

Expository Sermon Outlines Through The Book of Galatians

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Deliverance From This Present Evil Age
Galatians 1:1-5

Main Idea: God has provided for the deliverance of sinners.

Division Statements:

1. God has provided for our deliverance through the teaching of His authoritative messengers (vv. 1-2).

Note: These are excellent verses in which to discuss the nature of true Apostleship, that is those who held the office given to lay the foundation of the church (Eph. 2:20). The requirements of this office were: a) Being a personal witness to the resurrection of Jesus Christ (1. Cor. 9:1; 15:8-9); b) Having been personally commissioned and empowered by the Lord for this ministry (e.g. Luke 6:13); and, c) Being granted the ability to perform confirming signs and wonders referred to as “the signs of a true apostle” (e.g. 2 Cor. 12:12).

2. God has provided for our deliverance through the work of Jesus Christ (vv. 3-5).

Note: This statement is amazing. Though I opted to handle all five verses in one message, this sentence could easily be the subject of an entire message in it’s own right. Consider the following divisions:

1. God delivers us by bringing grace and peace (v. 3).
2. God makes this deliverance possible by the sacrifice of His Son (v. 4a).
3. God through this deliverance sets us free from the evil of this world (v. 4b) (i.e. We are no longer bound to walk in it’s ways, and we no longer share it’s doom.).
4. God’s deliverance should overflow in adoration and worship (v. 5).

Bridging From Text To Sermon

Textual Idea: Paul opens the letter with an affirmation of his apostleship and praise to God for His gracious deliverance.

Sermon Proposition: God has provided for the deliverance of sinners.

Interrogative: How has God provided for our deliverance?

Transition: The text reveals two specific actions God has taken to deliver us from this present evil age.

There Is Only One Gospel
Galatians 1:6-12

Main Idea: Reject every false gospel.

Division Statements:

1. Embracing a false Gospel is a personal rejection of God (v. 6).

Note that they are “turning away **from Him...**” Doctrine is not some sort of “pie in the sky” academic pursuit. It is very personal to God.

2. Embracing a false Gospel makes one devoted to destruction (vv. 8-9).

Note the meaning of ἀνάθεμα. Not also that this is not a curse that applies simply to the false teachers, to anyone who rejects the gospel, which is a necessary implication of the text and a direct application of 1 Cor. 16:22.

3. Embracing a false Gospel pleases men, not God (v. 10).

πειθω (peitho), translated “persuade” in the NKJ and “seek the favor of” in the ESV and NAS is contrasted with ἀνθρώποις ἡρεσκον in the next sentence. ἡρεσκον means (1) of having favor, *be pleasing to, be acceptable to* someone (MT 14.6); (2) of seeking favor (*strive to*) *please, accommodate, win over* (GNM Morph + Frieberg). Thus the clearest translation is that of the ESV and NAS.

4. Embracing a false Gospel rejects the revelation of Jesus Christ (vv. 11-12).

The implications of this are simply staggering for every area of life and should perhaps be dwelt on at length depending on your particular circumstance and audience.

Bridging From Text To Sermon

Textual Idea: Paul tells the churches that there is only Gospel and gives grounds for rejecting all pretenders.

Sermon Proposition: Reject every false gospel.

Interrogative: Why should we reject false gospels.

Transition: In this text, the Lord gives us four arguments for all false gospels.

Will They Glorify God In You?
Galatians 1:10-24

Main Idea: Rejoice in the one true Gospel

Division Statements:

1. The truth of Paul's Gospel is attested by his motive (v. 10).

Consider what Paul's Gospel says about man, its radical God-centered message, and consider what embracing it meant for a person living at this time. Note also the essential difference between Biblical Christianity and man made "works-based" religions. Paul's motive becomes clear.

2. The truth of Paul's Gospel is attested by its origin (vv. 11-12).

3. The truth of Paul's Gospel is attested by his miraculous conversion (vv. 13-14).

In discussing these verses, we have a very good place for a biographical sketch bringing in descriptions from the books of acts and other Scriptures.

4. The truth of Paul's Gospel is attested by his independent witness (vv. 15-24).

The plain import of these verses.

Bridging From Text To Sermon

Textual Idea: Paul explains how to know that the Gospel he preached is true.

Sermon Proposition: Rejoice in the one true Gospel

Interrogative: How do we recognize the true Gospel

Transition: The text gives four evidences for the truth of Paul's Gospel.

Let The Truth Continue In You
Galatians 2:1-10

Main Idea: Sometimes God calls us to contend for the truth of the Gospel.

Division Statements:

1. There is a real threat of false doctrine arising in the church (vv. 1-4).

Paul describes for us the private side of the Acts 15 controversy. It's important to note the heart of the Judaizer's teaching described in Acts 15:1.

2. Believers must contend for Gospel truth without yielding (v. 5).

Note the crucial motivation given for the Apostles' refusal to yield submission to the Judaizers for even "an hour." How does that apply to us and to our children after us?

3. The Ground of truth is the unified message of the apostles (vv. 6-10).

It is not "richness" and diversity of religious traditions that we should rejoice in, but the wonderful unity and coherence of Scripture. In particular note the phrase in verse 6, "they added nothing to me" and the meaning of the phrase, "the right hand of fellowship."

Note also the sarcasm Paul uses in verses 6 & 9, "who seemed to be something" and "who seemed to be pillars", is not directed at the other apostles at all but at the Judiazers, who apparently used these terms as a backhanded way of putting Paul down and denying his authority.

