

# THROUGH THE BIBLE

## GALATIANS 5-6

Perched atop our nation's Capitol in Washington DC is a twenty foot statue known as the "**Freedom Lady**." She was sculpted in Rome, and imported to America.

But during the delivery, the ship encountered a bitter storm - howling winds, and huge waves. The seas were so severe the captain feared the boat might capsize so he ordered the cargo thrown overboard.

But when the crew went to toss over the "**Freedom Lady**" the skipper stopped them. He shouted over the noise of the storm, "**No, never! We'll flounder before we throw 'Freedom' away.**" And this is Paul's message in Galatians 5, "**Never throw away your freedom!**"

Yet many Christians do.

Legalism is the storm that rocks the boat of faith.

It's the mentality, that it's up to me to either *obtain or maintain* a right standing with God. I try to prove that I'm deserving of God's blessing and favor by what I do.

At times the rules I try to keep are God's - at other times their mine, or they come from church-folk - but the idea is the same... ***Our work proves our worthiness.***

The Gospel of grace teaches us just the opposite.

There's nothing we can do to earn God's favor. On our own the most obedient among us are unworthy.

But God extends grace... On the cross Jesus did what we could never do. He accomplished all that needed to be done for us to receive God's favor. Our job is to be humble and put our faith in God's grace.

But sometimes the storm blows, and we get bullied by legalism. A friend, or a preacher, or even our own conscience tells us we should be doing this or that...

And we can doubt the sufficiency of Christ - we add a few good works just to be on the safe side. But trying to be on *the safe side* can put us on *the wrong side*.

When we lean toward legalism *we diminish the cross of Christ and drift from God's grace*. In essence, we throw away our freedom. Paul warns the Galatians...

Chapter 5 begins, "Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage."

Understand, Jesus sets us free from **performance-based religion**. He takes us off the treadmill of working and striving - but never measuring up. We live by faith.

In Acts 15, at the Jerusalem Counsel, Peter told the Church not to expect Gentile believers to conform to the Jewish Law. He said in verse 10, "Why do you test God by putting a yoke on the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?"

Notice Peter refers to the demands of the Law as a **yoke** - a harness that will **choke** off *the joy of Jesus* and *the life of the Holy Spirit*... Anytime Christians stop depending on the work of Jesus, and rely on their own deeds they refasten themselves in the **yoke choke**.

This is what the Judaizers did to the Galatians.

Rather than teaching them to live by grace through faith, they put the believers back on the treadmill. They expected them to live up to their own pet standards - their own lethal concoction of self-righteousness.

Here's the problem... A legalist appears disciplined, pious, sincere - and a new believer gets intimidated.

*Who am I to buck such a spiritual person?*

Some religious-folk like to throw their weight around. By enforcing their rules they control others - or make themselves look good - or climb the pecking order...

And the new believer gets sucked in. Because of his ignorance, or fear, or uncertainty, he becomes saddled with unnecessary baggage. A person who Jesus died to set free, ends up living under *“a yoke of bondage.”*

This is why *“freedom is always unfinished business.”*

It's not only true politically, but spiritually. There's always somebody trying to rob you of your liberty.

Paul tells the new believers in Galatia, *“stand fast... in the liberty by which Christ has made us free and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage.”*

A yoke is no joke. There will always be people trying to refit a new harness around your neck. This is why Paul is so adamant... *stand up - resist - remain free!*

He tells the Galatians in verse 2, *“Indeed I, Paul, say to you that if you become circumcised, Christ will profit you nothing.”* One of the legalistic stipulations being

enforced on the Galatians was Jewish circumcision. This was an OT badge worn by God's people, Israel.

The Judaizers were insisting that Christians in Galatia should also wear this same badge. And this is typical of legalism. *Faith is hidden under the lapel. It's unseen.* But religion loves to assign external badges.

There are churches today that emphasize ceremony and ritual for the same reason... Righteousness is equated with *church membership, or baptism, or daily devotions, or home schooling your kids, or speaking in tongues, or giving an offering, or keeping a holy day...*

Certainly, these activities have a place, but if they're made mandatory to pleasing God - you insult God's grace and diminished the work of Jesus. Faith in Jesus makes you as right with God as you can get. There's no such thing as a second class Christian.

