violently as
The Accuser spews forth
His vomit
Commanding me to
Ingest it
Chew it
Consume it
As it consumes me?*

*Allow me, LORD,
To be defiant against falsehoods
To discipline the emotions of my soul as
The Holy Spirit blows forth
His gospel
Wooing me to
Embrace it
Cling to it
Consume it
So it consumes me*



8/20/2025 - WEEK 33 DAY 3

The Gospel of Jesus Christ

SCRIPTURE: GALATIANS 1:11-12

Devotional By: Susan Pressler

I am writing this devotion on Easter Monday, the day following Easter Sunday. We were informed, inspired, and enlightened during Holy Week through teachings and stories about the Last Supper, the New Covenant, Jesus' crucifixion, and Jesus' resurrection. These happenings are integral to our Christian faith. In fact, our Christian faith is founded on believing in the resurrection of Jesus and receiving Him as our Savior.

I am reflecting now on the connections between Holy Week and today's verses of Galatians 1:11-12. The book of Galatians was written by the Apostle Paul in approximately 49 AD, sixteen years after Jesus' resurrection. Christianity was rapidly spreading across the Middle East, Asia, and Europe. Paul had preached the gospel to the Galatians several years earlier, and many had received Jesus Christ as their Savior. In verses 11 and 12, Paul was warning the Galatians to stop following other false gospels about how to be saved. These false gospels were developed and taught by men, not by God (BibleRef.com).

The gospel Paul claimed to preach was "not from man or through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father" (D. Guzak, Enduring Word). In other words, Paul, being filled with the Holy Spirit, preached what was revealed into his heart by Jesus and any substantial differences in content from other preachers were not to be considered as inspired by God. Holy Week reminds us to be faithful to the words of Jesus and God and beware of false gospels.

In similar verses in 1 Corinthians 15:1-2, Paul warned them to remember the gospel that he had preached "which you [the Corinthians] received and on which you have taken your stand. By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you."

What does this mean for us today? Reading the gospel without revelation from the Holy Spirit is not the means to receive God's grace. We have to receive it in our hearts and then do as Jesus commanded, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me" (Matthew 16:24).

The simple yet magnificent truth is written in Jesus' words, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6).

Poem

You Ask

Galatians 1:11-12, Psalm 113

*He raises the poor from the dust and
lifts the needy from the ash heap;
he seats them with princes,
with the princes of his people.
Psalm 113:7-8*

*You ask why I am a follower of Jesus?
You ask why I love the Lord?
I could spew forth*

Scripture

Theology

Apologetics

Trying to make your mind

Understand

Comprehend

Be convinced

But not a single mental exercise

Could replace

The Divine's revelation

The Spirit's transformation

The Savior's reconciliation

Which came upon me

Over time

And yet

In an instant

Swelling me with

Grace

Love

Hope

Faith

I am now at peace

I am now known

I am now loved



8/21/2025 - WEEK 33 DAY 4

The Persecutor Becomes the Proclaimer

SCRIPTURE: GALATIANS 1:13-17

Devotional By: Dan Henke

Paul and I have one thing in common; we were not always Christians. While I did not persecute Christians in the manner of Paul, I was hostile and resistant to notions of Christian faith. I did not have the "Road to Damascus" moment that Paul experienced. Jesus did not speak into my life in a moment of blindness (even though I was, in a way, as blind as Paul). The road taken in my journey has been longer, and the evolution was gradual even though there have been significant moments of spiritual growth along the way. If I were to provide an analogy of my faith journey, I would point to the parable of the workers in the vineyard in Matthew 20: I showed up for work around noon, but didn't really begin to understand the job until much later in the day.

I take some comfort in knowing that I am not alone. Just as Paul found his faith, many others have come to faith more fully than I have. You could start with the criminal next to Jesus in Luke 23. As Christian Living contributor Jim Day wrote in "God Dots: Atheists Who Became Big Believers":

"All of the authors / singers / God Dots were at some point in their lives self-proclaimed atheists: C.S. Lewis, Lee Strobel, Keith Green and even Taylor Caldwell, who in an interview in 1978 called herself a Catholic atheist. They ran smack-dab into their own God Dots and came away with faith that cannot be suppressed. Just as the apostle Paul had his encounter with Jesus on the road to Damascus, Jesus has designed divine encounters for us. People seem to put a lot of effort into denying God, but He never gives up on them."

I consider that good company to be in.

Paul also said he did not rely on people, but I did. I've had many Christian mentors, even if they didn't know they were mentoring me. As I was writing this devotional, I spent time visiting with my friend Tim, who has been a friend for over 40 years, and his wife Snez. We spent time sharing our faith and our faith journeys. Tim knew me in my very non-Christian days, and I asked him if he ever thought I would turn out to follow Christ. He said he wasn't surprised. Maybe he saw something all along that for far too long I didn't see in myself.

I thought I was far from Christ, but Christ was never far from me. Is there someone in your life who believes they are far from Christ? Can you help them on their road to Damascus?

Poem

Lord, Come To Me
Galatians 1:13-17, Psalm 119:41-48

May your unfailing love come to me, Lord, your salvation, according to your promise;... I will speak of your statutes before kings and will not be put to shame, for I delight in your commands because I love them.

Psalm 119: 41, 46-47

*Lord, come to me,
Even when I do not know I need You
Even when my mind is set against You
Even when I kick against You
Lord, come to me,
Knock me off my pride
Burst in to my self-made prison
Take away everything which hinders
Lord, come to me,
Open my eyes to my own blindness
Open my ears to hear Your claim
Open my mouth to stand and declare
Lord, come to me
O King, I stand before You!*



8/22/2025 - WEEK 33 DAY 5

Paul's Three Years of Preparation

SCRIPTURE: GALATIANS 1:18-24

Devotional By: Nancy Foust

Throughout Paul's life, he explains many times in the bible that he was not a believer and was not a good person in his younger years. It was not until Jesus's crucifixions that he began his process to believe in God the Father. How many years did it take YOU to become a believer in the Lord Jesus? I have always believed in the power of my faith, so I find it difficult to understand those that do not accept Jesus as our Savior.

Paul states in Galatians 1:23 "... the man who formally persecuted us is now preaching the faith he once tried to destroy. And they praised God because of me." We are told that Paul established his authority to preach the truth of God by learning through the gospels. Therefore, shouldn't it make sense that unbelievers could read the gospels and understand how important faith in God can be?

I tried to put this distrust or unbelieving into our life today, to help me understand why people can truly not trust in God. Think about actors/actresses, Politicians, CEOs, and others in places of high authority. Often we have a strong distrust or dislike for the job they do but is it because we don't believe they are doing the appropriate job for us? Or is it because we don't understand why they do what they do? I believe if we can understand fully the position they are in, we can begin to believe they are doing the best they can do at their respective job. That should mean that understanding the Gospels of Jesus' life can help unbelievers begin to trust in their faith.

With that thought, it is up to us, as believers, to follow Paul's lead and preach the gospels to those that truly don't believe in God the Father. Try it - you will surprise yourself how much you really do know.

Poem

I Confess

Galatians 1:18-24, Psalm 79

*Do not hold against us the sins of past generations; may your mercy come quickly to meet us, for we are in desperate need. Help us, God our Savior, for the glory of your name; deliver us and forgive our sins for your name's sake.
Psalm 79: 8-9*

*I confess
I confess I was an enemy of God
I confess I was proud in my own knowledge
I confess I looked down upon those unlike me
I confess I continued in the generational curses of my heritage
I confess I caused great damage to others
I confess I was wrong*

*I confess
I confess I was brought low by the gift of grace
I confess I knew nothing of God
I confess I had much to learn
I confess I received blessing without merit
I confess I long to be a part of the healing Kingdom
I confess I am loved*



8/25/2025 - WEEK 34 DAY 1

Paul's Fourteen Years of Practice

SCRIPTURE: GALATIANS 2:1-5

Devotional By: Wilbur Sutton

Galatians 2:1-5 shares with us that Paul spent fourteen years carrying the Word to the Gentiles before going to Jerusalem to meet with the esteemed leaders (the Apostles) to be sure he was sharing the Word correctly. We can call that Paul's fourteen years of practice.

I think some of us have spent most of our lives sharing the Word with others during study groups, conversations, disciple studies, etc. at church. It has helped us grow spiritually and has helped us to strengthen both our faith and our understanding of the Bible. Could this be "our practice?" Could it be that God is preparing us to reach unchurched people who have either never truly heard God's word or have drifted away from "organized religion?" Could it be that God is preparing us to have a serious conversation with that person who needs God in their life and just doesn't know it yet?