Bridging From Text To Sermon

Textual Idea: Paul describes the conflict he had with the Judaizers in Jerusalem to preserve the truth.

Sermon Proposition: Sometimes God calls us to contend for the truth of the Gospel.

Interrogative: What do we need to know in order to contend for the truth.

Transition: The Spirit gives us three basic thoughts in this text, necessary to contending for the truth.

Fearful Hypocrisy
Galatians 2:11-14

Main Idea: Do not play the hypocrite.

Division Statements:

1. The fear of man leads to hypocrisy (vv. 11-12).

Verse 12 says plainly that Peter “feared” those “who were of the circumcision”; and therefore, withdrew from eating with the Gentiles, when these men came to Antioch.

2. Uncritically following the crowd leads to hypocrisy (v. 13).

Verse 13, tells us that the rest of the Jews “played the hypocrite” with Peter. But even more amazingly to Paul, Barnabas “was carried away” in the same conduct. Carried away is συναπήχθη, a passive verb meaning to suffer oneself to be carried away together with (something that carries away), i. e. to yield or submit oneself to lowly things, conditions, employments, -- not to evade their power as one should.

3. Legalistic tendencies lead to hypocrisy (v. 14).

In verse 14, we see why it was so easy for Peter to fall into this particular form of hypocrisy. Legalistic tendencies were a well traveled path for him. But he had learned the fallacy of works righteousness (e.g. v. 16) and so therefore, he must resist this past tendency and be “straightforward about the truth” not only in words but in conduct as well.

Bridging From Text To Sermon

Textual Idea: Paul describes a time when Peter fell into hypocrisy and he was forced to confront him.

Sermon Proposition: Do not play the hypocrite.

Interrogative: How do we avoid playing the hypocrite?

Transition: God reveals three motivational factors that can cause us to fall into hypocrisy.

Justification By Faith Alone
Galatians 2:15-21

Main Idea: Do not seek to be justified before God by works!

Division Statements:

1. Seeking to be justified before God by works is futile (vv. 15-16).

It's absolutely critical to discuss the meaning of δικαιοσύνη (dikaiosune), which appears five times in these seven verses - translated "righteousness" in verse 21. If ever there was a passage to do an in depth study of this term for the congregation, it is this one.

In verse fifteen and sixteen, Paul makes the impossibility of justification by any human effort crystal clear. σάρξ is the word for "flesh" here and in this particular usage it refers to "all mankind," Jews, Gentiles, whoever. Note this verse torpedoes any dispensationalist idea that the Jews under the Old Covenant were justified by any means other than faith. This will be reinforced later in the letter by the discussion of Abraham's justification and the quotation of Hab. 2:4.

2. Seeking to be justified before God by works is sinful (vv. 17-19).

The Spirit anticipates and answers the potential objection that this doctrine will encourage the abuse of grace in verse 17. Paul then uses his chief besetting sin (Legalism) in verse 18, to show how returning to his prior way of life would in fact be the thing to make him "a transgressor" and ends with the startling statement contain in verse 19. These statements must have had the Judaizers absolutely twisted up in knots and gnashing their teeth. The point of these three verses, is that if Paul went back to legalism as a means of having right standing before God, he would be sinning.

3. Seeking to be justified before God by works is in opposition to a Christ-centered life (v. 20)

Wow ... just wow! Camp out on this verse for the rest of your life. The Christ life isn't about what you can do, but about what God can do in you.

4. Seeking to be justified before God by works denies the necessity of Christ's death (v. 21).

Verse 21 is the nail in the coffin on the whole issue of how one is justified. God will never allow the death of His Son to be viewed as pointless, unnecessary or δωρεάν (i.e. without effect, in vain, to no purpose). If justification is by anything but faith in Christ, then the cross is denigrated and the glory of God is given to another, two things which God cannot and simply will not allow to happen (Is. 48:11). Paul's logic on this last point is utterly incontrovertible.

Bridging From Text To Sermon

Textual Idea: Paul explains the impossibility of being justified before God by works.

Sermon Proposition: Do not seek to be justified before God by works!

Interrogative: Why can a person not be justified by works?

Transition: The text gives four reasons why you should not seek to be justified by works.

When A Christian Plays The Fool
Galatians 3:1-5

Main Idea: A Christian can fall into foolish and inconsistent living before God.

[Note - the word for “fool” in this passage is not the word that the Lord uses in the Sermon on the Mount. That’s the word μωρός (moros). This is the word ἀνόητος (anoetos). It means without understanding, unwise, foolish or senseless.]

Division Statements:

1. A Christian plays the fool when he forgets the majesty of the cross (v. 1).

The Galatians had forgotten the wonder, majesty and all sufficient glory of the work of Christ on the cross, which Paul had so clearly portrayed to them when the churches were founded.

2. A Christian plays the fool when in pride he forgets his beginnings (v. 2).

The Galatians thinking contradicts the work of the Spirit in their lives. Paul begins to show this by reminding them how their Christian lives began. Was there any human working involved in their becoming Christians. No they were completely helpless..

3. A Christian plays the fool when he relies on his own strength rather than the power of the Spirit (vv. 3-4).

It is foolish after having begun in such a way to now try and bring oneself to ἐπιτελέω (epiteleo), completion by one’s own efforts/working. Sanctification for the Christian is by grace through “the hearing of faith” even as Justification is.

