

PAUL'S LETTER TO THE COMMUNITIES IN GALATIA

Greeting

1 From Paul, an apostle^a—not sent from people or by human authority, but from Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from among the dead. **2**And from all the brothers and sisters^b with me. To the Christian communities of Galatia.^c **3**Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ. **4**He gave himself for our sins, so that he could rescue us out of this current evil age.^d This was^e the will of our God and Father. **5**May God get the glory forever and ever, amen!^f

You've Turned Away from the Good News!

¶I'm amazed how quickly you've switched loyalties! You've turned away from the One who called you by grace,^g and gone to a different good news—which *isn't* another good news!^h Maybe it's just that there are some people trying to trying to frighten you, and they're hoping to overturn the good news of Christ.ⁱ But even if we—or an angel from heaven—ever brings you a good news message that's against the message we brought you,^j then let them be cursed!^k Just as we've said before, I'll say it again right now: if somebody brings you a good news message that's against what you've

^a See "Bible Words".

^b Or "brothers". Masculine forms in Greek often refer to mixed-gender groups.

^c Prn. *ga-lay-sha*.

^d Or "world". The same word means both in Greek.

^e Lit. "...age, in line with".

^f Lit. "to whom be the glory to/for the ages of the ages, amen".

^g Or "who called you by the grace of Christ/of Christ Jesus/of Jesus Christ/of God," or simply "who called you" (omitting even the words "by grace"). The ancient mss are split between these options.

^h Lit. "which is not another". I think he's saying that the "different good news" doesn't really deserve the name of good news, not that it isn't different from the good news they've known.

ⁱ Lit. "Unless certain people are unsettling you and wanting to overturn the good news of Christ".

^j Some mss leave out the word "you".

^k Or "totally damned".

received, then let them be cursed! ¹⁰So now who am I trying to get on my side? People, or God? Am I trying to please people? If I still tried to please people, I wouldn't be Christ's servant.^a

Paul's Apostolic Message Came to him by Revelation

¹¹Brothers and sisters, I want you to know something about the good news I preach: it's not a human opinion.^b ¹²Because I didn't get it from human beings, and I wasn't taught it. No, I got it through of a revelation of Jesus Christ.

¹³After all, you've heard about my way of life when I was in Judaism—that I viciously persecuted the community of God. I was even trying to destroy it. ¹⁴And I was going further in Judaism than lots of people my age in my country. I was even more passionate than they were about the traditions of my ancestors. ¹⁵But then it pleased God to ¹⁶reveal God's Son in me—the One who had set me apart from my mother's womb, and called me through divine grace:^c God's purpose was for me to spread the good news of Christ to^d the Gentile nations. When that happened, I didn't go to get human advice right away.^e ¹⁷And I didn't go off to Jerusalem to visit the people who were apostles before me. Instead, I went off to Arabia and then went back to Damascus^f again.

Paul and the Jerusalem Apostles

¹⁸Then I went up to Jerusalem after three years to visit^g Cephas,^h and I stayed with him for fifteen days. ¹⁹I didn't see any other apostle, except for James, the Lord's brother. ²⁰God is my witness: I'm not lying about all this.ⁱ

²¹Then I went to the regions of Syria and Cilicia.^j ²²And the Christian communities in Judea^k didn't know me face to face.^l ²³But they were just hearing that "the man who used to persecute us now spreads the good news of the faith he used to try to destroy!" ²⁴And they were praising^m God about me.

^a Or "slave". Paul appears to be very angry. I think it's because certain people have accused him of cutting corners on God's laws in order to get more acceptance from non-Jews. His view is that he used to be trying to get acceptance, back when he used to persecute the Christians. But for many years, he's been willing to face anything—including physical attack and death—to bring the good news of Jesus Christ to Jews and non-Jews (see e.g. 2 Cor. 11:23-27). After putting his life on the line again and again, it hurts him to be labeled a spiritual coward.

^b Lit. "I make known to you, brothers and sisters, about the good news announced by me, that it isn't according to humankind".

^c Lit. "his grace".

^d Or "among".

^e Lit. "I didn't quickly consult flesh and blood".

^f Prn. *da-mass-cuss*.

^g Or "to get to know".

^h That is, Peter. Cephas (prn. *see-fass*) is Peter's name in Aramaic.

ⁱ Lit. "And the things I'm writing to you—look, in front of God, I'm not lying".

