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Galatians 5 in Context: A Brief Biography and Deliberative Rhetoric

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INTRODUCTION

The basic framework of Paul's letter to the Galatians may be set out as follows:

- A Prologue (1:1-5)
- B Gospel Distortion and Denunciation (1:6-10)
- C Gospel Derivation and Direction (1:11-2:21)
- D Gospel Delineation and Distinction (3:1-4:31)
- E Gospel Declaration and Definition (5:1-6:10)
- F Epilogue (6:11-18)

We will share the proposals of others later, after providing a biographical co-text for the passage (E) chosen for exposition. At a time when many believe that the authors of ancient documents have very little to do with our understanding of their works, we have overcompensated in the other direction by providing a fairly fulsome sketch of a favourite writer, notwithstanding Cephas's 'complaint' (2 Peter 3:16). Even those who deny authorial intent write books, append their names, and expect to be understood in a traditional manner;¹ well not quite every one it would appear!

At the 1993 Annual Meetings of the American Academy of Religion and Society of Biblical Literature, one scholar read a paper offering a postmodern interpretation of I Corinthians 8: 1-6. He argued that in this passage Paul is a polytheist correcting the error of monotheism in the Corinthian church. One of my colleagues rose to his feet during the question period and asked the speaker if this was supposed to be a serious exegesis of I Corinthians 8. The speaker replied affirmatively. My colleague replied with words to this effect: "Then isn't it

¹E.g., Dale Martin, *Biblical Truths: The Meaning of Scripture in the 21st Century* (New Haven/London: YUP, 2017), 72 *et passim*.

incumbent on you to justify your interpretation, which you confess to be idiosyncratic, by arguments that refute other readings and show yours to be right?" The speaker promptly responded that he was not claiming his interpretation was right or correct; how could he, if he was offering a postmodern reading? So my colleague continued, "I thought you might answer that way. Then what would you say if I read your paper and interpreted it as a defense of Pauline monotheism and an implicit rejection of postmodern thought?" The speaker responded, "You can interpret my paper any way you want to. What do you expect me to do? Have a foundation for my belief?" I suppose he was consistent.²

The Writer of Galatians

Although Paul (in and around 49 AD) founded the set of churches in South Galatia,³ he is definitely not the founder of Christianity, as Richard Dawkins claims.⁴ Matthew 16 and Acts⁵ chapters 1-2 are far better witnesses where the origin of the Messianic community is concerned.⁶ It was the late professor of counseling psychology at the Caribbean Graduate School of Theology who once said that all our theology is biography. Although the case may have been overstated, Dr. Dave Carlson was indeed correct, because theology is a human enterprise. It is one of the things humans do: they theologize. One of the best ways to study theology is to do so within the context of biographical genre (cf. Matthew-Acts⁷); this section does not examine the life and thought of modern theologians but one from whom most if not all of them have learnt. We briefly then take a look at the thought of the apostle Paul as it is mirrored in the legacy of his language and literature.

In the minds of many the Apostle Paul is the greatest missionary theologian the world has ever seen.⁸ Even if we disagree with this judgment, there can be no doubt regarding the tremendous impact he has made in advancing the cause of Christ in our world. Yet, in the words of Tucker,⁹ "Paul is a less awesome figure than some adulatory devotees would have him to be. In many ways, he was a very ordinary man facing ordinary problems that have confronted missionaries ever since." This observation, paradoxically, serves to highlight the Apostle's greatness even more, for if he was so ordinary whence his greatness as a missionary? An examination of the Apostle Paul's role as an evangelist, teacher and writer may furnish the answer to the above query.

² D A Carson, *The Gagging of God* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 191; the authorial integrity of Galatians, seen especially in chapters 1-2, is crucial for this paper.

³Schweiser, Eduard, *A Theological Introduction to the New Testament*. Translated by O. R. Dean, Jr. (London: SPCK 1992), 73.

⁴*The God Delusion* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2006), 58.

⁵See, "Chiastic Contours and the Book of Acts: The Messianic Community and Christian Mission," Paper for the 71st General Meeting of SNTS, Montreal, Canada, Seminar 6: "The Mission and Expansion of Earliest Christianity," August, 2016, and *Acts: A Concise Caribbean Commentary* (Kingston: DeoVolente, 2018).

⁶On matters of date, provenance, and the like, see, e.g., D. Guthrie, *Introduction to the NT* (Leicester: IVP, 1970) and the relevant articles in *ABD* and *NBD*.

⁷ See especially, *Acts: A Concise Caribbean Commentary*. Kingston: DeoVolente, 2018.

⁸ "The view that Paul was the greatest missionary among Gentiles in the first century is a notion based on the fact that writings of Paul survive that allow us to describe his theological convictions . . ." (Schnabel, *Early Christian Mission* [Leicester: IVP, 2004], 923). We will explore some of these convictions below.

⁹Ruth A. Tucker, *From Jerusalem to Irian Jaya: A Biographical History of Christian Missions* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan), 27.