There is comfort in discussing The Word with other believers. It's an important part of our spiritual growth. BUT, could it be that God is preparing us for the time we are talking with a friend who possibly needs the comfort and understanding that God loves them as much as he loves us? I suggest we keep our eyes and ears open that we might not miss that opportunity. I suggest we use that practice to bring that person, whom God puts in our path, closer to Him.

Prayer: Loving God, help me to see your opportunity to bless others with your wisdom, your love, your forgiveness, with which you have blessed each of us. Amen

Poem

The Trumpeting Band Galatians 2:1-5, Psalm 67

*May the peoples praise you, God;
may all the peoples praise you.
May the nations be glad and sing
for joy, for you rule the peoples
with equity and guide the nations
of the earth. May the peoples
praise you, God; may all the
peoples praise you.
Psalm 67: 3-5*

*Over the seas, across hill and plain
God's Spirit wind blows, revealing
Christ's name
The breath of God's trumpeting
mission'ry band
The called ones proclaiming in
every land
Great news to all nations, great
news to all tribes
O, to be part of the orchestral
vibe!
Then band turns to chorus as
voice anthems raise
Proclaiming with glad joy the great
global praise
To God who created, to Christ—
redeemed, saved
To sustaining Spirit, our sin's debt
full paid*



8/26/2025 - WEEK 34 DAY 2

Paul's Partnership with Barnabas

SCRIPTURE: GALATIANS 2:6-10

Devotional By: Dave Rizk

A few months ago, I visited an older gentleman in the hospital with several students from my class. This man was not feeling well, struggled to maintain proper hygiene, and had an old flip phone on the bedside table. During our conversation, one student spoke to him in a judgmental tone. However, everything changed when we discovered that he was an esteemed university professor living alone and dealing with declining health. Instantly, the student's attitude shifted to one of respect. This moment sparked a realization for me: the student had judged this man solely by his appearance, allowing that initial impression to dictate how he treated him. It served as a powerful reminder that we should not judge others based on their appearance or social status.

It is easy to rate people based on their official status and be intimidated by influential people. But Paul was not intimidated by those held in high esteem because all believers are equal in Christ. We should respect all our spiritual leaders, but our ultimate alliance must be to Jesus. We are to serve him with all that we are. God does not rate us according to our status, He looks at the attitude of our hearts. We must strive to be encouraging leaders who show humility and demonstrate a heartfelt desire to please God. The pillars of the church leaders such as James (Jesus' half-brother), Peter, and John realized that God was using Paul to reach the rest of the known world, not just fellow Jews. After hearing Paul's message, they gave Paul and Barnabas their approval, "the right hand of fellowship" to continue to work among the Gentiles.

A Call to action: Have you caught yourself viewing others as more or less important than yourself lately? Consider ways that you might correct your course and view Christ followers as equals, regardless of their socioeconomic status or job titles.

Poem

God Chooses

Galatians 2:6-10, Psalm 119:65-72

*Do good to your servant according
to your word, Lord. Teach me
knowledge and good judgment, for I
trust your commands. Before I was
afflicted I went astray, but now I
obey your word.
Psalm 119:65-67*

*God chooses whom He chooses
To do His bidding call
The brave, the meek, the broken
Equips them one and all
Those whom were once deaf,
blinded
Now healed by Divine word
Those whom were once afflicted
Now carry Spirit's sword
All rise to Kingdom's mission
All rise to join the throng*



8/27/2025 - WEEK 34 DAY 3

Peter's Difficulty with Gentiles

SCRIPTURE: GALATIANS 2:11-14

Devotional By: Mark Elcessor

Some people get involved in a pickleball league.
Others hang out with a gardening group
And other folks join a card club.
In Paul's day, some Jewish Christians belonged to the
circumcision group. Deal me out.

This group of people, also known as Judaizers, were Jewish Christians who taught that Gentiles had to become Jews in order to become Christians. They had to observe the Jewish Law for things like what they ate, how they observed the Sabbath, and even getting circumcised as adult males. These people had already walked away from their Greek gods and goddesses. Now there were new layers of expectations for them to become followers of Jesus.

The Early Church wrestled with this mightily. A hot second after Christianity was born, there was preferential treatment given to Hebraic Jews over Grecian Jews who had become believers (Acts 6:1). A handful of years later, Peter saw a vision and was convicted to baptize some Gentiles, against all his Jewish upbringing (Acts 10).

Yet the question of whether Gentiles had to become Jews on their way to becoming Christians persisted. Hence, the circumcision group. One day Peter was baptizing and eating with Gentiles. The next day he was steering clear of them to appease the Judaizers. Paul called Peter out for his hypocrisy right to his face. So much for being intimidated by the right-hand man of Jesus.

This whole question got settled at the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15, when the apostles decided it is not necessary for Gentiles to get circumcised and obey the law of Moses if they want to become Christians. But it wasn't like there were no expectations. All believers were required to abstain from idolatry and sexual immorality (Acts 15:20).

Peter was focused on barriers to believing. These were eliminated by the grace of Christ. Paul was focused on pathways to purity. These were embraced and proclaimed by the apostles.

What are some barriers to believing that keep people from considering Christianity these days? How should they be confronted and eliminated?

What are some pathways to purity that a life in Christ calls to? How can these be pursued and embraced by followers of Jesus?

Poem

Prayer

Galatians 2:11-14, Psalm 78

*They forgot what he had done, the
wonders he had shown them.
Psalm 78:11*

*As time begins to ramble
As days turn into weeks
O, LORD, do not allow my soul
To lose what You did speak
The wonders You have shown me
The insights You have giv'n
Taking my earthbound thinking
And lifting it to heav'n
Turn logic into Spirit thought
Turn patterns set in stone
Into Your will driv'n future way
Which glorifies Your throne
May I allow Your Spirit
To change the course I plod
May my whole being yield itself
Unto Your hands, O God*



8/28/2025 - WEEK 34 DAY 4

Faith Alone

SCRIPTURE: GALATIANS 2:15-16

Devotional By: Kim Arnott

Growing up, my father was an Indiana State Police Commander, and he impressed upon me the importance of following the law. God forbid a policeman's daughter would ever get caught doing something they shouldn't! I was expected to toe the line – and I did! So, I can relate to those Jewish believers in Galatia who had been taught all their lives the importance of following the law. But now, this man named Paul was saying that the ONLY thing necessary for salvation is faith in Jesus. They were probably thinking “Yahweh forbid we should abandon the Torah! Following the law will not save us? What? That can't be right!” This would have been difficult for them to accept.

Paul was arguing for *sola fide* – a Latin phrase meaning “justification by faith alone”. It's a central belief of most Protestant denominations. No one can earn their way to heaven by obeying the law and following the rules. Faith is truly the only requirement for salvation – we should not add anything to it.

But the Galatians were also hearing from the Judaizers. They held that Gentile believers MUST be required to follow Jewish law to achieve salvation. In their view, Paul's teaching of justification by faith alone would lead to chaos and disorder. The laws under debate were primarily Biblical laws that were important to Jewish identity – circumcision, dietary laws and sabbath observance. For instance, it was forbidden for Jews to share meals with Gentiles because Gentiles didn't follow Jewish dietary laws. When Peter first came to the area, he participated in these shared meals. But after being criticized by followers of James, Peter relented and refused to take part. Paul chastised Peter claiming that he had not upheld the truth of the Gospel. So, there was the debate.

Paul is not saying that we should ignore the law completely. In his letter to the Romans he states, **“the law itself is holy, and its commands are holy and right and good”** (Romans 7:12). The law is a tool we can use to align ourselves with biblical standards of behavior. It helps us to discern right from wrong. It guards us from sin. Doesn't it seem that human beings function better when there are laws or rules in place? We like structure. We like guidelines. It's sometimes easier for us to live by rules than by faith which is intangible. But Paul is saying that, even though the law is important, it's not the way to salvation or justification. **“The law cannot save us, but it can guide us to live as God requires.”** (Life Application Study Bible)

How are you more focused on rules than simply *sola fide*?

Poem

Faith Above Law

Galatians 2:15-16, Psalm 121

The Lord will keep you from all harm— he will watch over your life; the Lord will watch over your coming and going both now and forevermore.