^j Prn. *sil-liss-ee-a*.

^k Prn. *joo-dee-a*.

^l Lit. "And I was unknown by face to the communities in Christ (i.e. spiritual communities, not towns) of Judea".

^m Lit. "glorifying".

2 Then, fourteen years later, I went up to Jerusalem again with Barnabas. We took Titus with us too. 2 I went up because of a revelation.^a And I laid out for them the good news that I preach to the Gentiles. But I did it privately,^b with the respected leaders. I didn't want to find that I was running, or had been running, this race for nothing.^c 3 But in fact, not even Titus, my non-Jewish companion,^d was forced to be circumcised.^e 4 There had been pressure through certain false believers that had sneaked in. They slipped in to spy on the freedom we have in Christ Jesus—so they could enslave us. 5 But we didn't give in and follow their demands for even one minute.^f We wanted the truth of the good news to stay in your possession.^g

6 But among those who had some sort of reputation, the people with the most reputation didn't impose anything on me. (What their official positions were^h doesn't matter to me—God doesn't go by human appearances.) 7 Far from imposing something on me, they saw that I've been entrusted with the good news for the non-Jews—just as Peter has been entrusted with the good news for the Jews.ⁱ After all, 8 the one who worked in Peter to bring the good news to the Jews^j also worked in me to bring the good news to the Gentiles. 9 And James and Cephas^k and John (who have a reputation as pillars) recognized the grace that's been given to me. They shook hands with Barnabas and me as a sign that we were partners with them.^l We agreed that we would go to the Gentiles, and they would go to the Jews.^m 10 They only asked that we would continue to remember their poor—the very thing I was actively committed to doing.

Paul Stands up to Cephas (the Apostle Peter) in Antioch

11 Then, when Cephas came to Antioch, I stood up to him face to face and told him he was wrong.ⁿ 12 Because he'd been eating with Gentiles before certain people came from James. But

^a Or "in obedience to a revelation"; lit. "according to a revelation". My opinion is that Paul is referring to a trip he made to bring contributions to the believers in Judea during a famine. The "revelation," and Paul's trip in response to it, may be seen in Acts 11:25-30 (and see Gal. 2:10). Paul made another relief trip years later—see 1 Cor. 16:1-4; 2 Cor. 9:1-15.

^b Or "I also did it privately". I can't tell for sure if Paul is saying that he only did it privately, or that he did it both publicly and privately.

^c Lit. "lest I should run, or had run, for nothing".

^d Lit. "Titus, who was with me, being a Greek". "Greek" here just means non-Jew.

^e See "Bible Words" under "circumcise".

^f Lit. "to whom we not did submit in obedience even for one hour/moment".

^g Lit. "so that the truth of the good news might remain with you". Paul is implying that certain people want to steal the truth of the good news from the Gentiles, and only give it back if they agree to get circumcised and become Jews.

^h Lit. "What kind they were". Lattimore thinks he means "Which ones they were". I don't think Paul means what kind of people they were ethically or spiritually, because that does matter to him.

ⁱ Lit. "I've been entrusted with the good news of the uncircumcision, just as Peter is of the circumcision".

^j Lit. "to/for mission to the circumcision".

^k That is, Peter. See the nt. on 1:18.

^l Traditionally: "They gave us the right hand of fellowship". The sense is that they didn't just accept them as Christians, but agreed to regard them as equal partners in the work of spreading the good news.

^m Lit. "to the circumcision".

ⁿ Or "face to face, because he was wrong."

when they came, he started hesitating. And he was keeping himself separate out of fear of the people from the Jewish group.^a ¹³And the rest of the Jewish believers joined in the act with him—so that even Barnabas got drawn^b into their play-acting. ¹⁴But I saw that they weren't acting in line with the truth of the good news. And I said to Cephas, in front of everyone, "You're a Jew. So if you live like a Gentile and not like a Jew, how is it that you force the Gentiles to live as Jews?" ¹⁵Were Jews by birth, and were not sinners from other nations.^c ¹⁶But we know that a person is not found innocent^d by doing what the Law requires^e except through faith in Jesus Christ. And we've believed in Christ Jesus so that we'll be found innocent by our faith in Christ, not by doing what the Law requires. Because

No human being^f is going to be found innocent by doing what the Law requires.^g

¹⁷But suppose that while we're trying to be found innocent in Christ, we discover that we're sinners too.^h Does that make Christ a servant of sin?ⁱ Absolutely not!^j ¹⁸After all, suppose I rebuild the same things I've torn down. Won't I make myself a law-breaker by doing that?^k ¹⁹Because thanks to the Law, I've died to the Law—so I can live for God. I've been hung on a cross with Christ. ²⁰And it's not me that's living anymore—Christ lives in me. And the life I live in my mortal body^l now, I live by faith in the one who loved me and gave himself up for me. ²¹I'm not disqualifying the grace of God. After all, if a verdict of innocent^m comes through the Law, then Christ died for nothing.

