



Galatians - Chapter Six

IV Galatians 5:16-6:10 - Life in the Spirit and Love (continues/concludes)

Summary of Chapter Six

The Gospel teaches unity in Christ, yet somehow the Galatian churches had become disunited, in part because of the doctrine of the false teachers and in part because it appeared that some may have seen themselves as somehow spiritually superior. Paul calls for a united teamwork approach to church, with those who are doing well offering encouragement and support to those who are encountering problems with their own Christian walk.

Paul does not point to any individuals who may be the root cause of the problems but he does say, in a nutshell, if you want to follow the law, follow the law of Christ, a law of self-giving to others in genuine love for them.

Paul writes a classic phrase that has become a modern parable: 'you reap what you sow', although this was not a new concept: <<As I have seen, those who plough iniquity and sow trouble reap the same>> (Job 4:8), and: <<Sow for yourselves righteousness; reap steadfast love; break up your fallow ground; for it is time to seek the Lord, that he may come and rain righteousness upon you. You have ploughed wickedness, you have reaped injustice, you have eaten the fruit of lies>> (Hosea 10:12-13a). Paul's call is to sow what is spiritual and not what is of the flesh. He also issues a call to persevere in order to reap the rewards of the Kingdom of God.

Paul concludes the letter by stating there can only be one Christian boast. It is not in the flesh, or of human achievement but in the Cross of Christ. And those who boast should be prepared to face the persecution that comes with professing the Cross, willing to bear the scars of such ill treatment with pride in their Saviour. The letter ends with a brief benediction for the Lord's grace on those whom Paul still viewed as his family in Christ Jesus.

IV.b Galatians 6:1-10 - Bear One Another's Burdens

So far Paul has led the Galatian believers to understand the historical and theological background for the crisis in their churches. He has given them general principles about life in the Spirit. Now he spells out specific responsibilities for those who are led by the Spirit so that they can rebuild their broken relationships.

Paul illustrates what he means by the life of love in the Spirit, which he described in more general terms in the previous section.

¹ My friends, if anyone is detected in a transgression, you who have received the Spirit should restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness. Take care that you yourselves are not tempted.

Galatians 6:1

If anyone is detected in a transgression. This statement is a clear indication that believers have a responsibility to care for others when they fall into sin and to be willing, not to condemn them for it, but to restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness.

The word restore used here is also used in medical references to a doctor resetting a broken bone or in Scripture to the fishermen repairing their nets: *<<As he went a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John, who were in their boat mending the nets>>* (Mark 1:19). This gives the understanding of bringing something back into its useful state for service.

In a spiritual context restore means perfecting in spiritual maturity and equipping for service: *<<Finally, brothers and sisters, farewell. Put things in order, listen to my appeal, agree with one another, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you>>* (2 Corinthians 13:11), *<<The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ>>* (Ephesians 4:11-12), *<<Night and day we pray most earnestly that we may see you face to face and restore whatever is lacking in your faith>>* (1 Thessalonians 3:10), and: *<<Now may the God of peace, who brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, make you complete in everything good so that you may do his will, working among us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory for ever and ever. Amen>>* (Hebrews 13:20-21). In 1 Corinthians 1:10c Paul uses the same verb to express his desire that the divided church in Corinth: *<<should be united in the same mind and the same purpose>>*.

Paul adds the caveat take care that you yourselves are not tempted to warn believers not to get drawn into someone else's error. Whereas the call for restoration is given in the plural form to address the entire church, you here is singular to indicate responsibility is at an individual level. Sin in the church is not a hypothetical possibility, it is a reality. This verse calls for a spirit of compassion for others, for all are vulnerable to temptations. Yet Paul is more concerned about the manner in which sinners in the church are treated than in the sin itself. It should be remembered that it is not only those who are hurt by the sin that are the

victims; the sinner is also a victim of the sin: <<*Jesus answered them, 'Very truly, I tell you, everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin'*>> (John 8:34).

