

Galatians Chapter 6 – John Karmelich

1. If God wants us to help others, how do we do that? When do we draw the line between helping other and taking care of our own needs? That is the main question asked in this final chapter of the book of Galatians. If you want a shorter title, I'll call it "carrying burdens". If one is curious what is that God wants us to do in terms of making a difference for Him in this world, you have come to the right place. That is my main topic for this lesson.
 - a) To begin, let me explain this whole lesson another way: Paul was concerned that believers living in a region of the world called Galatia (today part of modern Turkey) were trying to prove their value to God by trying to keep all the Old Testament laws. They thought they had to live like devout Jewish people in order to believe in Jesus. My main argument over the past five lessons is that salvation for the Christian is just about believing that Jesus did die for our sins and that's that. Yes, we should try to be a good person, but that should be out of gratitude for what God did for us, and not to do the impossible, which is trying to prove our worth to Him.
 - b) My point here is simply that Paul is saying at this point in the letter, "So, you want to live under a set of rules and regulations? Great, try this rule on for size: "Love your neighbor as yourself." That is what Jesus commanded us Christians to obey. Christians throw that line around as a tag line, and rarely specify what it is we should be doing in order to make a difference for God in the world. My job here is to try to explain what it is that God want us to do to make that difference for Him. The related question to consider is how should we balance our time between taking care of our own needs and making a difference for others. If one understands that, one gets the purpose of my final lesson in Galatians.
2. To explain further, let me go over the text of this chapter:
 - a) Paul first states that we should help others dealing with their sin issues. No one is strong enough to deal with sin by him or her self. The way to overcome is by teamwork in order to deal with temptation. In short, help each other deal with the temptation to sin.
 - b) By Verse 5, Paul seems to contradict himself and say we should each take care of our own issues. My job here is to explain how Verse 5 is not a contradiction to the first few verses.
 - i) The short answer is that we are each accountable to God for our lives, but at the same time, He wants us to help each other so we can all fight against sin together.
 - c) Next Paul states in effect that church teachers (pastors, priests, actual teachers, etc.) must work in unison with those being taught. This comes back to how do we deal with sin. We must work as a team in order to make a difference for Jesus in this world.
 - d) Then Paul comes back to the idea that our life is a sum of our actions. If we use the most valuable thing God gives us, our time only to make a difference for ourselves, then we've wasted that valuable asset. If we use it to make a difference for Him, by helping others, then we have done what God expects us to do as believers.
 - e) Paul then makes a quick comment how he finishes the letter "in his own handwriting", as opposed to dictating it, to prove it was from Him.
 - f) The letter then ends with a final reminder that neither circumcision (nor any other ritual for that matter) makes a difference for our salvation. It is only our faith in what God has already done for us that counts and our trust in what He already did for us.
 - g) To sum up the whole chapter in a thought: Go use your life to make a difference for Jesus not to earn His respect, but just because that is how God wants us to live.
3. There, you have just understood Galatians Chapter 6. The rest is just the details. If you want to read further, my job over the course of the final eighteen verses of this chapter is to remind all of us what "burdens" God does and does not want us to carry as believers in Jesus. If one is curious what I mean by those "burdens", I encourage you to read further. Meanwhile, Verse 1.

4. Chapter 6, Verse 1: Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted.
- a) This is one of those verses where it is best if I first explain what it is not saying: When the text says "you who are spiritual", is not referring to any sort of "super Christians" that are somehow superior to others.
 - b) The way to look at this verse is to realize that all of us are tempted to sin. However, not all of us are stuck in some sin at any given moment. Therefore, if are not stuck for the lack of a better term, we need to be helpful to restore those who are stuck at the moment.
 - c) Let me explain this concept another way: When we know someone who has committed their lives to serving Jesus and we know they have a weakness for "x" sin. At a moment when they are dealing with that sin, do we say too bad for you, or I'll go pray with others so in effect I can spread rumors about you? Or do we just help them with their issues.
 - i) Let me given some examples. Let's say we know someone who has struggled with a drug addiction or say alcohol abuse for many years. If we see them in a situation where we know they are doing something they shouldn't the question becomes do are we offer to help them gently as verse 1 says, or are we picking on them or even worse, spreading rumors about them? That is the question here.
 - d) Then notice Verse 1 says those who are "spiritual" may be tempted too. That is why this verse is not saying some of us are more spiritual than others. It is saying that any one of us can be tempted at any given moment and demonic forces know our weaknesses.
 - e) The point here in effect comes back to the idea that God wants teamwork in order to live out the Christian life. It is too hard to do by ourselves. It is too easy to fall in temptation no matter how spiritual we think we are.
 - f) What if one does not have any close Christian friends? Then one has to make some. When going to a church function invite oneself to join others to say, have lunch with them. This may take time, but if one hangs around believers enough, friendship will come. To put it simply, if one is kind to others then those others will want to hang around with us.
 - g) Finally, let's put this in context of the final few verses of Chapter 5. They said that we as Christians should not provoke each other or be envious of each other. In those verses Paul was saying, "don't do that", and in this verse Paul is saying do this instead.
 - i) The purpose of Christian living is to make a difference for Jesus in our lives. One way we do that is by helping others grow in their faith. That means encouraging others especially during times of weakness. That is what this verse is getting it.
5. Verse 2: Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.
- a) I have to admit that whenever I read Chapter 6, I love to compare Verse 2 with Verse 5. That is because Verse 5 says that each of us should carry our own load and Verse 2 here says that we should bear each other's burdens. One has to admit, that is a contradiction.
 - b) To explain the difference, think of traveling with a backpack on a camping trip. Every person on that trip is responsible for carrying his or her own backpack. However, there may be a load too large for one person to handle and others have to help at times.
 - i) Since I'm not a big camper, let me explain this concept another way for us non-campers. We each go through periods in our lives where we can't handle life at that moment. We may be really worried about a big decision or are dealing with a tragedy. At such moments, we may need people around us just to be there or to help us with decisions. I remember a few tragedies in my own life where I can't remember now what anyone said to me, but I do remember that who was just there to be there at the times of those events.
 - ii) The corollary is having the wisdom to say or think, "Everyone goes through what you are dealing with right now. It is ok, that too will pass". That is when we are telling someone to "bear their own load". I'm not talking about ignoring someone in pain or struggling with an issue. It is just "bearing our own back-pack".