^a Lit. "fearing those of the circumcision".

^b Lit. "drawn away," i.e. away from honesty.

^c I think Paul is turning a typical expression of Jewish spiritual superiority against Cephas. This is a hard argument for modern non-Jews to follow.

^d Or "justified". See "Bible Words" under "justify, justification".

^e Traditionally: "by works of the Law," i.e. things done in obedience to the commandments of the Law of the Pentateuch (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy).

^f Lit. "No flesh".

^g Ps. 143.2. It's not completely clear where Paul's quotation of his remarks to Peter ends, and where he begins to expand on it for the Galatians. It could be here, or all the way to the end of v. 21, or, maybe it even ends with v. 14.

^h I think Paul means that Jews tended to think of themselves as the "righteous" ones, and to think of the Gentiles as the "sinners". The good news of Christ reveals that everyone, Jews and Gentiles alike, suffer from sin and need forgiveness from God (see also Rom. 1–3).

ⁱ Lit. "But if, seeking to be justified in/by Christ, we also find ourselves to be sinners, is Christ then a servant of sin?"

^j Lit. "May it never be!" This is a familiar rhetorical feature in Paul's writing. It connotes, "May God strike me down if I should ever say that," or, even closer, "May God not strike me down—for even putting that thought into words".

^k I wonder if he's thinking of Peter and the others, who first laid aside the strong Jewish prohibition against associating with Gentiles, then started holding to it again. By building up the Law that they'd torn down before, they put themselves on the wrong side of it. If that's what he's saying, then he's saying that once you let go of trying to be right with God by obeying the rules perfectly, you can't go back without condemning yourself.

^l Lit. "in the flesh".

^m "A verdict of innocent": or, "justification".

Right with God—By Faith, or by Keeping All the Law's Commands?

3 You unthinking^a Galatians, who hypnotized you? Your own eyes have seen Jesus Christ publicly hung on a cross! ²I only want to learn one thing from you: did you receive the Spirit by doing what the Law requires, or by hearing and believing?^b ³How can you be so unthinking? You started out in the Spirit—are you going to finish in the flesh? ⁴Have you gone through all this for nothing? Was it really just for nothing?^c

⁵So—when God^d gives out the Spirit to you, and does displays of power among you—does that come from doing what the Law requires, or from hearing with faith? ⁶It's like Abraham, who "believed God, and it was credited to him as being in the right"^e. ⁷So understand that it's the people who live on the basis of faith who are Abraham's children. ⁸And scripture sees ahead of time that God will find the Gentiles^f innocent on the basis of faith. It tells the good news to Abraham ahead of time:

All nations are going to be blessed through you.^g

⁹The result is that those who live on the basis of faith are blessed along with Abraham, who believed. ¹⁰After all, those who operate on the basis of doing what the Law requires are under a curse. Because scripture says:^h

Everyone who doesn't hold to all the things written in the book of the Law, by doing them,ⁱ will be under a curse.^j

¹¹Yes,^k it's clear that that no one is found innocent by God through the Law, because "The person who is innocent will live by faith!" ¹²But the Law isn't based on faith. No, "The person who does these things^m will live because of it!"ⁿ

¹³Christ has paid the price to set us free from the curse of the Law. He became a curse for us. Because the scripture says,^a

^a Or "oblivious," here and below: lit. "mindless".

^b Lit. "or by hearing of faith".

^c Lit. "Have you experienced/suffered so much for nothing—if indeed it was for nothing?"

^d Lit. "So the one who".

^e Traditionally: "it was credited to him as righteousness/justice". See Gen. 15:6.

^f The Greek word for "Gentiles" is the same word as the word for "nations".

^g Gen. 12:3, see Gen. 18:18).

^h Lit. "For it is written"—the standard way of citing scripture.

ⁱ Lit. "to do them".

