

Fourth Sunday after Pentecost

OLD TESTAMENT – Isaiah 66:10-14

Rejoice with Jerusalem

10 “Rejoice with Jerusalem, and be glad for her, all you who love her; rejoice with her in joy, all you who mourn over her; 11 that you may nurse and be satisfied from her consoling breast; that you may drink deeply with delight from her glorious abundance.” 12 For thus says the LORD: “Behold, I will extend peace to her like a river, and the glory of the nations like an overflowing stream; and you shall nurse, you shall be carried upon her hip, and bounced upon her knees. 13 As one whom his mother comforts, so I will comfort you; you shall be comforted in Jerusalem. 14 You shall see, and your heart shall rejoice; your bones shall flourish like the grass; and the hand of the LORD shall be known to his servants, and he shall show his indignation against his enemies.

66:10-11 The Lord commends comfort to the ones in anguish over the state of Jerusalem and those who will mourn her destruction (Ezk 9:4). (TLSB)

66:10 *Rejoice ... be glad.* Such good things are in store for Jerusalem, that in the last analysis which includes the church of the NT, that when they who wish her well consider the situation, they will be moved to rejoice and be jubilant. This includes those who mourned over her when her lot in life was a less happy one. (Leupold)

The church has always been the gathering of believers. Scripture refers to that gathering as “Jerusalem” and “Zion.” The Lord addressed his believers and encouraged them to rejoice. They were to rejoice at the birth and transformation of Jerusalem. The Lord promised that the church would reemerge and the NT era would dawn with glorious and gracious light. (PBC)

all ... who love her. Cf. Ps 137:6. (CSB)

The faithful inhabitants and friendly peoples. (TLSB)

who mourn. Through the ages, believers have encountered sorrow as they witnessed the troubles of the church. Those in Isaiah’s day saw the hypocrisy, unbelief, and idolatry among their own people. Such realities troubled them deeply. When they saw the Assyrians destroy the Northern Kingdom and invade Judah, they mourned. Later their hearts melted as the Babylonians carried believers and unbelievers away as captive. They mourned because they knew that the sins of God’s people had brought about the exile. Jesus wept over Jerusalem because of its unbelief (Luke 19:41). The church has been persecuted over the centuries and believers still suffer for their faith in Jesus. We note the erosion of morality and the abandonment of the gospel of Jesus Christ by so many in our own age. We too mourn over the condition of the visible church. The church on earth remains a faithful little flock battered and ridiculed by the world and even by some who claim to be Christian. Yet even the very gates of hell will not triumph over the church of Christ (Matthew 16:18). (PBC)

EPISTLE – Galatians 6:1-10, 14-18

Bear One Another's Burdens

Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted. 2 Bear one another's burdens,

and so fulfill the law of Christ. 3 For if anyone thinks he is something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself. 4 But let each one test his own work, and then his reason to boast will be in himself alone and not in his neighbor. 5 For each will have to bear his own load. 6 Let the one who is taught the word share all good things with the one who teaches. 7 Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap. 8 For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life. 9 And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up. 10 So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.

6:1-10 One of the attractions of the rivals' teaching at Galatia was the concrete direction they were providing for the Christian life through Moses' Law. Even today many Christians yearn for concrete direction in their lives (as Christian bookstores attest). As an alternative, Paul offers living or walking according to the Spirit's lead (5:16, 18, 25). The fruit of the Spirit that he lists—love, joy, peace, etc. (5:22–23)—may not seem particularly concrete in practical application. Paul comes the closest to offering specific instructions on how to live in 6:1–10, but even here his comments merely hint at a more comprehensive approach. This section of the letter consists of a series of maxims revolving around the motifs of doing good rather than evil (6:1, 2, 8, 9, 10) and of helping others, especially those in the household of faith (6:1, 3, 4, 7, 8). Paul refuses to replace Moses' Law with yet another legal system. Those seeking a new law will not find it here. The Spirit's fruit gives shape to the Christian life. The fruit of "gentleness" (5:23), for instance, expresses itself when believers restore one another "with the Spirit of gentleness" (6:1). The Law in the hands of Christ (6:2) expresses itself in "love" (5:14), the Spirit's fruit (5:22). The fruit of "self-control" (5:23) expresses itself when a Christian does not boast and bears his or her own load (6:4–5). "Forbearance" or patience (5:22) expresses itself with persistence in what is good (6:9). The fruit of "goodness" or "generosity" (5:22) results in the sharing of material blessings (6:6, 9–10). A Christian's actions will be consistent with the Spirit's fruit. (CC)