- iii) Let me give another example: When one has children, one wants to fix all of their problems. One learns that there are times where it is best with children to let them figure it out by themselves. That is an example of "bearing their own load". I still remember my eight-year old daughter being in the back seat arguing with one of her best friends. Instead of breaking up an argument, I let them work it out and in a matter of moments they did. Yes one has to supervise and pray for them to have wisdom, but one can also help at times by letting them "bear their own load" and figure out what is the best thing to do in any given situation.
- c) All of that talk about Verse 5, leads me back to Verse 2. Notice it says here that we fulfill the law of Christ by bearing each other's burdens. What law is that? That is the idea that people will know we are Christians because we show love to each other. That is from the Gospel of John 13:34. That does not (big emphasis on not) mean we can force our will on someone in order to help them. The idea here is that if someone is handling a load that is too big for others to deal with, we offer to help.
 - i) This comes back to the idea that it is very difficult to sin if we are busy focusing on someone else. It would be like walking up to someone we know and just asking them about their life and what they are dealing with at the moment. We can then ask them how can we be helpful to them at the moment. If they tell us to "bug off" we bug off. ☺ If they just want to say what is on their mind, we listen and don't try to fix the situation. One of the best ways to fulfill what this verse is teaching is simply be willing to listen to others.
 - ii) I know this is hard for men, because men want to "fix things" and not just listen to what others have to say. I have had to learn in my marriage to literally ask the question, "Is this one of those situations where you just want me to listen or do you want me to fix it?" Usually the answer is listening. Then I know I have to keep my big mouth shut and just listen to what she has to say. My point is the way to bear each other's burdens is not about fixing situations, but usually just be willing to listen to what is on someone's mind. At such moments, we are, whether we realize it or not "fulfilling the law of Christ" and bearing their burdens just by listening or maybe even praying with or for that person.
- d) My final point on this is when it comes to "fixing" people we should never exceed what that person wants us to do. Let's come back to the issue of someone who is struggling with a sin at that moment. They may say, "Pray for me, or lead me out of here", but we never exceed what they demand. Most of the time, people are quite aware of what they should do or need to do. Nobody likes being lectured. When it comes to helping people deal with burdens that are too big for them to handle, one has to learn to not try to fix what one does not want to fix. To put it simply, there is a big difference between forcing our will on someone versus offering to help.
 - i) Yes there are times for drastic measures. I remember a story from many years ago about my uncle getting involved in the life of my cousin at a very low point in my cousins' life. My point is that when we regularly pray and seek God, then He does lead us at times to take strong action if such actions are helping the situation.
 - ii) Remember that God desires that Christians work as a team to help each other. Not only are we making a difference for Him in the world, but the way we avoid sin is when we are so busy helping others, we are not focusing on our own "backpacks".
 - iii) Paul's point in these verses is essentially that just because we are saved, does not mean we are now more special than anyone else. Any of us can fall into sin at any time or at the least be burdened by big problems. However, the Christians life is never designed to be a whole bunch of solo efforts. We are to work together to not only help each other when we are struggling, but also to help each other flourish so that we all can make a difference for Jesus in this world.