^j Deut. 27:26.

^k Lit. "And".

^l Hab. 2:4. I think that in Paul's reading of that passage, the great test is whether a person trusts God, or whether they rely on their pride in themselves.

^m Lit. "them".

ⁿ Lit. "because of them," Lev. 18:5.

Everyone hung on a stake^b is cursed.

¹⁴In this way^c the blessing of Abraham could go to the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, so that we could receive the promise of the Holy Spirit through faith.

God's Promise of Christ for the World is Older Than the Jewish Law

¹⁵Brothers and sisters, I'm going to use a human example.^d Even when it's a human will, when it's been finalized, no one sets it aside or adds conditions to it. ¹⁶Now, the promises were made^e to Abraham and to his "offspring." It doesn't say to "the offsprings," as though it's to a lot of people. No, it's as though it's about one person: "and to your offspring,"^f which is Christ.

¹⁷My point is this:^g There is a will, which has been finalized by God.^h The Law, which comes along 430 years later,ⁱ doesn't cancel it out and^j invalidate the promise. ¹⁸After all, if the inheritance were based on the Law, it wouldn't be based on the promise anymore. But God has given the gift to Abraham through a promise. ¹⁹So why do we have the Law? Because of people's disobedient ways.^k It was added until the promised offspring came. It was put in place by angels, using a go-between.^l ²⁰But there's no such thing as a go-between where there's only one party—and God is One!^m

The Purpose of the Law

²¹So—is the Law against the promises of God?ⁿ Never! After all, if the Law as given could make people alive, then right living would have come out of it. ²²But the scripture locks them all in prison together under sin! That way, the promise can be given to those who believe, on the basis of faith in Jesus Christ.

^a Lit. "Because it is written".

^b Or "on a tree" (see Deut. 21:23). For the Jews, execution by hanging on a stake or from a tree was the most disgraceful manner of death.

^c Lit. "so that," referring all the way back to "Christ paid the price to set us free".

^d Lit. "I speak according to humanity".

^e Lit. "said".

^f Gen. 12:7; 13:5; 17:7; 24:7. Paul's argument here may be surprising to us, but it is well formed within the rules of argument that he learned in his first-century higher education (see Acts 12:3). He knows very well that the word "offspring" (lit. "seed") can refer to more than one person, but he's excited about what happens when you see it as referring to Jesus Christ.

^g Lit. "And I say this".

^h The will Paul is talking about is the blessing promised to Abraham's offspring by God.

ⁱ Traditionally, the giving of the Law to Moses on Mount Sinai happened 430 years after Abraham. See Exod. 19:1–24:8.

^j "And": lit. "so as to".

^k "Disobedient ways": lit. "transgressions," which means boundary-breakings.

^l Lit. "by the hand of a mediator". I think he means Moses, but the angels are mediators too.

^m This hints of Paul's belief in the divinity of Jesus. He means that the one who promises (God) and the one who receives the promise (Jesus) are essentially one party.

ⁿ Some very early mss omit the words "of God".

²³Now before faith came, we were locked away under guard together by the Law: we were waiting for the faith that still had to be revealed. ²⁴As a result, the Law became our tutor until Christ came. That way, we could be found innocent on the basis of faith. ²⁵And now that faith has come, we aren't under a tutor anymore. ²⁶Because you're all God's children through faith in Christ Jesus! ²⁷After all, those who have been baptized have put on Christ. ²⁸There's no more Jew and non-Jew, there's no slave and free, there isn't man and woman—you're all one in Christ Jesus! ²⁹And if you are Christ's, then you belong to Abraham's offspring, and you're heirs in line with the promise.

4 My point is this:^a As long as the heir is a child, there's no difference between them and a slave—even though they own everything. ²No, they're under guardians and caretakers until the moment set by their father. ³In the same way, when we were children, we were kept in slavery by the ruling spirits of the world.^b ⁴But when the time was exactly right,^c God sent God's own Son. He was born to a woman, and born under the Law. ⁵That way he could pay the price to set free the people who were under the Law—so that we could receive adoption as children. ⁶And because you're children, God has sent the Spirit of God's Son into our hearts. And the Spirit calls out,^d "Abba! Father!" ⁷So you're not a slave anymore—you're a child of God. And if you're a child, you're also an heir because of God.

Have you Forgotten Where you Came From and What You Received through Christ?