You who have received the Spirit does not refer to an elite class of Christians but rather to those who have more maturity and experience in the Christian life, and who are therefore in a position to help their beleaguered brother or sister. The adjective spiritual means 'living and walking according to the Holy Spirit'. Refer to the comments made on 1 Corinthians 2:15, 3:1, and 14:37, and Galatians 5:16. It includes, but is not limited to, the qualities listed as the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22-23.

Maturity and experience in spirituality has nothing to do with the number of years a person has been a Christian. It is to do with their perception of and positive response to the Spirit in guiding their own lives, and it may be that some relatively newer converts have more spiritual discernment than some who have been in the church for many years.

Moral failure in the church should not be a surprise, nor should it be considered fatal to the life of the church. What is important is the church's response when such failure occurs. The church may respond with harsh condemnation under the law. That response will crush the sinner and divide the church. That seems to have been what was happening in the churches in Galatia. The zealots for the law were merciless to sinners. But Paul wants to show that the occasion of sin is the opportunity for Spirit-led people to display the fruit of the Spirit in order to bring healing to the sinner and unity within the church.

² Bear one another's burdens, and in this way you will fulfil the law of Christ.

Galatians 6:2

To bear one another's burdens is the supreme imitation of Jesus, the ultimate burden-bearer: <<*But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed*>> (Isaiah 53:5 NIV), and: <<*We who are strong ought to put up with the failings of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Each of us must please our neighbour for the good purpose of building up the neighbour. For Christ did not please himself; but, as it is written, 'The insults of those who insult you have fallen on me'*>> (Romans 15:1-3). He has even gone to the length of taking mankind's sins: <<*Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself for our sins to set us free from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father*>> (Galatians 1:3-4), and the curse of the law upon himself: <<*Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us – for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree'*>> (Galatians 3:13). He is not asking much of his followers to bear some of the load of others!

The term burdens, Greek *baros*, may refer to all kinds of physical, emotional, mental, moral or spiritual burdens. Support can come in the form of actual intervention, such as making financial contributions or giving time to work alongside someone, providing moral support and time spent in prayer. However, the context here seems to relate to offering non-judgemental support for those

who are committing sin. Carrying the burdens of others requires in-depth participation in their pain and sorrow. The important point is to genuinely care.

You will fulfil the law of Christ. Although Paul insists that the Galatians are free from obeying Jewish ceremonial laws, refer to comments on Galatians 2:11-12, this does not mean they are free from all of God's moral requirements.

The law of Christ in a broad sense means the entire body of ethical teaching that Jesus gave and endorsed, see comments on 1 Corinthians 9:21, but in a specific sense here it probably refers to the command to love one's neighbour: <<***And a second is like it: "You shall love your neighbour as yourself"***>> (Matthew 22:39), <<***I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another***>> (John 13:34), and: <<***You do well if you really fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, 'You shall love your neighbour as yourself'***>> (James 2:8), which, if followed fully, will result in obeying the rest of God's moral law: <<***Owe no one anything, except to love one another; for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. The commandments, 'You shall not commit adultery; You shall not murder; You shall not steal; You shall not covet'; and any other commandment, are summed up in this word, 'Love your neighbour as yourself.' Love does no wrong to a neighbour; therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law***>> (Romans 13:8-10), fulfilling the written law of God and the law of Christ.

It is clear that Paul does not mean to replace one set of written laws with another. Certainly, Jesus provided a whole raft of ethical teaching and guidance for life before God. However, the primary act of Jesus was to show love for others. He stated how he loved his disciples; he went to the Cross bearing a heavy burden because of his love for sinners; he was raised from death as an act of love by his Father that gave hope to all those who would believe in him. Hence all who are united with Christ and are led by the Spirit will also fulfil the high standard of love established by the life, death and resurrection of Christ; like him, they will love sinners and carry their burdens. Serving one another in love in this way expresses Christ's love and so fulfils Christ's law.

³ For if those who are nothing think they are something, they deceive themselves. ⁴ All must test their own work; then that work, rather than their neighbour's work, will become a cause for pride. ⁵ For all must carry their own loads.

