

from **root** to
fruit

a series in Galatians



STUDY GUIDE

This book contains study notes to accompany the ChristCentral Church Sermon Series based on the book of Galatians. Each chapter relates to a separate sermon in the series.

The sermon series: "From Root to Fruit" can be found on the ChristCentral Church website:
<https://christcentral.church/from-root-to-fruit/>

No Other Gospel	- <i>Galatians 1:1-10</i>
Set Apart	- <i>Galatians 1:11-24</i>
Entrusted With The Gospel	- <i>Galatians 2:1-10</i>
Justified by Faith	- <i>Galatians 2:11-16</i>
Crucified with Christ	- <i>Galatians 2:15-21</i>
Who has Bewitched You?	- <i>Galatians 3:1-14</i>
One in Christ	- <i>Galatians 3: 15-29</i>
Sons and Heirs	- <i>Galatians 4:1-7</i>
For Freedom!	- <i>Galatians 5:1-15</i>
Walk By The Spirit	- <i>Galatians 5:16-25</i>
Bearing One Another's Burdens	- <i>Galatians 6:1-18</i>

No Other Gospel – Galatians 1:1-10

The Gospel is fully loaded with power to transform lives and communities; therefore, it is precious to the Church and essential to its mission. Guarding the Gospel at all costs is tantamount in Paul's instructions to the Galatian church where external forces were seeking to attack and undermine it. This instruction is vital to us also as a church today, for The Gospel that Paul preached 2,000 years ago remains the Good News for all men and women, bringing about God's best in our lives, from root to fruit.

Paul starts this letter to the church in Galatia with a reminder of how important this Gospel is. No other gospel, no other promise of good news, can compare with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The Church had been veering away from the Gospel, the news that had been preached, and their identity was being lost. Paul recognises this, and focusses on the root, the power to transform lives.

Q. What qualities do you look for in a church? What are the things you look for when you visit a new church?

What is taught in church matters immeasurably more than anything else. The epistles have no challenges on poor musicianship. The Early Church leaders do not confront churches on the welcome people receive when they visit. The focus, the primary challenge that we read repeatedly, is regarding the basis of the teaching in the church. The Apostles recognised that the teaching was key, so that people did not stray from the good news, water the message down, and ultimately lead people away from God.

If there are poor musicians, there may be awkward moments during worship. If there is poor teaching, with no faithful Gospel witness, the result is death: death of the church, and the tragic abandonment of men, women and children lost in this evil age. Talented worship leaders, friendly greeting and even good coffee are valuable. It is important to remove stumbling blocks that may hinder. However, the end goal is that lives are transformed by God and enjoying Him. Strong teaching, from the Bible, is the anchor churches need to hold, to draw close to God.

Q. How can the Christian message be watered down by society? What can we do to spot, and prevent, this?

Q. How can you continue to develop your understanding of the Bible and what God has said?

“Paul, an apostle...” (verse 1)

Q. Have you experienced God's love in a way that you did not feel you deserved, but desperately needed?

Formerly known as Saul, this letter was written by a former enemy of the Church. Saul had persecuted followers of Jesus. He was not a man looking for Jesus, searching for the answer. He was warring against the Church, but Jesus met with him powerfully. His life was transformed, not from men or by man, but by Jesus Christ; sent by God.

There is a uniqueness to the Apostles; those who had seen him after his resurrection, who founded the Early Church, writing scripture and teaching doctrine. These Apostles (including Paul), had God-given authority. Therefore, Paul could challenge the false teaching that was weaving in to the Gospel message he had preached.

“Grace to You...” (verses 3&4)

This Gospel is beautifully summed up in verses 3&4. The extended arm of God pulls men and women out of despair. His initiative, His efforts, His gift! There is one plan, there is one hero, there is one rescue mission, all with inestimable personal cost. Without God, we have no hope. When you come to realise that all God needs from you is ‘nothing’ and all he has for you is everything, your life changes. The Gospel is stunning and precious news to save us.

Q. How does the Gospel of Grace differ from other ways of self-improvement and religious teaching?

Q. Have you experienced the freedom and joy that follows the Gospel of Grace? How has your life changed?

"I am Astonished..." (verse 6)

Q. What requirements can we be tempted to put on ourselves and others to live a 'Christian' life?

Paul is writing to the churches in Galatia, because people are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ. Resulting in churches turning from the grace of Christ. Instead they turned to a gospel of works; introducing law, such as circumcision as necessary in addition to The Cross for salvation. Rather than holding onto the Bible, the Word of God, the Gospel of Grace, these churches came to rely on personal experience, traditions and old covenant practices.

"...Let him be eternally condemned!" (verse 9)

Paul knows grace. Paul knows the Gospel. Paul knows the message that was shared with the church in Galatia. He had experienced a life where everything appeared sorted, but his encounter with Jesus highlighted the need that he had. Meeting Jesus, Paul realised he had nothing to bring, but the Gospel is a free gift, from God, that saves.

Paul stresses how important this message is. Any differing message, even from an angelic messenger, is false and deceptive, blinding us, so serious is this in Paul's view that he calls eternal damnation upon its perpetrators. We need to fully trust in Jesus, that it is solely through His work – our only hope. Without this Gospel we are lost, because of it, we are found.

Q. Why do you think Paul is so strong here? Why would he call for those undermining The Gospel to be 'eternally condemned'?

Q. How is the Gospel message radically different from other views? How can we share this message?

"...trying to win the approval of men?" (verse 10)

So many churches are silent on the truth of the Gospel. Scared to talk about Hell, Sin, a Righteous God. Too often messages are weakened, appeasing men, not sharing the truth. Why do you listen to the people you listen to? What makes a preach good? Is it because the preacher is funny? Does the message meet your needs and give you the answers you want?

Paul recognised that his preaching wasn't to please his audience. His message wasn't to gain the approval of man, but the approval of God. Preaching needs to come from Biblical truth to serve Christ. We want to be a church that shares a message that pleases God, not man, and so our message needs to come from what He says in His Word.

Q. What parts of the Bible can we be tempted to silence to not offend others? How does this affect the Gospel?

Set Apart – Galatians 1:11-24

God's revealed will is that we would all see him and know how wonderful he is. The Gospel is how we learn of how marvellous he is, and all that he has done for us. It is about an incredible God who took on flesh; who lived a perfect life; who bore our sins and died in our place; conquering sin and death. The Gospel is a message that all who believe in him, who put their trust in him can have eternal life; a message so simple that even a child can understand, yet with so much depth to it, that we can spend our entire lives studying it and never scratch the surface.