⁸Now, it was totally different when you didn't know God. You were slaves to beings that aren't really gods.^e ⁹But now you know God—or, more accurately, you're known by God. So how is it that you're turning back again to those poor, weak ruling spirits?^f How is it that you want to be slaves to them all over again? ¹⁰You're keeping special days, months, seasons, and years.^g ¹¹I'm afraid for you! I'm worried that I've worked hard among you for nothing.

¹²I'm asking you, please, brothers and sisters: be like me, just as I became like you.^h You haven't done anything wrong to me. ¹³Now, you know that it was because of a physical disability that I

^a Lit. "And I say this".

^b Lit. "by the elements of the world". I'm not sure, but I think Paul is saying that all nations—both the Jews and Gentiles—have been under the spiritual custody of angelic beings until the coming of Christ.

^c Lit. "when the fullness of time came".

^d "...hearts. And the Spirit calls out": lit. "...hearts, calling out".

^e Lit. "But back then, to the contrary, not knowing God, you were slaves to what by nature are not gods".

^f Lit. "elements"; see the nt. on v. 3 above. I think Paul is saying that even a return to Jewish "ruling spirits" is a major backward step, now that Christ has come.

^g The implication is, "...just like you used to before you believed the good news!"

^h Paul gave up all the standing he had in Judaism to prove that God approves of the Gentiles, in Christ, right where they are, and they don't have to convert to Judaism. Paul "became like them" because he treated them as equals before God, and for doing so he was regarded as though he were a Gentile (or worse—a traitor to Judaism) by the Jews. Please, he asks, stand with me for this freedom and full standing in Christ that God has given you. If you convert to Judaism, you not only throw these precious gifts away, but you make the sacrifice I made on your behalf be for nothing.

ⁱ Or "in a condition of".

brought you the good news the first time. ¹⁴Even with the trial^a that my physical condition was to you, you didn't despise me or reject me. Just the opposite: You took me in as though I were an angel of God, as though I were Christ Jesus. ¹⁵So where is that sense of blessing now?^b After all, I can testify that if you could have, you would have plucked out your eyes and given them to me. ¹⁶So now have I become your enemy by telling you the truth? ¹⁷They're anxious to get your acceptance, but not in a sincere way. They actually want to shut you out, so that you'll be anxious to get *their* acceptance.^c ¹⁸For that matter, it would be good if you sincerely valued *my* acceptance all the time,^d and not just when I'm there with you. ¹⁹My children, I'm in labor with you again until Christ is finally formed in you. ²⁰I keep wishing that I could be with you, and talk differently about this—because I just don't know what to do about you.^e

Hagar and Sarah (Gen. 21:8-21; Isa. 54:1) Illustrate the Law and the Good News

²¹Tell me—those of you who want to be under the Law: don't you listen to the Law? ²²After all, scripture says^f that Abraham had two sons. One was born to the slave woman and one was born to the free woman. ²³However, the one born to the slave woman was born according to the normal physical way of things, and the one born to the free woman was born because of a promise.^g ²⁴These things have a hidden meaning:^h they're the two covenants. One is from Mount Sinai, born into slavery. That's Hagar. ²⁵And Hagar (Mount Sinai) is in Arabia,ⁱ and corresponds to the present-day Jerusalem, because she's in slavery with her children. ²⁶But the Jerusalem above is free: she's our mother. ²⁷After all, scripture says,^j

Celebrate, though you were infertile and never got pregnant;
 Let loose a shout of joy, though you never were in labor.
 Because the woman who'd been deserted will have lots of children—
 Even more than the woman who kept her husband.^k

^a That is, the trouble that it cost them, which might have tempted them to turn away from Paul.

^b Lit. "So where is your blessing?" The sentences before and after show that he means the blessing they felt when he brought them the good news.

^c Lit. "They're seeking you, not sincerely—on the contrary, they want to lock you out, so that you'll seek them."

^d Lit. "And it would be good to be sincerely sought all the time".

^e Lit. "I've been wishing until now that I could be with you and change my tone, because I'm at a loss about you".

^f Lit. "For it is written".

^g Lit. "But the one from the slave woman was born according to the flesh, whereas the one from the free woman was born through a promise". Paul has in mind that Isaac was born by God's special intervention: Isaac's mother Sarah was long past childbearing years when God promised Abraham a son through her. See Genesis 15–21.

^h Lit. "These things are an allegory".