Christian love expresses itself in slavery toward others (5:13–15). The Galatian "brothers (and sisters)" (6:1) are to act in a fitting and generous manner toward family members (6:10). Gal 6:1–10 demonstrates again that those led by the Spirit will live connected to a community of fellow believers. A Christian at a distance cannot bear another's burdens or share material benefits. A believer with no contact with others of the faith cannot restore another in "the Spirit of gentleness" (6:1). An "isolated Christian" is a contradiction in terms. Pastors are right to admonish those who refuse to attend Christian worship and who refuse to work with their fellow believers. Indeed, pastors and other Christians *must* admonish those who choose to isolate themselves. Believers need each other! An unnecessary side effect of the Reformation emphasis on justification before God has been a tendency to stress the individual at the expense of the community that God, by faith, has drawn together. The preaching of God's Word, Baptism, the Eucharist—the means of grace—are all corporate affairs. Paul explains in his letter to the Romans that Christian faith is not possible apart from the messengers who deliver the Gospel message (Rom 10:14–17). The Galatian Christians have been *set apart* from this present evil age (Gal 1:4). Israel of mere flesh must yield to the corporate "Israel of God" (6:16). Christ must be formed *in their midst* (4:19). Again, note the plural Greek pronoun "in you" (ἐν ὑμῖν) in 4:19: Christ is formed within the Christian community! (CC)

The corporate dimension of the Christian life is inescapable. Gal 6:1–10 neatly alternates between individual accountability and corporate responsibility:

- 6:1a: corporate responsibility—"you ... restore" (plural forms) the transgressor
- 6:1b: individual accountability—"watching yourself" (singular forms)
- 6:2: corporate responsibility—"bear" (plural imperative) one another's burdens

- 6:3–5: individual accountability—“each” must “examine his own work” and “bear his own load” (singular forms)
- 6:6: corporate responsibility—the pupil supports his teacher
- 6:7–8: individual accountability—how “a person” “sows” is how he or she “will reap” (singular forms)
- 6:9–10: corporate responsibility—“we” Christians should do good to all, especially to fellow believers (CC)

Paul regularly points to Christ as an example or pattern for Christian behavior (Rom 15:1–3, 7–9a; Phil 1:27–2:11; 1 Thess 1:6). Paul bears “the marks of Jesus” in his body (Gal 6:17). God revealed his Son *in* Paul (1:15–16), and so to receive Paul is to receive Christ Jesus (4:14). Even as Christ became as we are (4:4), so also *I* have been crucified, says Paul in 2:19–20; 6:14. The Galatians should therefore become *as Paul* (4:12; also 1 Cor 11:1). Those who belong to Christ *crucified* the flesh (5:24). As Richard Hays observed: “Paul holds himself up to [the Galatians] as a mirror in which they may see Christ’s self-sacrificial love and faithfulness reflected.” Since Christ lives *in* the Christian (2:19–20), the Christian’s life by faith always has a Christ-like shape. Likewise, the corporate life of the believing community takes the form of Jesus Christ himself. After all, the believer bears the fruit of the Spirit *of Christ* (4:6). Certainly the Christian cannot die on a cross for the sake of sinful humanity as did Christ, but Paul sees Christ’s selfless sacrifice as a paradigm for behavior within the community of faith as Christ is formed in their midst (4:19). The preaching of Christ’s saving work *for* the believer must never overlook Christ’s sanctifying activity *in* and *with* the believer. Christians share in the wonderful blessings of their Lord, a Lord who remains active in the lives of his dear people! (CC)