6. Verse 3: If anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself.
- a) John's very loose translation: If you think you are something special, get off of your high horse and realize you are no better than anyone else.
 - b) Let's be honest, our ego's can often be our biggest problem. We think we are more special than we really are and that is the point here. We may think we are too important to help others or we don't want others to hear about our problems. This verse is a good warning to us to remember what we are before God and before other people: No better than any one else.
 - c) Remember that Paul is writing to Christian believers. He is saying just because you are believers, doesn't mean one is now too special to help others or be helped.
 - d) OK, enough on that point. Let's move on.
7. Verse 4: Each one should test his own actions. Then he can take pride in himself, without comparing himself to somebody else, ⁵ for each one should carry his own load.
- a) All of this talk about not acting better than anyone else leads us to the point about testing our actions in Verse 4. This is about taking those moments when we ask, "Are we acting superior to others at the moment, or are we bearing our own load"?
 - b) This sentence my best be explained by an illustration: Let's say we are dealing with a specific issue in our lives that we can't stop thinking about. We have prayed about it and we don't have a solution. Paul's question here is, "Is one bearing their own load, or is one trying to get others to solve their problems for them?" It comes back to remembering that God works on His timing. It is about remembering that He cares about our lives and He does want to help us through whatever we are dealing with at any given moment.
 - c) The point about pride here, is we can take pride in waiting on God's timing as opposed to trying to solve our problems without Him. I once learned a wonderful little prayer that says, "Pray like everything is up to Him and live like He is guiding our every move". To be honest, we can't verify in any way that God is guiding our lives. All we can do is trust that He is guiding us, trust that He is judging how we live and that He desires that we do make a difference for Him in this world by our willingness to care for others and not just focus on our own lives.
 - i) But if we are to focus on helping others, why does Verse 4 say we should test our own actions and Verse 5 say we should carry our own loads? To be honest, the biggest experts on our lives is ourselves. We are each very aware of what we are dealing with at any given moment. Even if we are being of service to others, we are still very aware of what is going on in our own lives at the moment.
 - ii) To say it another way, it should never be, "Hey God look at me, how proud You must be for what I am doing at this moment". We help others because that is how God wants us to make a difference for Him in the world and not for our ego's.
 - iii) That is why Paul is encouraging us to examine ourselves here. It is about keeping our motives pure and confessing when we are doing things "for our sake" and not because we care about those who we are helping or praying for at that moment.
 - d) In summary, the way we bear our own burdens is by telling God, here is what I can and cannot handle at this moment in time. It is to pray for God to help us to handle what You want us to handle and help us to let go of what You want us to let go of at this moment.
 - e) OK, hopefully, by now, I've beaten to death the topic of bearing each other's burdens and bearing our own burdens and understanding the difference. If one is still confused about this issue, or confused how it applies to some specific issue in one's life right now, pray one's way through it. I do promise that God wants to help give us the proper perspective about how to deal with any specific issue on our minds at the moment. It is Him, not me or anyone else who will tell you what burden He wants us to let go of, what burden He wants us to "wear as our backpack" and what burden He wants us to be helpful to in other people's life. If it is God's problem to solve, I am now free to move on to Verse 6.

8. Verse 6: Anyone who receives instruction in the word must share all good things with his instructor.
- a) Whenever one is confused about what a verse means, one should always read it in context of the surrounding verses. On the surface, this verse is saying in effect, if one is a student, one should financially support the instructor. I heard one pastor joke that this is a pastor's favorite verse, to preach for more donations. I see this verse as bigger in scope than that.
 - b) Remember that Paul is talking about bearing our own burdens and bearing each other's burdens. Therefore, think of the instructor in this verse as the one helping with someone else's burdens and the instructed as the one struggling with an issue. Therefore, I see this verse as saying in effect "I can't help you if you don't tell me what the problem is".
 - c) This verse is in effect about our willingness to share our lives with others and also to be willing to trust others to say what is on our minds. Let's be honest, one of our biggest fears is to share some big secret with others only to have them "blab it" all over town. Therefore, we hold back sharing what is our minds out of fear that others will find out what it is we are struggling with at the moment.
 - i) That is why trust takes time to build and we have to develop trust in a situation.
 - ii) Therefore, the burden is on the instructor to handle the situation gently, and not to share what is not meant to be shared. That is why I have stated in the past that the most common sin in the Christian church is the spreading of gossip.
 - iii) The point is if we are going to help someone, help them. Don't spread their stories to people that are not meant to hear them. I give my wife a lot of credit here. She works in counseling situations and avoids sharing the stories of what she hears in those sessions with me.
 - d) With that said, let me come back to, "I can't help you if you don't tell me what the problem is". We can't or shouldn't force people to share their lives with us. Again, it comes back to the idea of building trust in a relationship so we can be of help to others. That I believe is what Paul meant in this verse by saying let the "instructor share in all good things with those being instructed.
9. Verse 7: Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows.
- a) Boy, is this verse preached out of context a lot. A lot of people know this verse by heart and use it to preach out loud to tell others in effect, "Get your act together as God is well aware of what you are dealing with in your life" as if it is our job to fix them. Yes this verse is truly preached out of context and I could give a whole talk on that issue alone.
 - b) However, again the secret to studying one's bible is always to read it context of what is said surrounding any particular verse. Paul's main issue in writing Galatians is to warn against trying to prove to God one's value by what we do. In that sense, we are mocking what He knows about us if we try to prove to Him our value.
 - c) So what does that have to do with "A man (or a woman) sows what he (or she) reaps?"
 - i) Let me answer with an illustration: If one lives out their lives trying to prove their worth to God by their good works, they will one day look back at their life and realize it was all about their ego and not because they just trusted in the fact that God did love them, "because He does" and that's it.
 - ii) To state the obvious, if one turns their back on God all of their life, they will also "sow what they reap" by living a life that turns one's back on what He desires.
 - iii) If God just loves us, why aren't all people saved, just because we sin? Let me try to answer that: The way I explain it is God chooses to love us just because He does and He wants to find out if we choose to love Him just because we choose to. But doesn't our good works show we love Him back? Yes, but the issue comes back to whether or not we are unnecessarily trying to prove our value to Him.
 - iv) The secret of living is to realize God loves us just because He does. Therefore, my response should be, "Let me live as He desires to make a difference for Him".