Galatians 6:3-5

For if those who are nothing think they are something, they deceive themselves. When people think too highly of themselves, they are judging themselves as better than others, claiming some attainment of knowledge or virtue or to be closer to God, among others. Paul warns against this elsewhere: <<***For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of yourself more highly than you ought to think, but to think with sober judgement, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned***>> (Romans 12:3). This attitude of self-elevation brings with it no charity, compassion, understanding, love for neighbour, or desire to help those in need, it

only brings pride in one's own achievements. Such people are living in self-deception, and therefore choose to be nothing or useless to God and others. Jesus gave an excellent example of this attitude in the Parable of the Pharisee and the Tax-Collector, where the two men are compared: <<*The Pharisee, standing by himself, was praying thus, "God, I thank you that I am not like other people: thieves, rogues, adulterers, or even like this tax-collector. I fast twice a week; I give a tenth of all my income." But the tax-collector, standing far off, would not even look up to heaven, but was beating his breast and saying, "God, be merciful to me, a sinner!"*>> (Luke 18:11-13).

All must test their own work. To judge one's own work is to test it according to Christ's example, and not any other person's. Believers are not to think better of themselves by pointing out the weaknesses of others. One common saying is: 'you don't have to blow my candle out to make yours shine brighter'. The rejoicing in one's self alone comes from recognition of one's desire and work in following the Lord's example.

For all must carry their own loads is a call to personal accountability: <<*But all shall die for their own sins*>> (Jeremiah 31:30a), and: <<*For all of us must appear before the judgement seat of Christ, so that each may receive recompense for what has been done in the body, whether good or evil*>> (2 Corinthians 5:10). While it is right to help carry the burden of others who are found in transgression, this statement reveals that the individual has a responsibility to complete the work they have been given to do by God.

There is no contradiction here with v.2, which calls for Christians to carry each other's burdens. In fact, Paul uses two different Greek words to make a clear distinction between the burden (*baros*) and the load (*phortion*). Although these two words are basically synonymous in other contexts, the change of nouns in this context indicates a change of reference. Verse 2 refers to the need to come to the aid of others who cannot carry the crushing burden of the consequences of their sin. Verse 5 refers to work given to believers by God, before whom they will have to give an account of how they used the opportunities and talents he gave them in order to serve him.

⁶ Those who are taught the word must share in all good things with their teacher.

Galatians 6:6

Those who are taught the word must share. Believers have a responsibility not just to pass on what they have been taught but also to respect those who have given of themselves to teach. Paul gives similar advice to Timothy: <<*You then, my child, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus; and what you have heard from me through many witnesses entrust to faithful people who will be able to teach others as well*>> (2 Timothy 2:1-2).

Paul instructs the church to support its teachers materially, with food, money, and whatever good things are appropriate: <<*In the same way, the Lord commanded that those who proclaim the gospel should get their living by the gospel*>> (1 Corinthians 9:14). Refer also to comments made on vv.7-8.

⁷ Do not be deceived; God is not mocked, for you reap whatever you sow. ⁸ If you sow to your own flesh, you will reap corruption from the flesh; but if you sow to the Spirit, you will reap eternal life from the Spirit.

Galatians 6:7-8

Do not be deceived. Here, Paul is saying be careful, do not deceive yourselves, or be deceived by others. God cannot be fooled by pretended outward behaviour for he can read the intent of the heart. From the heart, the seed is sown, and what is sown will grow and mature according to that seed; a seed that shall bear the fruit to be harvested. Anyone who believes differently is guilty of self-deception: <<***The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?***>> (Jeremiah 17:9 NIV).

God is not mocked does not mean that he will immediately retaliate against those who are foolish enough to do so, even if the psalmist calls for such action: <<***Rise up, O God, and defend your cause; remember how fools mock you all day long***>> (Psalm 74:22 NIV). It is not that he is powerless to defend his cause; just that such people will miss out on his blessings and will ultimately lose the rewards that are on offer to those who would turn to him through Christ.