Paul was indeed an evangelist. But he was not always so, because he once sought to impede the progress of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. He relentlessly persecuted the people of God until he himself submitted to the Lord of Glory one bright and sunny day on the way to the city of Damascus. It was the Lord who announced to Ananias that this once proud Pharisee would be an evangelist. “Go! This man is my chosen instrument to carry my Name before the Gentiles and their kings before the people of Israel,” was the heavenly injunction (Acts 9). It was not very long before the now converted Saul began preaching the good news of Christ in Damascus, showing convincingly that Jesus who was crucified was indeed the awaited Messiah (Acts 9:19-22). He began, quite naturally, with his own people. However, his efforts were greeted with almost immediate opposition.

Sometime after this bitter experience the Apostle Paul began to have a more or less settled ministry in the thriving assembly at Antioch. It was from this church that he received further direction through the Spirit to be involved in a wider ministry. He was to embark on a missionary career that would take him as far as Rome, the capital of the then known world, and he was to henceforth serve not as a loner but as a laborer among many. His evangelistic partner from the home base was Barnabas, the man who was instrumental in gaining an entry for him among the believers at Jerusalem. Having left the church at Antioch to fulfill their missionary vocation, Barnabas and Saul stopped in Salamis after passing through Seleucia on the mainland. Salamis was a city on the isle of Cyprus which boasted an apparently large community of Jews, so “they preached the Word of God in the synagogues . . .” (Acts 13:6). If evangelism is witnessing that confronts the uncommitted with the claims of Jesus Christ, then Paul was an evangelist *par excellence*. As a fisher of men he went where the fish were, and as a result he was constantly found in the synagogues where there was always a gathering of Jews with their proselytes, “For Moses of old times hath in every city them that preach him, being read in the synagogues every Sabbath day” (Acts 15:21; see Appendix E on the Sabbath question).

But Paul in particular was not just acting out a principle. He was expressing a heartfelt concern for first century Jewry. He confessed: “I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, that I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could, that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh who are Israelites” (Rom 9:1-4a). However, while the apostle Paul had the privilege of seeing a number of Jews coming to the Lord, his greater success was with the Gentiles. And as he moved along he evangelized, preached, argued, testified, and persuaded his non-Jewish audience (e.g., Acts 17:26).

The missionary activities of the Apostle Paul were not confined to evangelism alone but included a calculated effort to foster the spiritual development of new believers. Even before Paul went on his first missionary journey, the importance of nourishing babes of the faith was impressed on him when he first visited the church of Antioch. A revival had broken out in that city after certain itinerant evangelists powerfully proclaimed the gospel to both the Jewish and Gentile inhabitants. News of this activity reached Jerusalem, and the church there sent Barnabas to conduct follow-up work.

After being involved in some intensive counseling sessions with the new believers and seeing further numerical growth, Barnabas decided to instruct them more accurately in the things of the Lord. To help him accomplish this task he enlisted the help of Saul of Tarsus, a man in whom he had discerned the gift of teaching. “And when he had found him he brought him unto Antioch. And it came to pass that a whole year they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people. And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch” (Acts 11:26).

This must have been a memorable experience for Paul, because as a result of this concentrated teaching the disciples were dubbed “Christians.” Their fellowmen had seen a difference in their lifestyle. There was no doubt in the young teacher’s mind that there was a close connection between the nickname *Christian* and the creed he and Barnabas had so faithfully expounded. Later on in his writing to the church at Ephesus he had clearly a thought out philosophy of edification. The flow of Paul’s thought expressed in chapter 4:11-15 is as follows: The risen and glorified Christ has given certain gifted persons to His church (v. 11). The task of these persons is to equip the saints for service (v.12a). The involvement of the saints in the ministry is with a view “to the edifying of the body of Christ . . . till we all come . . . unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.” (vv. 12b, 13).

Paul’s plan to see the maturity of God’s people was squarely based on the Word of God. Writing to Timothy just before his martyrdom, he reminds the young pastor of the authenticity and potency of Scripture (2 Tim 3:15-17) and proceeded thereafter to urge its proclamation. With a note of sadness the aged Apostle anticipated a time when even saints will resist any effort made to ensure genuine spiritual maturity (2 Tim 4:1-4). Prior to writing this epistle to his young companion, he had met briefly with the Ephesian elders en route to Rome. In this solemn meeting the tent-making missionary who was instrumental in founding the church at Ephesus unburdened his heart to the elders of that church. His heart was for their survival. Committed as he was to spiritual development his concern went beyond this; he wanted to leave behind a vibrant, God-glorifying church that would make him proud at the judgment (cf. 1 Thess 2:19).

It is in this light that we must understand Paul’s discourse at Miletus. “And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus, and called the elders of the church. And when they were come to him, he said unto them, Ye know, from the first day that I came into Asia, after what manner I have been with you at all seasons, serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears, and temptations, which befell me by the lying in wait of the Jews: and how I kept back nothing that was profitable to you, but have showed you, and have taught you publicly, and from house to house...Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God” (Acts 20:17-20, 26-27). Two verses are worthy of comment: verses 20 and 27. The latter is an expansion of the former. As an instructor in righteous living Paul did not fail to teach such truths as election, predestination, and the perseverance of the saints, as well as the fact that God is to his people a consuming fire to those who shun their responsibility to live holy.