The letter to the churches in Galatia was written to defend this Gospel and remind the churches of the importance of this message. Ideas and words are powerful. Reading the Bible, and understanding the messages is not a quaint exercise of little consequence. Wrong philosophy, wrong understanding leads to terrible actions. It is of great importance that Paul writes to the churches, and that we understand God's message.

Q. What are the dangers of allowing false teaching, and misunderstanding of the Christian message, to go unchallenged?

"...our letter of recommendation..." (2 Corinthians 3:2)

The churches in Corinth had started to question Paul's authority and role as an Apostle. Paul's response: "You yourselves are our letter." Paul reminds the church that their changed lives are evidence of the message he had shared. From pagan idolatry to worshipping Jesus, how they lived was proof of the power and authority in the message. Each of us, once we declare ourselves a Christian, stand as a letter, as proof for the Gospel message. Our lives are on show for people to see, and will be used as evidence to judge the power and authority of the Christian message.

Q. How does your life represent the Gospel? What impression of the Christianity do people see in your relationships? ...on Facebook? ...through workplace conversations? ...by how you raise your children?

"Who do you say that I am?" (Matthew 16)

Jesus commands his followers to turn the other cheek, going to the cross silent, despite knowing the false accusations being thrown at him. Paul, when offended and challenged appears to be offended and livid. Is Paul taking it all too seriously? Is he being too sensitive? Is this in line with Jesus command and example?

In Matthew 16, we see Peter confess Jesus as the Christ. However, a few verses later, Peter denies the Gospel, the mission that Jesus had. Jesus response to Peter, following his confession of faith, is not silent. It's one thing when an unbeliever attacks the Gospel. It is quite another thing when one who has made a confession of faith undermines it. Like Jesus, Paul's letter to Galatia is written to Christians, and so Paul needs to stand up for the Gospel, to ensure churches do not misrepresent and undermine it. Their lives, despite professing a Christian life, were bearing witness to a different message.

Q. What role does church, and Life Group, have in holding us accountable, and encouraging our growth in faith?

Q. How can we be tempted to water-down Christian discipleship to prevent offending others?

"...not something man made up" (verses 11&12)

Paul reaffirms the authority of this message. It's not a message that Paul has been taught. It is not a message that Paul figured out and decided to share to help the lives of others. This message comes from God, not Paul. It is not just wisdom from a clever man who had worked things out.

Paul's message is not a man-made message, and subject to different lifestyles, backgrounds and experiences of man. These are God's words, and so we need to hold fast to them.

Q. How do you respond to the more challenging Bible passages? How can we be tempted to question biblical authority?

“...you have heard of my previous way of life...” (verses 13&14)

Paul was a persecutor of the Church. Zealous for the traditions of his fathers, Paul would have thought he was doing God’s work, doing the right thing. Paul’s life was heading one way, and steadfast. He was opposed to the Christian message, and certainly not on the verge of being convinced by its message. Paul’s life had been one passionately devoted to honouring the traditions of his fathers. But his life was changed. An enemy of the church, suddenly its advocate – that is a message you want to hear.

Q. How does Paul’s transformation help prove the authenticity and power of the Gospel?

Why would he abandon this life where he was doing so well? He had seen something infinitely more wonderful. Paul had a “But God” moment. God changed Paul’s heart, and everything changed as a result. Only by God would this transformation happen

“...set apart...called...pleased to reveal...that I might preach...” (verses 15&16)

Paul sets out a clear order of events where God had been at work in Paul’s life. Paul was set apart before he was called. Before Paul encountered Jesus, God had made a plan for him. Even when he was killing Christians, God had chosen Paul, and set aside a role for him, and he sets us apart, even when we fall. God’s purpose, to set apart, isn’t to blend in to society, to be “normal”. Nor has God set us apart, to be ‘holier-than-thou’. We are set apart, chosen, and called to live holy lives, to point towards the one who is even better.

Q. How does Paul being ‘set apart from birth’ encourage us when we feel we are unworthy, or have let God down?

Q. Is your life ‘set apart’? How can we be tempted to blend in and appear ‘normal’ rather than ‘religious’?

God was pleased to reveal his Son *in* Paul. The Gospel goes straight through Paul, transforming him inside. That is what enables Paul to honour God. That is what compels us to worship, and live the life, for which we have been set apart. Transformation happens as Jesus is encountered through the Gospel being proclaimed. Not through habit, tradition or upbringing.

Q. Have you had a ‘transforming encounter’, where God revealed himself to you? What happened? What changed?

“...now preaching the faith he once tried to destroy...” (verses 23-24)

Paul lived with the reality of his previous life every day, but through it all, in his life God was glorified. Paul was forgiven, and accepted in Christ, and so he could speak of his former life, knowing it only serves to draw attention onto The Gospel and its transforming power. Meeting Jesus, lives change. Transformed lives glorify God. Only the Gospel can bring these changes.

Q. What examples are there in your life, or those close to you, where Gospel transformation has occurred to God's glory?

Q. How are we seeing lives and communities transformed to glorify and enjoy God?

It's a very powerful thing to share our stories with each other, please encourage this in your groups

Entrusted With The Gospel – Galatians 2:1-10

The Letter to the Galatians was written to remind the churches in Galatia of the true Gospel. Because it is so wonderful, so good for us, it has been under attack since it started. Like every great and good thing, people have tried to copy it. Counterfeits appear that aren't as good; they can't quite achieve what the original. The Gospel has been subject to counterfeits like everything else, and Paul has stressed the importance of the true Gospel, even using his own history to back up the power of the Gospel.

“The first great and primary business to which I ought to attend every day is to have my soul happy in the Lord.” - George Muller

That is our task, every day; to have our souls happy in God. The Gospel is the only way we can achieve this goal. The counterfeits, the false teachings, have tried to fake this Gospel, add to it, or remove from it. We cannot earn God's approval or love, we cannot make ourselves worthy of happiness in God, and any teaching or attempt otherwise is fruitless. The Gospel tells we can be happy in the Lord, and by the Gospel alone are we transformed to enjoy Him.

Q. “Why is it important to ‘enjoy God’ and be ‘happy in the Lord’? How can you see this in your life?

“...I Went Up Again to Jerusalem...” (verse 1)

Fourteen years after Paul originally visited Peter, he returned to Jerusalem. Paul had spent fourteen years preaching the Gospel to the Gentiles. While Paul has been spreading the Good News, he had been constantly under attack. There were followers who were preaching an adapted message – a counterfeit gospel: “Yes, you need Jesus, but you need to look like a Jew” “...be circumcised” “...refuse pork”; introducing laws to the message that Paul had shared. Paul returns to Jerusalem (a primarily Jewish church) with Barnabas, a Jewish convert, and with Titus, a Greek, non-Jewish convert. Culture and society were saying that the converts should follow the Jewish rules and look like the church in Jerusalem.