For you reap whatever you sow. In this context, Paul's reference to reaping is a reference to the blessings of eternal life, rather than to temporal blessings, that the believer will reap as the result of sowing his life to the Spirit. There is a different experience of eternal life waiting for those who sow to your own flesh! As Paul argues elsewhere, the believer's expectation and experience in this life will be persecution and affliction, but: <<***For this slight momentary affliction is preparing us for an eternal weight of glory beyond all measure***>> (2 Corinthians 4:17). This is confirmed by Jesus' own words: <<'If the world hates you, be aware that it hated me before it hated you. If you belonged to the world, the world would love you as its own. Because you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world – therefore the world hates you. Remember the word that I said to you, "Servants are not greater than their master." If they persecuted me, they will persecute you; if they kept my word, they will keep yours also. But they will do all these things to you on account of my name, because they do not know him who sent me'>> (John 15:18-21), <<***And they will do this because they have not known the Father or me***>> (John 16:33).

In the context of the letter Paul may be meaning that sow to your own flesh refers to those who thought they could earn salvation by works of the Jewish Law, starting with circumcision, then adding the rites and ceremonies; all works of the flesh that bring disappointment, guilt and condemnation.

Paul has been saying consistently that there are two choices for the Galatians and indeed all believers to make: whether to walk with the Spirit or follow the desires of the flesh. Paul's readers cannot remain neutral; they must decide which way to go. Since each individual must decide for himself or herself which way to live, Paul puts his challenge in a singular form.

A primary part of what Paul is calling for here is the financing of the church and its ministry. As he did in 2 Corinthians 8-9, Paul is calling on believers to give generously of their earthly wealth in order to reap the rewards of eternal blessing. This includes proper payment for those who are gifted in teaching the word of God and give their time to such ministry: <<*Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honour, especially those who labour in preaching and teaching*>> (1 Timothy 5:17). He does so without mentioning money, for he does not wish to imply that salvation can in some way be bought, for giving is a matter of the heart: <<*for God loves a cheerful giver*>> (2 Corinthians 9:7b).

⁹ So let us not grow weary in doing what is right, for we will reap at harvest time, if we do not give up. ¹⁰ So then, whenever we have an opportunity, let us work for the good of all, and especially for those of the family of faith.

Galatians 6:9-10

Let us not grow weary in doing what is right. One of the biggest problems facing either paid staff or volunteers in churches is fatigue. This is a call to persevere through the tough times as seen in the church in Ephesus: <<*I also know that you are enduring patiently and bearing up for the sake of my name, and that you have not grown weary*>> (Revelation 2:3).

For we will reap at harvest time is likely a reference to the end of the age, as Jesus explained in the Parable of the Weeds: <<*He answered, 'The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man; the field is the world, and the good seed are the children of the kingdom; the weeds are the children of the evil one, and the enemy who sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are angels. Just as the weeds are collected and burned up with fire, so will it be at the end of the age*>> (Matthew 13:37-40).

However, there are many who do see the fruits of their labour in this life as well. It might be seen through the joy of a successful ministry that is seeing lives changed, or through new relationships that develop through the love shared. The Christian life is meant to be one of joy, irrespective of the hardships and trials that will inevitably be encountered.

While believers await their rewards (vv.7-9), they should work for the good of all: <<*Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due, when it is in your power to do it*>> (Proverbs 3:27), and: <<*He it is who gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity and purify for himself a people of his own who are zealous for good deeds*>> (Titus 2:14). The primary focus should be on serving those in the church, i.e. the family of faith, but never to the exclusion of people in the wider world. As Jesus made clear: <<*But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well*>> (Matthew 6:33 NIV), the Christian's primary allegiance is to the Kingdom of God, with God as 'our' heavenly Father: <<*Pray then in this way: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name*>> (Matthew 6:9), rather than to friends, the workplace, school, sports, or to anything else, even earthly families: <<*Another of his disciples said*

to him, 'Lord, first let me go and bury my father.' But Jesus said to him, 'Follow me, and let the dead bury their own dead'>> (Matthew 8:21-22).