Psalm 121: 7-8

*It is the Lord who saves you
Who keeps you from all harm
It is your faith which keeps you
Full nestled in His arms
True, Law can give you guidance
True, Law can light your way
But faith alone in Christ alone
Brings each one to the day
When we delight in true life
When we live in the light
When we do fully know true love
And in the Lord delight
So bind God's word within you
And meditate on truth
But realize it is by faith
Christ's love your soul will soothe
Then glory to the Father
And glory to the Son
And glory to the Spirit true
Our God, the three in one*



8/29/2025 - WEEK 34 DAY 5

Crucified with Christ

SCRIPTURE: GALATIANS 2:17-21

Devotional By: Elyce Meador

How good do I need to be? Are the 10 commandments enough? Do I need to live as a pauper? I keep hearing that I need to do better, but I thought Christ died for me! Paul can be a bit difficult to read, sometimes seemingly speaking in circles. Finding exactly what he is trying to say is hard. In this passage, he speaks of Christ being a servant of sin. Really? He emphatically responds: "Absolutely not!" He speaks of dying to the law so that he might live in Christ. What does that mean? How do I die to the law?

These questions can get in the way of hearing the message Paul is trying to say, and it's important to remember that we modern people are not his contemporary audience. This was written 2000 years ago for a church consisting mainly of Jews who were now converted Christians. They were questioning whether Gentiles could be Christians without first becoming Jews by following the traditional laws and practicing circumcision.

Paul is arguing back! If following the Jewish laws alone could save you, then he himself should have been saved. Instead, following the law had merely resulted in him feeling inadequate to the task. He had to "die" to the law. He had to give it up as a way to salvation. The way to salvation was Christ. Faith in Christ. Christ living in him, in us. There we are saved.

Salvation is not anything we can "do," but a gift from God. God has done all the work. He has been perfect, through Christ, on our behalf. Nothing we can do will earn us a spot in heaven. If we are good, follow the Ten Commandments, volunteer, save children, give away all our money, it will not be enough. We must believe that Christ died for us. That is it - nothing more complicated than that.

When you believe, when you bring Christ into your life, the law is not needed. You will have no choice but to be "good," to follow the Ten Commandments, volunteer, save children and give—because it will be Christ working through you, and because you will want to do all these things in response to such a gift. It won't be a matter of choice, it will just be.

Don't mishear me, there are still struggles, we are not perfect. But that is really the point: we don't have to be perfect, God has already done that for us.

Poem

Dry Clay

Galatians 2:17-21, Psalm 104

When you send your Spirit, they are created, and you renew the face of the ground.

Psalm 104: 30

*Dry clay, lifeless though molded
My being, here I am
Until You breathe Your Spirit
Creating me to stand
Your image in this broken world
Your lampstand of Your way
Providing beams of Son-light
To hail creative day
So breathe upon me, Holy One
Change clay into Your child
Give me your full renewing pow'r
Your life through me provide*



9/1/2025 - WEEK 35 DAY 1

Who Has Bewitched You? **SCRIPTURE: GALATIANS 3:1-5**

Devotional By: Judith Gibson

"How many times do I have to tell you? Haven't you learned this by now?" During your childhood, you probably heard your mother or father ask these questions. Sometimes it seems we just don't learn something the first time. Philosopher George Santayana wrote, "those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it."

Paul dealt with this learning challenge with the Christians in Galatia. In his letter to them, he addressed the Christians about the wrong teaching of the "Judaizers," teaching that all Christians should be circumcised and conform to the Jewish law. Paul was a converted Jew and believed this teaching was exchanging Christian freedom for slavery (*Zondervan Handbook to the Bible*). In his visits to them, Paul repeatedly taught that repentance and faith were all that was needed to receive God's forgiveness and live the new life God had given them.

However, he knew that some of the teachers insisted that non-Jewish converts must also be circumcised and observe the Jewish laws (or become Jews). This same thing happened at Antioch (Acts 15:1). Undoubtedly, he reminded them of the thief crucified beside Christ. Because of his belief in Christ alone, he was promised a home in Paradise even though he may or may not have been circumcised or followed Jewish law. As He was dying on the cross, Jesus tells the penitent thief, "Truly I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise" (Luke 23:43).

Paul believed that the Galatians were returning to their legalism and undoing the work of Christ on the cross. Again, he reminded these believers that Christ set them free from the Jewish law. He asked, "Are you so foolish? After beginning by means of the Spirit, are you now trying to finish by means of the flesh?" (v. 3). In other words, "haven't you learned by now; salvation is by faith in Christ alone?"

Like the mother or father who asks the question to the erring child: "How many times do I have to tell you?" Paul was frustrated and distraught at this teaching that made "obedience to the law just as essential to salvation as trust in the crucified Messiah" (*Zondervan*). He knew that it struck at the very roots of the Christian message. Salvation - new life—is God's gift to all who believe. There is absolutely nothing we can do to earn it!

Have you been bewitched by the world's teaching and a slave to its opinions and morals? Or are you free in Christ and submit to His law of love?

Poem

Renewed Spirit Galatians 3:1-5, Psalm 51

*Create in me a clean heart, O God;
and renew a right spirit within me.
Cast me not away from thy presence;
and take not thy holy spirit from me.
Psalm 51:10-11*

*I knew the Holy Spirit's pow'r
I knew the quick'ning life
I knew God's heart as He knew mine
I knew God's peace in strife*

*But then I turned away from God
But then I lived my way
But then my rebel spirit rose
But then my love did stray*

*The darkness then became a void
The darkness in me crept
The darkness suffocated me
The darkness, vast and deep*

*In helplessness I cried to God
In helplessness I laid
In helplessness I felt no hope
In helplessness I prayed*

*Create in me anew, O God,
Create in me Your pow'r
Create in me Your Spirit, Lord
Create me in this hour*

*The Lord, so faithful, heard my cry
The Lord, did draw me near
The Lord, renewed His Spirit's place
The Lord made Himself clear*

*Ne'er let me ever turn again
Ne'er ever leave Your call
Ne'er let me e'er forget Your love
Ne'er let me ever fall*



9/2/2025 - WEEK 35 DAY 2

Christ Redeemed Us from the Curse

SCRIPTURE: GALATIANS 3:6-14

Devotional

By: Bill Ringenberg and
Mark Ellcessor

Abraham is the forefather in faith of all of us moderns. Through him “all the nations shall be blessed (verse 8). With that blessing of Abraham now coming “upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith” (verse 14) in the Incarnate Son of God. Through Jesus, Christians have been adopted into the family of God!

Throughout the Old Testament, people tried to earn God’s favor by works of the law. That failed mightily. Abraham wasn’t perfect. Neither was Moses. Joshua, David and Solomon joined the good-try club. Even the high priests offered sacrifices for their own sins. Every human being fell under the curse of their own sin.

That is, until Jesus. Verse 13 says, “Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us.” This echoes 2 Corinthians 5:21, “God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.” On the cross, Jesus became our sin. Jesus became our curse. In exchange, we receive the righteousness of God. We receive the promise of the Spirit.

Good works are a dead-end street of destruction.

Right faith is an eternal avenue of grace.

The essence of this passage is that salvation in for both Jews and Gentiles who have faith in the work of Christ, not their own works. We are all children of Abraham. We are all part of the family of God!

Poem

The Curse V. The Blessing
Galatians 3:6-14, Psalm 109

*While they curse, may you bless;
may those who attack me be put to
shame, but may your servant rejoice.
Psalm 109:28*

*The Curse brings
Fruitless labor
Thorny life
Broken mutuality
Painful bearing
Hardened longing
Death*

*The Blessing brings
Abundant harvests
Cleared way
Loving intimacy
Joyful labor
Deep fulfillment
Life*



9/3/2025 - WEEK 35 DAY 3

The Inheritance and the Promise

SCRIPTURE: GALATIANS 3:15-20

Devotional By: Judith Gibson

In one of his sermons, C.H. Spurgeon told a story about two men in a boat caught in strong rapids. As they were being carried swiftly downstream toward dangerous rocks and falls, men on shore tried to save them by throwing out a rope. One man caught the rope and was saved; the other man, in the panic of the moment, grabbed a log that was floating alongside. It was a fatal mistake! The man who caught the rope was drawn to shore, but the man who clung to the log was carried downstream by the rapids ... never to be found” (Anders, Max. *Holman New Testament Commentary*).