In an increasingly materialistic world, modern Christians must take seriously the financial self-sacrifice that faith in Christ entails. In the book of Acts Luke narrates how the first Christians would even sell *their homes* for the sake of the welfare of other members of their community. The Roman Empire did not offer its inhabitants a social security system. That rendered the plight of widows or orphans or others with no remaining family members even more precarious. Paul would certainly agree with Luke that Christian self-sacrifice includes a willingness to provide financially for the welfare of less-advantaged community members (Acts 2:44–45; 4:32–37; 6:1–2; 11:27–30). A Greek-speaking person in the first century would likely have noticed in Gal 6:1–10 the sheer volume of words regularly used in financial contexts:

1. “overtake” (προλαμβάνω, 6:1)—for money received or given as a retainer
2. “transgression” (παράπτωμα, 6:1)—an error in the payment amount
3. “bear” (βαστάζω, 6:2, 5)—assuming someone’s indebtedness or enduring taxation
4. “burden” (βάρος, 6:2)—financial burdens, whether taxes or oppression (half of all usages); the singular form occurs in the B text of Judg 18:21 for “riches, abundance”; Sirach 13:2 uses it in relation to money and wealth; five or six of the eleven other instances of this word and its cognates in the Pauline corpus have a financial sense (2 Cor 11:9 [note the immediate context]; 12:16; 1 Thess 2:9; 2 Thess 3:8–9; 1 Tim 5:16; cf. 1 Thess 2:7)
5. “fulfill” (ἀναπληρῶ, 6:2)—pay in full, fulfill a contract, make up a debt
6. “examine” (δοκιμάζω, 6:4)—testing the genuineness of metals and coins (cf. LXX Prov 8:10; 17:3; Epictetus, *Diatr.* 1.7.6)
7. “work” (ἔργον, 6:4)—trade or commerce (cf. ἐργάζομαι, “to work,” in Rev 18:17)
8. “load” (φορτίον, 6:5)—freight, cargo, wares, merchandise
9. “share” (κοινωνέω, 6:6)—sharing in common a financial burden or material resources (Phil 4:14–15; *Barn.* 19.8; cf. also Acts 2:42–46; 4:32–35)
10. “Word” (λόγος, 6:6)—an account, as of expenses (cf. Phil 4:14–15)
11. “sow” (σπείρω, 6:7–8) and “reap” (θερίζω, 6:7–9)—in financial contexts elsewhere in Paul (cf. 1 Cor 9:10–11; 2 Cor 9:6)
12. “proper time” or “opportunity” (καιρός, 6:9–10)—the time when a payment was due

Although Paul is clearly concerned with financial benevolence in some of these verses, he casts the net more widely in others to include failings of a more general moral nature. Nevertheless, genuine care for others must also include a willingness to share of one's wealth. How many modern Christians come close to the ten percent tithing of OT believers? Why would Spirit-led people not *exceed* the requirement of Moses' Law in whatever is necessary for the welfare of fellow brothers and sisters in Christ? (CC)

6:1 ἐὰν καί (“if ... nevertheless”)—The καί is intensive. The sense is identical to 1 Cor 7:11, in which Paul is emphasizing a protasis that should *not* occur: “if *indeed* she separates” from her husband. The sense is the same here: if an individual “indeed” or “nevertheless” transgresses.

ἄνθρωπος (“an individual”)—Some manuscripts (e.g., Ψ syr^h cop^{sa}) add ἐξ ὑμῶν (“among you”) after ἄνθρωπος. This change emphasizes the generic nature of the noun ἄνθρωπος here (“someone/anyone”) and may reflect the scribes' understanding of the admonitions as directed to the Galatians (“among you”). P and syr^{pesh} substitute τις ἐξ ὑμῶν (“any one of you”) for ἄνθρωπος; the rationale would be the same as for the addition of ἐξ ὑμῶν. These variations were likely prompted by Paul's use of the generic “individual” (ἄνθρωπος) rather than the familial “brother” (ἀδελφός) so frequent elsewhere in the letter and even at the beginning of the verse. The changes reflect the scribes' recognition that Paul is referring not just to anyone but to the community's members.⁴