Q. Even a Gospel believing church like ours can be at risk of adding to the Gospel message. In what ways might we be prone to do this?

“...even Titus... was not forced...” (verse 3)

Paul, Barnabas and Titus would have journeyed to Jerusalem, and would have wondered how Titus, the ‘odd-one-out’, would be treated. The Church Leaders responded without forcing him to follow their rules. The Gospel Paul had been declaring was identical to that of the Apostles in Jerusalem, Titus belonged because of grace, nothing else was required.

We cannot have a man-made culture as our measuring point. A culture that relies on the works of man, on society's acceptance, or on the traditions of our community does not reflect the Gospel. A culture of grace works miracles of unity between groups of people which would otherwise be largely polarised.

Q. How can our culture, society and traditions affect our expectations of others in our church community? How is a culture of grace within the church evident to see? Where could we see more progress in terms of building a united people?

“...some false brothers had infiltrated...” (4-5)

There is a subtlety to the work of the false teachers. The false teachers were hiding behind good things. The Law, and circumcision, was a good thing. However, finding identity through achieving these things, and so not having identity without them, leads you away from the Gospel. The Law was given to us to show the problem, but it can not bring healing. Living by the Law is to strive for your own perfection, in your own strength; to fail, every single day, because you will never be able to rid your own soul from the guilt/shame/fear/darkness. It's too deep. It requires a miracle.

Q. What 'good things' have you tried to live by? How can we be tempted to adapt the Gospel to require these things?

"...entrusted with the Gospel..." (7-9)

One of the first signs of compromise is when you no longer see the Gospel as good news. Hesitating to share it, because you're not certain you believe it yourself. Our insecurities, our fear of man, can at times hold us back from sharing the Truth, the Hope, the Good News, but we need to recognise the treasure that it is, and that God has entrusted us with it!

Q. When have you been afraid to share the Gospel? What was it that held you back?

The Gospel is precious. It's not man's message, to add or remove as we see fit. The Gospel is a gift from God, and he has trusted you with this message, to know it, and to share it. The Gospel has been given to us to look after, and to share with those God has placed in our lives.

Q. Who has God placed in your life that needs to hear the Gospel? How can you share this precious message with them?

"...remember the poor..." (verse 10)

Why is it so important for the church to remind Paul to remember the poor? Helping the poor is part of the Church's ministry. Understanding the Gospel, the weight of what Christ gave up for each of us, leads to compassion.

"For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich." - 2 Corinthians 8:9

Charitable care is not the primary focus of the Church, the Gospel is. The deeper we know the Gospel, the price paid for us, the more we will be stirred to sacrifice and care for others in need. We too have been sent to 'the poor'.

Q. How does the Gospel remind us of all that God has done? How does this lead to generosity and compassion for others?

Q. What things can you do to remember the poor? What role should the church play in caring for the community?

Justification by Faith Galatians 2:11 – 16

The Gospel and the Word of God are what we need to protect because they are the roots to our faith that enable our growth. From that comes everything else but only if our roots are deep in the Gospel. We are all as followers of Jesus justified by faith. There is no distinction about how anyone comes before God, the work of Jesus is enough, it's faith and never works.

Pauls confrontation with Peter (verses 11-12)

This confrontation echoes back to what Paul said earlier in Galatians about people adding things to the Gospel. If anyone comes to you preaching a different Gospel, telling you to do things (other than have faith) to come to Jesus, like follow the law or being circumcised they are wrong, don't listen to them. Peter starts off living out like he believes the Gospel and being an example by inviting the Gentiles in. But he is scared of man, not of God. He had been given the vision that God has made all people clean, so Peter of all people should understand how God has made all things clean through Jesus. But he is still fearful of what the other men will do to the Gentiles. So the Gentiles see Peter, the very person who had told them they are saved by grace and that food isn't clean and unclean, withdraw and not associate with them when men from Jerusalem come. He is fearful and starts behaving in a way that backtracks on all he had just been preaching to them, he is putting the walls back up and seems to make it about works and not grace.

Q: Have you ever felt marginalised by those who have put religious expectations on you?

Q: What are the pressures on you that cause you to not to confront hypocrisy?

What happens because of Peter's behaviour (verses 13-14)

Peter, as a leader, had influence over people. So very quickly all the Jewish Christians were behaving hypocritically, even Barnabas was lead astray. What Peter was doing was public and was not in step with the truth of the Gospel. The Jews decide if Peter is doing it then they will do it as well. Peter made other people start following the Jewish law again. Earlier in the book we heard about people coming in secret but this is someone who is supposed to be a leader in the church, so Paul confronts it publically. Peter should be boldly declaring the truth and grace that Jesus has done it all and leading people closer to Jesus. We all have a responsibility to get into the word of God for ourselves so that if we ever hear anything not in line with the Gospel we know to confront it for the sake of others, for the sake of the truth.

Q: Our actions influence others, have your actions sometimes shown you've not grasped the true Gospel? Do your actions always lead people to Christ?

Q: How can we support our leaders and challenge them when they start preaching or living another Gospel?

What is Justification by Faith (verses 15-16)

Justification is central to the Gospel. It's the table we eat off of at the Gospel banquet. Justification is a validating performance record that opens doors (Keller). If you take your CV with all your qualifications, experience and special skills to an interview, if you are good enough, you get the job. The Jews were saying this 'validation process' was the law. If your performance matches up with God's standard, you get in, if not, you don't.

Many non-Christians may say I don't care what standards God has set, I don't need to live up to those! But everyone is trying to justify themselves, often through their performance. It will never be enough, we need to be justified by something other than ourselves because trying by works of the law will always fail because God's standard is so far from us. That is why Paul is writing this letter, to defend the Gospel and challenge Peter because by works of the law none of us can be justify our lives.

Q. Do you find it easy to slip into the mindset of trying to validate yourself?

Why do we need justification?

If we don't understand the Gospel, it's easy to make it about works because that's the way the rest of the world works. We are rewarded based on what we do, that's the way we are conditioned from childhood. Even in other religions, your worth is based on your achievements.

Only in the Christian Gospel does it say no one can be justified by what they do. No good deed is good enough to gain his approval. So we need someone to come down and lift us up to God's standard, to validate us. But God doesn't deal with us the way our sins deserve. If we are trying to earn God's approval, it's often from selfish intentions because of a desire to feel close to him, or to find peace, or to find assurance.