From his illustration, Spurgeon indicated the rope from shore represented salvation through faith in Jesus and the log was salvation by the Law. In today’s passage, we read that the Judaizers, Jewish believers, tried to combine their trust in the Law with salvation through faith in Jesus. They believed salvation was only for God’s chosen, the Jews, and those who claimed salvation through faith in Jesus also had to convert to Judaism. In contrast, Paul taught that the law’s purpose was never to save. It was just a tool that would expose our sin, our need for grace, and then lead us to Christ.

Earlier in this chapter, Paul told the Galatians that anyone who would rather have the law instead of freedom in Christ was foolish. These Jewish Christians talked about making Gentiles “sons of Abraham through the rite of circumcision” (Zondervan). However, he taught they were already Abraham’s sons and daughters—heirs—because they shared his faith (3:7). Since God had already accepted Abraham centuries before the law was given through Moses, how then could the law win people free pardon? The law was not perfect and could save no one. In the book of Romans, Paul teaches “all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God, and all are justified freely by His grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus” (Rom. 3:23-24).

The promise to Abraham was made by God and mediated by God alone. It was not fulfilled in the Jewish race, but in Jesus Christ; and through Jesus people from every nation are blessed. “All those promises to Abraham are given to those who believe and have faith in Jesus Christ” (sharperiron.org/users/tyler/). “So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed” (John 8:36). Salvation comes down to faith in Jesus alone.

Are you clinging to a “log” of tradition and legalism or the “rope” of salvation through faith in Christ alone?

Poem

Inheritance

Galatians 3:15-20, Psalm 16

*Lord, You alone are my inheritance,
my Cup of blessing. You guard all that
is mine.*

Psalm 16: 5

*A sad thing indeed is the fighting
that’s caused
As once loving relationships end
Over scraps from this life, when a
loved one does die
And great greed upon siblings
descends*

*What is owed to the child? Not a
penny, at all
For ‘tis up to the parent to give
As the parent decides, for the
blessing bestowed
Is but left to each will to provide*

*I am blessed, for inheritance given to
me
Is relationship, faithful and true
Not in things which succumb to fleas,
molding or rust
But in mem’ries a lifetime imbued*

*You alone, Lord, my cup and inher-
itance
You alone, Lord, my portion will be
You alone, Lord, the bounty of eter-
nal life
You alone, Lord, are all that I need*



9/4/2025 - WEEK 35 DAY 4

Locked Up as a Prisoner of Sin

SCRIPTURE: GALATIANS 3:21-25

Devotional By: Lynette Hart

When we are young, we have rules. Rules we must follow. We have a bedtime. We have to eat our dinner or no dessert. We cannot eat cookies and ice cream all the time. We must do our chores, make our bed, clean our rooms. We need to be nice to each other.

As children, we have consequences for breaking these rules. Time outs. Sit in the corner. No TV. Grounded for a week. Children look forward to the time they are grown up and can do what they want.

We use these rules to teach us right from wrong. As we grow up, we do not need the strict rules. We can go to bed when we want to go to bed. We can eat what we want to eat. We do not need to wash the dishes, do the laundry or clean the house.

But we quickly learn that we must do these things. If we don't go to bed on time, we are tired the next day. If we eat too many cookies and ice cream, we are not healthy. If we do not go grocery shopping, we have no food. If we do not clean the house, we leave in filth.

God's Law is similar. We are given God's Law to learn what is wrong and right.

One thing that God's Law does not have is salvation. Only Jesus can provide salvation. After Jesus comes, we are justified by faith. We are not justified by following the law. We do not gain salvation by following the law. We can gain salvation only by Jesus. However, we now choose to follow God's will because we know it is the right thing to do and more importantly, it is for God.

How can we live our faith every day to show others God's salvation? How can we follow God's will to bring others to Jesus?

Poem

From Behind Closed Bars
Galatians 3:21-25, Psalm 142

*Bring my soul out of prison,
That I may praise Your name;
The righteous shall surround me,
For You shall deal bountifully with me.*

Psalm 142:7

*From behind closed bars
From the gates of hell
This lone pris'ner praye
Long too tired to yell*

*"I have sinned, O Lord
I do not deserve
Any mercy, love
From Your law I swerved*

*"But by grace alone
Bring this poor soul out
From this prison cell
Full of shame and doubt*

*"Bring me into light
Darkened eyes to see
Your redeeming love
Showered down on me*

*"Then from cracked lips hear
As with tears, come praise
As the chains fall off
And my spirits raise*

*"For You, Lord, are good
Bountiful in grace
As forgiveness reigns
And I see Your face"*



9/5/2025 - WEEK 35 DAY 5

A World Without Barriers

SCRIPTURE: GALATIANS 3:26-29

Devotional By: Kim Arnott

The community where I spent the first 18 years of my life had to be one of the most homogeneous areas in the state at the time. The only diversity was the large Amish community – so, no, not very diverse. And most churches in the area were also very much the same – all professing a theology and practice of somewhat conservative Christianity. So, everyone looked like me, acted like me and believed like me. It was relatively easy to get along.

The community in Galatia – the land of the diaspora churches – was quite the opposite. They were comprised of a diverse group of races and classes which made Galatia unique. Christianity provided a bridge between these differences. Their faith in Jesus Christ gave them a new shared identity. They were now all children of God – regardless of their race, class or gender. As Paul tries to communicate in Galatians, any former distinctions are now erased and replaced with unity by virtue of faith in Jesus Christ. Paul uses the word “all” twice in verses 26 & 27. All means all. And that leads to verse 28.

Paul was imagining a world without barriers. A world where all will live in peace. A world where people value and respect each other because of their shared faith. A world where faith in Jesus Christ removes any discrimination – any differences based on ethnicity, social status or gender. A world where there is unity of spirit in Christ and inclusion for all.

At the second Jesus died on the cross, we learn that **“the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom.”** (Matt. 27:51) That event symbolized that the barrier between God and humanity was now gone and each one of us could come directly before God because of Jesus’ sacrifice. So, if we allow our differences to divide us, we are discounting the entire message of the Gospel. Billy Graham is famous for saying, **“the ground is level at the foot of the Cross.”** How true that is! Every one of us are equally in need of a savior, no matter where we come from, what our social status might be, what gender we are or any other distinction we can come up with.

How do we as Christians continue to perpetuate discrimination? What ways can we find to truly demonstrate that ALL are children of God through faith in Jesus Christ?

Poem

Water Birth

Galatians 3:26-29, Psalm 105

*O children of Abraham,
God's servant, you descendants of
Jacob, God's chosen ones. He is
the Lord our God; he carries out
judgment throughout the earth.
He always remembers his covenantal
decree, the promise he made to a
thousand generations—
Psalm 105:6-8*

*The water broke
Through birth canal
I slid from Mother's womb
Her child I am
Conceived, nurtured
Within her secret room*

*The water poured
Baptismal birth
A covenant was born
God's promise sure
God's claiming grace
From which I can't be torn*

*No barriers hold
Me from God's plan
Though life's storms 'round me wild
His judgments true
His promise sure
His will for me, His child*



9/8/2025 - WEEK 36 DAY 1

It's Time to Grow Up

SCRIPTURE: GALATIANS 4:1-7

Devotional

By: Dan Henke

When are you “grown up?”

There are several milestones where we consider a person to no longer be a child:

Age 12-13: Confirmation, pay full price at the movies

Age 16: Get a driver's license

Age 18: Legal adulthood for most purposes; voting, executing contracts, consent to medical care

Age 21: Purchase alcohol

Age 25: Insurance premiums go down

Most of these milestones are not as random as they seem; there are good logical reasons that the restrictions on children exist and are then lifted when appropriate. (Except for the movie ticket thing, that's just greed).

In this passage, Paul looks at how the Jews lived while under the Law prior to the coming of Jesus. He compares them to children who were not yet “of age” to be responsible for their own affairs. The Old Testament referred to this in Hosea 11:1: “When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son.” Hosea Chapters 10 and 11 talk of how Israel has gone astray. It was acting like a wayward child.

God's love for His people is as a father's love for a child even if the child is unruly. Because the child needs direction, Paul argues that God sent the Law to act as a Guardian for His people. With the coming of Jesus, His sacrifice on the cross and His resurrection, all of humanity is now of “legal age.” We have been freed from this guardianship and are now capable of a clearer understanding and mature love towards Christ displayed by our faith.

This was not the only time where Paul mentioned the faith journey as a passage from childhood to adulthood. One verse has been read at every wedding you've ever attended: “When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put the ways of childhood behind me.” 1 Corinthians 13:11.