As I said earlier, to doubt the sufficiency of God's grace, and lean in the direction of legalism - *just to be on the safe side*, puts you *on the wrong side*. That's what was happening to the Galatians via circumcision.

Paul tells them if they make a religious ritual a requirement for obtaining or maintaining a right standing with God - they forfeit the merits of Christ!

Note how Paul puts it, *"Christ will profit you nothing."*

This is a big deal! Faith in Christ is an all or nothing proposition. Add anything to your faith in Jesus - *I'll also rack up a few good works, and rely on a couple of traditions just in case* - then you forego the saving merits of Jesus. His benefits no longer accrue to you.

Verse 3, “And I testify again to every man who becomes circumcised that he is a debtor to keep the whole law.” Since nobody’s perfect, the legalist picks and chooses which rules and rituals he wants to obey.

But that’s not how it works. Paul says live by the Law and you’re covered by it all. God’s Law isn’t a spiritual smorgasbord. Read the Law God gave to Moses...

Do you kindle a fire on the Sabbath? Flip on a light, or turn on a stove on a Saturday - and you’ve blown it.

Have you kept a kosher diet? If you've ever bitten into a ham and cheese sandwich - you're a lawbreaker!

Verse 4 is the strongest warning yet, “You have become estranged from Christ, you who attempt to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace.” It’s one or the other, you can’t trust in the work of Christ and your own works. Either you live *under law* or *under grace*.

“For we through the Spirit eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness by faith.” Notice we’re right with God “*by faith*” - which poses the question, *if we stop having faith then how can we continue to be right with God?*

Paul uses stern words for the person who abandons his faith - who stops trusting in Christ... they become “*estranged from Christ.*” They have “*fallen from grace.*” As we read in verse 2, “*Christ profits them nothing.*”

It’s hard to say this person retains their salvation.

Here's my take on *once-saved-always-saved...*

I don't receive salvation because of anything I do or don't do, so I can't lose my salvation by anything I do or don't do. It's not as if certain sins are *salvation-snuffers* - commit them and you're no longer saved.

We obtain and maintain a right standing with God *"by faith."* Yet evidently faith isn't a once-and-for-all status.

It's not a sign-on-the-bottom-line-for-life type of proposition. Faith is a living thing. It's more like a plant. If you want the plant to live you water it and feed it and weed it. But if you ignore the plant, it'll shrivel and die.

Colossians 1:23 states this clearly, *"You... He has reconciled... if indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel..."* You have to continue in faith.

Here's a personal testimony... I grew up in a Baptist church and held tenaciously to once-saved-always-saved. I assumed once I committed my life to Jesus - that's it - I'm in regardless of my future decisions.

This sounds good. Even after I started reading and studying the Bible I wanted to hold on to this doctrine.

I'd still believe it now, if I could. But I can't... because it's not what's taught in the NT. The Bible is clear if we want to be saved we need to continue in our faith.

Verse 6, *"For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but faith working through love."* In Christ deeds and religious badges don't matter. God looks below the badge to the heart!

What makes you right with God is not whether you tithe or don't... attend church or



stay at home... read your Bible or the newspaper... these acts may be ways to demonstrate *your love for God*, but they don't determine *His love for you*! God accepts you and blesses you not because of your *feats*, but your *faith*.

A lot of pastors are afraid to preach grace, for if they do they'll give up their leverage. If the church members discover the reason God blesses their lives is because of what Christ has *done*, not what they *do* - what motivation will they have to serve and work and obey?

"Who'll come to the church workday if they all think God will bless them the same if they stay at home?"

Yet pastors who fear the grace of God don't understand its power. When you tell a person God blesses them regardless... it frees them up to serve the Lord - *not because they have to, but they want to*.

Paul tells us how this operates in verse 6, *"faith works through love."* The more you realize God loves you the more you trust Him, and the more your trust Him the more God does to demonstrate His love. The Law drives a wedge between us and God, but His grace melts, and molds, and fills us from the inside out.

In verse 7 Paul asks the Galatians.. *"You ran well. Who hindered you from obeying the truth?"* One of the legalists sold them a toxic potion of faith plus works.

*"This persuasion does not come from Him who calls you."* This undermining of God's grace was never taught by Christ - and was never preached by Paul.