4. A Christian plays the fool when he attributes the works of God to himself (v. 5).

“Miracles” is the word δύναμις (dunamis), meaning: power, might, or strength. I do not take this to refer simply to supernatural works that took place in the apostolic era, but to ordinary power of God we see at work in the church continually: conversion, people set free from sinful habits or addictions, family members reconciled, bitterness replaced with love, forgiveness, the fruit of the Spirit displayed mightily, prayers answered, missions advanced, etc. All of these are accomplished not by the power or strength of men, but by the merciful working of the Spirit.

Bridging From Text To Sermon

Textual Idea: The Spirit reveals how foolish the Galatians had become in their thinking.

Main Idea: A Christian can fall into foolish and inconsistent living before God.

Interrogative: When does a Christian play the fool before God?

Transition: The text reveals four ways that the Christian can play the fool.

Who Are The Children Of Abraham?
Galatians 3:6-9

Main Idea: Are you a child of Abraham and a recipient of his blessing?

Division Statements:

1. The Children of Abraham are not children by physical descent (v. 7).

This is the plain teaching of the vers for “only those who are of faith are sons of Abraham.” The truth is further verified by comparing other texts, namely the exchange in John 8:39 and following and Romans 9:6-8. Moreover, Genesis 17:4-5 tells us that the blessing that would come to the nations through Abraham would be the blessing of sonship.

2. The Children of Abraham are those who believe like Abraham believed (vv. 6 -7).

The Judaizers appealed to Moses. Paul goes back farther and appeals to Abraham and the testimony Moses gave about the father of the faith. It is valuable, I think, to take the listener back and give a brief chronology of God’s dealings with and promises to Abraham.

3. The Children of Abraham are those who inherit his blessing (vv. 8-9).

Though there are many facets to this blessing, two aspects of our inheritance are specifically mentioned in the immediate context and should therefore be discussed here:

a. This blessing includes justification (v. 8).

b. This blessing includes the Holy Spirit (v. 14).

Bridging From Text To Sermon

Textual Idea: Paul explains to the churches how one becomes a child of Abraham and inherits his blessing.

Sermon Proposition: Are you a child of Abraham and a recipient of his blessing?

Interrogative: Who are the true children of Abraham?

Transition: The text gives three facts that help identify the children of Abraham.

Redeemed From The Curse Of The Law
Galatians 3:10-14

Main Idea: Do you bear your own curse, or does Christ?

Division Statements:

1. The law brings a curse (vv. 10-12).

Note from verse 12, that law and faith are mutually exclusive. The verse teaches that You cannot mix and match the two, come up with your own recipe for justification before God and then hope He honors it. “Nothing in my hand I bring, simply to thy cross I cling,” the hymn says.

Note also in your discussion of verse 12 and the quote from Leviticus 18:5 that there was only one man who ever fulfilled this qualification, which was Christ, the sinless lamb of God, who was therefore qualified to serve as our mediator.

2. The Lord Jesus bears the curse for those who believe (vv. 13-14).

These two verses are simply magnificent. Do not rush them or gloss over the great doctrine of Christ’s substitutionary atonement “for us” or that we received the blessings flowing from this atonement “through faith.”

Bridging From Text To Sermon

Textual Idea: The law testifies to it’s own inability to save, but Christ brings redemption by substituting Himself for us and bearing our guilt.

Sermon Proposition: Do you bear your own curse, or does Christ?

Interrogative: How do you face the curse that comes upon all men?

Transition: The text explains two realities that hep us confront our cursed condition.

Why Then The Law?
Galatians 3:15-25

Main Idea: God's law serves an important purpose in your life.

Division Statements:

1. The Law was not given to invalidate the Promise (vv. 15-18).

It's important to discuss in these verses the meaning of "Seed", it's singular usage in passages such as Gen. 3:15 & 22:18, as well as the nature of the covenant confirmed to Abraham in Genesis 15, where God passes through the pieces by Himself. Paul makes an encouraging comparison between men's covenants and God's.

2. The Law was given as a prison to confine all under sin (vv. 19-23).

A useful cross reference here is Romans 7:13. The purpose of the law is made evident here. It was never given that man might somehow obtain heaven or eternal life by keeping its precepts, but it was given to reveal our sin and wretched state to us. It was given to open our eyes to the truth about ourselves. Note the word "confine" in verse 22, (συγκλείω) - to shut up on all sides, to imprison.

3. The Law was given as a tutor to bring you to Christ (vv. 24-25).

"Tutor", (παιδαγωγός) - a guide and guardian. Among the Greeks and Romans the name was applied to trustworthy slaves who were charged with the duty of supervising the life and morals of boys belonging to the better class. The boys were not allowed so much as to step out of the house without them before arriving at the age of manhood. Note: the law prepares the soul for Christ, because those who have learned by experience with the law know that they are not and cannot be commended to God by their works. They, therefore eagerly welcome the hope of salvation offered them by grace through faith in the Lord Jesus.

Bridging From Text To Sermon

Textual Idea: Paul explains the relationship between the law and the promised Messiah in the Old Testament.

Sermon Proposition: God's law serves an important purpose in your life.

Interrogative: What is the role of God's law in your life?

Transition: The text reveals some purposes of the law.