Where do we get it?

Thankfully it doesn't end there. We are justified in Christ and not the works of the law. He gifts righteousness to us, it's not ours, it's a gift received by faith. There is no one with a validating record good enough, except Jesus. Jesus took our shame on the cross and gave us justification before God that is ours because of faith. It's not just forgiveness of sins we get at the cross - which means we are free to go, not under wrath. Justification opens doors, it's an invitation to come and enjoy everything that a perfect record entitles you to. The love of God expressed through justification alone opens the door to God wide open. We can know him, we are his children and we are blessed beyond measure. It's so much more than just forgiveness (which is incredible) we are now justified before Him. It's important to understand the difference between what we are saved by and not what we are saved for. We are saved by faith, but we are saved for good works to walk into. Our hearts change, we turn from our old life and seek to be more like Jesus. We are saved by grace for good works.

Q: Have we grasped His CV, do we hold onto this invitation, how do we respond to what he has done, to our invitations?

Q: What are the good works is God calling us all into?

Q: How does a proper understanding of the grace in justification by faith help us engage with our communities?

Crucified with Christ – Galatians 2:15-21

So far in this series we have looked at Paul's words to the Galatians, reminding them that the Gospel of Jesus Christ is the only gospel. No other message or plan for salvation is of use. Paul challenges those who feel a need to add to the Gospel, adding extra requirements and laws to the work of the cross. As Christians, we have a personal responsibility for the manner in which we bear witness to Christ. Our lives need to show the true Gospel, and not add to it, or show others a need to meet extra standards. Our justification comes only through Jesus.

In this passage, there are 13 first-person references. Paul is showing how this Gospel has applied to him, how it has changed him personally. Outside of the Gospel, we look to earth bound things to understand our identity (our family, career, religion, education etc.). The Gospel redefines the answer to that question. Rather than 'what I have done', 'what has been done to me', or 'where I have come from', the Gospel lifts our vision from earthly things, up to Christ. We see who we are on the basis of who Jesus is, and what he has done.

Q. Where can we be tempted to find our identity in earthly things? What are the problems associated with finding our identity in these things?

Does Justification Permit me to Sin? (verse 17-18)

The Judaizers (Christians still following the Jewish laws and practices) would have identified Gentiles as sinners. If the Jewish converts give up their 'Jewish identity', let go of the laws and requirements of the Mosaic traditions, their natural conclusion is that they are sinners. With no requirement to be good, we are free to be bad.

Much like the heresy of Legalism that Paul has already confronted in Galatians, this response is another heresy – the heresy of Liberalism. While Legalism adds law/behaviours/traditions to the Gospel, Liberalism give license to continue sinning and water down the Gospel. Liberals will 'hear' the Gospel and worry, "oh no does this mean I have to become 'religious' and stop having fun?". Legalists 'hear' the Gospel and say, "oh no does that mean bad people can go to heaven and good people to hell?".

These views have infiltrated many forms of Christianity over the years, and are still both prevalent today. Paul confronted Legalism in Galatia, and Liberalism in Corinth. Jesus confronted the two attitudes in the Parable of the Prodigal Sons. Jesus did not come to lead you to a life of sin, nor did he come to lead you to a life of a moralist. In the Gospel, both these responses tumble down and shows that there is another way to live.

Q. How do we see Legalism and Liberalism in our society today?

Q. How might ChristCentral Church be prone to liberal or legalistic responses to Grace and the Gospel?

I have been Crucified with Christ (verse 20a)

Paul identifies with the Crucifixion. He was not one of the thieves beside Jesus. He was not bodily crucified with Christ – but he is speaking of something very real and very personal. To refute the heresies of Legalism and Liberalism, Paul makes the shocking statement. Christ's death/execution/crucifixion was Paul's also. As far as Paul is concerned, he was on the cross with Jesus – in Christ's death was Paul's death, his old self hanging on the cross. This is equally true for all who have faith in Jesus. Our old selves - our sin, our shame, our guilt – has died with Jesus.

The Gospel is far reaching. The Gospel changes communities and nations. Still the power of the Gospel is also for the individual. The Cross achieved The Bride of Christ; it brings together every nation, tribe and tongue. However, you as an individual can and must, along with Paul, look upon the cross and say: 'I have been crucified with Christ'!

We can be at risk of losing the wonder of all the Christ has done on the cross. A clear sign of this is how we consider the cross compared to our attitude towards sin. Thinking of sin as unimportant and casual, because it is wiped away by the forgiveness of Jesus – all have sinned, what I have done is not important. Or thinking of sin as the rusty dagger that killed our loved one. If we identify with the cross as Paul identifies, our attitude to sin changes. Grace is not incitement to sin, but is an incitement to live in the light of all we know is true.

Q. How does a view of ‘*crucified with Christ*’ affect our relationship with sin and temptations?

Q. How does the ‘for me’ along with the ‘for all’ view affect your response to the work of Jesus on the Cross?

Q. How does the severity of the Cross affect our view of sin, and our own behaviour?

Live by Faith (verse 20b)

Paul speaks of a new way to live. Not liberalism or legalism but the way of grace. Friendship with God, knowing the One who hung for me, lives in me and longs that I find all my heart’s desires satisfied in him! Faith is not some distant view but a warm embrace of Christ. I can embrace the one who loved me and gave himself for me!

What does it mean to live by faith? A life of thanksgiving. You wake every day and praise God for Jesus. As soon as you stop thanking Him for His Cross you’ll take it for granted and become casual with sin. As you meditate on the outrageous sacrifice of God for you, you will flee from sin and certainly not play around with it.

You are ‘in Christ’ resurrected with him to everlasting life, man might hurt your body but your soul will never experience death! *‘Lose you mindless fear and take courage today, because Christ was crucified for you!’*.

Q. How can we continually remember the importance of the Cross, and avoid becoming casual with sin?

Q. How does our position ‘in Christ’ encourage us to live our lives as an example to others?

Who has Bewitched You? – Galatians 3:1-14

We live in uncertain times. Following the General Election, Brexit negotiations, and recent terrorist attacks we don't really know what is going to happen next. However, the Word of God remains certain and sure. As we continue to look through Galatians we read a great encouragement, an opportunity through which the Spirit of God can bring freedom, peace and assurance. Our worldly efforts will fail, but God has a plan and a way to solve these issues – to give us purpose and strength to achieve these goals.