- d) Aren't you preaching doing good works here? Yes I am. I want to "reap what I sow".
 - i) The issue is not doing good works. The issue is why are we doing them. If we are doing them to try to prove our worth to God, then we are "reaping what we sow" in a negative sense. If we are doing them, just because we realize that He does love us and we want to express that love back to Him, then we just want to do what He commands, and that is to love Him back and go make a difference for Him in this world.
 - ii) I can't state it any better than that, so it is time to move on.
10. Verse 8: The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life.⁹ Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.
- a) Let's start by stating the obvious again. If we just live to satisfy our own desires, then we will reap what we sow, which is eternal destruction. Paul is reminding us that heaven and hell are real places. Let me deviate a little and explain what I believe hell essentially is: An eternal separation from God for eternity. In effect, hell is giving people who choose to reject God what they want. To quote C.S. Lewis, "The gates of hell will be locked from the inside". If one chooses to live their lives rejecting God's love and desires for their lives, He then says to us in effect, if that is how you want to live, you will live that way for eternity.
 - b) With that statement out of my system, let me now return to the main issue of this book, and talk about eternal destruction and trying to prove our worth to God. One thing that amazes me as I study the Gospels is how kind Jesus was to everyone He encountered. The only people Jesus was tough on were in effect the religious leaders and at times, His own disciples. He was tough on His own disciples, as He wanted them to understand what was His purpose for both living and dying. He was tough on the Jewish religious leaders, as He wanted them to get the idea that it was His death that frees us from having to obey God's laws to prove our value to God the Father and not our "works".
 - i) I bring this up here as it ties back to Verse 8. I think hell will have more than just those who literally reject Jesus death as payment for their sins. I think it will also have those who use their entire lives to prove their worth to God based on how they live. It would like being on trial before God and saying, "Look at all the good things I have done in my life. Here is my list of a through z that I did, which were all good things". God then responds with, "Were you perfect? Our honest answer is of course, "Of course not". God then has to reject them because by definition He is perfect and we need to be perfectly forgiven to spend eternity with Him.
 - c) I can just hear some of you saying, "I know all of that. I trust in Jesus complete payment for my sins. You don't have to beat that over our heads anymore." The danger for all of us is our moments do come when we still try to prove our value to Him and that is why Galatians is such a necessary part of the bible. In effect it comes back to the reminder as this book says that "The just shall live (big emphasis on live) by faith" and that's it.
 - i) Does God still desire obedience? Of course. Not to earn our salvation, but because He wants us to be a good witness for Him in this world. Think of it this way: God gives us the privilege of leading others to Him. That is why He wants us to use the most valuable thing He gives us, our time to make a difference for Him.
 - d) All of that leads perfectly to Verse 9. I describe it as, "Let us not get tired of doing good things and living to make a difference for Jesus in this world." Let be honest, living the Christian life is difficult at times. It takes effort to keep our focus on Him and not just live to fulfill our own desires. It takes effort to think, "How can I use my life and my time to make a difference for Him today?" The daily demands of life and our routines can easily get our focus off of Him and onto our lives. In effect, Verse 9 is Paul pushing us on when life gets tough. It is like a good sports coach that encourages us onward when we feel like we can't go any further. Believe it or not, that thought leads me to Verse 10:

11. Verse 10: Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.
 - a) Throughout these studies on Galatians I have been preaching that we should use the most valuable thing God gives us, our time, to make a difference in the world. Here Paul tells us who we should be performing those good deeds upon: Everyone, especially believers.
 - b) I still remember one sermon I heard many years ago on this topic, from a pastor who was talking about what charities Christians should support. His view was in essence, let non-Christians support non-Christian causes and Christians should focus on Christian causes. While that view does sound biblical, you have to admit this verse says that we should do good for all people as this verse implies.
 - c) In effect, this verse comes back to Paul's telling the Galatians, if you want to live under a set of rules, try the rule of using your life to make a difference for others, especially for the believers. In other words, "love your neighbor as yourself".
 - d) Let me stick with the "who" topic a little more. If God wants us to use our lives in order to make a difference for others, "who" should be the others? If there are lots of good causes to help or donate money too, where do I start? My primary rule on giving is I never like to give out of guilt. I like to give where I see God already working.
 - i) Let me explain this another way: If one is picking stocks in the stock market, how does one know which stocks to pick? The answer is to look for the best return on one's investment. It should be the same when we give to Christian causes. I like to look where I see the Holy Spirit already making a difference as then I see that as a good return on "God's investment" in the world.
 - ii) Sometimes the answer is usually right in front of us. God may be saying to us at any given moment, see that person over there, I want you to help them. It may start off with something small, but the point is to make a difference in the world.
 - iii) To say it even another way, do something, and then God guide us to go further. As I love to say, do what one can't stand not doing, assuming that doesn't violate any biblical principals and one is giving (time or effort) to others based on what believes is the best thing to do at that moment.
 - iv) All right, enough financial guilt. Let's move on to the next verse.
12. Verse 11: See what large letters I use as I write to you with my own hand!
 - a) Back in Galatians Chapter 4, Paul mentioned he had some sort of eye problem. Scholars suspect that Paul dictated this letter and someone else actually wrote it down due to that eye problem. At this point in the letter, Paul wanted to prove that the letter is not any sort of forgery, so he hand wrote part of with large letters as that was his "signature".
 - b) I don't know the spiritual significance of this verse, other than to say, there are times in life when we need to show people that yes what we are saying "is really from us" and not any form of forgery and this was Paul's method of doing so.
 - c) In case you don't know, Paul's original letter is long gone. So are the original copies of all the books of the bible. That gives me the motive to deviate for a moment and explain how we know the bible is "genuine" and not a forgery.
 - i) First of all, we have more manuscript evidence for the books of the bible than any other ancient document. As a comparison, we really only have one ancient source that verifies that Alexander the Greek really existed. We have thousands of copies of the New Testament books that go back close to the time they were written.
 - ii) To put it another way, if the original copy of a document is lost, but there happen to be hundreds or thousands of hand made copies, how do we know what the original one said? The answer is to compare all the copies to see commonality. The great majority of all copying errors are simple spelling errors that are easy to catch. Our ancient copies are probably accurate to within 98% or probably better.
 - iii) In short, we can trust the documents as original due to all the copies we have.

- iv) As to the Old Testament, the oldest copy we have is about 1,000 AD. The Jewish rabbi's who would copy those books had a system where they would add up the number values of each letter (e.g., A=1, B=2.). If a new page had the exact same numerical value as the old page, they would burn the old page and take the new one. If it didn't add up correctly, they burned the new one and started again.
 - v) In summary, a lot of people went to a lot of trouble to copy this book as perfectly as they could despite many centuries of persecution, despite periods of it being a death sentence to own part of a bible, the book lived on. If one ever wants to have an appreciation for their bible, study one's history and learned how many people had died horrible deaths in order to copy this book for others to read it.
 - d) Gee John, that is interesting, what does it have to do with this verse? My point is simply that if Paul could go to the trouble to mention that he had his own system to verify that what he wrote is "genuine", we should be grateful to the many people over the course of a few thousand years who painstakingly took the trouble to copy it for us to learn from.
13. Verse 12: Those who want to make a good impression outwardly are trying to compel you to be circumcised. The only reason they do this is to avoid being persecuted for the cross of Christ.
- a) As Paul is getting ready to wrap up this letter, he is coming back to summarize some of the key points. The first is that while Paul is trying to encourage the Galatians to trust in Jesus alone for their salvation, he is also aware that there are Jewish Christians in their midst who want those Galatians to convert to Judaism in order to trust in Jesus.
 - b) Some suspect that part of their motivation to want to convert Christians is because that Judaism was an officially Roman "sanctified" religion. In other words, it was not a death sentence to be a Jew, but in many parts of the Roman world at that time, to be a Christian was a death sentence. Therefore, part of the motivation was to protect people's lives.
 - i) Paul's response to this concept is in effect, "If the price to be a Christian means our death, so be it. God has kept me (Paul) alive this long to preach Christianity and whether it means one's martyrdom or a long life as a Christian, one has to accept God's will for our lives."
 - ii) Since I'm quoting a lot of pastor's in this lesson, let me give one more quote that I love. Chuck Missler likes to say, "The relatively easy thing to do as a Christian is to die a martyr's death. The hard thing is to continue to live out one's entire life making a difference for Jesus".
 - iii) Personally, I don't fear death as much as I fear pain. I am convinced enough about my belief in God that I don't fear death. It is the pain before that part that I am not crazy about. Also, I want to support my family as much as possible before I go, so that is a motivation as well. I suspect that most Christians being tortured would confess to just about anything, except to deny that Jesus is God. If you don't know this, almost all of the original apostles were recorded as denying horrible deaths as they refused to deny that Jesus was God under those conditions.
 - c) My point, as it comes back to this verse, is that Paul is saying, it may be a death sentence at this time to declare that Jesus is God, but it is worth that risk if that message is true.
 - i) It would be like asking, "Do you believe the Gospel is true? Do you believe it to a point that one is willing to die to accept it as true?" That is what Paul and God are asking us. It is a relatively easy to trust in God when life is going well and there is no threat of pain or persecution. It is another to trust God when a threat to our life or say, our family is on the line.
 - d) With that tough thought finished, let me now come back to this verse. We don't know for sure what was the motivation of those who desired to covert the Galatians to Judaism. We just know that we as Christians are to live by faith that Jesus is God and died for our sins and we can't "add to that" by trying to impress God with our good deeds. That is why Paul wrote this letter to say in effect, "They are wrong what they preach".