After Faith In Christ
Galatians 3:25-29

Main Idea: Believe in Christ and receive His great blessings.

Division Statements:

1. You are no longer under the tutor of the law (v. 25).

The work of the tutor has been completed. This does not mean that the law no longer plays an important role in the Christian life. It shows us the character and heart of God. It becomes for us an joyful aspiration, not for the purpose of obtaining righteousness, but for the sake of loving Him.

2. You have become a child of God (v. 26).

3. You have been clothed in Christ (v. 27).

Note that it is not water Baptism in view here but the true spiritual Baptism in which the believer is united to Christ. To “put on” (ἐνεδύσασθε) is the Greek verb for putting on a garment. Just as a garment envelopes the person wearing it and defines his appearance, so the person baptized in Christ is entirely covered by Christ. This is talking about the imputation of Christ’s righteousness which clothes us when we are saved

4. You have unity with all other Christians (v. 28).

This verse is obviously not discussing roles in the family or church as the egalitarians claim, but it is a reference to salvation and essential equality before God in Whom there is no partiality (e.g. 1 Pet. 3:7). God does not judge His children according to false human distinctions such as race, social status, wealth or gender.

5. You are an heir of God’s kingdom (v. 29).

The promise referred to here is not the land but the promise of justification.

Bridging From Text To Sermon

Textual Idea: The Spirit describes the blessings of faith in Christ.

Sermon Proposition: Believe in Christ and receive His great blessings.

Interrogative: What are the blessings that come upon those who believe?

Transition: God speaks of five great benefits of faith in Christ.

Do Not Turn From Adoption To Slavery
Galatians 4:1-11

Main Idea: If you are adopted by God, then you are free from slavery.

Division Statements:

1. The law prepares you for adoption (vv. 1-3).

ἐπίτροπος (epitropos), “guardian” - a general term referring to someone to whom the whole care of the underage boy is entrusted. Remember that Paul had just taught them at the end of chapter three that the law of God was a prison guard that confined all men everywhere in the prison of sin, and that the law was also a tutor, designed to bring you to the end of yourself by revealing your overwhelming sin so that you would turn to Christ in faith. The law then is the guardian and manager preparing a child of God for adoption.

2. The Son is the means of your adoption (vv. 4-5).

Here we have the great doctrines of providence, the incarnation, the sinless perfection of Christ, substitution, redemption and adoption all expressed in these two verses. All should be touched on in the exposition to some degree or another.

3. The Holy Spirit is the Guarantor of your adoption (vv. 6-7).

Notice that the whole Trinity is involved in this great work of redemption and adoption. κρᾶζον, “crying out” in verse 6 is a present active participle. Explore the implications of this particular word choice and its form. Truly the Spirit does a mighty work on our behalf, ensuring our salvation.

4. Perseverance is the confirmation of your adoption (vv. 8-11).

The “weak and beggarly elements” are the things taught by the Judaizers as a means to salvation: circumcision and the examples of verse 10. Paul stunningly calls this a “turning again” meaning that these things are the same as the paganism out of which the Gentiles had been saved. Both are doctrines of demons and inconsistent with true salvation. Thus his fear in verse 11. The necessary implication of verse 11 is that perseverance in the truth confirms adoption and failure to persevere proves that one never truly knew God.

Fortunately the Galatians heeded Paul’s warning and this text actually became the means of their perseverance.

Bridging From Text To Sermon

Textual Idea: The Apostle explains how our adoption into God’s family is accomplished and its consequent freedom.

Sermon Proposition: If you are adopted by God, then you are free from slavery.

Interrogative: What does God teach us about our adoption?

Transition: The text explains four crucial aspects of our adoption by God.

O That Christ Might Be Formed In You Part 1
Galatians 4:12-16

Main Idea: The highest goal of your existence is that you might be conformed to the image of the glorious Lord Jesus Christ.

Division Statements:

1. Christ is formed in us when we follow the example of the godly (v. 12).

Paul urges the church to adopt His example and pursue the goal of Gal. 2:20. No less than five times in Scripture are we exhorted to pursue the example of Paul (1 Cor. 4:16; 11:1; Phil. 3:17; 4:9) as well as other godly men (e.g. Heb. 13:7).

2. Christ is formed in us when we reject worldly ideals (vv. 13-14).

In verses 13-15 we have a clue to the thorn in the flesh, which was apparently some eye disease. The sickness of Paul was a “trial” which would ordinarily invoke contempt and literally “spitting upon.” Further in both Greek and Jewish culture those who suffered as Paul did were ordinarily viewed as those under divine judgment. But the churches of Galatia rejected all such worldly ideals and moved closer to the image of Christ.

3. Christ is formed in us when we move in love and compassion (v. 15).

They would have “plucked out their own eyes” and given them to Paul, if they could have. Such was their joy, not in Him, but in the Lord Jesus.

4. Christ is formed in us when we embrace truth (v. 16).

Is Paul now an enemy, because he shares with them the same truth that he did in the beginning, when they first trusted in Christ? No, he is laboring again that the image of the Lord might be formed in them (v. 19), and a critical part of this is that they embrace truth.

Bridging From Text To Sermon

Textual Idea: Paul pours out his heart and shares the goal of his ministry: the Christlikeness in God’s children

Sermon Proposition: The highest goal of your existence is that you might be conformed to the image of the glorious Lord Jesus Christ.

Interrogative: How is Christ formed in us?