He warns them... *"A little leaven leavens the whole lump."* Legalism is like yeast. It corrupts by puffing up. It plays on our pride. It's show me religion *"Look at how good*

*I am!*" - and it can pollute an entire church.

Verse 10, "I have confidence in you, in the Lord, that you will have no other mind; but he who troubles you shall bear his judgment, whoever he is. And I, brethren, if I still preach circumcision, why do I still suffer persecution? Then the offense of the cross has ceased." The message Paul preached was the work of Christ - *the cross*. This was what offended the Jews.

The cross implied man can never be good enough for God. The idea of God's grace assaults man's pride.

Paul wasn't the target of Jewish persecution for preaching OT legalism... Paul taught God's grace!

Keep in mind, the flashpoint for the Judaizers was circumcision. This was the rule on which they insisted.

This is why Paul counterpunches in verse 12. In fact, he takes off the gloves so to speak... "I could wish that those who trouble you would even cut themselves off!"

Paul is so opposed to performance-based religion he wishes that those who insist on circumcision just go all out. If clipping off the foreskin truly pleases God then why not go to the extreme and emasculate yourself.

Here's Peterson's paraphrase of verse 12, "Why don't these agitators, obsessive as they are about circumcision, go all the way and castrate themselves!"

Verse 13, "For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another." For over 4 chapters



Paul has stressed the importance of liberty.

But Paul realized he could be misunderstood.

Recently I ran across some headlines that ran the same risk... "Police begin campaign to run down jaywalkers." "Iraqi head seeks arms." "Astronaut takes blame for gas in spacecraft." "Local High School dropouts cut in half." "Man minus ear waives hearing."

I'm sure the editor wished he'd been more careful...

Well, Paul also wants to be careful to prevent a misunderstanding... Just because *we're free from living under the Law* doesn't mean *we have liberty to sin*.

Yes, rules no longer govern our behavior, but that doesn't mean our behavior doesn't matter. *Law* is out. But *love* is in. We've swapped *rules* for a *relationship*.

Pleasing God is still the goal, but the method has changed. The Law worked from the outside in - *you conformed to the Law*. But grace puts us in touch with God, and *His love transforms us* from the inside out.

Paul encourages us, "*only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.*" God wants us controlled not by *law* or *lust*, but by *love*. People gravitate toward the extreme - it's either *legalism* or *license* - but grace produces *love*!

The love of Christ produces gratitude in our hearts. Grace isn't an excuse to sin, it's a reason not to sin!

Verse 14, “For all the law is fulfilled in one word...”

And here it is... drumroll please... one word sums up the whole OT... “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” The whole intent of the Law is to love others.

“But if you bite and devour one another, beware lest you be consumed by one another!” One of the most famous bite of all time occurred in a heavyweight title fight between Evander Holyfield and Mike Tyson.

The two boxers were tied up when Tyson leaned in and took a bite out of Holyfield’s ear. The boxing world was appalled by such a barbaric, classless tactic.

Yet I wonder how many Christians have taken a bite out of another brother or sister. We’re certainly not free to snip at each other with gossip, and take a bite out of someone’s reputation. Believers need to walk in love.

Verse 16, “I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.” The “*lust of the flesh*” is a biblical name for “selfish desires.” And how do you overcome a lifestyle of selfish-gratification?

Some say the answer is “willpower,” or “the power of positive thinking,” or “self-discipline,” or “twelve steps,” or “months of psychological therapy.” But the answer is much simpler... Paul tells us to “*walk in the Spirit...*”

When you’re caught up, and wrapped up, and overwhelmed by the influence of the Holy Spirit you don’t have time to concern yourself with the lusts of the flesh. You’re too busy *loving God* and *loving others*.

“For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are

contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish.” Paul pinpoints two approaches to life...

Either you see yourself “in Christ” or “apart from Christ...” Either your world revolves around Jesus or it revolves around yourself... Either you’re *relishing the grace of God*, or *your relying on your own grit*...

**Either you’re into Jesus or you’re into yourself.**

Get caught up in Jesus - walk in the influence of the Holy Spirit - and you lose interest in fleshly desires.

Paul tells us in verse 18, “But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.” The influence of the Holy Spirit accomplishes what the Law never could do.