Yet another aspect of Paul’s concern for the people of God is seen in his prayer life. If, as the epigram goes, “intercession is love on its knees,” then there is no doubt that the Apostle

to the Gentiles really loved his converts. It is worthy of note that in most of his epistles written from prison, prayers are mentioned at the beginning and end. (Eph 1:15-22; 6:18; Phil 1:3; 4:6; Col 1:9; 4:1). Paul's prayer for the Colossians is quite significant in the light of the fact that he did not start that assembly. He was so committed to helping people attain Christ likeness that he constantly cried out to God who alone can effect any lasting change in human nature.

Did the Apostle Paul have any plan to ensure that the church throughout her history would have a true "apostolic" succession, that is, an unbroken line of leaders who would genuinely care for God's heritage? And if so, what is it? I believe that the answer to the first question is in the affirmative. The balance of this chapter attempts to address the second.

Already in Paul's day there was a shortage of Christian leaders. He could say to Timothy his trusted co-laborer, "Do thy diligence to come shortly unto me: for Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this world, and is departed unto Thessalonica" (2 Tim 4:9-10). It must have been with tears in his eyes that he penned these words to the Philippians Christians, "But I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy shortly unto you, that I also maybe of good comfort, when I know your state. For I have no man likeminded, who will naturally care for your state. For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's."

But if this was indeed the case in the first-century church it was not Paul's fault, for it is evident from a study of his ministry that one of his priorities was the training of Christian leaders. This he sought to do by way of positive example. Once again we turn to Acts 20:17-35. What Paul did among the early converts at Ephesus was not accidental. He consciously stressed certain traits and habits, because he wanted his spiritual children to follow suit. If the Ephesian elders had missed this point the apostle is at pains here to put the issue beyond doubt. He wanted to underscore such virtues as humility, patience (v. 14), longsuffering, boldness (vv. 20, 21, 22, 23, 24), faithfulness (26, 27), and watchfulness (v. 28-31). He was particularly desirous of imparting to his converts in general and leaders in particular a meaningful work ethic: "I have coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel. Yea, ye yourselves know that these hands have ministered unto my necessities and to them that were with me.

I have showed you all things, how that so laboring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:33-35). This is confirmed by his reference to this same kind of ethic in Ephesians 4:28 and his use of the word "labor" on both occasions. If one does not understand the apostle, his anxiety to have people follow his pattern of life seems to border on egotism. Indeed, an enumeration of the number of personal references in Acts 20 would definitely convince some of his conceit. But statistics in this case does not give a true picture of the man. Living an exemplary life was at the root of his strategy to train leaders. Twice Paul urged the Philippians to take his life-style seriously (Phil 3:17-18; 4:9).

Evidently, from 2 Timothy 2:2 Paul had a class of specially handpicked men whom he trained to carry the burden of the ministry in the succeeding generation. Every believer should be concerned about telling the gospel to others. However, this passage is particularly

applicable to leaders. Every such servant of God, while not neglecting the whole congregation, should endeavor to develop other leaders who will be qualified and competent to carry the gospel effectively to others. This is how the gospel reached the twenty-first century. It is our responsibility to prepare others to reach the next generation.

What was Paul's curriculum for potential Church leaders like? This we are not explicitly told, but from his various emphases here and there it may be possible to put together a fairly accurate picture of at least his "core disciplines." We can be fairly certain that such a curriculum was squarely based on the sacred writings. It is highly improbable that the young pastor at Ephesus was hearing the words of 2 Timothy 2:2 for the first time. The apostle must have imparted to his students sound Bible study principles, drawing both from his rabbinic and Christian traditions. In some places we find this missionary theologian stressing (rather than straining) certain points of grammar (e.g., the singular number in Gal 3:16). He wanted Timothy to give heed to "sound words" (2 Tim 1:13). Imprisonment and impending execution did not stop the apostle Paul from serious study of God's Word (2 Tim 4). This must have had a tremendous effect on his protégé Timothy.

As a missionary theologian the Apostle Paul was faithful both to his evangelistic call and his follow-up efforts. He also sought to reproduce himself in men and women ("men," generic in 2 Tim 2:2) who would carry the torch of leadership to yet another generation of believers. It is the apostle's work in these three areas that made him great in my judgment. It seems evident, then, that Paul was consciously carrying out in his ministry what is commonly known as the great commission (Matt 28:18-20; cf. John 14:15; 2 Cor 5:14). What the apostle Paul and others did for the first century is left for us to do in the twenty-first, provided our definition and declaration of the Gospel carry conviction.

Gospel Declaration and Definition (5:1-6:10)

In spiritual and theological terms, the Galatians are children of the free woman (4:31). As such they are children of divine promise (4:28) and power (4:29). The stark implication of this reality is that their new found freedom in Christ must be celebrated—and guarded with the utmost seriousness! (5:1).¹⁰ What this means as well is that the outward sign of the particular yoke is not circumcision, the distinguishing mark of the old covenant. On account of the ground-breaking and earth-shaking work of the Messiah¹¹ on the cross, circumcision and all that it entails have lost their value. In fact, all those who insist on circumcision as a badge of honour are obliged to keep the other 612 stipulations that make up the Mosaic covenant (v.3).