Transition: The text gives us four paths toward Christlikeness.

O That Christ Might Be Formed In You Part 2
Galatians 4:17-20

Main Idea: The highest goal of your existence is that you might be conformed to the image of the glorious Lord Jesus Christ.

Division Statements:

1. Christ is formed in us when we reject self-glorifying teachers (v. 17).

The true motive of the Judaizers is clearly exposed in this verse. Note also 6:12.

2. Christ is formed in us when we are zealous for good (v. 18).

Spend some time discussing ζηλώω - as commendably striving for something *desired, show zeal (for), set one's heart on*

3. Christ is formed in us when we rejoice in Christ-glorifying teachers (vv. 19-20).

Paul's motives stand in sharp contrast to the motives of the Judaizers. He did not want to be made much of by the Galatian churches, but He wanted Christ to be made much of and be formed in their very lives and hearts.

Bridging From Text To Sermon

Textual Idea: Paul pours out his heart and shares the goal of his ministry: the Christlikeness in God's children

Sermon Proposition: The highest goal of your existence is that you might be conformed to the image of the glorious Lord Jesus Christ.

Interrogative: How is Christ formed in us?

Transition: The text gives us three additional paths toward Christlikeness.

Slavery or Freedom
Galatians 4:21-31

Main Idea: We must give over all self-reliance and believe, if we want to receive God's promise.

Division Statements:

1. Self-reliance leads to rejection by God (vv. 21-25, 30).

Abraham and Sarah weakened in their faith for a time and sought to help God fulfill His promise of a son through Hagar. They trusted in their own devices and simply ended up producing a son who would never be the heir of God's promise. In the same way, Israel could never inherit the promise of salvation through legalism. The law was not met with faith, but with self-reliance (e.g. Rom. 9:32) and therefore the "Jerusalem which now is" was rejected by God.

2. Faith leads to freedom and joy (vv. 26-27, 5:1).

Faith, however, not in what man can do, but in what God can do leads to an entirely different result. When Sarah stopped trusting in what she could produce and began believing in the promise of God (Heb. 11:11), she gave birth to a son who would be the heir of God's promise.

3. Faith leads to persecution by men but acceptance by God (vv. 28-31).

These verses are very clear. We are free and children of promise as Isaac was, when we give over self-reliance and works to obtain God's promise and simply believe. We become accepted by God. However, this inevitably leads to persecution by the world, even as Ishmael persecuted Isaac.

Bridging From Text To Sermon

Textual Idea: Paul shows how Isaac & Ishmael are symbolic of faith vs. works, grace vs. law, freedom vs. slavery, and Christianity vs. Judaism.

Sermon Proposition: We must give over all self-reliance and believe, if we want to receive God's promise.

Interrogative: Why should we give over self-reliance and believe in God's promise?

Transition: The text gives us three results to consider in answering this question.

Stand Fast In The Freedom Of Christ
Galatians 5:1-6

Main Idea: God is not a Creditor to be repaid, but a Treasure to be adored.

Division Statements:

1. God does not desire debt based religion (i.e. trying to buy God off) (vv. 1-5).

Verse one states the overarching theme of the entire letter.

a. If you embrace works as a means of justification, then Christ is of no benefit to you (v. 2). - The atonement of Christ does not cover the sins of those who trust in law as a means of salvation.

b. If you embrace works as a means of justification, then you are obligated to keep the whole law (v. 3). - God's standard for "earning" your way to Him is absolute perfection (e.g. James 2:10).

c. If you embrace works as a means of justification, then you have let go of grace (v. 4). - The phrase, "fallen from grace" appears only here in the Bible. It doesn't mean that you can lose your salvation but the verb means to lose one's grasp on something, in this case it means letting go of grace as a principle, a theology of grace to embrace a theology of human effort, to turn from righteousness given as a gift from God to earning righteousness through obeying the law. Moreover, those who believe that salvation can be lost are inevitably led to embrace some kind of works as the means of maintaining their good standing before God, which is an exact contradiction of everything that Paul has been saying throughout this whole letter. To view this verse as teaching that one can lose his salvation, therefore, is to twist it grossly out of context and such a view is forced even to ignore the first half of this very sentence, "You have become estranged from Christ, you who attempt to be justified by law ..."

d. If you embrace works as a means of justification, then you are excluded from true righteousness (v. 5). - True righteousness is that which comes "by faith."

2. God desires love-based relational devotion (v. 6).

It is faith working through love that "avails" with God, not external law keeping. While we are saved by faith alone, faith, if it is true, will never be alone, but will always result in a very real, active and fruitful love towards God.

Bridging From Text To Sermon

Textual Idea: Paul urges the churches to approach God not as a Creditor, but as a Treasure.

Sermon Proposition: God is not a Creditor to be repaid, but a Treasure to be adored.

Interrogative: What kind of devotion does God desire?

Transition: The text shows us two possible approaches to God.

Embrace The Offensive Cross
Galatians 5:7-12

Main Idea: False teachers must be identified and rejected that we may honor God.

Division Statements:

1. False teachers hinder obedience to the Word of God (v. 7).

The image here is of a runner who is impeded, cut off or knocked over in the pursuit of his goal.

2. False teachers contaminate the church with a persuasion that is not from God (vv. 8-9).

In Scripture, leaven often represents sin as in Jesus warning about the “leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees,” which referred to their doctrine (Matt. 16:6,12). God uses the figure of leaven to indicate the permeating power of false teaching and its ability to infect and spread through a group of people.