In fact, these two approaches to life produce predictable paths. Paul lists “*the works of the flesh*” alongside “*the fruit of the Spirit*.” The “*flesh*” - which is *me apart from Christ* - works. It’s all up to me. But the Spirit inside me does His work, and the result is “*fruit*.”

The flesh is *self-centered*. The fruit is *Spirit-inspired*.

“Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like...”

Notice, it’s not an exhaustive list. “*And the like*” means all the other stuff that’s in the same category.

Our flesh doesn't have a very impressive resume.

Left to ourselves... on our own... here's what we're capable of... "illicit sex, moral perversion, turmoil, temper, telling lies, believing lies, intoxication, *and the like...*" There you are! God's Law was a safeguard. Like a playpen it kept you from wandering into trouble. But without the Law - on your own - this is where you'd go.

And obviously, the works of the flesh can never work your way to God. Paul says, "of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things - or literally, "practice them habitually" - will not inherit the kingdom of God."

The idea in this verse isn't that a single act of *envy* or *hatred* or *sexual sin* will send a person to hell.

Paul is saying a man who walks in the flesh - and doesn't have a relationship with Jesus - is headed to hell. And he's easy to spot because he's practicing a consistent pattern of *evil habits*... Remember, this was the problem the Pope had with the nuns - *dirty habits*.

But if you walk in the Spirit you can also predict the results, verse 22, "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law."

Notice these nine fruits are in three clusters of three.

Cluster #1 flows from our relationship with God... *love, joy, peace*. Cluster #2 effects our relationships with one another... *longsuffering, kindness, goodness*. And cluster #3 involves our relationship with ourselves... *faithfulness, gentleness, self-control*.

None of these attributes are man-made. They can't be mustered up by the flesh. They're the Spirit's work.

When you try to conjure up your own joy... or be kind because you know you ought to be kind... or force yourself to love a guy acting unlovable... *it's fake fruit.*

But if you trust in the Holy Spirit to produce what you lack, He'll manufacture true, genuine, *Juicy fruit.*

The Spirit yields unforced love, spontaneous joy, peace in the midst of fear, enduring patience, genuine kindness, decision-altering self-control. It's beautiful.

Verse 24, “**And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.**” The most pathetic of fellows is the person who's in Christ - wants to please God - but is trying to do it in his own strength.

We need to recall that as Christians we've “**crucified the flesh.**” We committed to stop trusting in our own efforts, and live our lives depending on the Holy Spirit.

Too many believers are Christians, but they live as if they're not. They trust in their own strength. This is why Paul tells us, verse 25, “**If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.**” God has made us alive by His Spirit. Now let's lean on Him, rather than our own flesh.

“**Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.**” God expects better out of His kids. Stand fast in the liberty with which Christ has freed us, and use that freedom to walk in the Spirit!

Chapter 6, "Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one..."

The word translated "*trespass*" refers to "a lapse, a stumble, a slip up" Paul isn't referring to a false teacher who's deliberately spewing false doctrine. He's already told us what to do with them - cast them out!

This is the brother who falls victim to a weakness.

We're told to "*restore*" him. The word is used in the NT to describe the mending of a fishing net, or the setting of a broken bone. This is a tedious task - it involves careful evaluation of the break - and then a gentle manipulation to realign the fractured parts.

That's why this is not the job of a novice. Paul is specific, "*You who are spiritual restore such a one...*"

*The what* is to restore. *The who* is the man who is spiritual. Now *the how...* is "in a spirit of gentleness."

The word "*gentleness*" is translated elsewhere "*meekness*" It means "strength under control, firmness tempered with love." When a kid come to you with a boo-boo you don't start poking and prodding. If you want them to open up you've got to be gentle.

So it is with a saint who's slipped. You don't barge in with both barrels blazing. "Alright, shape up or ship out." If that's your approach you'll run him off before you can bandage his wound and give him time to heal.



You've got to be firm, but you've also got to be loving. And the best way to strike the balance is to take heed to what comes next... **"considering yourself lest you also be tempted."** *Be humble or you'll also stumble.*

If not for the grace of God you'd be in the same mess. Never underestimate your own ability to blow it!

Legalism creates a self-righteous, judgmental church, but where grace is embraced folks will roll up their sleeves and reach out to those who stumble.