What this meant for early Christians was that they didn't have to go back to being as children under the Law, as some of them were considering doing. But what does this mean for us? While we may be of “legal age” in the eyes of God, capable of receiving His Grace and salvation through the sacrifice of Jesus, we still need to ask ourselves: Are we showing that in adult Christian living?

Poem

Guardian And Father
Galatians 4:1-7, Psalm 121

*The LORD is your guardian; the LORD is your shade at your right hand. By day the sun will not strike you, nor the moon by night. The LORD will guard you from all evil; he will guard your soul. The LORD will guard your coming and going both now and forever.
Psalm 121:5-8*

*Guardian of my life
My provider
My protector
My deliverer
My defender
As I sleep
As I rise
As I move
Upon this sod
You are good
You are faithful
You are true
To me*

*Father of my life
My adopter
My life-giver
My true parent
My full wisdom
As I move
As I work
As I delight
As I eat
At Your table
You give all
Your bloodline
Your portion
To me*



9/9/2025 - WEEK 36 DAY 2

Weak and Miserable Principles

SCRIPTURE: GALATIANS 4:8-11

Devotional By: Nancy Foust

Are you always the perfect Christian, obeying God and doing all that he requires? If your answer is a strong NO or a wavering MAYBE, this Bible verse is for you. Paul asks in Galatians 4:9 "But now you know God-or rather are known by God- how is it you are turning back to those weak and miserable forces?" The Galatians had begun to understand the power of the gospel and the freedom it can bring, but they started embracing their own laws again, which included other gods.

I am sure this happens to all of us at certain times in our life. Just like Paul preaching to the Galatians, most of us need to hear and be reminded of the power of our one true God so that we don't revert back to our old performance mentality. As a Christian, we cannot let life just go by and creep into our heads. We must stay strong in our beliefs of our faith and continually pass it on to others.

Thinking of how I tend to waver away from God, I find that when I am missing church on Sunday or not being involved with my church family in some way, I tend to start finding other life events more important. The thing is, I know in my heart, that God does know me, but what I forget is that I need to put Him back as #1 in my life. We must be careful not to "turn back to those weak and miserable forces".

With summertime passing us by, I tend to get very lazy about my faith, so I made a concerted effort to have some quiet time with God every morning that I can, on my porch, and just listen for him to speak to me. It is very rewarding. Find a way to discover your time with God at a falling faith time.

Poem

Freedom From Enslavement Galatians 4:8-11, Psalm 107

*So he bowed their hearts down with
hard labor; they fell down,
with none to help. Then they cried
to the Lord in their trouble,
and he delivered them from their
distress. He brought them out of
darkness and the shadow of death,
and burst their bonds apart.
Psalm 107:12-14*

*What holds me captive?
Lord, break the bonds!
What bends me low?
Lord, lift my head!
What wears me out?
Lord, renew my strength!
What distresses me?
Lord, give me peace!
What makes me cry?
Lord, anoint me with joy!
What enslaves me?
Lord, set me free!*



9/10/2025 - WEEK 36 DAY 3

Following Godly Examples **SCRIPTURE: GALATIANS 4:12-20**

Devotional By: Charlie Hart

I can remember my parents scolding me as a child for picking on my little brother. I had many teachers who frequently had to remind me that talking to others in class during listening time was not acceptable. In my working career, I've had bosses and clients advise me to make another attempt to successfully finish a project I had been completing on their behalf.

As a parent, I've provided the same correction to my children. As a teacher, I've made the same appeal to my students. As a boss and client, I've implored the same "do it again but better" suggestion to those in my charge. People say all the time that they are open to constructive criticism, myself included, but when it gets down to it, it doesn't matter if one is three or fifty-three, no one likes being told "you messed up."

Paul is struggling with some of the same emotional issues when providing correction in this passage. When he last visited the Galatians, they were eager new Christians, full of fire and energy for Jesus. Now, many have been convinced to return to following the law in addition to following Jesus. He implores them in verse 12 to "become like me." He is saying that he, Paul, used to live under the law but now lives with faith in Christ as his means for salvation. He knows that many of the Galatian Judaizers are angry with him for calling them out on their turning away from Christ as the sole means of salvation but is perplexed by their anger with him for calling them out over it. They may say they like constructive criticism, but deep down, they, like most of us, struggle with it. Paul presses on because he has the truth on his side.

How well do you accept constructive criticism? When a believer calls you out for falling short, are you willing to listen without anger? How often are you tempted to do good works to "erase" your sins rather than counting on the sacrifice of Christ on the cross?

Poem

Once I Have Tasted
Galatians 4:12-20, Psalm 119:153-160

*All your words are true; all your
righteous laws are eternal.
Psalm 119:160*

*Once I have tasted the delights of
Your table
The richness of steak
The bread of truth
The wine of joy
Do not allow me to return to old
vomit
Like a dog*



9/11/2025 - WEEK 36 DAY 4

The Old and New Covenants

SCRIPTURE: GALATIANS 4:21-27

Devotional

By: Mark Ellcessor

When I was about four years old, I was running through our house headed outdoors. The front storm door was opened by my older and faster cousin, and I was several steps behind. The door latched just before I pushed on it, and my right arm went right through the glass. My forearm was splayed open from the wrist to the inside of the elbow.

After being rushed to Ball Memorial Hospital, I was quickly prepped for emergency surgery. Apparently, I didn't have much confidence in the surgeon, because I looked at him and said, "Hey Manny, I want to do it myself." My mom told me that story a thousand times over the years.

The story of humanity is one of wanting to do it ourselves. DIY is a fine idea if you're repairing a leaky faucet. But it gets you nowhere if you're a four-year-old wanting to do self-surgery, or if you're a sixty-four-year-old wanting to do self-salvation.

Choosing to try to obey the law of Mt. Sinai over receiving the grace of Mt. Zion is just as silly. Why be enslaved to legalism when you can enjoy the full freedoms as an heir to the King.

Hebrews 12:22-24 puts it like this:

²² But you have come to Mount Zion, to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, ²³ to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven. You have come to God, the Judge of all, to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, ²⁴ to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant...

Jesus brought us a new covenant, one that the covenant of old promised but couldn't deliver. Jesus is the Savior of the world. Jesus is the Master Surgeon. I think I'll let Him do the work.

Poem

Not Slave, Am I

Galatians 4:21-27, Psalm 108

*My heart, O God, is steadfast; I will
sing and make music with all my
soul. Awake, harp and lyre! I will
awaken the dawn. I will praise
you, Lord, among the nations; I will
sing of you among the peoples.
For great is your love, higher than
the heavens; your faithfulness
reaches to the skies. Be exalted, O
God, above the heavens; let your
glory be over all the earth.
Psalm 108:1-5*

*Not slave, am I, in Pharaoh's land
Not exile, far from home
Not sinner bound in curses' throes
Not wanderer, alone
But I am free, born in God's home
Full free to dance and sing
I've crossed the Red Sea without
harm
Set free by Zion's king
My clothes are righteousness alone
No longer rags of slave
I live within God's temple gates
New covenant God made
Great is Your love, You set me free
From all that would enslave
I will rejoice; I will live midst
The promises You made*



9/12/2025 - WEEK 36 DAY 5

Children of the Promise

SCRIPTURE: GALATIANS 4:28-31

Devotional By: Wilbur Sutton

As children of God, we also can choose to inherit His Promise. Just like an inheritance in today's world, we still need to accept it. We have a choice.

In Galatians 4:28-31 we see Issac, born the son of Abraham & Sarah, chosen to receive his inheritance after Abraham's death. We see Abraham's other son, Ishmael, being born of Hagar, the slave woman, as their choice of sin (not trusting God). Before Isaac's birth, neither Abraham, nor Sarah, had trusted God for a son. They chose to produce an offspring through the slave woman. For Abraham to have his true son as his heir, he had to choose Issac over the slave woman's son, Ishmael.

We know we are children of God. and we can accept our inheritance as children of God by following Him. The other choice is to be children of sin and turn our back on our true inheritance. We are constantly tempted to follow sin in this world. It's easy. It's quick. It offers temporary satisfaction. To choose God's inheritance, we must make the hard choice and turn from away from temptation and choose the right path.

Prayer: Loving Jesus, we choose you. We know you love us and bless us, Lord. We ask that you give us the strength to trust you and to turn from temptation and follow your Way. Help us to stay strong and follow you, Lord Jesus. Amen

Poem

The Lord Has Done Great Things For Me
Galatians 4:29-31, Psalm 126

"The Lord has done great things for them." The Lord has done great things for us, and we are filled with joy.