Q. How can our circumstances and the situations challenge our feeling of certainty?

Q. How can our security in God be an encouragement and counter-cultural in these times?

Our Need for the Spirit (v1 – 5)

This passage starts with some strong words. Once again, Paul is highlighting how serious this point is. It is as if a spell has been put on the churches in Galatia, that they have been tricked. Before their very eyes, Christ had been clearly portrayed as crucified. They knew the truth of the Gospel – Paul himself had witnessed a church who knew the Gospel. Salvation - not by works of the law - but by believing in Jesus.

Not only had the Christians in Galatia believed the Gospel, and received the justification that came from it. They also received an evidence, a seal, an assurance, of this saving faith - the person of the Holy Spirit, which produced transformed lives. This was something the law could never do. The Holy Spirit was being given to all believers, as promised by Jesus himself (John 16:7). The Holy Spirit is a gift from God, that transforms lives. It is by the Holy Spirit that Jesus is revealed. The Holy Spirit is active in the Gospel and our salvation.

Q. Do you recognise the work of the Holy Spirit in how you came to believe in Jesus and the Gospel?

Q. Looking back on your life, how can you see God at work, drawing you closer to Him?

By accepting the false teaching, the Galatians were trying and finish by means of the flesh - by their own efforts. Rather than continuing by the Spirit, how they had come to know the Gospel, they were returning to old ways, of self-help and self-justification. It's so easy to slip into this mentality, it's so bewitching, beguiling and attractive to us - on a subconscious level.

After everything they had experienced in their life and seen in others they were forgetting the true Gospel. After what they had been given - God himself dwelling among them, everything they need in and through Christ by the power of the Spirit. Paul reminds the Galatians of the work God has done in their lives, that it might not be in vain.

Q. Where can we be tempted to complete God's work by ourselves? What are the consequences of doing this?

Q. How can we remind ourselves to lean on the Holy Spirit, rather than our own works?

The Blessing of Faith (v6 – 9)

This is a repeated theme in Galatians, necessarily because it is so important. We need it to sink in. Nothing we get from God is deserved. There is nothing we can do to make God love us more than He already does. Abraham the Father of the Jewish nation, whose descendants were the God's chosen people, he was made righteous not because of anything he did but because he believed in the promises of God (Hebrews 11:11-12). It's not religious observance of the Jewish laws - as the Judaisers were trying to impose - that makes someone a child of Abraham, part of God's chosen people. It's those who, like Abraham have faith that the one who made the promises will remain faithful.

Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the Gospel in advance to Abraham (Gen 22:18). Those who rely on faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith.

It's those who rely on faith that are blessed, that are credited with righteousness, along with Abraham.

Q. How does the 'Blessing of Faith' Abraham received compare with other attempts to achieve righteousness?

Q. How does God's promise to Abraham encourage us, and provide certainty and security?

The Curse of the Law (10 – 14)

'Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law.'

Deuteronomy 27:26

Paul has quoted from Deuteronomy 27. If you read on, in Deuteronomy 28 you read of the blessings for obedience and the curses for disobedience.

Why are you under a curse if you rely on works? Because you'll never be good enough. No one can ever be perfect. The Old Testament is given to us, to show just how incapable man is of observing the law. In the book of Judges we see hundreds of years of the repeated cycle of religious observance, then idolatry, then being enslaved, then crying out to the Lord, and being rescued, only to go back to religious observance.

If you do one thing wrong, you you're no longer perfect, it doesn't matter if you're better than the next person, if you're not perfect. It gets worse. Not only can you not do anything wrong, but perfection requires you to never fail to do something you should do. The law is not based on faith; in the contrary, it says 'the person who does these things will live by them'.

Christ redeemed us from the curse. Justice required punishment and it is paid by the blood of Jesus. That's the reason we can have certainty. We can see how it could never depend on our record, it isn't designed that way. God made it such that the only way we could come to him is through His Son, never boasting in what we have done.

Q. How does Christ's answer to the 'Curse of the Law' bring hope to those striving to live a 'good life'?

Q. How can we walk in the certainty and freedom Christ has provided?

One in Christ – Galatians 3: 15-29

There is power in the name of Jesus, there is no other gospel besides this one and today 2,000 years on it is still turning nations upside down and putting smiles on the face of gangsters! No wonder Paul would protect it.

In this passage we see four major themes, and four words that are repeated by the apostle Paul: “promise” – mentioned 8 times, “law” – mentioned 7 times, “faith” - mentioned 6 times, and “Christ” – mentioned 8 times. Once again Paul is emphasising the value of the Gospel, that the promise is achieved through faith, not through the law.

To help his challenge, Paul talks about two Old Testament “heavyweights”. Both Abraham and Moses are respected in the Jewish tradition as key figures. Abraham - linked to the promise from God - and Moses – linked to the Laws of God – had both encountered God, been given seemingly impossible edicts from Him, and saw a picture of Christ, the One they needed to depend upon, in order to get through these tasks.

Q. Are you facing the impossible today? How do you respond to those challenges that you are faced with?

The Impossible Promise (vs 15-16)

Abraham had lived a life of tragedy and trial. He was not a young man, filled with dreams and aspirations. At almost 100 years old, Abraham had accepted a long time ago that he and his wife, whom he loved and was devoted to, would never have children. Abraham encounters God, and receives a promise from God (Genesis 15:5). This promise is not just impossible for Abraham and Sarah. Over the years, they would have given up on their longings to have any children at all. But it would be an impossible task for even the most fertile of couples to achieve: children as numerous as the stars in the sky. The understandable response: “That is impossible. Utter madness for anyone, let alone two old and infertile people such as Abraham and Sarah”.

Abraham’s response: “...he believed the Lord, and he [God] counted it to him as righteousness” (Genesis 15:6). This is: faith – ‘he believed’; and justification - ‘counted it to him as righteousness’. What was counted to him as righteousness? The fact he believed. Believed what? That God was faithful to His promise. That God could and would do it.

Q. What promises from God do you struggle to believe? What has God said that seems impossible in your life?

Q. How can we remind ourselves of God’s promises and faithfulness when faced with ‘impossible’ situations?

The promise was something vast and beyond counting ‘stars in the sky’, all nations, but Paul makes this point really clear it is ‘offspring’ not ‘offsprings’. Detail, which hinges on one letter - even one letter can damage the message of God. It is vital we protect the Word of God. This promise from God speaks of a people vast and varied – like the stars on the sky – who are one family, joined together through Christ.

The Impossible Command (vs21-22)

Paul returns his attention to the Law, and to Moses. Many Israelites believed that it was the law that accomplished the promise. They believed the family God had promised to Abraham could be identified and seen through their commitment to the commandments Moses received from God. This does not correlate to the Gospel Paul shared.