σκοπῶν σεαυτὸν (“while watching yourself”)—The participle and pronoun are singular, even though the verb the participle modifies and its emphatic subject pronoun are plural (ὁμεῖς ... καταρτίζετε, “you ... restore”). Paul is emphasizing “you [plural] *each*.” (CC)

Brothers (and sisters), if an individual is nevertheless overtaken in some transgression, you who are spiritual restore such a one with the Spirit of gentleness while watching yourself lest you also be tempted. Paul's address of the audience as “brothers (and sisters)” signals a new section of the letter (cf. 3:15; 4:12; 5:13; and the weaker rhetorical break in 4:28). At the same time, this new section builds on the immediately preceding admonitions in 5:26 against conceit and envy. “If nevertheless” (ἐὰν καί, as here, or εἰ καί) elsewhere in Paul's letters always develops in some way an element of the preceding sentence. Gal 6:1–10 as a section therefore offers practical advice that will guard against conceit by a proper self-evaluation and against envy through self-sacrificial relationships with other people. (CC)

The address of the audience as “brothers (and sisters)” (ἀδελφοί, 6:1) reminds the Galatians that they belong to the household of the faith (6:10). Paul therefore addresses 6:1 to “brothers (and sisters)” in the context of the “we” who “live by the Spirit” (5:25–26); they are not rivals. Their behavior will reflect their mutual membership in the family of God. Christians *are* their brothers' and sisters' keepers! (CC)

The verb Paul employs in the protasis of his third class conditional sentence, “be overtaken” or “caught” (προλαμβάνω), is ambiguous. The passive form of this verb is used nowhere else in the NT. Some commentators have contended that Paul is referring to an individual being caught off guard by a false step or blunder (NEB; cf. Wis Sol 17:17). In that case, Paul would be avoiding the notion of deliberate sin. He would be writing of people being *overtaken* by transgression. Others think that the verb refers to an individual being *discovered* or caught in the act of some transgression (cf. Jn 8:3–4). One could perhaps avoid the problem posed by the ambiguity with the translation “caught,” which could refer both to being unexpectedly detected in sin by a fellow Christian and to being taken by surprise by the transgression itself.³⁴ Paul expresses concern that the brother or sister who is assisting the fallen might “also” (καί) be overtaken by temptation to transgress. Although the verb “caught” or “be overtaken” (προλαμβάνω) itself is ambiguous, the participial clause at the end of 6:1 demonstrates that Paul probably does not have in mind the notion of being caught in the act of transgression. The point of comparison (καί) between the one who assists and the one who has fallen is not that they are both caught in the act of sin but that they are both in danger of, or have been overtaken by, transgression. “Be overtaken” is therefore the preferred translation. (CC)

Paul admonishes that if an individual is overtaken “in some transgression,” that individual should be restored by fellow brothers and sisters in Christ’s household. The appearance of the word “transgression” in 6:1 is striking since Paul often uses this word (παράπτωμα) in the context of Moses’ Law (Rom 5:13–15, 20; see also the synonym παράβασις, “transgression,” in Gal 3:19). Up to this point in Galatians Paul has been consistently negative about the Law. No sooner does Paul use the word “transgression,” which brings to mind Moses’ Law, when he uses the phrase “the Law of Christ” in 6:2: the Law in the hands of Christ. Christ has grabbed hold of the Law of Moses and provided the definitive perspective. Indeed, as Christ says in Matthew’s Gospel: “If your brother [fellow Christian] sins [against you], go and reprove him, only between you and him. If he listens to you, you have regained your brother” (Mt 18:15). Paul has in mind *any* transgression; the word “some” (τινι) prevents a limitation to financial concerns. Paul envisions any sort of “*false step*” (παράπτωμα) that stands in the way of *walking* by the Spirit (5:25)—note the play on these words’ meanings. (CC)

The word “transgression” in 6:1 may be significant in another regard as well. In their pagan pasts the Galatians had been wary of transgressing against their gods. The propitiatory inscriptions that have survived from throughout Asia Minor betray an obsession for identifying and performing the proper cultic rituals to restore the relationship with the gods in the wake of transgression. Paul proclaims a different route. Ritual remedies are no longer necessary, whether pagan rituals or the rituals of Moses’ Law. The Galatian brothers and sisters may use their freedom responsibly by reaching out in love to fellow family members in the faith. (CC)