Psalm 126:2b-3

The Lord has done great things for me...

*God knew me in the womb
God breathed His Spirit into me
New life from out a tomb*

The Lord has done great things for me...

*God fed me on His word
God taught me how to sing His praise
To wield the Spirit's sword*

The Lord has done great things for me...

*On high place I've been set
In freedom, I bound like a hart
All needs in Him are met*

The Lord has done great things for me...

*A calling by His will
A purposed life, a labor true
A Sabbath to be still*

The Lord has done great things for me...

*A home He does prepare
And when He calls, He'll carry me
To live forever there*



9/15/2025 - WEEK 37 DAY 1

Opposing Teams? SCRIPTURE: GALATIANS 5:1-6

Devotional By: Doug Bromm

When I began to share my thoughts on Galatians 5, all I could think about was my own years of frustration trying to understand it. What I needed was a good sports analogy!

The goal of Paul's game was to refute those in the Galatian church who had come out of the tradition that Jewish law had to be obeyed in order to be saved.

The players on Paul's roster are named Spirit, Grace and Freedom. Jesus sent us the Spirit to understand and apply God's Word. Grace is the unmerited salvation He gives us when we come to Him by faith. Both Spirit and Grace produce a Freedom or a will to follow God and His laws such that they are not a burden to follow.

The opposing team known as the Judaizers, fields the Law, Slavery, and Circumcision. What could be wrong with God's perfect law? Nothing except a legalistic following of the law produces a sense of slavery as one is constantly dependent on their own good works to earn their way into heaven. Finally, I kept reading about a shadowy player on the opposing team named Circumcision. As you can imagine this is a sensitive subject for most men. That can cause a problem understanding this passage. Speaking for the guys here, we are thinking about the "snip snip" rather than what Paul really means which is just shorthand for strict adherence to Jewish law. He knows the Galatian church understands they cannot possibly obey each point of the law all the time.

In Verse 1, Paul makes a contrast between Team Jesus' freedom (found by following the Spirit) and slavery when he writes, *"It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery,"* Then he asks the Galatians to make the obvious choice not to go back to slavery.

Paul believes the circumcisers are cutting off more than they realize when he says, "you who are trying to be justified by the law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace."

In other words, the Judaizer team is so focused on their obligations to the Law, they are committing an unforced error and losing out on these three promises of the spirit:

1. God can save you no matter your past.
2. You are not responsible for earning your own salvation.
3. The Spirit's precious promise is that it can produce in you a heart that loves the Godly things so you will want to pursue righteousness.

Which team do you want to be on?

Poem

Surely It Is God Alone Who Saves Me!
Galatians 5:1-6, Psalm 138

Though the Lord is exalted, he looks kindly on the lowly; though lofty, he sees them from afar. Though I walk in the midst of trouble, you preserve my life. You stretch out your hand against the anger of my foes; with your right hand you save me.

Psalm 138:6-7

Surely, it is God alone who saves me!

*No sacrificial rites
No pouring of my blood
No incantations of repeated prayers
No offering of my body to the fire*

Surely, it is God alone who saves me!

*Christ's sacrifice for me
Christ's blood poured from his side
Christ's intercessions on my behalf
Christ's Spirit fire refining my soul*

Surely, it is God alone who saves me!



9/16/2025 - WEEK 37 DAY 2

Who Cut in on You?

SCRIPTURE: GALATIANS 5:7-12

Devotional By: Mark Ellcessor

Paul just took the circumcision debate to a whole new level. Circumcision is one thing. But emasculation?

The key lies in the debate between Paul, who was proclaiming the “offense of the cross,” and his opponents, who were preaching adherence to the law through circumcision and obedience to the law’s rules. Understand the contrast clearly: the offense of the cross ended the rule of law as the means of obtaining the forgiveness of God. In 1 Corinthians 1:22 -24 Paul wrote, “Jews demand signs and Greeks look for wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.”

In today’s passage, Paul is calling out his opponents as those who cut in on your race, have a persuasion that is not of God, are like yeast working itself through a batch of dough, and are throwing the people into confusion. He calls them agitators, and challenges them to go the whole way and emasculate themselves.

So, why encourage them to emasculate themselves? Some of the participants in the pagan cults of their day actually emasculated themselves as a religious rite. Faithful Jews were appalled by this practice. Paul was saying that trying to get right with God through circumcision or any other kind of works righteousness was just as empty as pagan ritual emasculation. If you want to reject the grace of Christ for religious practices, you are no different than your neighbors who participate in pagan cults.

The upshot is that we must be on alert for those who proclaim a false gospel. Rather than listening to those who cherry pick verses for proof texting their theological, social, or political leanings, we must dedicate ourselves to be guided by the whole counsel of Scripture. Instead of allowing someone to cut in on your race, Paul says, “Run in such a way as to get the prize... Therefore I do not run like someone running aimlessly” (1 Corinthians 9:24, 26). Elsewhere he says, “And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus” (Hebrews 12:1-2).

On your mark, get set, go!

Poem

Run, My Child!

Galatians 5:7-12, Psalm 119:1-8

You're blessed when you stay on course, walking steadily on the road revealed by God. You're blessed when you follow his directions, doing your best to find him. That's right—you don't go off on your own; you walk straight along the road he set.
Psalm 119:1-3

Run, My Child!

Throw off all weights

Which keep your feet from fleeting

Run, My Child!

Breathe deep my breath

Your true heart ever beating

Run, My Child!

Remember clear

Long hours of your training

Run, My Child!

The course is set

The one of My ordaining

Run, My Child!

Push through the hours

When muscle pains do hinder

Run, My Child!

Stay on My path

Do not with falsehood linger

Run, My Child!

Avoid all that

Would trip you with beguiling

Run, My Child!

In Me delight

As on you I am smiling



9/17/2025 - WEEK 37 DAY 3

Don't Abuse Your Freedom

SCRIPTURE: GALATIANS 5:13-15

Devotional

By: Kim Arnott

Freedom. America was built on the idea of freedom for its citizens. We're The Land of the Free and the Home of the Brave. But as much as we would like to believe we have total freedom; we have freedom....with limits. We value individual liberties but also respect the rights of others and live within boundaries. The First Amendment outlines five freedoms – Religion, Speech, Press, Assembly and Petition. Yes, we have free speech but not to the extent that speech incites violence or defames another. Yes, the press can publish information without government interference but not if it's deemed obscene or violates national security. American freedom strikes a balance between the freedom of its citizens and the common good of the people.

Paul is saying something similar when he says, ***"You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But....."*** (Gal. 5:13) Believers are free.....but not free to do harm to others or themselves. There were some in the community who were claiming that since they were now free from the law, they were able to do whatever they wanted. They would participate in sinful behavior just to confess the next day. Paul refutes this totally. Freedom isn't an excuse to step outside the boundaries. I like the way verse 13 is translated in *The Message* - ***"It is absolutely clear that God has called you to a free life. Just make sure that you don't use this freedom as an excuse to do whatever you want to do and destroy your freedom."*** Freedom in Christ is not permission to sin but an obligation to serve each other in love. Like American freedom, the Christian life strikes a balance between freedom from the law and freedom from sin.

Paul then returns to that common theme – love. Paul encourages the Galatians to love one another by repeating Jesus' words. ***"Love your neighbor as yourself."*** (Matt. 22:38) Jesus' call to love one another is non-negotiable. Beyond the call to love God above all others, love of others is the second most important commandment. If the freedom you find in following Christ is not based in love, it's no freedom at all. And if these Galatians somehow felt they were still committed to following the law, Paul ensures them that ***"the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command."*** (vs. 14)

Rabbi Hillel was a Jewish religious leader who died in 10 CE so lived at the time of Christ. He expressed the idea like this: ***"That which is hateful to you, do not do unto your fellow (man). That is the whole Torah; the rest is the explanation; go and learn."*** So, love one another – the rest is just explanation.

Poem

When I Serve You
Galatians 5:13-15, Psalm 100

Serve the LORD with gladness!
Psalm 100:2

When I serve you, I serve the LORD
When serving sister, brother
I lift up my heart to the LORD
By lifting up another

When I love you, I love the LORD
When offering a cup
Providing shelter, food or care
Is when I lift God up



9/18/2025 - WEEK 37 DAY 4

Walk by the Spirit

SCRIPTURE: GALATIANS 5:16-21

Devotional By: Peggy Cooke

Our family always went to church on a regular basis. Our United Methodist Church was located 3 blocks from our house. However, you had to cross one highway that ran smack down the middle of our little town, College Corner, Ohio. There were no stop signs or stop lights. My Dad always drove us to church, probably because there was a total of 7 of us.