The Law demands perfection. Moses himself could not live up to these commands. He had committed murder, and yet shared the commandment “do not murder”. Moses - the Law Giver, is also Moses the Law Breaker. God didn’t pick out the most blameless man to give the law to. He selected one of the most compromised. He didn’t pick out the most fertile couple to start a nation with, He chose the most barren.

Q. How can we be tempted to write-off ourselves as unqualified or unsuitable for God's plans?

Hebrews 11:23-28 recounts Moses' life and how he lived - summed up as: 'by faith'. Moses knew keeping the law was impossible. He had already failed before he started – he could not be saved by his works. However, Moses had faith in God to do for him that which he could never do himself. He saw by faith his indisputable need for God's rescue. You must face the impossible – and in facing the impossible you must concede you need help.

Q. What 'impossible' situations are you facing, where you need God's help?

Q. What 'impossible' situations are you avoiding, to prevent needing God's help?

The Impossible Made Possible in Christ (vs22-29)

There is a sense of being captive, imprisoned, by the law. You are incapable of escaping; it is impenetrable by our own means. But this captivity and imprisonment led to faith in Christ, because he walked past the 'cell' with a key in his hand. The Gospel invites you to 'ask Jesus' to unlock the door of the cell you live in. Law was our guardian until Christ came. In other words living in the OT was to look forward 'in faith' to a time when God would 'do the impossible'.

Q. Do you trust your God to do the 'impossible'? How can we be tempted to create our own escape?

Q. How can we remind ourselves of the freedom already gained through the work of Christ?

Verses 25-29 speaks of great equality and unity in the Gospel. The fulfilment of the 'offspring promise' given to Abraham. In Christ, there is no sexism, racism, classism or any other man-made barrier that brings division. We are one. This works across denominations and churches. Satan works to bring division, but the Gospel of Christ brings unity through the Church.

Q. How do you relate with Christians of different class/background/race/denomination?

Q. How can Christians and churches promote unity across these barriers? What are the challenges?

Sons and Heirs – Galatians 4

As a church, we have a vision: “To see lives and communities in, around and beyond Portsmouth, transformed by the Gospel, enjoying God and glorifying Him in all things” - that is why we exist. There are many views of God, and a lot of what is said is wrong. This can be seen at the very beginning of the Bible, and continues today. However, we believe in a God who is full of life, and joy – and His Church should be full of the same, as we know and enjoy Him.

Q. What are some of the misconceptions and lies about God that we can see in society?

All Are Enslaved

No one wants to be in slavery. No one wants to be a slave. We all want to be free. The question is, what does it mean to be ‘truly free’ and then ‘how do we become truly free’? It makes no odds if you’re ‘religious’, a church goer, a secularist, agnostic, atheist, we all want to be ‘free’.

Q. What is your understanding of ‘freedom’? What does the word ‘free’ mean to you?

To enjoy freedom in life, clearly isn’t as simple as being ‘autonomous’ able to do what I want, when I want. The majority of us have responsibilities. The kind of person who would leave children, or a spouse, casually on a whim because it’s what they ‘want to do’ as an expression of their ‘freedom’, is not someone you are likely to respect very much.

It’s easier to say what freedom isn’t. Someone who is ‘in prison’ is not free; someone who is in slavery is not free; a dead body is not ‘free’. Yet, here’s the thing - The Bible describes all people like this. All are ‘imprisoned’; all are ‘slaves’; all are ‘dead’.

It is a spiritual condition, the soul of every man and woman is imprisoned, a state from which no person has ever escaped in their own efforts. We attempt to medicate the aching of our soul, with drink, drugs, holidays, success, hard work, good deeds, strong relationships... this list goes on. We may experience a measure of well-being - but the reality is that even things that may make us feel better only compound the problem. In themselves, many of these things are not bad things – but when they become our hope and purpose they keep us imprisoned. Achieving great wealth, success and popularity leaves us needing more. Losing it becomes a disaster.

Q. What things can we rely on to ‘medicate our souls’? What do these things start expecting from us?

“Our hearts have been made for you, O God, and they shall never rest until they rest in you.” – Augustine

The Bible tells us we are made to know our creator, and until we know Him, our hearts are restless. As we grow older, we become accustomed to the world, concluding this is just the way it is. Born into this captivity, we know no other existence. With no experience of the freedom, we remain imprisoned.

Q. Do you recognise this restlessness in those who don’t know God? Friends? Colleagues? Family?

True Freedom Is Found in Christ

Read Verse 4

In a world without ‘God’, who says what is right and what is wrong? As a society, we can’t agree. We are a divided people. The Bible gives us instructions on right and wrong from the Creator – a standard we do not meet. God came into the world like one of us. Not a created response, but the eternal God the Son. Not only was Jesus clothed with our flesh but also with our feelings. He too experienced betrayal, rejection, the death of a loved one. Not only did He experience the physical pain of a world in bondage, but He knew the agony of sorrow and sadness. The Son of God came into this world, and felt the full force of all that is wrong with it - and without any bitterness, malice or prejudice. He lived under the requirements of God’s perfect law and was never found to be at fault.

Jesus said, “*I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life*” (John 14:6a). Jesus came into our prison, and made a way for men, women and children to be set free. He had the necessary currency to pay for your freedom; to pay your ransom price; to take away your guilty verdict. Our guilt and shame He took into himself upon the cross, and His perfect life is credited to us in exchange. The cross is the gate to true freedom, for forgiveness and peace with God. It’s not about becoming religious. Christianity is not about what you do, but about freedom to have a relationship with God.

Q. How does society determine what is right and wrong? How can we be confident in God as Judge?

Q. How does Jesus’ experience on Earth separate Him from gods of other beliefs and faiths?

True Freedom Is Knowing The Father

Read Verses 5-7

This is the freedom Paul is explaining. We are redeemed; receiving the full rights as sons; adopted into God’s family. John 14:6 continues, to explain where Jesus is the Way to; what Jesus is the Truth of; how Jesus is the Life – to come to the Father. You and I exist to know and love our Creator, the one and only God, whom Jesus reveals to us as Abba - Dad; God of all hope and peace. The only One able to meet you in your restlessness and lead you into everlasting joy.

If you are a Son, then you are also an heir to a priceless inheritance, freedom from all pain, free to enjoy God forever. None of us are perfect, yet we can meet with God, know Him, and enjoy Him.