What is worse, anyone who would strive to be right with God by obeying the Mosaic law severs all ties with the Messiah and rejects the grace of God mediated through his son (cf. John 1:16-17). "A man who says 'I was saved by grace, but now my continuance depends on my own effort,' has fallen from grace. That is what it means 'to fall from grace.'"¹² This is not to deny

¹⁰The clause in 5:1, "The Messiah has liberated you with freedom" (τῇ ἐλευθερίᾳ ἡμᾶς Χριστὸς ἠλευθέρωσεν) appears to be emphatic; Moule, *An Idiom Book of New Testament Greek*, 44 n2.

¹¹ Recalling the tremendous account of Matt 27:51-54.

¹² H. Ironside, *Expository Messages on the Epistle to the Galatians* (Neptune, NJ: 1941), 179.

that effort must be made in living the Christian life; that would be patently false, as Philippians 2:12-13 demonstrates. The kind of effort inveighed against is the type that refuses the input of the Spirit (see v. 16 below); it is the kind of living that can boast on one's own effort akin to what we see in Luke 18. From the divine side, justification comes through the grace of God (5:4b). From the human side (5:5),¹³ whoever expresses genuine interest in being right with God must come to realise that “without faith it is impossible to please him” (Heb 11:6).

In the letter to the Romans (8:30c), written after Galatians, justification is treated as a done deal. Here in Galatians 5:5b it is something the people of God anticipate. Did the apostle change his mind by the time he penned his *magnum opus*? Perhaps the best way to explain this seeming contradiction is to recognize the New Testament teaching of the already-not-yet (*A-N-Y*) construct. *A-N-Y* reveals that the Messianic righteous and rule have arrived and also await consummation, like the zygote/embryo/foetus (already a human being but not yet); the wedding (already married but not yet); union with Christ (already ‘married’ but not yet); glorification (Rom 8:30c); being seated in heaven (Eph 2:6); and salvation in general (“*A Gad imself staat op da gud wok ya iina unu [already], an im naa go tap nou. Im a go gwaan du we im a du iina unu laif, til Jiizas Kraias kom bak a ort [not yet]*”—Philippians 1:6).¹⁴

Verse 7 sees the apostle Paul introducing an imagery of athletics that he does not develop (cf. 1 Cor 9; 2 Tim 2; Heb 12:1-2). It is used to commend the Galatians for their previous effort in adhering to the gospel of Christ as well as to challenge them to conduct serious introspection as to their recent massive and miserable failure in regard to said gospel. Who is responsible for this? Who is the cause of their stumbling? It is certainly not the One who enlisted them in the race in the first place (v.8). In verse 9 the imagery is switched from the realm of athletics to the domestic domain. Back in 3:1 the writer expressed shock at how soon the purity of the gospel was abandoned. Now in verse 10 he expresses Spirit-inspired confidence in their mental and spiritual resolve to stay the course, while at the same time assuring them that the real troublemaker (the ring-leader?), whether within or without, will have his day in court (*krima*).

With his endearing phrase “sisters and brothers” (ἀδελφοί/ *adelphoi*) and characteristic emphatic ‘I’ (ἐγὼ; v.11; cf. v.10), as well a powerful rhetorical question, Paul continues to argue for the obsolescence of the rite of circumcision as a mark of covenant relationship. Only a fool, the apostle implies, would allow himself to be persecuted for something he knows to be invalid and untrue.¹⁵ The writer, if he continued to proclaim the validity of circumcision, would be rendering ineffective the most significant event in history—the cross work of Christ. Such disaster (i.e., rendering ineffective the most significant event in history) would be tantamount to reversing or overturning the perfect and permanent basis on which human liberation was achieved at the

¹³ In vv. 5 and 6 the writer brings together his famous triad of Christian virtues: faith and hope (v. 5); love (6). In v. 5 hope is tied to eschatological righteousness, and in v. 6 faith and love are brought together as eternal values in contradistinction to the obsolete circumcision. Here faith is expressed in genuine love; in verse 22 love generates faith(-fullness).

¹⁴We make good use of the Jamaica New Testament (JNT) throughout; feel free to read the exposition against the backdrop of your favourite version. Observe the ‘already/not’ title of Kortright Davis: *Emancipation Still Comin’: Explorations in Caribbean Emancipatory Theology* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1990), and Jamaica independence.

¹⁵The same kind of logic applies to the crucifixion and resurrection.

cross, the proclamation of which is utter foolish to Gentiles and a serious stumbling block to anyone Jewish outside of Christ.

Verse 13 returns to the theme of liberation introduced above, forming an *inclusio* with verse 1. The freedom Paul has in mind is never a license to enjoy the pleasure of sin once again. On the contrary, it is a divine accreditation to serve. Here the apostle may be alluding to the early days of liberation from African slavery where the man of God directed the monarch at the time to let the people go that they might serve¹⁶ Yahweh (Ex 7-12). So verse 13

demands that service be motivated by love and demonstrate love. God's expression of love towards humanity was motivated by love (John 3:16) and demonstrated love (Romans 5:8). By the action of dying on the cross and taking upon himself all our sins Jesus, in a clear way, showed love for humanity. This verse calls Christians to commit to a lifestyle of service to humanity. It is this commitment to serve, embedded in the Jamaican National Pledge, that makes it one of [our] favourite poems . . . [It ends thus] "advancing the welfare of the whole human race."¹⁷

At this point (v. 14), and in support of verse 13, the writer horizontally summarizes the core of the Mosaic law with a citation from Leviticus 19:18.¹⁸ In a sense the choice of this text is somewhat surprising since earlier (according to the Jesus tradition) the Messiah cited Deuteronomy 6:4 (plus Lev 19:18) as his summary text. But the contexts are different. Paul's choice suits him well, because he will in short order demonstrate what lack of love for neighbour can do to a congregation or any other social unit for that matter (v. 15). The following list of vices (vv 19-21) also justifies his wisdom, and, for the apostle, failure to love the other is a symptom of a greater failure—failure to love the God who is love (1 John 4:7-8).