V. Galatians 6:11-18 - Final Admonitions and Benediction

Paul summarises the main themes of the letter in his own handwriting and challenges the readers to stay true to the Gospel. To require circumcision is to deny the Cross and the dawning of the new creation. Those who belong to the new creation comprise the true Israel.

¹¹ See what large letters I make when I am writing in my own hand!

Galatians 6:11

Most likely Paul has been dictating the letter to a scribe, as was his usual custom: <<*I Tertius, the writer of this letter, greet you in the Lord*>> (Romans 16:22). Now, however, he adds his personal 'signature' to the letter: <<*I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand. This is the mark in every letter of mine; it is the way I write*>> (2 Thessalonians 3:17), a postscript in his own handwriting, which entailed writing in large letters. This would help to personalise the letter, authenticate its contents as coming from the author and form a summary section that would help the readers to focus on some of the key points raised.

It is possible, as some claim, that Paul wrote the whole letter by hand as it was his first known writing but there is no way of knowing this for sure and using a scribe was certainly common in letter writing during Paul's day.

Some commentators have linked Paul's illness or condition and the giving of their eyes, recorded in Galatians 4:13-15, with the large letters here to mean that Paul's condition was sight related. However, such evidence is purely speculative and without real substance to support it.

¹² It is those who want to make a good showing in the flesh that try to compel you to be circumcised – only that they may not be persecuted for the cross of Christ.

Galatians 6:12

Those who want to make a good showing in the flesh is a clear reference to the Judaizers, who were portraying their religion in a way that made it attractive to the Galatians. In doing so, they could avoid giving offence to other Jews by acting out their own faith as Christians according to the Gospel of Jesus. That is, they could then avoid being persecuted for the Cross of Christ. Jesus had criticised such actions as hypocrisy: <<*Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you clean the outside of the cup and of the plate, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. You blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup, so that the outside also may become clean*>> (Matthew 23:25-26).

¹³ Even the circumcised do not themselves obey the law, but they want you to be circumcised so that they may boast about your flesh.

Galatians 6:13

Even the circumcised do not themselves obey the law. This is a fact of history. It is not that the majority of Jews did not want to live in a way that honoured God. It is just that their sinful nature and the draws of the world around them made it impossible to obey the whole law, as previously discussed in the letter. Yet they wanted the Galatians to become circumcised and to follow parts of the law so that the Judaizers could boast they had made proselytes of these Christians, thus impressing their Jewish kinsfolk and avoiding any conflict with them over their own Christian faith. The prophets had warned of such boasting: <<*But you should not have gloated over your brother on the day of his misfortune; you should not have rejoiced over the people of Judah on the day of their ruin; you should not have boasted on the day of distress*>> (Obadiah 12), and: <<*This shall be their lot in return for their pride, because they scoffed and boasted against the people of the Lord of hosts*>> (Zephaniah 2:10).

In vv.12-13 Paul gives the clearest picture of the false teachers in the entire letter. He lists three key characteristics:

1. They are motivated by an obsession with outward uniformity.
2. They are concerned for their own personal safety.
3. They are motivated by pride in their national identity.

¹⁴ May I never boast of anything except the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.

Galatians 6:14

May I never boast of anything except the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. As was the case in Corinth, it is easy for those who come to know salvation through Jesus to become boastful of their new found faith and elevated status, from a human perspective, as being adopted as children of God. To them Paul wrote: <<*God chose what is low and despised in the world, things that are not, to reduce to nothing things that are, so that no one might boast in the presence of God. He is the source of your life in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification and redemption, in order that, as it is written, 'Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord'*>> (1 Corinthians 1:28-31).

The world has been crucified to me. Paul is saying that the entire world system in all its glory, but in opposition to God, is dead or destroyed in its power to attract him; it has no influence or power over Paul, no appeal to him.

And I to the world. Paul is similarly dead to the desires and attractions of the world, for he serves Christ as his new Lord and master.

¹⁵ For neither circumcision nor uncircumcision is anything; but a new creation is everything!