Paul requests that “you, the Spiritual ones” (ὁμεῖς οἱ πνευματικοί) act to restore the transgressing brother or sister. This turn to “you who are Spiritual” is capable of a number of interpretations. Paul has employed the plural “you” throughout the letter for the Galatian recipients as a whole. That does not mean that he cannot by “the Spiritual ones” be referring to a group *within* “you” Galatians, but the pattern of usage of the second person plural pronouns to refer to the Galatian Christians as a whole renders reference to a subgroup less likely. Paul reminds the Galatian congregations of their experience of the Spirit in 3:2–5 and, throughout Galatians 5, admonishes the congregations to walk by the Spirit, to be led by the Spirit, and to keep in step with the Spirit (5:16, 18, 25). They are a people in whom the Spirit works fruit (5:22–23) and for whom the Spirit combats the flesh (5:17). After Galatians 5 the Christ-believing audience would surely recognize *themselves* in “you, the Spiritual ones.” Indeed, in 6:8 each of them must sow to the Spirit. Since they *all* have experienced the Spirit, Paul is not likely referring only to a leadership contingent who should be taking action against sin. Paul will struggle mightily against the notion of Spiritual “haves” versus “have-nots” in his Corinthian correspondence. (CC)

Some have further hypothesized that Paul is turning to a “pneumatic” faction, a group who claimed the Spirit as a sort of title. The apostle’s use of the term “Spiritual ones” in that case would be sarcastic. The problem with this hypothesis is that he does not use the term in any obvious sarcastic sense. His tone is matter of fact, if not friendly. The letter does not otherwise betray factions at Galatia beyond the obvious division between the Galatians and the teachers of the Law who have entered their midst. Paul also is not using the language to distinguish between those who follow his Christ-centered teaching and those who are succumbing to the Law. One does not find in 6:1 the contrast between the “Spiritual” and the “fleshly” that one finds in a passage such as 1 Cor 3:1. No, Paul appeals to *all* of the Galatian Christians based on their mutual experience of the Spirit in 3:2–5 and 4:6–10. He does not speak of “*those* [i.e., the few] who are Spiritual” but rather “*you* who are Spiritual.” Paul wants the Galatians to view themselves as “Spirit people” rather than as a people oriented around Moses’ Law. Incidentally, Paul is not using “spiritual” in the ambiguous, modern sense of the term as applied to adherents of any religion; Paul always means “Spiritual”—those who possess the Spirit of Christ. There is no sense of elitism here, only that the Galatian Christians are a different sort of people. Gal 6:1’s address to the “Spiritual” reinforces the point. (CC)

Of course, to say that Paul is addressing the congregations as a whole does not mean that he envisions them descending upon the poor, unsuspecting transgressor *en masse* (6:1). Congregation members have a responsibility toward their brothers and sisters that requires those who are closest to the situation of transgression to address the matter. The “Spiritual” must “restore” the brother or sister overtaken in transgression (cf. the same verb, καταρτίζω, “restore,” in Mk 1:19 for the mending of nets, and in 1 Cor 1:10 for restoring unity to the community). The present tense of the Greek imperative “restore” (καταρτίζετε) may be interpreted in a number of ways. Perhaps Paul envisions an iterative sense, that is, repeated instances of this restoration. Perhaps Paul thinks such correction may take some time, a continuous sense. Whatever the exact sense, the apostle recognizes that perfection of behavior will not be a reality even in Christian communities. What should distinguish Christian communities is the genuine concern that “such a one” (ὁ τοιοῦτος) be corrected when in transgression. “Such a one” may allude to (the neuter plural of) the same term in 5:21: “those who do *such things* [τὰ τοιαῦτα],” who continue in the works of the flesh, thereby jeopardize their inheritance in the kingdom of God. Correction from church-family members may prevent transgressors from losing or giving up their salvation. (CC)