Having mentioned the serious danger that is posed by the flesh (v.15), the apostle hastens to mention the antidote: "*Mi a tel unu liv unu laif laik ou Gad Spirit se unu fi liv. Da wie de unu naa go gi iin tu sin an du di rang sitn dem we unu eva waahn fi du*" (Λέγω δέ, πνεύματι περιπατεῖτε καὶ ἐπιθυμίαν σαρκὸς οὐ μὴ τελήσητε / Walk¹⁹ in dependence on the Spirit, and you will in no way²⁰ fulfil the desire of the flesh; v.16). Walking (the metaphor used in Greek) is a series of dependent steps that is more dependent on the head than the feet. If the assemblies of the body of Christ located in Galatia (and elsewhere) will simultaneously express total dependence on their Messianic Leader in their midst, while at the same time making every effort to live right, victory over the works of the flesh is guaranteed. But such route to the ongoing liberation from the power of sin, said to be practical sanctification by theologians, is no easy matter (v.17; see Appendix 2). There is battle between the fleshly internal and the indwelling Spirit; but if the Spirit is greater than the infernal foe (1 John 4:4), the flesh is no match for Him, provided the Messianic community submit (James 4:7; Rom 8:12-14).

¹⁶ This verb can also be translated 'worship'.

¹⁷ C.A. Dennis, *Galatians* (Maitland: Xulon, 2016), 89; for a capable exposition of the pledge, see John C. Keane, *Inspiration from Jamaica's National Pledge* (Kingston: PearTree, 2012).

¹⁸ The vertical summary is found in Deut 6:4-5; v. 4 of this text is alluded to in 3:20.

¹⁹ περιπατεῖτε –2ND person plural imperative (JNT- *unu liv*).

²⁰ The phrase "you will in no way" contains a double negative (οὐ μὴ/*ou mē*) that underscores the emphatic character of the conditional promise.

The Galatians fully well knew the ugliness of their past, especially from the perspective of Christian hindsight. Verses 18-26, then, constitute a kind of challenge reminiscent of Joshua 24:15, or that of Elisha (1 Kings 18:21). The question is: Which sphere of influence will they allow to control their lives going forward?

<u>Flesh</u>	<u>Spirit</u>
Works of the law	faith, promise
Curse	blessing, inheritance
Slavery	friendship, sonship
Sin and death	justification and life
Hagar the slave woman	[Sarah] the free woman
Sinai and present Jerusalem	Jerusalem from above
Ishmael	Isaac
Persecutor	persecuted
Cast away	heir
Being under law	being led by the Spirit
Works of the flesh	fruit of the Spirit ²¹

So, as verse 18 affirms, the leading of the Spirit is the way to deliverance from all the debilitating effects of the left column, especially from the strong insistence of the trouble-makers. What the left column throws up, like a badly managed cesspool, is described in verses 19-21. Every vice²² mentioned in these verses is destructive of community:

- Sexual immorality (πορνεία): the kind of conduct that is proscribed in Leviticus 18.²³
- Impurity (ἀκαθαρσία): perhaps the best definition of the term is summarized in Matt 5:19-20.
- Debauchery (ἀσέλγεια): “denotes open shamelessness, insolent disregard of decency.”²⁴
- Idolatry (εἰδωλολατρία): the worship of anything or anyone apart from the living and true God, *El Elyon*.

²¹ M. Silva, “Galatians, Theology of,” in W. Elwell, ed., *EDT* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996), 282. “In the course of his argument, Paul sets up a sharp distinction between two modes of existence, represented by various concepts. Reflecting on these contrasts provides significant insights into Paul’s theology.”

²²The list is from the NIV.

²³ In 1 Cor 6 the term could be translated ‘prostitution’. See also, Julie-Ann Dowding, “1 Corinthians 6: 9-11 As A Caribbean Response to The Homosexual Agenda,” *Caribbean Journal of Evangelical Theology* 16 (2016): 1-26.

²⁴ H. Vos, *Galatians* (Chicago: Moody, 1971), 103.