ⁱ Some mss have "For Mount Sinai is in Arabia...".

^j Lit. "For it is written".

^k Isa. 54:1. More literally:

Celebrate, you infertile one, who never got pregnant;
 Break out and shout, you who were not in labor.
 Because many are/will be the children of the deserted woman—
 More than she who kept her husband.

²⁸Brothers and sisters, you are the promised children, just like Isaac! ²⁹However, just as the one who'd been born according to the normal physical way of things^a persecuted the one born according to the Spirit, so it is now.

³⁰However, what does the scripture say?

Kick out the slave woman and her son! The son of the slave woman will never inherit alongside the son of the free woman!^b

³¹So, brothers and sisters, we aren't children of the slave woman, but of the free woman.

Living as Free People in Christ

5 Christ has released us into freedom! So stand in that freedom, and don't get roped into a yoke of slavery again. ²I, Paul, am telling you right out:^c if you get circumcised^d Christ won't do you any good. ³And I will testify further^e to every man who is circumcised, that he is duty-bound to keep the whole Law. ⁴Those of you who are justifying yourselves through the Law have nothing more to do with Christ.^f You've fallen from grace. ⁵Because we're looking forward by faith to the hope of being found innocent.^g ⁶Because in Christ Jesus, neither circumcision nor lack of circumcision counts for anything^h at all. What counts is faith that expresses itself through love.ⁱ

⁷You'd been running well. Who stopped you from believing in the truth? ⁸This belief is not from the One who called you. ⁹"A little yeast raises the whole batch of dough!"^j ¹⁰I'm believing in you in the Lord—that you won't change your mind at all.^k Whoever it is that's trying to frighten you, they're going to face God's judgment.^l ¹¹And brothers and sisters, if I'm still preaching

^a Lit. "according to the flesh".

^b Gen. 21:10.

^c Lit. "Behold, I, Paul, tell you (pl)."

^d See "Bible Words" under "circumcise".

^e Lit. "again".

^f More literally: "Those of you who are justified by the Law are cut off from Christ." The "cut off" part implies something like being disinherited from a will. But Paul's position is that they've let themselves be tempted into looking for justification through the Law, and so it is they who have cut themselves off from their legacy of grace in Christ.

^g Or "the hope of justification/righteousness". The same word means both acquittal and the state of deserving acquittal.

^h Or "has any force".

ⁱ Or "On the contrary, it's faith working through love."

^j A proverb, which Paul also quotes in 1 Cor. 5:6. The idea is that one person's actions may turn out to infect everyone. When a teaspoon of yeast is kneaded (mixed) into bread dough, it multiplies. Compare: "one bad apple spoils the whole barrel".

^k Or "that you won't come to hold any other opinion".

^l Lit. "The one who is unsettling you will bear judgment, whoever it might be".

circumcision,^a why am I still getting persecuted? Because then the stumbling block of the cross is erased. ¹²It'd be better for the people upsetting you to castrate *themselves*!^b

¹³As I said,^c you're called to freedom, brothers and sisters. Just don't use your freedom as a base of operations for your flesh.^d Just the opposite: out of love, be servants to each other. ¹⁴After all, the whole Law is fulfilled by one thing: "Love your neighbor as you love yourself."^e ¹⁵If you bite and rip pieces off each other, be careful or you'll end up destroying^f each other. ¹⁶But I say, live^h in the Spirit, and don't give the flesh what it wants at all. ¹⁷After all, the flesh wants the opposite of what the Spirit wants, and the Spirit wants the opposite of what the flesh wants. They're set against each other, so that you can'tⁱ just do whatever you want. ¹⁸But if you're led by the Spirit, you're not under the Law.

Behaviors of the Flesh and Fruits of the Spirit

¹⁹But the behaviors of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, filthiness, promiscuity,^j ²⁰idolatry, sorcery, fights, petty rivalry, jealousy, rages, competitiveness, splits, rival groups, ²¹hatred,^k getting drunk, orgies, and things like that. I'm telling you ahead of time, just like I did before:^l people who do these sorts of things aren't going to inherit God's Reign.

²²But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, harmony, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³gentleness, and self-control.^m There's never a law against these sorts of things. ²⁴And those who are Christ's have put the flesh to death on a cross, together with its cravings and desires. ²⁵If we live in the Spirit, let's live in line with the Spirit too. ²⁶Let's not get puffed up, and be challenging each other and envying each other.