Too often Christians seize upon the faults of other believers. Gatherings of believers must discipline themselves to prevent faultfinding about other Christians from prevailing. Negativism does not reflect the Spirit’s fruit. Christians do not exult in transgression; they, with all due humility, actively seek the betterment of their fellow family members. Transgression requires constructive effort and engagement, not easy critique and faultfinding. (CC)

Christians must also discipline themselves to *remain approachable* for such correction through the Lord’s instruments. God alone lives in “unapproachable light” (1 Tim 6:16). Luther agreed with Augustine, who taught that when believers treat the sins of others properly they prove themselves “spiritual” men or women. Unfortunately, such vitally necessary church discipline has become sorely lacking in most modern churches. The individual believer and the gatherings of believers always bear responsibility! A “live and let live” attitude will not do, lest the disease spread without the requisite, regular spiritual surgery. Transgression is a cancer that can affect the entire assembly of believers. For instance, a basal cell carcinoma that grows very slowly on the scalp of balding men is quite treatable if diagnosed early. The doctor simply cuts off the growth. Ignored, this slow-growing cancer eventually spreads and proves fatal. When Christians witness sin, they need to engage themselves and address it. They must, with due courage and love, *act*, as difficult as that may be and regardless of the potential repercussions. Such an approach to discipline requires discipline, if the pun may be permitted. (CC)

Paul’s (and Jesus’) concern with mutual correction is consistent with the Jewish milieu of early Christianity. The Qumran covenanters wrote in their *Rule of the Community* (1QS V.24–VI.1): “Each should reproach his fellow in truth, in meekness and in compassionate love for the man. No-one should speak to his brother in anger ..., but instead reproach him that day so as not to incur a sin for his fault” (trans. García Martínez). The following section (1QS VI.1, 24–VII.27) of the Qumran *Rule of the Community* describes the process when discipline must involve the full community (cf. Jesus’ instructions in Mt 18:15–20; see also Lev 19:17; Ezek 3:17–21; Pss 51:13 [MT 51:15]; 141:4; Lk 17:3–4; 2 Cor 2:5–11; James 5:19–20). The Jews and the first Christians recognized that sin can only be effectively combatted with the help of others (cf. *2 Clem.* 17.1–2). No Christian can afford to live apart from regular interaction with, and help from, other Christians. Christians *are* their brothers’ and sisters’ keepers! (CC)

At the same time, “such a one” should be corrected “with the Spirit of gentleness” (ἐν πνεύματι πραΰτητος, 6:1). Most commentators have concluded that a “spirit of gentleness” refers to the regenerated human spirit and not to the Holy Spirit, despite the Spirit’s prominence throughout Galatians 5 (e.g., 5:16–18, 22–23, 25). Few would dispute that this “gentleness” is a result of the Spirit and is not possible otherwise. The Spirit’s fruit must express itself in the human spirit. On the other hand, “gentleness”

(πραΰτης) in 5:23 is no mere human disposition or attitude, but the fruit of the Spirit of God. Throughout 6:1–10 Paul is directly applying 5:13–26, and especially the fruit of the Spirit (5:22–23), to the Galatian congregations and their situation. Such considerations therefore favor “with the Spirit of gentleness.” Paul is employing a play on words: “The spirit of humility is, as it were, the humility of the Spirit.”⁵³ Those who offer correction must avoid insensitive conceit (5:26) and instead manifest a “meek and lowly” Christ-like pattern of behavior (Mt 11:29; 2 Cor 10:1). (CC)

Paul issues a serious qualification to his instructions when he warns that the one who admonishes is vulnerable to transgression as well: Watch yourself! (6:2). The *singular* participle “while watching” (σκοπῶν) and second person *singular* pronoun “yourself” (σεαυτόν) contrast with the preceding second person *plural* pronoun and imperative, “you ... restore” (ὁμεῖς ... καταρτίζετε). The singular qualification reminds each Galatian believer to keep an eye on *himself or herself*. Those who attempt to correct others must themselves guard against temptation, “lest you also be tempted” (μὴ καὶ σὺ πειρασθῆς). Correction can all too easily turn to conceit. Paul had just warned against the very real danger of pride (5:25–26). “Thank God I’m not like that person!” (cf. Lk 18:11–12). Although a concern with pride is clear in the immediate context, the possibility cannot be ruled out that Paul is concerned that those admonishing may find themselves vulnerable to the very same transgression against which they are warning. In either case, the necessary practice of mutual correction is dangerous for the incautious. (CC)

you who are spiritual. Contrast with 1Co 3:1–3. (CSB)