On one beautiful Spring Sunday morning I decided I wanted to walk home after church. I was probably in the 3rd or 4th grade. I asked my mother, and she said no. Since my parents were busy talking to different people apart from one another in our small church I decided to ask my dad. So, I marched right up to him and asked him if I could walk home. Lo and behold he said yes. I exited our little church and started enjoying my walk home. When I came to the highway, I looked both ways just as I had been taught. As I was skipping to our house, I noticed that my parents were waiting for me in the kitchen doorway. The look on their faces told me I was in big fat trouble. I didn't do that again! Lesson learned.

I wanted to do what I wanted to do. We are not to gratify those wants and urges, but we are to walk with God in the Holy Spirit. How do you know if you are walking by the Holy Spirit? Your mind is set on spiritual things, including the scriptures. Worldly things no longer appeal to you in the same way. You maintain a composure, even in difficult times, of finding peace and calmness. Christ's character is reflected in your life because you continue to seek and pursue a relationship with Jesus. You are focused on the Holy Spirit's desire to produce good fruit.

Be thankful to God and always turn to God in prayer and ask for His will to be done. Take some time today and reflect on your walk with the Holy Spirit.

Poem

Spirit Cadance
Galatians 5:16-21, Psalm 143

*Teach me to do your will, for you
are my God! Let your good Spirit
lead me on level ground!
Psalm 143:10*

*Hear, hear, hear
Creation's beat
Now, set your feet a tappin'
Rise up now
And find your place
God's big bass drum be strappin'
March, march, march
The way be clear
Your seven rounds be circlin'
Wait, wait, wait
'Til the trumpets sound
Then vict'ry's praise be yellin'
Follow well
God's drum major
The Holy Spirit's leadin'
As into
The blessed holy land
God's chosen band receivin'*



9/19/2025 - WEEK 37 DAY 5

Cultivating a Christlike Character

SCRIPTURE: GALATIANS 5:22-26

Devotional

By: Carlye Frye

In this passage, the Apostle Paul highlights that true transformation and personal development in a Christ follower's life comes from a relationship with the Holy Spirit. The "Fruit of the Spirit" consists of nine qualities that reflect the very nature of Christ. Each fruit plays an essential role in how we show up and interact with God as well as those around us in our day to day lives.

Love: It is selfless and unconditional; it reflects the love that God has for us. If we embody that love, then we mirror God's heart to the world.

Joy: Paul said that joy flows from the fruit of the Spirit. Joy is optimistic and confident in God. Just as Christ endured pain upon the cross, because of the joy of being reunited with God, the Spirit enables us to rejoice in knowing God. (Heb 12:2)

Peace: Having a relationship with God guards our hearts against things that cause anxiety, conflict and worry. Every human heart yearns for peace. Reminder, Jesus promised his disciples, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give you." (John 14:27)

Forbearance/Patience: As we walk with Christ, we become able to endure trials, tribulations, and difficulties better than we could before. Just as Christ faced the hardship on the cross without resentment towards God, the Spirit puts an ability to patiently endure within all of us.

Kindness: Just as Christ risked it all to be kind to us, the Spirit works within us to uplift and support one another in Christ. We can do this by demonstrating genuine care and concern for others.

Goodness: Paul wrote that the Spirit would produce goodness in all of us. By reflecting a moral integrity, that goodness drives us to do what is right and beneficial for others. This then showcases the righteousness of God to others.

Faithfulness: If we are committed to God, then we as faithful people, keep our promises, are dependable, trustworthy and are true to our word. The Spirit makes us faithful despite our external and internal pressures.

Gentleness: Gentleness is the Fruit of the Spirit that demands the most from us. It requires us to have humility, sacrifice, patience, and compassion - qualities that we may lack, even on our best days. It puts us third, putting God and others above ourselves. The way we overcome that is that God shows us the way every day.

Self-Control: By exercising the ability to control our thoughts, feelings, actions, impulses and desires, this empowers us to live within God's will rather than our own. The Fruit of the Spirit helps us make wise choices and resist temptation.

As Paul outlines these qualities, remember they reflect the evidence of the Holy Spirit's work in your life. When facing struggles, pause and reflect. What's holding you back, lean on the Holy Spirit for strength in developing these attributes. How can we invite God to work through us? Are we actively seeking to grow in these areas?

Poem

Fruit

Galatians 5:22-26, Psalm 1

*You're a tree replanted in Eden,
bearing fresh fruit every month,
Never dropping a leaf, always in
blossom.*

Psalm 1:3

*How sweet the juice of ripened fruit
Mature upon the vine
How great the joy of serving God
Like taste of costly wine*

*How rich the oil of olives green
When crushed upon the press
Its virgin richness healing balm
For all who are oppressed*

*How wonderful the fruit of God
When shared with every neighbor
God's love served up to friend or foe
Great harvest—Our best labor*



9/22/2025 - WEEK 38 DAY 1

Spirit of Gentleness

SCRIPTURE: GALATIANS 6:1-5

Devotional

By: Kim Arnott

I grew up in northern Indiana in the middle of Amish country. Fun fact – my great-great grandmother WAS Amish.....a story for another day. One of the practices of the Amish is shunning. When an individual is found to have committed a forbidden offense, they're forced to face separation and exclusion from church, family and social activities. This exclusion includes not eating, working, worshipping or associating with others in the community. One of the Biblical bases for this practice is 1 Corinthians 5:11: ***"You must not associate with anyone who claims to be a brother or sister (who) is sexually immoral or greedy, an idolater or slanderer, a drunkard or swindler. Do not even eat with such people."*** Shunning, also known as *Meidung*, is meant as a form of punishment. The offender experiences rejection, guilt, shame and isolation. But the goal is always for the individual to repent and return to the community.

The Galatians may not have practiced shunning in this way, but today's passage focuses on bringing those who do stray back into the fold. We are told to restore those who may have strayed away from the path ***"gently"***. Gently..... How do we do this? Gentleness is one of the Fruit of the Spirit. It's the way in which we should always treat our fellow brothers and sisters in Christ. We should never treat them with an attitude of condemnation, judgement or criticism. They may already be feeling the immense weight of guilt and the heavy burden of shame. We should not add to that burden. ***"Now is the time to forgive this man and help him back on his feet. If all you do is pour on the guilt, you could very well drown him in it. My counsel now is to pour on the love."*** (2 Corinthians 2:6-8, The Message)

"Pour on the love." That's what they truly need, not criticism and condemnation. The Message translates verses 1-3 in this way – ***"forgivingly restore him, saving your critical comments for yourself. You might be needing forgiveness before the day's out. Stoop down and reach out to those who are oppressed.....if you think you are too good for that, you are badly deceived."*** We should take this to heart. In our attempts to restore others, we risk becoming self-righteous. We should never think we are "too good" or morally superior to anyone else. Who knows when we will be the one needing forgiveness and restoration.

The Amish community welcomes back their members, after repentance and a commitment to return to the Amish way. Similarly, we should always act with a spirit of gentleness as we encourage and welcome individuals back into our own community of faith.

Poem

Afflicted

Galatians 6:1-5, Psalm 129

*"They have greatly oppressed me
from my youth," let Israel say;
"they have greatly oppressed me
from my youth, but they have not
gained the victory over me.
Plowmen have plowed my back
and made their furrows long.
But the Lord is righteous;
he has cut me free from the cords of
the wicked."
Psalm 129:1-4*

*I cannot remember a day
Even as a babe, a child, a youth
When I did not struggle against an
enemy
Deep within*

*An affliction? A battle?
'Gainst spirit and truth
Which caused deep ruts and stagna-
tion
Within my worship*

*Lord, bring alongside me
A true friend, unafraid to hurt me
Who will hold me accountable
To You*

*Lord, bring alongside me
My True Advocate to rein me
To chide and exhort me back
To You*

*Cut the binding cords my afflicters
and
Set my heart aflame with tears
That I might be free to be a true
worshipper
In Spirit and in Truth*



9/23/2025 - WEEK 38 DAY 2

Blessing Those Who Instruct You

SCRIPTURE: GALATIANS 6:6

Devotional By: Lynette Hart

In Biblical times, the tithes went to the Temple. In the Old Testament, the tithe was given to the Levite tribe, which was made up of the priests. The Levites were not given an inheritance and therefore they were completely dependent on the offerings of others. Part of the tithe to the Temple was also given to the poor.