- e) OK John, you've been beating this point over our head for six lessons now. We get the idea that we can't add to our salvation by doing good deeds. So why should I care what these Galatian Jewish-Christian people thought 2,000 years ago? The answer is in effect that people like that still exist today: let me give some negative examples:
- i) If you are really saved, you should only read this particular version of the bible.
 - ii) If you are really saved, you should dress this way for church.
 - iii) If you are really saved, you shouldn't drink, smoke or chew tobacco.
 - iv) That type of action in effect is the same type of message as what the Galatians had to deal with in their day. My point is we can't add to our salvation based on how we act in church or life for that matter. Yes there is pressure to conform to certain church "norms". My view on that is effectively, "When in Rome, act like a Roman".
 - a) For example, I have found that most churches have their own little quirks that one has to deal with. Assuming they are not a biblical violation or a thing that is painful to do, I usually go with the flow as not to stand out.
 - b) If a certain church requires a coat and tie every Sunday, I put them on.
 - c) If another church is more casual, I dress accordingly. My point is none of those acts affect my salvation, but I want to be a good witness to all people and that means to do my best to conform in those situations.
 - d) Remember that Paul said that he has become all things to all people to win some to Christ (1st Corinthians 9:22). That should be our attitude as well.
 - v) Therefore, the point here is that none of these actions or lack of these actions do affect our standing with God. At the same time, we should be willing to give up our rights to do what we are allowed to do, in order to win some for Christ. That is why I try my best to fit in with some crowds, not that such actions are necessary for salvation, but just that I don't offend others while trying to be good witness for Jesus in all situations.
 - vi) Finally, let me state the obvious: One should not take that principal to an extreme where one is violating biblical principals in order to win others. For example we don't steal with a bunch of thieves in order to win those thieves to Jesus.
- f) Now that I've finishing lecturing all of us how we should and should not act as Christians, let us get back to the rest of the letter.
14. Verse 13: Not even those who are circumcised obey the law, yet they want you to be circumcised that they may boast about your flesh.
- a) Paul is summarizing his closing arguments by reminding all of us that those who want to live under the laws of Judaism are not perfect themselves. I should state quickly that of course I know Judaism has a whole set of rituals to deal with sins. What we have to ask as Christians in effect, "Are we denying what Jesus did for us if we are trusting in any or all rituals for the forgiveness of sins when we perform such rituals?" It is one thing just to confess our sins as wrong. That is biblical and a good thing to do. It is another to perform some sort of ritual in order to prove to God how sorry one is for their sins.
 - i) I find that rituals come down to our egos. We think we are better people than we really are and we are capable of acting better based on willpower. God is in effect saying to us, "No you are not. I know your weaknesses as well as you do, and you (us) are not capable of being a better person without Me to guide you." Therefore, we should confess sin as wrong to realize God was right and we were wrong. At the same time we don't have to prove to Him our sorrow by any sort of ritual.
 - b) With that statement made, Paul is implying here that those Jewish Christians who wanted the Galatians to convert to Judaism did it in order to boast about their accomplishments. It is like saying, "Look, I won over another one. God must be so proud of me right now."
 - i) We don't get "notches in our bible" for every person we save. We should just make a difference for Jesus, because we want to, not to earn any set of rewards.

15. Verse 14: 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.
- a) Speaking of not boasting, that is what Paul is saying in this verse. My paraphrase, "The only thing we should boast about in life is that we are trusting in Jesus being God, His death and resurrection for our salvation and that's that.
 - b) Since my theme of this lesson is quoting people I respect, let me quote from a famous Los Angeles pastor who past away a number of years ago. He once said, "I have heard people in this room cheer loudly for the Lakers and other sports teams, but I don't hear much of a cheer about their trust in Jesus for their salvation". (Source: E.V. Hill)
 - c) My point and that pastor's point is that Paul says if we want to cheer about something, we should be grateful for our salvation and what Jesus did for us. We are willing to cheer for our favorite sports team or say our favorite celebrity, but for Jesus, stone silence. It's time for all of us to quickly embarrass ourselves, and cheer for Jesus. I'll be here when you are done. ☺ OK, time to get back to the lesson.
 - d) Now that we are all fired up, notice something else about this verse. Paul also makes the statement that he is "crucified to the world". What does that mean? Glad you asked.
 - i) It refers to the idea that whatever the world considers important, Paul does not. I am not saying we can stop cheering for our favorite sports team. I am saying that we should put what the world desires in perspective of how Jesus wants us to live.
 - ii) If we are trusting in Jesus, what are we doing about it? How are we using the most valuable thing God gives us, our time, to make that difference for Him? What Paul is effectively asking us in this verse is, have we turned away from what the world desires in order to live the life that God desires we live?
 - iii) There, that is enough guilt for one verse. Time to move on.
16. Verse 15: Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything; what counts is a new creation.
- a) This is an easy one. In terms of being saved, the ritual of circumcision is meaningless. I believe I've beaten that point to death throughout this study of Galatians. Even the rituals associated with Christians are in effect signs to the world one is saved. The only way we truly do become saved is when we willingly accept the truth about Jesus and then change our lifestyle because we believe that to be true. Aren't you preaching works by that line? No. We are saved by faith alone. If we are saved by faith alone, how does anyone know we are saved unless our lives change accordingly? That is the main point of this book.
 - b) Since we are a "new creation" as Paul calls us, the point is then for us to use our time and our resources to make a difference for Jesus. Hopefully by now, I've beaten that point to death for all of us as well. Ok then, three more verses to go.
17. Verse 16: Peace and mercy to all who follow this rule, even to the Israel of God.
- a) Let me define "peace and mercy here" as Paul meant them. The idea of peace is not about the absence of conventional warfare. The idea of peace is that we can rest assured of our salvation by not having to prove our value to God by our works. The idea of peace is it affects every aspect of our lives no matter what is our situation.
 - b) The idea of mercy is that God may "go easy on us". Let me explain that another way. God will often punish us for our sins, not that He is mad at us, but just because He wants us to change our ways. It would be like God saying to us, "If this is what I have to do in order to get your attention to change your ways, I'll do what I have to do". In other words, God loves us too much to leave us alone. What Paul is praying for is for God to have mercy on our sins and may we change our ways before God has to use more drastic measures.
 - c) Then the verse says "Peace and mercy to those who follow this rule". Ok what rule is Paul talking about in this verse? To answer, go back to the previous verse. It doesn't matter if one is circumcised or not. What only matters is our trust in Jesus death alone. If we are living that way, then Paul (and God) wants to bless our lives with peace and mercy.