3. False teachers will be judged (v. 10).

Paul introduces this declaration with a word of encouragement to true believers similar Phil. 1:6, “I am confident of this very thing; that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.” The destiny of believers is secure. Jesus says, “They shall never perish, and no one shall snatch them out of My hand” (John 10:28). And the means the Lord would use to protect the Galatians was this very letter.

4. False teachers persecute true teachers (v. 11).

Discuss the “offense of the cross” (σκάνδαλον). May we never be ashamed of it or seek to remove its offense to avoid persecution or compromise with the world.

5. False teachers should be passionately opposed (v. 12).

ἀποκόπτω is the Greek word for the removal of the male reproductive organs. Two reasons the Spirit included this harsh phrase: 1) To show the internal inconsistency of works righteousness; 2) To show how passionately this false gospel must be opposed.

Bridging From Text To Sermon

Textual Idea: Paul describes and responds to the false teachers who reject the offense of the cross.

Sermon Proposition: False teachers must be identified and rejected that we may honor God.

Interrogative: How do we identify and respond to false teachers?

Transition: The text reveals several truths to guide us in this regard.

Your Freedom Is For Love
Galatians 5:13-15

Main Idea: Christian liberty is not freedom to sin, but freedom to love.

Division Statements:

1. Your freedom in Christ should lead you to oppose the sin nature (v. 13).

“Opportunity” translates ἀφορμή, which refers to a starting point or base of operations for an expedition; hence (1) occasion, opportunity, favorable circumstance (Rom. 7:8); (2) pretext, excuse (2 Cor. 11:12). The very idea that someone would use grace as a license for sin is intolerable (Rom. 6:1-2; Jude 4). Implicit, then, in this text and explicit in others is our division statement.

2. Your freedom in Christ should lead you to loving service (vv. 13b-14).

True Christian liberty frees us from sin and condemnation in such a way that we cannot help but respond in love to God and others. The first table of the law is all about your relationship and love to God, loving, honoring and worshiping Him. These happen first by faith, and that frees you to love your neighbor. So truly the whole law is fulfilled in the one who loves his neighbor as himself, just as verse 14 tells us.

3. Your freedom in Christ should lead you to avoid selfishly harming others (v. 15).

This verse is the opposite of the previous one and shows the terrible nature of life lived without the love of God flowing through to others. It is a life of bitter devouring abusive selfishness, that views other people as things to be used up and consumed. The text compares this life to brutal animalistic behavior. A life in which each individual feels like he has the right to run roughshod over others while gratifying his own whims and fulfilling his own selfish lusts. It is destructive.

Bridging From Text To Sermon

Textual Idea: Paul tells the church that God’s grace is never to be a license for sin, but an opportunity for love.

Sermon Proposition: Christian liberty is not freedom to sin, but freedom to love.

Interrogative: How should we use our great liberty in Christ?

Transition: There are three directions our freedom in Christ should take us.

Man Redeemed Is Man At War
Galatians 5:16-18

Main Idea: When God redeems us He sets at war with our old sin nature.

Division Statements:

1. Man redeemed is man at war with himself (v. 17).

The word translated “contrary” is ἀντίκειται a verb occurring in the present middle indicative voice, which is reflexive in meaning and speaks of an ongoing/continual opposition. The word speaks of those who are hostile, enemies, adversaries, and stand in opposition against each other. Thus we have the doctrine of mortification clearly in view in this verse.

2. God’s command in this war: “Walk in the Spirit” (v. 16).

“Walk”, περιπατέω, means to “walk” in the sense of “conducting one’s life” in a certain manner. Once again it is in the present indicative, indicating continual action.

3. God’s strategy for victory in this war (v. 18):

The following is meant to be a very practical three step strategy to explain how a person actually walks day by day in the Spirit. It draws the listener back to the final verse in our text explaining how to be “led by the Spirit” without grieving Him.

a. Systematic starvation of the flesh (Rom. 13:14).

b. Fill up the vacancy with the word of God (Rom. 8:5-6).

c. Be led by the Spirit through the hearing of faith (Gal. 3:5; 5:18).

Bridging From Text To Sermon

Textual Idea: Paul describes the internal warfare of the child of God.

Sermon Proposition: When God redeems us He sets at war with our old sin nature.

Interrogative: What is the nature of this warfare and how is it waged?

Transition: There are three elements to our warfare described in this text.

The Manifest Flesh
Galatians 5:19-21

Main Idea: The works of the flesh are deadly and must be avoided.

Division Statements:

1. The works of the flesh are obvious (v. 19).

φανερός (phaneros) - well known, clear, plain. Take time to discuss why this is so (Note Rom. 2:14-15). Also consider why these are called “works.” It is not because they take effort or are necessarily calculated to earn anything (e.g. envy), but because they come from a debtor-creditor mentality, that is, a heart that believes it deserves something better than what it’s getting.

2. The works of the flesh must be confronted (vv. 19b-21).

This is obvious from the actual listing of Paul and the statement in verse 21, “of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past ...” Confronting these sins was obviously a regular part of Paul’s ministry. At this point, uncomfortable as it may be, the faithful expositor must run through each individual word and explain it to the congregation. Do not leave out the phrase, “and the like”.