^a Paul seems to have heard that the advocates of circumcision were claiming he agreed with them.

^b I think Paul sees the teachers he's talking about as insisting on circumcision because they secretly want to castrate the Gentiles, to enslave them and domesticate them in relation to themselves. Paul says, if they want to castrate someone, let them do it to themselves.

^c Lit. "For," or "After all". But I think he's resuming 5:1.

^d Lit. "only not freedom as a base of operations for the flesh". It's a military metaphor. The freedom you have in Christ should not be a base camp from which your flesh (your worst self) goes out on campaigns.

^e Lev. 19:18.

^f Lit. "devour". The metaphor is of wild animals each fighting to eat the other.

^g Lit. "being destroyed by".

^h Lit. "walk," or "conduct yourself".

ⁱ Or "don't".

^j Or "lack of self-control," or "licentiousness".

^k Lit. "hatreds," or "instances of envy". The word is plural.

^l "I did"; lit. "like I told you ahead of time before".

^m Notice that both the "behaviors of the flesh" and the "fruit of the Spirit" are expressions of community living. They're more communal than personal virtues.

Standing on your Own Two Feet—And Helping Others

6 Brothers and sisters, suppose a person is caught in some kind of offense. You are the spiritual ones: correct the person with a gentle spirit. And watch out for yourself, so that you don't get tempted too.^a **2** Carry each other's burdens, and in that way you'll fulfill the law of Christ. **3** After all, if somebody thinks they're something and they're not, they're fooling themselves. **4** So everyone should test their own behavior.^b And then they can be pleased with themselves, and not in relation to somebody else.^c **5** Because "Each person is going to carry their own load."^d

6 A person who receives teaching should share in every resource with the teacher.^e **7** Don't be deceived. God is nobody's fool.^f "What a person plants is exactly what they'll harvest."^g **8** In other words,^h the person that plants in their flesh will harvest destruction from their flesh, but the person that plants in the Spirit will harvest eternal life from the Spirit. **9** Let's carry on doing good, and not let ourselves get discouraged. Because we'll each bring in a harvest if we don't give up. **10** Finally, since we have the opportunity,ⁱ let's do good to everyone, especially to the community of faith.^j

Final Warnings and Greetings

11 See these big letters? I'm writing you in my own handwriting. **12** It's people that want to look good in outward things^k who are trying to force you to get circumcised. It's just so they won't get persecuted because of the cross of Christ. **13** After all, not even the people who are circumcised keep the Law themselves. The real reason they want you to get circumcised is so that they can brag about your flesh!^m **14** But God help me if I ever brag about anything but the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ! Through him,ⁿ the world has been hung on a cross in relation to me, and I've been hung on a cross in relation to the world. **15** Because neither circumcision^o nor lack of circumcision is

^a The implication of this is that if you're harsh and judgmental, and not gentle, you will come under temptation too. Paul seems to be aware of the principle that Jesus taught: "Don't judge, so that you don't get judged" (Mt. 7:1).

^b Lit. "But let each person evaluate their own work". "Work" here refers to behavior, not just labor.

^c Lit. "and then they can have boasting for themselves alone, and not for the other person". I think he's saying don't measure your spiritual success by comparing yourself to others.

^d Apparently another proverb. Help each other along the road, says Paul, but don't get it in your head that someone else dropping their burden gives you more credit for carrying yours. It doesn't.

^e Lit. "Let the one who receives the word share with the one who teaches, in all good things". This might be yet another proverb.

^f Lit. "God is not [i.e. refuses to be] mocked".

^g Another proverb.

^h Lit. "That is, ..."

ⁱ Or "while we have time".

^j Lit. "those of the household of the faith".

^k Lit. "in the flesh".

^l Or "for".

^m Lit. "On the contrary! They want you to get circumcised so that they can boast in your flesh."

ⁿ Or "Through it" (the cross).

^o See "Bible Words".

anything—what matters is a new creation! ¹⁶May peace and mercy rest on those who hold to this principle, and on God's own Israel.

¹⁷From now on, nobody make trouble for me, because I'm carrying the scars^a of Jesus on my body.

¹⁸May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brothers and sisters! Amen.

^a Or "brand marks" (which would identify a slave as belonging to someone). Paul is saying that the scars he carries from the whippings, beatings and stonings he's faced for Jesus are his proof that he belongs to Jesus.