- d) That leads to the unusual phrase of this verse: the expression, "the Israel of God".
 - i) That term is a colorful way of saying that the God that the Israelites worship is the same God that I Paul, and you non-Jewish Christians in Galatia also worship.
 - ii) To put it all together, Paul is simply giving a closing greeting to those Christians living in Galatia by saying may God's peace and mercy be upon all of you, as you worship the God of the Israelites.
 - iii) So why is this here? Remember that the Jewish-Christians living in Galatia were trying to get the non-Jewish Christians to switch to Judaism in order to worship the God of the Israelites. Paul is saying you Galatians and all of us non-Jewish Christians already do worship the God of the Israelites. We don't have to switch to Judaism in order to worship their God and our God.
 - iv) Now that we have established that fairly basic point, we can move on.
18. Verse 17: Finally, let no one cause me trouble, for I bear on my body the marks of Jesus.
- a) You know the old expression, "Don't lead me into temptation, I can find it all by myself?", that is similar to what Paul is saying here. To paraphrase this verse some more, it is like Paul saying, "My life is difficult enough as it is. I've already suffered enough pain just for believing that Jesus is God and I'm saved by His grace alone. Therefore, don't cause me any more pain by trying to get me to convert back to Judaism or knowing that you people who I truly love are also trying to convert back to Judaism."
 - i) I want to say, that may be the longest paraphrase I ever wrote for one verse. ☺
 - b) OK John, that is all wonderful ancient history. Why should I care?
 - i) The point for us of course, is that living the Christian life is difficult enough as it is. We shouldn't add to it by trying to live by any set of rules or regulations in order to prove to God how worthy we are to be with Him.
 - ii) The related point is that we should care about the lives of other believers and ones who may become potential believers. If we see someone trusting in any ritual that is leading them away from just trusting that God loves them just because He does, if we can, we need to be willing to help others turn back to just trusting in what Jesus did for us and not trusting in any ritual for their salvation.
 - c) Coming back to Paul, there are other verses he wrote in the New Testament that lists how much he has where he suffered for the sake of the Gospel. See 2nd Corinthians 11:23-28, as the prime example of how much Paul had to suffer just because he preaching that one has to trust in Jesus full payment alone for our salvation. My point for you and me is not that we have to suffer the same way that Paul did. The point is if we are trusting only in Jesus complete payment for our sins, then we have to be careful not to add anything what He has already done, period. If one gets that, one gets the book of Galatians. With that said, I still have one more verse to go.
19. Verse 18: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brothers. Amen.
- a) Considering how much Paul has lectured the Galatian Christians in this letter, notice in this last verse, that Paul still considers them to be saved. Paul does not say, "You former Christians who have converted to Judaism, repent or be damned." Instead Paul refers to them as brothers (and sisters) in Jesus. In the classical Christians debate of whether or not one is "Once saved, always saved" or not, I think Paul is arguing here that once one does trust in Jesus for one's salvation, one cannot lose that as long as one is still believing that He was human, is fully God and He did die for our sins. Paul believes that they did sin by wanting to turn to Judaism, but it is not a "be damned" sort of sin.
 - b) On a related note, notice that Paul still says the Galatian Christians have the Spirit of God living within them in this verse. It says "your spirit". That is the same Spirit that resides in each of us when we are trusting in Jesus to guide our lives. This is Paul saying, you all didn't lose that privilege when you desired to trust in Judaism, or any other ritual for that matter. As long as one is trusting in Jesus for one's salvation, the Spirit is living within us.