- Witchcraft (φαρμακεία): the inordinate dependence on/or illicit use of drugs in witchcraft and the like.²⁵
- Hatred (ἔχθραι): enmity of all sort (including, *mi spirit no tek im/ar?*).
- Discord (ἔρις): “the natural outcome of hatred both in the world and the truth.”²⁶
- Jealousy (ζήλος): uneasy feeling of insecurity at the blessings of others.
- Fits of rage (θυμοί): lack of anger management.
- Selfish ambition (ἐπιθειᾶι): or rivalry.
- Dissensions (διχοστασίαι): This and the following “denote a state of affairs in which men are divided and feuds flourish.”²⁷
- Factions (αἰρέσεις): Division,²⁸ cliquishness.
- Envy (φθόνοι): strong desire to have other people’s blessings; grudgeful.
- Drunkenness (μέθαι): excessive indulgence in strong drink.
- Orgies (κῶμοι): “excessive feasting.”²⁹

Before passing on to the recommended list, a warning is issued, “[A]s I said before, those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.”³⁰

5:22 But the Spirit’s fruit is love.³¹ How is this love defined? Contextually, it is that outgoing concern which seeks the highest good (the *will of God*) for others. If it be assumed that there are fundamentally three types of love—loving others for self-sake, for their sake, and *for God’s sake*—the fruit of the Spirit belongs to the last mentioned. On the vertical level it is obedience to the word of God (John 14:15). This exotic expression of the heart of God requires of the people of God to care for even enemies. If we imagine this kind of love (*agapē*)³² to be a pizza, the slices are *philia* (fraternal regard), *storgē* (family love), and *erōs* (the driving force behind sexual intimacy). It has its source in the nature of God (1 John 4:16) as well as it is the best description of the Son of God (cf. 1 Cor 13: 4-7). So then the Spirit’s fruit³³ is love (ἀγάπη), manifesting itself in:

²⁵ At the time of writing, Giovanni Dennis is doing a week-long series on RJR (Sept 10-14, 2018) on many of the Jamaican youth (from primary school-university) who are engaged in drug abuse (from marijuana to coke).

²⁶ Boice, “Galatians,” 496.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ B. Newman, *Greek-English Dictionary of the New Testament* (Stuttgart: UBS, 1971), 5.

^{29,29} Moo, *Galatians*, 361. The phrase “and the like” shows that the list is merely partial.

³⁰ On this and other similar warnings relative to the issue of salvation, see C. Adrian Thomas, *A Case for Mixed-Audience with Reference to the Warning Passages in the Book of Hebrews*. New York: Peter Lang, 2008.

³¹ Here we follow M. de Boer, *Galatians* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2011), 362; the translation is ours. The list itself is from the NIV.

³² 100% commitment to God and the godless, and all in between. The word is used 75t in the Pauline literature, according to Moo, *Galatians*, 264. Of course, the 100% commitment of this kind of love is dependent on the context, e.g., in Luke 6 *agapē* is used for the truncated commitment of unbelievers.

³³ According to D. Wallace (*Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996], 106), the genitive construction highlights the productive source of this qualitative fruit. We have added some adjectives to bring this point out.

- Joy: χαρά (*aalwiew api no mata wa*) a sense of unspeakable delight.
- Peace: ειρήνη (*liv gud wid piipl*) a sense of indescribable well-being.
- Forbearance: μακροθυμία (*aalwiew tek taim wid ada piipl*) a sense of unimaginable patience.
- Kindness: χρηστότης (*kain*) undeniable expressions of mercy.
- Goodness: ἀγαθωσύνη (*eva a du gud fi piipl*) irrepressible sense of generosity.
- Faithfulness: πίστις (*fi bi sumadi we piipl kyan chos*) a sense of incomparable loyalty.
- Gentleness: πραΰτης (*jengkl*) a sense of ineffable meekness.
- Self-control: ἐγκράτεια (*ou fi kanchuol self*) a sense of inimitable personal mastery (cf. Matt 11:28-29; 1 Cor 9:24-27).

23b-26 “Against such things there is no law.” Neither the Mosaic Law nor the Messianic Code of ethics (v.2) would legislate against these virtues the way they must against the vices of verses 15, 18-21. The vices are the sure sign that another power is in control, since lack of self-control is *self* (i.e., the flesh) in control. But one of the unmistakable indicatives of the Christian life is that the power of the flesh was dealt a death blow on the cross (v. 24). This makes victory for the child of God possible; what makes the victory practicable (or experiential) is obedience to the corresponding imperatives (5:16, 25-26; cf. Rom 6:1-6, 12-14; Eph 5:18-21.).³⁴ Therefore, those “who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other.” (vv. 24-26 NIV).

In continuing his strong reaffirmation of the liberty found only in the gospel, Paul once again exposes the futility of obtaining a right standing before God by keeping the law (5:2-12). Accordingly, circumcision is authoritatively (v. 2) and summarily dismissed, and Spirit-related matters like grace, faith, love, and hope, are all promoted in its stead. He evidently speaks in this manner because “others had . . . undertaken to say what Paul believed or practiced in the matter of circumcision (cf. v.11); here is Paul’s own account”³⁵ that begins with the solemn statement of verse 2. Equally emphatic is the expression of confidence on the part of Paul that his Galatian converts will adopt the proper posture on the matter, that the offenders in question will be brought to book (v.10), and that his cruciform focus of ministry is not misplaced (v.11).

As the apostle draws the letter to a close he strongly expresses the hope that his converts “will avow with him a belief in Christocentric and cross-centered theology that eliminates the necessity

³⁴ May be we could associate Paul’s indicatives (e.g., 2 Cor 5:17; Rom 8:30; 5:10; Col 2:15) and corresponding imperatives (Rom 12:2; Phil 3:21; 1 Cor 4:8 [?]; Rom 16:20) with the ANY (already/not yet) construct.