Paul continues in verse 2, **"Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ."** In the process of restoring a fallen brother you'll discover there were stresses and pressures that led to his sin. That means once he's been restored our job isn't over. We need to help him cope with the factors that led to his fall.

There's an Indian word for *"friend"* which means *"one who carries my sorrows on his back."* This is what Jesus did for us, and you're never more like Jesus than when you do the same for a friend. I've heard it put, **"Friendship multiplies our joys and divides our grief."**

When we get up under someone else's load and help to lighten it in some way - we ***"fulfill the law of Christ!"***

**"For if anyone thinks himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself."** *"What did the mama whale say to her baby?"* She warned him, *"Son, it's only when you're spouting that you get harpooned."*

And the same is true for us. Don't get haughty.

At times you'll carry someone else's load, and there will be times when someone

will help carry your load.

Trust me, if you've been a Christian for more than a few years you've spent time on both ends of a burden.

Verse 4, *"But let each one examine his own work, and then he will have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another. For each one shall bear his own load."*

At first this sounds like a contradiction - what am I suppose to do *"bear one another's burdens"* or *"bear my own load."* And the answer is a resounding *"both."*

We're responsible for each other, but my responsibility for you never supersedes your responsibility for yourself. Verse 5 balances verse 2...

There's an old AA saying, *"If I am not the problem, there can be no solution."* I can't blame my dilemma on anyone other than myself. I should never say, *"Well, if you'd been there to help me bear my burden I wouldn't have succumbed to the pressure."*

You can't say that!

Your burden is still *your* burden. And God promises in 1Corinthians 10:13 not to give us more than we can handle. We're all responsible to *"bear his own load."*

Now the topic shifts to spiritual investments, and one of the best ones I can make is in a good teacher.

Paul tells us in verse 6, *"Let him who is taught the word share in all good things with him who teaches."*

Realize Christianity was the first religion whose teachers relied on the voluntary

contributions of the people they taught. Judaism taxed the people to pay the priests. Roman religions exacted fees and dues.

Understand, a *tithe* is not a *tax*. Rather than an *invoice*, think *investment*. Give from a grateful heart. Bless the teacher in proportion to how he blesses you.

Which reminds me of the pastor who told his congregation he had a \$100 sermon that would take ten minutes to preach - a \$60 sermon that would take thirty minutes - and a \$10 sermon that would take all of an hour. After they took the offering, he would decide which sermon to preach... This was a *shrewd pastor*.

In verse 7, Paul continues his thoughts on spiritual investments, “Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.”

Here's a natural law that also applies to the spiritual realm. Sow corn and you'll be up to your *ears* in corn.

A farmer understands this principle. He'd never sow corn and expect soybeans. You reap what you sow.

And the same is true spiritually. “For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life.

Sow to the flesh... entertain thoughts that *oppose God*... preoccupy yourself with ideas that *ignore God*... and one day you'll wake up living *without God*.

Here's the rule of thumb... **Garbage in. Garbage out.**

Fill your head with impure images and filthy talk and your life will gravitate down. You'll wake up one day in bondage to what you thought was just fun and games.

Notice what Paul says, *"Do not be deceived, God is not mocked."* This is a law of nature - a divine principle.

It's like the law of gravity. You can doubt it, deny it, defy it... *jump off a bridge, and shout all the way down that you don't believe in gravity.* Half-way down shout, *"nothing's happened"* - then splat! *God is not mocked.*

Like the guy who sowed his wild oats Monday through Saturday, then went to church on Sunday and prayed for a crop failure. Trust me, it doesn't work.

This is a law - you reap what you sow!

When you choose a music download, or a movie to watch or a website to browse remember this principle.

And understand what's so deceptive about *the Law of Sowing and Reaping* - *you don't always reap in the same season that you sow.* If harvest came the day after the planting, farming would be fun and easy.

And the same is true spiritually. Seldom do we reap in the same season we sow. Adultery is fun for a while. But when infidelity blossoms there'll be hell to pay.

Likewise, studying the Bible, learning to pray can be hard work - like planting seed on a hot day. But when you bring in the riches of the harvest it's all worth it.

If you want to grow a strong faith sow good seed. Log on to good Bible teaching, and Christian music, and take walks with God, and think God's thoughts... the more you sow to the spirit the more you'll reap!