Greek pneumatikos, possible congregational leaders. However, all Christians have the Spirit (cf 3:2-5, 14; 4:6), not just a select few or elite few. They follow the Spirits leading by gently and humbly caring for the who lapses into some sin. (TLSB)

restore. The Greek for this verb is used elsewhere for setting bones, mending nets, or bringing factions together. (CSB)

“To put back into former condition” (e.g., fishing nets, Mt 4:21; Mk 1:19). “Even though we have sins, the <grace of the> Holy Spirit does not allow them to harm us. For we are in the Christian Church, where there is nothing but <continuous, uninterrupted> forgiveness of sin” (LC II 55). (TLSB)

“Restore,” I learn, is a translation of the Greek word “kataritzo,” which in Paul’s day was a medical term meaning “to mend” or “to set bone,” an action requiring great skill. (Startled by Silence – Senter p. 43)

Now, he puts those on the table again. It's another hinge is really what it is between the catalog of vices and the fruits of the Spirit. And now what he's going to say in Chapter 6 regarding burdens. And in the very first verse of Chapter 6, Paul recognizes that even though Christ is in us, even though our communities are marked by the Spirit and the fruits of the Spirit are to live in us, we still live in a fallen world. That we are still infected with the virus of sin. And we still are broken people. (Just – V-40)

We still live in a world that is broken. Think of it this way: That there's like a cloud that is over us. And Christians still sin. Original sin still is in their bodies. They still have outbursts of the flesh. Envy. Even sins that we would consider to be you know somewhat horrendous public since, adultery, stealing, murder, breaking of the Ten Commandments. As Jesus said, we not only do it in our actions, we do it in our very thoughts. Just simply lusting after a woman is like breaking the Sixth Commandment. This is our nature that we still live in a body, we still live in a world, that is infected with a virus. (Just – V-40)

Now, Luther used to talk about it in this way: That we are at the same time saint and sinner. That there is this tension. And here is I think a key to Lutheran theology. And I just heard this expression the other day. I think I've always talked about it. But I've never thought about it this way. And it's been very

helpful. We get into trouble theologically when we see he it's either/or. It's either the Spirit or it's the flesh. And in a way it sounds like that's what Paul is saying. But it's not. Because Paul is a realist. He knows the real world in which we live is a world in which Christ is present with his gifts. And the Spirit is reigning. And that the triumph is already here in Christ. Yes, it is. And we live in that. That's why we're resurrected beings. But we also know we live in a world broken by sin. So it's never an either/or. It's always a both/and. Lutherans live in a both/and world. Now, don't ask me to explain that. That's why we sometimes resort to mystery. The fact that we live at the same time as saint and sinner is a great mystery. The fact that we live as saint and sinner, we are still triumphing in Christ is a mystery. Because we are plagued by the impulsive desires of the flesh. And sometimes they break out. Even in communities constituted by the Spirit. Even among us who are Christians. (Just – V-40)

Now, we're not quite sure what the Greek means here in it's fullness, to be overtaken. To be caught up in a transgression. Some people say this is like an addiction. But I think it's really much simpler than that. That each and every one of us at various points in our lives see that the impulsive desire of the flesh breaks out. Sometimes it breaks out in action. Where we affect people. You know, you can think of various situations in your own life or in your own experience where this has happened. More often than not, it happens in our minds. It happens in our discontent or in the hidden life that we live. It happens in the way in which we feel about people or we hold in resentments or we hold in lust or whatever into our own minds. What Paul is saying here is that when this happens, and it happens, take heed to yourself lest it happen to you, that you, too, be tempted. What communities that are constituted by the Spirit do is they are merciful, they are forgiving, they are compassionate, they are loving. I think that's one of the most extraordinary statements here where he says: You who are spiritual. You who are marked by the Spirit. Where the Spirit is living in you. Remember he says if you live by the Spirit and you do walk in the Spirit. That doesn't mean that you live a moral, perfect life. But you're a forgiving, loving, compassionate, really merciful person. You're characterized by these fruits of the Spirit of Christ. And if you are one who is spiritual -- and this is such an important statement -- you restore, you bring back the one who has fallen in the spirit of gentleness. (Just – V-40)