Q. What practical steps can we take to help us to know God and enjoy Him in all things?

Q. How do we portray the loving Father, the true God, who wants to be known and enjoyed?

For Freedom! – Galatians 5:1-15

Last session we looked at the sonship we receive from God. Chapter 4 continues to explain how true sons are made, not by man's efforts, not through the flesh. True sons are made through trusting in God. Paul gives examples of Abraham's sons, Ishmael and Isaac: one the result of man's effort, the other a work of God. This is how it is with us. We either try to make things happen ourselves and are left in slavery – or we come to the one who made the promise and are free.

Galatians 5 further explains this freedom we have received. Paul has been building to this moment – calling us to 'be free'. Christ came that you might live in freedom. It is for freedom that He set you free. Don't just admire the fact that the prison door is wide open - it is open that you might leave and embark upon a new life.

Q. What 'prisons' can we be tempted to live in? In what way can people be 'slaves' without realising it?

Step Forth into Freedom (verse 1)

Read John 11: 38-44

As Paul speaks of freedom, there is a complimentary story in the Gospels. You and I were as dead spiritually as Lazarus - a decaying corpse in a dark tomb. Life came to Lazarus and has come to us through the miraculous power of God. Lazarus was alive in the tomb, but he didn't stay there. He was given a loud order – 'Lazarus, come out'. You and I are hearing through these words of scripture the same order: 'come out of the prison, come out of your slavery - walk, run, come quickly to Jesus'. This is not a suggestion, an offer, or a recommendation for us. This is an order from Jesus: Come and enjoy your new life and freedom.

Your freedom is done - it has happened. What you and I need to learn to do now is to enjoy 'being free'. We have been set free so that we can live in the freedom – not to remain in the cell. We have been liberated; given the righteous verdict through the work of Jesus, our performance is a consequence of the love, forgiveness, acceptance and assurance we have been given. We need to stop using our sin and our failures – our own works – to stop us knowing, and walking in the true freedom God has called us to.

Imagine knowing - right here, right now, beyond any shadow of doubt - that when your life on this earth is over you will enter into everlasting glory, embraced by God as He welcomes you as His greatly loved child. Imagine right now that God spoke to you and said: 'you're in, your name is in my book, you're safe, you're loved'. Now, stop imagining it and start believing it. Freedom comes in knowing all that we've just 'imagined' is absolutely true. You don't ever need to worry that you will be rejected and your life should reflect the kind of confidence and joy this freedom brings.

Q. How do you respond to Jesus 'order' to live free? What holds us back from stepping into this freedom?

Q. How can we remind ourselves of the truth and the freedom God has promised to us?

It's All or Nothing (Verses 2-4)

Paul's argument here is quite straight forward - if you add even the slightest detail of the law for justification, then you are obligated to keep it all. We bring up things that we have done badly as reasons why we cannot be fully free - looking at our own lives, our own efforts, we fall short and feel that we cannot be free. Or we hold onto the comforts that previously helped us – relationships, success, peer approval – but these keep us confined as slaves.

When we don't know the freedom we have received, we do not show the Gospel to those around us. Unless Lazarus walks out, how is anyone to know the miracle has happened? Once he emerges, what do the people do? They believe what is impossible for man is possible for God. They become recipients of the promise. They turn to look at Jesus open mouthed and say, 'who is this, who raises the dead?'. Not leaving the tomb will lead others to question whether you are alive. If we condemn

ourselves for our sins, we say, 'the grace of God isn't sufficient to save me'. If we continue to live in our sin, we say, 'the grace of God isn't sufficient to satisfy me'. Changed lives bring glory to God; men and women walking in freedom draw eyes onto Jesus. Let the world see what Christ has done in your life.

Q. What reasons do you give to avoid stepping out in faith? Why can it be challenging to believe this freedom?

Q. How do our lives show evidence to our friends, family, colleagues of this freedom we have received?

Wait Well (Verse 5)

Paul sheds more light on how we practically respond, he says we are 'waiting'. The reality is that so much of what we are promised by God, we must wait for. But this isn't like being in a dull 'waiting room'. It is an 'empowered waiting' – through the Spirit. Waiting well is something the Holy Spirit achieves in us, for He leads us into freedom.

Read 2 Corinthians 3:17, Romans 8:16, Romans 5:5, Ephesians 1:14

The life of the Christian is one empowered by the Holy Spirit. It falls apart without Him. Yet it still requires an active choice by us to accept Him and step out into the freedom for which we have been set free.

Q. Do you feel the power of God? When was the last time you prayed to be filled with the Holy Spirit?

Q. How can we prioritise walking in the freedom God has provided for you?

Take the opportunity today to pray for each other: to know and walk in the freedom that we have received through the Gospel – empowered by the Holy Spirit.

Walk By The Spirit – Galatians 5:16-25

Last week we started Galatians 5 with the passage “For freedom Christ has set us free – so don’t go back to slavery”. Thinking about this passage we compared the freedom to Lazarus raised from the dead, and called from the tomb – a miracle in action as Jesus authority is shown. This is the same for us: not just being made alive, the stone rolled away – we are called out of the tomb, we have been made free and are called into that freedom.

Galatians 5 continues to explain how this all happens – by the work of the Holy Spirit. We are our own worst enemy; knowing the truth of the Gospel, that Jesus alone can save and satisfy – we don’t always behave as though it is true. We don’t always act in a way that demonstrates this truth.

Walk By The Spirit (verse 16)

Why is it that by leaving a life ruled by law we don’t fall into a life of sinful indulgence? Here we find our answer: we ‘walk by the Spirit’ and so will not gratify the desires of the flesh. Not ‘may not’ or ‘occasionally won’t’. This is a statement of absolute truth: those who ‘walk by the Spirit’ will not gratify the flesh. Then, in verse 18, Paul explains that those ‘led by the Spirit’ are not under law. Paul explains who is ‘led by the Spirit’ in his letter to Rome: “*For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God*” (Romans 8:14). Those who are led by the Spirit are ‘Christians’. If you are ‘led by someone’ they are in front of you calling you forward, calling you to follow – like a parent leading a child to walk. The Holy Spirit is always doing this for Christians – all Christians.

It says in verse 16 ‘you will not gratify the desires of the flesh’ – but sometimes I do. Does that mean I’m not a Christian? Not necessarily - but what it does mean is that there are times when the Spirit is leading you, yet you choose not to follow. There are times when instead of ‘walking by the spirit’ you ‘gratify the flesh’. You are no longer a slave the desires of your flesh, but at times when the voice of Jesus calling you to ‘come forth’ seems like a distant whisper, you stay in the tomb. Maybe you think, ‘if Jesus really wants me to be free He will shout louder’. He may do that - because as His son, He loves you too much to leave you in the tomb. But those times are not pleasant experiences.