- c) With that understood, why did Paul end this letter with a request for the grace of Jesus to be within their spirit? If God's grace is already there, why give this ending blessing? The point is to remind us that His grace is upon us.
- i) In other words, despite the fact we may at any given moment be trusting in some ritual to prove our worth to God or trust in some good act we are doing in order to prove our worth to Him (or others around us), we can and should still rely upon His grace upon life.
 - ii) It is time for a quick reminder of what is His grace. That word refers to receiving a gift that we didn't earn or deserve. That gift is the privilege of eternity with Him as well as our ability to communicate with Him and rely upon Him in order to make a difference for Him in this world.
 - iii) That gift is given to all believers and it is available to us, no matter how much we sin or no matter what we are dealing with at any given moment. To remember the fact that God knows all things and can't learn should be a sense of comfort to all of us that we can't surprise God by our shortcomings and our sins. I admit it is hard to accept that a perfect God can help billions of people simultaneously, but I have learned through experience it is true and it does work. His grace is upon all of us who trust in His complete payment for our sins. Since we trust in that payment, we are now free, as I like to say to sin all we want. Which of course leads us back to how much do we want to? That is what living the Christian life is all about: Trusting in what Jesus did and living for God out of gratitude of what Jesus has already done for us. God then gives us His Spirit as a power source to be able to live how He wants us to live.
- d) That long statement is a wonderful way to end this lesson and this book. I hope that what I taught here has been a blessing to your life. Thanks for reading. If interested in further study, I included a biography of my sources on the next page. With that said, let me close in prayer:
20. Father, we thank You that we don't have to earn our salvation based on how we live our lives. We thank You that You have done it all. Help us to be grateful for what You have already done for us, and use our time and our assets to make a difference for You in this world. Help us to rely upon Your Spirit and not our strength to accomplish what You desire to accomplish through us. Thank You for this book and what it teaches us of how You desire that we live. Guide as we go and make a difference for You. We ask this in Jesus name, Amen.

Supplement: Bibliography

"If I have seen further, it is because I have stood on the shoulders of giants." (Isaac Newton)

Without prayer and the guidance of the Holy Spirit, all these commentaries are useless. My prayer as I prepare these lessons was for God to show me the things He wanted me to learn, and second, the lessons He wanted me to pass on in my writings. I have quoted many sources throughout these lessons. If any of these writers appeal to you, I invite you to read or listen to them further via the places listed below. I have also quoted other sources not listed, and those names are usually listed in the lessons. These other authors were usually quoted from the materials listed below and taken from those sources.

First and foremost, the greatest commentary on the bible is the bible itself. Here are the bible versions I use in preparation of my lessons. I mostly quote The New International Version (NIV), Copyright 1973, 1978, 1984 by International Bible Society; The New King James Version (NKJV), Copyright © 1979, 1980, 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc.; The King James Version (KJV) (no copyright on that version); the English Standard Version. (ESV). The copyright information for the ESV is in point #9 below. The Living Bible (TLB) Copyright © 1971, 1986 by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Wheaton, IL 60189; "The Message" copyright © 1993 by Eugene H. Peterson. All rights reserved. All the bible text used in these lessons (except the ESV) is taken from Parsons Software: Electronic Edition STEP Files Copyright © 1999, Parsons Technology, Inc., all rights reserved and from Zondervan Reference Software (32-bit edition) Version 2.6, Copyright © 1989-1998 The Zondervan Corporation.

Here are the commentaries I have referenced over these lessons. The specific commentaries on the book of James are listed first, and then the bible-wide commentaries. They are listed in alphabetical order by author. The reference to audio commentary means the information was gathered via the Internet in MP3® Format, unless otherwise stated:

1. Commentary on Galatians by Jon Courson. It is in book form from Harvest House Publishing. It is also available in MP3® format at <http://www.joncourson.com/>.
2. Commentary on Galatians by Bob Davis. They are available for free in MP3® format at <http://northcountrychapel.com/studies/Galatians>
3. Commentary on Galatians by David Guzik. They are available for free in MP3® format at http://www.enduringword.com/gal_audio.htm. One can also read his commentary at <http://www.enduringword.com/commentaries/48.htm>
4. Commentary on Galatians by Chuck Missler, available at K-House Ministries 1-800-KHOUSE1. The web address is <http://www.khouse.org>.
5. The English Standard Version Study Bible; Copyright (2005-2009) The Standard Bible Society. The version itself is copyrighted 2008 by Crossway Bibles, a publication of "Good News Publishers".
6. The Expositor's Bible Encyclopedia, Zondervan Publications, (via CD-ROM 1998 release). This is a multi-volume encyclopedia with notes on every bible verse. It is available through Zondervan. Paperback books are published on individual Bible books from this same source. The actual text that is copied and pasted is taken from this source.
7. The Life Application Bible, Zondervan Publishing: www.zondervanbibles.com/0310919770.htm.
8. The MacArthur Study Bible with commentary by John MacArthur Nelson Bibles (1997) ISBN: 0849912229.
9. I also refer sometimes to J.P. Moreland apologetic ministry which is at www.jpmoreland.com and Greg Koukl's apologetic ministry, which is Stand to Reason at www.str.org. My apology if I have quoted someone else and I have forgotten to include them here.
10. Also, I also taught Galatians many years ago before I started this ministry. There are pastors I have quoted and thoughts I remember from that first "time around". My gratitude to those teachers who have helped me to prepare for this ministry even if they don't even know I am doing this.