3. Habitually practicing the works of the flesh reveals a lost condition (v. 21b).

Here we have the frightening truth of the end of verse 21 and the most important point in this message. Juxtapose the lifestyle portrayed in this verse with the warfare of verse 17 and the putting to death of the flesh by the Christian in verse 24.

Bridging From Text To Sermon

Textual Idea: God describes the works of the flesh for us that we may learn to walk in the Spirit and not in the flesh.

Sermon Proposition: The works of the flesh are deadly and must be avoided, if we would live and honor God.

Interrogative: What does God tell us about the nature of these works?

Transition: God gives us three important facts concerning the works of the flesh:

The Manifest Spirit
Galatians 5:22-26

Main Idea: Let the fruit of God's Spirit shine forth in you!

Division Statements:

[Please note: You may preach this text logically in as many as nine or ten weeks or as few as one, depending on God's leading. When I've taught these verses, I've done it as presented. I've also covered verses 24-26 at the same time as verses 19-21 and broke out verses 22-23 in order to spend more time on each individual aspect of the fruit of the Spirit, and I've also taught the verses in a nine week class. Submit the question to God and follow His leading for your particular audience.]

1. The fruit of the Spirit is one fruit with many aspects (v. 22).

Note in the Greek text that there is one fruit singular and the proper verb is "is" rather than "are." This is a critical point, because it guards us against focusing on one particular aspect of the fruit to the detriment of others, like you might buy apples in the grocery store and ignore the bananas. For instance, a naturally gentle person might have difficulty with faithfulness when faithfulness requires discipline. Such a person might seek justification in believing that they are just more gifted in this "fruit" as opposed to the other. But the person displaying the true "fruit" of the Spirit, singular, will hold these two aspects together in the correct balance.

2. The fruit of the Spirit reflects the character of God (vv. 22-23).

This division is the appropriate place to discuss each particular aspect of the fruit of the Spirit with appropriate cross references and examples.

3. The fruit of the Spirit is a gift of God (vv. 22-23).

This is an inescapable conclusion from the language, καρπὸς τοῦ πνεύματος. "Fruit" means literally, "crop, outcome, product, or consequence." In other words, it's something He produces in us.

4. The fruit of the Spirit is to continually shine forth in the believer's life (vv. 24-25).

Meaning of "walk."

5. The fruit of the Spirit is to be born out of humble dependence on the Spirit (v. 26).

Those who seek after godliness through prideful self-reliance will run afoul of this verse in all three ways: conceit, provocation and envy. The converse is humble, childlike, dependence on the Spirit

Bridging From Text To Sermon

Textual Idea: Paul describes for us the character of those who "walk in the Spirit."

Sermon Proposition: Let the fruit of God's Spirit shine forth in you!

Interrogative: What do I need to know that the fruit of the spirit might be displayed in my life?

Transition: There are five principles in this text that we need to understand that the fruit of God's Spirit may be displayed in our lives.

Restoring, Bearing, Examining
Galatians 6:1-5

Main Idea: Walking in the Spirit means helping others in the body of Christ.

Division Statements:

1. We are to bear one another's burdens, including the burden of sin (vv. 1-2).

The phrase "You who are spiritual" does not refer to any kind of requisite Christian maturity level, rather it refers to what Paul has just been discussing, namely those who are "walking in the Spirit" whether they are brand new one day old Christians or have been Christians 60 years. "Burden" (βάρη) - refers to a weight or heavy load, in this case the weight of one's sin. "Bear" means to take up and carry. In other words to help the person through the sin problem and "restore such a one" back to walking in the Spirit rather than the flesh. The "law of Christ" is the law of love (5:14).

2. We are to bear one another's burdens in a spirit of humility (v. 3).

This is inferred from the "spirit of gentleness" that is required in restoring a sinning brother and the need to keep from falling yourself. It is brought home powerfully in verse 3. "Nothing" (μηδέν) when used in reference to a person means "a nobody." The simple truth is that all we have and all we are we owe to God alone. As 1 Corinthians 4:7 says, "For who makes you differ from another? And what do you have that you did not receive? Now if you did indeed receive *it*, why do you boast as if you had not received it?" Therefore, apart from His gives, including the fruit of the Spirit and a heart to "walk in the Spirit" we are, spiritually speaking, complete "nobodies."

3. We are to examine ourselves and fulfill our ministry (vv. 4-5).

Verse five at first seems a contradiction to verse 2, until we realize that a different word for "load" is being used than the previous word for "burden." φορτίον refers not to difficulties or hardships per se but to the routine demands and obligations of one's life (i.e. the practical demands of one's work, responsibilities due to position, or duties with regard to discipleship in the spiritual realm). In this context, it refers to the ministry that God has gifted you with and placed you in the body of Christ to fulfill. All of us have such a ministry (e.g. Rom. 12:4-8), and we must pursue it according to the commands given here.

Bridging From Text To Sermon

Textual Idea: Paul continues to show us practically how to walk in the Spirit within the body of Christ.

Sermon Proposition: Walking in the Spirit means helping others in the body of Christ.

Interrogative: How am I to help others in the body of Christ?

Transition: God gives us three commands in this text for helping others in the body of Christ.

Do Not Grow Weary In Well Doing
Galatians 6:6-10

Main Idea: Walking in the Spirit involves generous giving to advance the Kingdom of God.