In Galatians, Paul is providing information on how Christians should live together and be more Christ like. In this verse, Paul teaches that this practice of taking care of the pastors should be continued in the New Testament. Pastors are given the spiritual gift of pastoring / teaching. This is a full-time job just as the Levite priests.

I have been blessed with several amazing pastors here at Fishers United Methodist Church. They have each taught me exactly what I needed to hear when I needed to hear it. Sometimes I am convinced that each came to this church for me only and others just got the added benefits. The daily devotionals and Bible study that our current pastors have created have taught me so much about the Bible and how passages connect with each other and our present day lives.

Part of receiving the instructions and wisdom from our pastors includes sharing all good things with them. All good things can be many things. This includes our joys and our daily prayers.

A few month ago, the church's prayer team formed a P.I.T. Crew (Pastor's Intercessory Team). This is a group who has committed to praying daily for our pastors. It is not an easy task to lead a church and to be there for all the parishioners. Please take a moment in your prayers to pray for our Pastors.

Poem

Pour Out And Sharing
Galatians 6:6, Psalm 140

Surely the righteous will praise your name, and the upright will live in your presence.
Psalm 140:13

*Like a volcanic eruption
I pour out and share
All the struggles, anxieties
Every care
My concern for another
My concern for my soul
It cannot stop flowing
Prayers out of control
Great Teacher, I need You
To train great constraint
To stop deep eruptions
To quell vain complaints*

*Like a spring in the mountain
I pour out and share
The victories, the lessons
Received through Your care
The love for a foe
The restraint of a tongue
The stilling of soul
All the vict'ries I've won
Great Teacher, without You
I'd not hold the prize
Turn the glory from me
To the podium, Your rise!*



9/24/2025 - WEEK 38 DAY 3

Reaping What You Sow

SCRIPTURE: GALATIANS 6:7-10

Devotional By: Carlye Frye

Growing up, as well as living my adult life in Indiana, when you step outside in rural Indiana, you can always tell the change of seasons based on farmland. If we look at a calendar of events, typically planting crops start in April, then scouting and managing for pests and diseases happen throughout the growing season, and lastly harvesting takes place in late September or early October. This overview, though simplified, paints a clear picture of the agricultural cycle.

In this passage, Paul points out that the crop you plant in the soil will inevitably sprout forth into a harvest. In our own lives, what will our harvest be? What are we reaping? What are we sowing? What was Paul referring to? Work of the flesh vs the fruit of the spirit. If we continue to do work of the flesh, that will likely lead us to negative outcomes, while nurturing the fruit of the spirit will likely yield positive results. If we are investing our time, talents, gifts, and services into temporary, worldly or fleshly things, it will amount to destruction. It then can damage our relationship with God and each other. On the other side, if we invest in the fruit of the Spirit, the Spirit will yield the harvest of spiritual blessing that will not go away. You will reap spiritually, relationally, mentally, and physically according to what you plant.

Paul encouraged the Galatians to not give up in doing good. God promises to reward those who are faithful in the long run. Our walk with Christ is not a sprint, but more like a marathon. You may not be able to see the goal, but in those difficult times it's important to concentrate on making the right investment by doing good even when no harvest seems possible. How many times have you done good and not seen the results? How many times have you not seen any fruit? In those moments, God is saying "Don't give up", let us continue doing good and give it to God to yield the harvest.

Question for you; what are some positive actions?

Caring for and/or reaching out to those in need.
Extending forgiveness to others.
Sharing the Gospel.
Offering words of encouragement.
Deepening our engagement with God's Word.

As we reflect on this scripture, one cannot help but think, where are we sowing seeds in our own lives? Are we investing in nurturing relationships, serving our communities, and enriching our spiritual journeys? Where have we grown weary and on the verge of giving up? Paul's message is a wonderful reminder that every day is an opportunity to plant seeds of love and encouragement. Let us embrace this call to do good for all.

Poem

Decisions And Consequences
Galatians 6:7-10, Psalm 126

*Those who sow with tears will
reap with songs of joy. Those who go
out weeping, carrying seed to sow,
will return with songs of joy, carrying
sheaves with them.
Psalm 126:5-6*

*As she went off to college
My child, I pulled aside
"Decisions, yours, you now will make---
Your consequence decide
With wisdom will come righteousness
Despite what others see
With foolishness, great downfalls grow
With varying degree
But either way, what's sown is reaped
Be quick or long delayed
Each seed will germinate its fruit
Then in your life displayed
So set your mind on Jesus
Your kneeling prayers employ--
E'en tears shed in repentance
Will bring harvest of joy!"*



9/25/2025 - WEEK 38 DAY 4

Never Boast Except in the Cross

SCRIPTURE: GALATIANS 6:11-16

Devotional By: Mark Elcessor

Get with a group of people in their 20's and 30's, and listen to them reminisce about their great feats in sports, their being the lead in the school musical, their being the class clown, brain, artist, or some other yesteryear memory.

Get with a group of people in their 40's and 50's, and they tell the same stories, but this time about their kids.

Get with a group of people in their 60's and 70's, and hear how they are wearing themselves out going to such events for their grandchildren.

Get with a group of people in their 80's and 90's, and they speak with pride about their family, down to the youngest great-grandchild.

Paul says, "May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world." Easy for him to say. He never had a grandson competing in the games.

Paul was speaking about a boasting that went way beyond childhood accomplishments. He was talking about our tendency to think of our relationship with God based on how good of a person we are. Throughout Galatians, Paul reminds the people that circumcision and obedience to the Mosaic Law are hopeless causes when it comes to being accepted, forgiven and redeemed by God. Only the crucified Christ on the cross can do that.

Through Jesus we become a new creation. We become the Israel of God. We are adopted as His sons and daughters. The theme for this entire year is "Be God's Family." It is only by the work of Christ on the cross that we are brought into the family and made heirs of the King of kings.

Get with a follower of Jesus of any age, and listen to them boast about the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ!

Poem

Reminder

Galatians 6:11-16 Psalm 137

*May my tongue cling to the roof of
my mouth if I do not remember you,
if I do not consider Jerusalem my
highest joy.
Psalm 137:6*

*When times are good
When all seems well
When vines produce
When purses swell
Heed this reminder
Do not say
"All that you see
All on display---
Came from my own hands
Sweat and blood
From my hard work
From my own good."
Instead, the Lord
Be your lone boast
The cross, salvation
Lift the most
And even more
When times are sad
When feeling broken
Life gone bad
Continue, yes,
In endless praise
Despite exile
Your treasures razed
Remember, yes,
Remember well
'Tis in God's will
You always dwell
By grace alone
You do survive
By love alone
God makes you thrive*



9/26/2025 - WEEK 38 DAY 5

The Marks of Jesus

SCRIPTURE: GALATIANS 6:17-18

Devotional

By: Mark Elcessor

For Paul, bearing the marks of Christ was more than metaphor. In 2 Corinthians 11:23-25 he boasts about what he has endured saying, "I have worked much harder, been in prison more frequently, been flogged more severely, and been exposed to death again and again. Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was pelted with stones, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea..."

While severe persecution and martyrdom still take place throughout the world, most of us reading this devotion have never experienced anything like this. For us, what does it mean to bear the marks of Jesus? Look at the following verses. How do these apply to your life?

Jesus said, "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me" (Matt. 16:24).

"Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others" (Phil. 2:3-4).

"You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love" (Gal. 5:13)

"This is how love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment: In this world we are like Jesus" (1 John 4:17).

"I bear on my body the marks of Jesus" (Gal. 6:17).

As you reflect on these and other passages, give thanks to Jesus for His work in your life. Next, we will turn our attention to the book of James for practical wisdom on how to live our Christian lives in the world.

Poem

My Life Be Marked
Galatians 6:17-18, Psalm 150

*Let everything that has breath praise
the Lord. Praise the Lord.
Psalm 150:6*

*My life be marked
By songs of praise
By courage battles
Banners raised
By calloused knees
From nights of prayer
By scars on heart
From arrows' tears
By wise answers to
Mocking voice
By staying true
To holy choice
By holding down
A lifelong fort
By speaking truth
Loving exhort
By reined in tongue
Gentle reply
By open hands
Gen'rous supply*



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