³⁵ F. F. Bruce, *Commentary on Galatians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 229.

for circumcision,”³⁶ so that they may reaffirm their new creation status in Christ (v.15; cf. 5:2 2:6). In the apostle’s own closing words: “But far be it from me to boast save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom the world is crucified to me, and I to the world . . . For the rest let no one trouble me, for I bear in my body the brands of the Lord Jesus” (DV). The passage in which these words are found is not an ordinary first-century epilogue. In it Paul fitly summarizes the crucial elements he has already discussed in the body of the letter,³⁷ and that by way of “self-exemplification and self-portrayal . . . [he] drive[s] a wedge between the Galatians and the Judaizers by convincing them to side with Paul against his opponents.”³⁸ Siding with the apostle also means a preferential option for the weak (6:1-5):

Even if a man should be detected in some sin, my brothers, the spiritual ones among you should quietly set him back on the right path, not with any feeling of superiority but being yourselves on guard against temptation. ²Carry each other’s burdens and so live out the law of Christ.³⁴ If a man thinks he is “somebody”, he is deceiving himself, for that very thought proves that he is nobody. Let every man learn to assess properly the value of his own work and he can then be glad when he has done something worth doing without dependence on the approval of others. ⁵For every man must “shoulder his own pack.” **JBP**

*Tek kier so unu no faal iina sin tu. 2Wen sumadi av prablem, unu fi elp dem. Unu fi elp unu wan aneda. Kaaz wen unu du dat unu a du we Kraiz Jiizas se unu mos du. 3Kaaz ef sumadi tingk se dem big an impuotant bot dem a nobadi, dem ongl a fuul demself. 4Evribadi mos luk iina demself an si ef wa dem a du rait. Unu no fi luk pan nobadi fi si ef unu rait, unu mos ongl luk pan unusef. An den ef wa unu a du rait, unu kyan api wid unusef 5Kaaz evribadi mos kyari dem uona luod. **JNT***

6:1 When the “flesh” is at work in any church setting, there is bound to be casualties (cf. 5:15). So those who are consistently resisting the fleshly life-style (Rom 8:13-14) by walking in the Spirit are called upon to rescue the perishing from within. The story is told of a man who was about to jump from a high-rising building in New Kingston, JA. The JCF sent for their most tactful police officer, who on arrival, appeared to have been making steady progress in his effort to dissuade the unfortunate man from taking his own life. The conversation was recorded, the last part of which (i.e., the officer’s closing remarks) went like this: “I’m glad you’ve finally decided not to take the plunge . . . but tell me something, why you wanted to kill yourself in the first place—give me ten good reasons!” On hearing the ten most persuasive lines why death is preferable to life they both jumped. The moral of the story lies in the plural personal pronoun (*unu*; **JNT**). In restoring the erring believer, it is best not to go alone. Spirituality must be wedded with sagacity—and even in that case, meekness must be matched with sober introspection (1c).³⁹

6:2-5 The type of behaviour enjoined in the previous verse is part of what it means to bear another’s burden. It is a concrete expression of the law of Christ (v. 2; see Appendix). Verses 3-4 appear to pick on the warning of verse 1 concerning the kind of self-examination that should

³⁶ Longenecker, *Galatians*, 234.

³⁷ Bruce, *Galatians*, 268.

³⁸ Dodd, *Paul's Paradigmatic 'I'*, 169.

³⁹ NIV and most English versions fail to bring out the change from plural to singular in the imperative construction; JNT added one plural ‘you’ too many.

characterize those who are engaged in spiritual restoration. Certainly, the verses have a wider application, and, as verse 5 makes plain, the individual dimension is important as well.

6:6-10 *Unu we a lorn Gad wod mos shier aal a di gud sitn dem we unu av wid unu tiicha. 7No fuul unusef: Unu kyaahn tek Gad mek preke. Eniting we unu plaant a dat unu ago riip. 8So ef yu plaant di sitn dem we yu badi waahn, a ded unu ago ded — a dat unu ago riip. Bot ef yu plaant di sitn dem we Gad Spirit waahn, yu wi riip laif, wan laif we naa go don. 9So mek wi no get taiyad fi du gud, kaaz ef wi no gi op, wen Gad redi, im wi mek wi riip nof gud sitn. 10So weneva wi av di chaans fi du gud, mek wi du it. Mek wi du gud fi evribadi, vos ef dem a paat a Gad fambili an biliiv iina Jiizas laik wi. JNT*

Verse 6 is an example of how burden bearing is firmly grounded in the Messianic code of ethics and can find meaningful expression among the various congregations of Galatia: those taught must welcome the privilege of reciprocating the blessings received, whether spiritually or materially (Luke 10:7; cf. 1 Cor 9:14).⁴⁰ The next couple of verses (7-8) may then have their closest application in the principle enunciated in verse 6, that is, failure to share is a way of sowing to the flesh. On the other hand, giving is a way of sowing to the Spirit and at the same time laying up treasures in heaven. Although these verses must not be limited to giving, contextually they do seem to make good sense when understood in that way. The agricultural language is continued in verse 9 with the strong encouragement to persevere in the good deeds outlined in the chapter thus far; in fact, the incentive of reaping at a divinely appointed season in the future, whether near or far, is enticing.