“God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pain: it is His megaphone to rouse a deaf world” - (C.S. Lewis)

Don’t ignore the whisper and wait for the megaphone. Be sure of this – The Helper will lead you into freedom.

Q. Do you recognise the leading of the Holy Spirit? How have you heard His whispers in your life?

Q. How can we be tempted to ignore the whispers? What comforts and tombs are we slow to leave?

Man’s Greatest Battle (verses 17-21)

This verse explains something we know from experience as Christians. The battle against sin doesn’t end when you become a Christian, that’s when it begins. The Spirit is at war with my flesh. You have two natures ‘the flesh’ and ‘the spirit’ and they are directly opposed to one another and will be until you receive a glorious, sin-free, resurrection body. It is this conflict, between flesh and the spirit, that keeps you from doing the things you want to do. This is the reality of being a Christian.

Q. Have you experienced this battle between the flesh and spirit? How can we be tempted by fleshly desires?

Read verses 19-21

The flesh will try to persuade each of us to these things, convincing us these things are ‘better’. Paul issues a warning: “those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God”. Those who put up no resistance, not motivated by grace, not drawn toward the riches of Christ – those with no fight will not inherit the Kingdom of God. The motivation of the one who is ‘Spirit-led’ is freedom: to enjoy being a son, pursuing the greater happiness. We are more than conquerors (Romans 8:37-39), and no temptation or fleshly desire is strong enough to separate us from God.

Q. What other motivations can we be tempted to pursue? How can we be encouraged to battle temptations?

The Fruit of The Spirit (verses 22-24)

The fruit of the Spirit reflects how we relate to God, others and ourselves. The Holy Spirit does not produce one or another of these in our lives – all are evident in the life of a person walking with the Spirit. The Spirit will bring forth all of these in your life – the longer you walk with Him.

Q. Have you seen the fruit of the Spirit develop in your life? How does this change as you walk close to Him?

Q. How do you display the fruit of the Spirit to others? Have people noticed a change in your life?

Crucify The Flesh (verses 24-25)

This is not of something to happens 'to us' but something done 'by us'. We have been crucified with Jesus, but we ourselves must take up our cross daily and follow Jesus. You've got to take every temptation to sin and nail it – declaring, 'these things will not imprison me'. Life in the Spirit is freedom - won by Christ and empowered by the Holy Spirit. He is calling you to follow, will you walk with Him?

Q. What fleshly desires is God encouraging you to crucify? How will you choose freedom from these desires?

Take the opportunity to pray for members of the group, to crucify the flesh and walk with the Spirit daily, to experience greater freedom to enjoy God and glorify Him.

Bearing One Another's Burdens – Galatians 6:1-18

Our roots are in Christ, in the Gospel. A life that is rooted in Christ, saved by the Gospel – aware that Jesus is the one that brings them before God and not through their own works – is a life that can't help but do good works, bear good fruit. The fruit of the Spirit – love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness gentleness and self-control – come as a result of the work Jesus has done.

Bearing one another's burdens happens when you develop the fruit of the Spirit. The perfection of the fruit of the Spirit, the great example, is shown in how Jesus treats each of us. To show this fruit to the world, we need to realise that this is how we have been treated. This is the start of how we shoulder the burdens of those around us.

Our Great Example

When thinking about bearing others' burdens we can consider our own burdens and focus on our own needs: "I haven't got the time/money/ability to help you – I have my own issues to deal with". Alternatively, we can see the burdens others are experiencing and decide it is their problem – especially when it is something they are causing themselves: "Why should I help when they don't help themselves?".

Q. How do you respond to someone in need? Does your response change when you know the cause?

Jesus responded differently. When He saw a world turning its back on God, Jesus took our greatest burden. He saw our sin – a debt that we were unable to pay off – and took it upon Himself. What was our fault and our weight to carry, Jesus bore on our behalf. Because we have a great example in Jesus, we can support those around us. The burdens of those around us are not our fault, or our responsibility – but because Jesus took away our burden, we too can support one another when things are tough by imitating Him.

Q. How has Jesus carried your burdens? How does this inspire us to care for each other?

Anyone Caught in Transgression

Read Galatians 6:1

The first thing Paul mentions in this section is this: 'if anyone is caught in transgression'. This is where Paul wants this support to start. Not starting with those struggling with too much on their plate. Paul starts by focussing on those who are living lives contrary to the gospel – who need to be restored. This is the first and best support we can offer.

Q. Why is Paul's first focus important for those bearing each other's burdens? How can we keep this in focus?

This isn't a job reserved for Elders and Leaders – those who have years of experience. Those who are spiritual are those who have the Spirit – and the Spirit is given to all children of God. All Christians have a responsibility in this verse. We need to be bold enough to challenge those who are living lives contrary to the gospel – restoring those to a relationship with God. We need to be strong enough to come alongside and identify where those carrying the burden of sin can be restored to God.

Q. How can we be tempted to disqualify ourselves from following this command and helping others?

You Should Restore Him

If somebody is living a life contrary to what God has said, we need to restore them – pointing them to the truth of God's Word. Often this is opposed in the world. How can we say what is wrong? If God is love, and what I am doing is what I call love, then God must approve what I am doing. The world attempts to redefine love by what they want to do, and so redefine God based on what they consider to be love.

"God is love - that is true - but He also defines what love is.

We don't have the license to define love according to our standards.” – Francis Chan

God is the definition of love. If our understanding of love doesn't fit with what the Bible says, then our understanding of love needs to be adjusted – not God. To restore someone is to realign with the truth in Scripture – not to beliefs based on experience or culture which change. In love, with gentleness – not brash or aggressively – we point out what God has said and direct to the truth.

Q. Why is it important to ensure our standards are aligned with God's? How do we do this?

Let us Do Good to Everyone

“Do all the good you can, by all the means you can, in all the ways you can, in all the places you can, to all the people you can, as long as ever you can.” – John Wesley

While society expects you to seek your own benefit – for you to get ahead - Paul encourages us to do good. We don't define good – we let the Bible define good. By allowing the fruit of the Spirit to grow in our lives, we point to Jesus. Our burden has been carried by Jesus - so we support those around us by imitating Him.

Q. How can you support the needs of those around you? How does this help point people towards Jesus?

Use this opportunity to pray for each other: for courage and wisdom to share the love and truth of God; for support and release from burdens; for opportunities to 'do good' to those around us.

Notes