Galatians 6:15

For neither circumcision nor uncircumcision is anything. Paul wants to make it clear that the Gospel is for everyone, irrespective of their ethnicity or allegiance to any written code.

On Christians as a new creation Paul writes: <<*So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!*>> (2 Corinthians 5:17). Not only has Christ been crucified. Not only have Christians been crucified with him (2:19-20 and 5:24); the world itself has been crucified. Calvary was the fundamental turning-point of history. The whole cosmos has had the sentence of death passed on it - so that God's new world, God's new creation, can be born out of the old. This new creation began with Jesus himself at his resurrection; it continues with the Spirit-given new life which wells up in all those who belong to Christ; and will go on until the whole creation will be set free from its own slavery to share the freedom of the glory of God's children.

The Gospel is the rule for Paul's life; it determines both the spiritual and the social dimensions of his life. No longer does he relate to God or to others on the basis of his Jewish identity, but on the basis of his union with Christ in his death and resurrection. Paul wants this to be the same for everyone else.

¹⁶ As for those who will follow this rule – peace be upon them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God.

Galatians 6:16

As for those who will follow this rule – peace be upon them. Paul concludes with a benediction of peace. The rule he is calling people to follow is the Gospel.

And upon. And, Greek *kai*, can also mean 'even', in which case Paul would be equating the church with the Israel of God. Which sense is best here must be decided with reference to the larger context of Paul's thought, both in Galatians and in his other epistles.

The Israel of God. That is, in contrast to the children of the 'present Jerusalem' (4:25), the true people of God are the believing children of Abraham (3:7 and 3:29), who belong to 'Jerusalem above' (4:26-27). Paul confirms that the promises made to Abraham by God have been fulfilled for all who have turned to Jesus as their personal Lord and Saviour.

¹⁷ From now on, let no one make trouble for me; for I carry the marks of Jesus branded on my body.

Galatians 6:17

From now on, let no one make trouble for me. This is a clear statement of Paul's apostolic authority in the churches of Galatia. After the benediction to believers, Paul wants his opponents to know where they stand. Here, Paul is making it clear that he does not want anyone to bother him with arguments and various disruptions or false doctrines. They must stick to the pure teaching of the Gospel. They must separate from any dissenters or troublemakers. This would include

putting such people out of the Church. They must step up to this responsibility and act on it and not depend on Paul to do something.

The false teachers, perhaps followed by some of the Galatian Christians themselves, have obviously been slandering Paul to some degree. However, Paul insists on the respect that is due to his ministry. He is a genuine minister of Christ and has the scars to prove it, not the scars of his circumcision but what he calls **the marks of Jesus** that resulted from his persecution as a genuine apostle sent by Jesus: *<<Are they ministers of Christ? I am talking like a madman – I am a better one: with far greater labours, far more imprisonments, with countless floggings, and often near death. Five times I have received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I received a stoning. Three times I was shipwrecked; for a night and a day I was adrift at sea; on frequent journeys, in danger from rivers, danger from bandits, danger from my own people, danger from Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brothers and sisters; in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, hungry and thirsty, often without food, cold and naked>>* (2 Corinthians 11:23-27).

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

Galatians 6:18

Paul's final prayerful blessing sums up the whole letter and shows that he has not given up on the Galatians. He still refers to them as **brothers and sisters**, calling on **our Lord Jesus Christ** and the Spirit to give them **grace**: *<<The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit>>* (Philippians 4:23), *<<The Lord be with your spirit. Grace be with you>>* (2 Timothy 4:22), and: *<<The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit>>* (Philemon 25).

This brief benediction is one that reaches out beyond the boundaries of the 1st Century Galatian churches to all the readers of Paul's letter throughout history past and yet to come. For God's **grace** reaches out and embraces the whole world. The sign of that embrace is not a mark in the flesh but the presence and joy of the Spirit. So it was in the 1st Century; so it is now, in the church and world that still needs the message of Galatians. So it will be until faith is rewarded with sight, patience with the final harvest, and eager hope with fulfilment.