Conclusion

One of the things the true gospel does for the people of God is to enable them to be meaningfully engaged in good works (cf. Eph 2:8-10). So if anyone would get the impression that the writer is against good works, verse 10 should disabuse their mind. The works of the law, then, that are not recommended are those associated with the Mosaic economy in terms of how one enters into covenant relationship with God and how this relationship is maintained to the end; the works that are encouraged in verses 9-10 are those that are connected to the law of Christ, based on the example the Master himself has set and what his Spirit brings to fruition (5:22-23). The priority of this welfare engagement must be carefully noted (v. 10). Such engagement is sometimes hard but never burdensome. The gravity of this point (and all that preceded it) is underscored by the capital letters of the writer (6:11).

⁴⁰ Moo, *Galatians*, 383.

APPENDIX 1

Theology of Galatians

Eleutheria (liberation), according to Betz, “is the central theological concept which sums up the Christian situation before God . . . in this world. It is the basic concept underlying Paul’s argument throughout the letter.”⁴¹ This is borne out by the chiasmic structure of the correspondence:

- A Prologue (1:1-12)
- B Way of the Flesh and Spirit: A Personal pre-post-Conversion Testimony (1:11-2:10)
- C Justification by Faith (2:11-3:4)
- D Arguments from Scripture (3:5-29)
- E Messianic Liberation (4:1-10)
- D’ Arguments from Scripture (4:11-31)
- C’ Justification by Faith (5:1-13)
- B’ Ways of the Flesh and Spirit: Potential post-Conversion Testimony? (5:11-6:16)
- A’ Epilogue (6:17-18)⁴²

Paul’s perspective of holistic salvation, a major theme of Caribbean Theology, is highlighted in the central section of the above chiasmus, as well gleaned from a twofold structure of Galatians: *Liberation in terms of Justification*⁴³ and *Union*: (1:6–4:31); and *Liberation in terms of Sanctification*⁴⁴ and *Glorification*⁴⁵ (5:1–6:18).

⁴¹ Betz, *Galatians*, 255.

⁴² Adapted from M. Silva, *Explorations in Exegetical Method: Galatians as a Test Case* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996), 91.

⁴³ On this see D. Pearson, “Justification by Click,” in *Romans in Context: A Theological Appreciation of Paul’s Magnum Opus* (Eugene, Oregon: RP, 2011), 55–57.

⁴⁴ See also the Appendix below. We also need to bear in mind that the sanctified “live a life of victory, but it is qualified victory. We are not yet what we shall be. We are not yet totally like the Messiah (1 John 3:2). We live in the tension between the “already” and the “not yet.” We are genuinely new persons but not totally new.” (A. A. Hoekema, “Reformed View,” in *Five Views on Sanctification*, edited by Stanley Gundry [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987], 190).

⁴⁴ Even those who believe that the God of Abraham and David is “jealous and proud of it; a petty, unjust, unforgiving control-freak; a vindictive, bloodthirsty ethnic cleanser; a misogynistic, homophobic, racist, infanticidal, genocidal, filicidal, pestilential, megalomaniacal, sadomasochistic, capriciously malevolent bully” (Richard Dawkins, *The God Delusion* [Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2006], 31).

⁴⁵ Cf. the structure of Romans as well as A. J. Hultgren (*Paul’s Letter to the Romans: A Commentary* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011], 294–309) labels 8:1–11 “Liberation from Sin and Life in the Spirit;” verses 12–13 should probably have

It is the B'-section that takes up the various strands of liberation and weaves them into the beautiful tapestry of tension (5:17) and new creation (6:15; see Appendix below). It is this segment as well that emphasizes the already/not character of divine liberation, which, if not understood, has the potential for so much confusion and misapplication in the lived-experience of people of faith everywhere.⁴⁶

been included here, especially v. 13. R. Longenecker, *Introducing Romans: Critical Issues in Paul's Most Famous Letter* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011), 347, proposes that chapters 5–8 set “out the essence of what [Paul] proclaims in his Gentile mission” This can hardly be doubted, but we do not have any letter from him to a purely Jewish church to fully support this contention.

⁴⁶Caribbean theologians, though quite attuned to the need for fulsome liberation, seldom mention this already/not perspective of divine deliverance that is perhaps best summarized in the words of Philippians 1:6 (See the Appendix 2 for further clarification). Having said all this, we still have to reckon with the fact that “we know in part.” The already/not perspective (or realized eschatology) may be further illustrated (by way of analogy) from the OT in the death of Adam and Eve in Gen 3. The moment they ate the forbidden breadfruit (On this, see Bruce Metzger's *Reminiscences of an Octogenarian* [Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1997, p. 200]), they died spiritually, long before their physical demise; when Sarah died, her widower bought a plot to bury her, though the land was theirs. In the NT, the Messiah announced the kingdom, yet taught his community to pray, “Let your kingdom come!” And when he died his unique death he cried, “finished,” because he (during the three hour of darkness?) had already borne our sins in his own body on the tree (1 Peter 2:24; cf. 2 Cor 5:21; Isa 53:5-6, 10), before uttering “into your hands I commit my spirit,” signalling his physical death. Also, in the first century the two stages of marriage (betrothal before the wedding) correspond to the church being the Messianic ‘bride.’ Today in the western world the *decree nisi* preceding the *decree absolute* may serve the same illustrative purpose. With this legal analogue, I rest my case.

APPENDIX

The Dialectic Of Messianic Liberation in Galatians