Division Statements:

[Note: There are four facts that show us the Apostle is primarily concerned with money in these verses. First, verse 6 is obviously a reference to compensating those that teach the word to the congregation so that they might be free to carry out this duty faithfully and rightly. Second the closing thought says “Let us do good to all” (ἐργαζώμεθα τὸ ἀγαθὸν) is a Greek euphemism for giving alms, money, to the poor, meeting their needs. These two statements, therefore, act as bookends to Paul’s line of thinking. Third, the phrase “God is not mocked” appears so often in the Old Testament in the context of the misuse of money and greed that if you are a faithful student of the prophets you can hardly hear the words “God is not mocked” without thinking about the use or misuse of money. And fourth, the proverb “whatever a man sows, that he will also reap,” is a proverb that is commonly used to encourage generous financial giving, (e.g. 2 Cor. 9:6.)

1. Believers should provide for those that teach them the word of God (v. 6).

There are four clear implications of this verse’s command:

- a. Teaching the word of God is essential to the life of the church.
- b. Those who carry the main responsibility of teaching need freedom to study, meditate and pray.
- c. Pastor-Teachers should be paid to allow them this freedom.
- d. When you give to support the teaching ministry you fulfill the “law of Christ”, namely the law of love (v. 2).

2. Believers should use what God has given to build the kingdom rather than feed the flesh (vv. 7-8).

How might the world be different if believers would faithfully use their finances to sow to the things of the Spirit rather than their flesh (including the entertainment industry). There are many startling statistics in this regard conducted by reputable missions sending agencies and others. Use them in your exposition.

3. Believers should persevere in giving knowing that God will give a great reward (v. 9).

This is a beautiful promise and should perhaps be the heart of your message. In all of us there is a temptation to “grow weary”(ἐγκακῶμεν) - to become weary, grow tired, give up, become discouraged, lose heart. The Lord understands this all too common temptation and draws us back into action with many great promises in His word.

4. Believers should provide for the needy, especially those who are fellow believers (v. 10).

“Opportunity” is *καιρός* in this verse. It does not refer to a fixed specific instance or moment of opportunity, but to a season of opportunity. The point, therefore, is that one’s entire life offers a unique opportunity and privilege to give to others of what God has given you. This great opportunity is passing away, so let us make the most of it with the days we have left by providing for the needy, especially our brothers and sisters.

Bridging From Text To Sermon

Textual Idea: Paul explains the importance of giving as a part of walking in the Spirit.

Sermon Proposition: Walking in the Spirit involves generous giving to advance the Kingdom of God.

Interrogative: How are those walking in the Spirit supposed to give?

Transition: According to our text, believers should give in five important ways.

Boasting in The Flesh
Galatians 6:11-13

Main Idea: Do not boast in the flesh, but the cross of Christ!

Division Statements:

[Note, verse 11 was covered at the same time as 4:14&15]

1. Those who glory in the flesh are motivated by personal pride (v. 12a).

“Good showing”, εὐπροσωπείω, - “to look well.” The Judaizers wanted to impress others with how spiritual they looked.

2. Those who glory in the flesh are cowards (v. 12b).

Another hidden motive of the Judaizers is revealed here. The Jewish at the time Paul is writing had a protected status in the Roman Empire. If the Judaizers adhered to the external requirements of Mosaic law, then they could legitimately claim to be a part of this religion and avoid persecution as Christians.

3. Those who glory in the flesh are hypocrites (v. 13).

The Judaizers were did not “keep the law” themselves. Thus they were hypocrites, who simply wanted to boast in the number of converts they had managed to win.

Bridging From Text To Sermon

Textual Idea: Paul reveals the wretched hearts of the Judaizers who glory in the flesh.

Sermon Proposition: Do not boast in the flesh, but the cross of Christ!

Interrogative: How do we know if we are among those who boast in the flesh?

Transition: The Spirit gives three powerful descriptions of those who boast in the flesh.

Boast In The Cross Alone
Galatians 6:14-18

Main Idea: Boast only in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ!

Division Statements:

1. Those who glory in the cross are motivated by freedom from the world (v. 14).

When Paul says, “by whom the world has been crucified to me.” “World” does not refer to the physical material system, neither does it refer to people as in John 3:16 for whom Paul is laboring and giving himself that they might hear the Gospel. Rather it refers to the evil world system with its rebellion against God and unholy way of living and thinking. When Paul first trusted Christ, he died to worldliness and the world died to him as well in the sense of John 15:19.

2. Those who glory in the cross exalt God’s power (v. 15).

Circumcision or uncircumcision are the works of man, but “a new creation” is solely the work of God.

3. Those who glory in the cross receive peace and mercy (vv. 16-18).

Note that this is not peace and mercy from the world as the context (especially verse 17) makes clear, but peace and mercy from God.. You might add grace (v. 18) to the division statement if you choose, but I believe the word grace in this context encompasses all of Paul’s desire and hope for the letter as the Holy Spirit takes this word and brings it to bear on their hearts, excising the Judaizer’s heresy from the midst of the churches that the true Gospel might shine forth. “Israel of God,” is a clear reference to the true church and takes us back to 3:9&29.

Bridging From Text To Sermon

Textual Idea: Paul reveals that his own heart, unlike the Judaizers was to glory in the cross of Christ alone.

Sermon Proposition: Boast only in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ!

Interrogative: How do I know if I’m boasting in the cross alone?

Transition: God gives us three descriptions of those who boast in the cross alone.