This is why Paul says in verse 9, *"And let us not grow weary while doing good, for*

in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart.” Our biggest obstacles are weariness and discouragement. We get tired and lose heart. We need endurance. Press on!

“Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith.” You take care of your family, before you feed strangers - and the same is true in the Body of Christ.

Paul starts wrapping up his letter to the Galatians in 6:11, “See with what large letters I have written to you with my own hand!” In 2 Thessalonians 3:17 we learn that Paul dictated his letters through a stenographer. He then signed them with his own signature to assure their authenticity. *But Galatians was an exception.*

Paul was so passionate about this letter: it's subject, God's grace - it's readers, the Galatians - he wrote this with his own hand. Paul penned Galatians himself.

Some people assume Paul wrote in large letters because he was having problems with his eyes. His *thorn in the flesh* had reoccurred. It also could've been a attempt to make sure the Galatians read every word.

At the bottom of the Declaration of Independence you find the words “*John Hancock*” in abnormally large letters. Hancock used large script to be sure King George saw his name. This might be Paul's motive!

Paul concludes Galatians, “As many as desire to make a good showing in the flesh, these would compel you to be circumcised, only that they may not suffer persecution for the cross of Christ.” The false teachers in Galatia insisted that the Gentiles be

circumcised.

To stand up for the grace of God and faith in Christ would've been costly. It would've drawn persecution.

“For not even those who are circumcised keep the law, but they desire to have you circumcised that they may boast in your flesh.” The false teachers were hypocrites. There were areas of the Law they ignored.

Yet they browbeat the Galatians into circumcision. The Galatians were nothing but notches on their belt.

Verse 14, “But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ...” The Jews were embarrassed by the cross, but to Paul it was his only source of pride - he bragged about the cross.

Paul accomplished more for the cause of Christ than any Christian who's ever lived. Yet when he looked at his resume he found nothing in which to boast. All his deeds were nothing but a response to what Jesus did.

A life of sacrifice and service is the least we can give.

For Paul to brag about His accomplishments would be like drinking an expensive wine, then talking about the bottle. Don't brag on the vessel, but what's inside.

The cross changed Paul's life. He says of the cross, “by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.” Before he saw the cross this *world's power, wealth, religion* had a hold on Paul. But at the cross of Christ the world system was exposed for the evil it is...



All the world joined together to put to death an innocent man for no reason but jealousy and fear.

After seeing what the world did to Jesus, Paul would never be enchanted by the world and its charms again.

Paul died to what ever hold the world had on him, and Paul no longer sensed an obligation to the world.

Author Neil Strait makes a penetrating observation, "Christ on our cross is the way Calvary really reads. He died for us - in our place. We, then, are debtors. *Strange, that so often we act like we owe nothing...*"

Why is it when the world knocks on our hearts we react as if we owe it a hearing? Not so, let's renounce this world and any hold it might have on our lives.

We have a debt, for sure, but it's not to this world - our obligation is to the Savior hanging on the cross.

Verse 15, "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but a new creation." Again, it's not what we've done or can do for God that counts, but what Jesus has done in us.

We are "*a new creation*" in Christ!

"And as many as walk according to this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God.

From now on let no one trouble me, for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus." The false teaching Judaizers had not only questioned the legitimacy of Paul's

message, they also the sincerity of his ministry.

Finally, Paul takes off his shirt, and reveals the crisscrossed scars on his stomach and back. Pot-marks worse than what you'd find on any country road.

Most of his scars were the result of his stoning in Lystra - proof of the suffering he endured to bring the Gospel to Galatia. His scars testified of his sincerity.

It reminds me of a missionary to Burma, Adoniram Judson. For seven years he was imprisoned, and kept in leg-irons and handcuffs for preaching the Gospel.

His wrists and ankles bore severe scars.

Upon his release Judson asked the Burmese King if he might be granted permission to preach Jesus.

The king responded, "My people are not fools enough to listen to anything a missionary might SAY, but I fear they might be impressed by your SCARS and turn to your religion." Paul also spoke by his scars.

Paul ends his Gospel of grace... "Brethren, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen."

Let me close with a quote that sums up Galatians, "Your worst days are never so bad that you are beyond the reach of God's grace. Your best days are never so good that you are beyond the need of God's grace."

We're saved, and we stand, and we live, and we grow - all through faith God's amazing grace!