keep watch on yourself...be tempted – This is a rather serious warning. Its purpose is to put down the harshness and cruelty of those who do not cheer and restore the lapsed. “There is no sin,” says Augustine, “that one man has committed that another man could not commit.” We are living on a slippery place; therefore if we become proud and forsake good order, it will be easier for us to fall than to stand. Therefore that man spoke rightly in *The Lives of the Fathers* when the report was brought to him that one of the brothers had fallen into fornication. “Yesterday it was he,” he said, “and today it could be I.” **6:2** ἀναπληρώσετε (“you will fulfill”)—This future indicative is supported by B F G co Marcion Cyprian (ⱼ⁴⁶ has the future indicative ἀποπληρώσετε, “you will complete, satisfy, fulfill”). The aorist imperative ἀναπληρώσατε has strong support in κ A C D Ψ 0122 ℣ Clement. The aorist imperative is likely a scribal conformation of the future tense verb to the preceding imperatives καταρτίζετε (6:1) and βαστάζετε (6:2). Paul’s choice of a verb with a prepositional prefix (ἀνα-) may be for the sake of intensification: the Galatians will thoroughly or completely fulfill the Law of Christ. No more would be required of them. The verb is an indicative (“will”) and not an imperative and thus expresses the sure result of Christian behavior. (CC)

Bear one another’s burdens, and so you will fulfill the Law of Christ. Sin has an inevitable tendency to compound itself with further difficulties and issues as it bears its own sort of fruit. Sometimes the burdens that individuals carry can be personally overwhelming. So Paul admonishes the Galatians in 6:2 to “bear one another’s burdens” (cf. the very similar admonition in Rom 15:1–2). Paul’s “bear” (βαστάζετε) is not in the sense of “to tolerate” or “to put up with” but rather in the sense of doing something that may be inconvenient and that may involve some effort. Bearing burdens was the task of a slave. Paul has just admonished the Galatians to be enslaved to each other in love (5:13). Paradoxically, those free in Christ bear the burdens of others. Did not Christ do the same on behalf of those burdened under the Law and its

curse (3:13; 4:4–5)? Christ sacrificed himself to free others from “the present evil age” (1:4). Was Christ not the ultimate burden-bearer? The Christ-like shape of Christian behavior is inescapable. The one who became a curse “for us” (ὕπερ ἡμῶν, 3:13) now empowers us by his Spirit to live for the benefit and welfare of others. Christians will be a countercultural people in the midst of a “me-centered” world. Christians do not exist in autonomous isolation but remain outwardly and otherworldly focused (5:13). (CC)

Bearing burdens (6:2) is a slave’s chore (5:13–14)! The believer is to be a slave to others. The apostle would have the Galatians cultivate that mindset in their conduct. He places “one another” (ἀλλήλων) first in the Greek sentence for emphasis. The emphasis on mutual service has been building to this point. Paul uses the reciprocal pronoun “one another” (ἀλλήλων) with negative verbs in 5:15 and 5:26 (twice in each verse): the Galatians must not bite and devour “one another” lest they be consumed by “one another” (5:15); they should not provoke “one another” or envy “one another” (5:26). Instead, as Paul recommends in 5:13–14, in love they should become slaves to “one another” (ἀλλήλοις). Although Paul does not explicitly connect 6:2 to 6:1, surely one means of bearing other people’s burdens (6:2) is the assistance that Christians provide in helping restore brothers and sisters from transgression (6:1). (CC)

When Paul admonishes the Galatians to “bear one another’s burdens,” he may be drawing on a maxim common in his day. Menander quipped: “Accept the misfortunes of your friends as your own”; “accept all burdens among friends as common.” Xenophon reported Socrates as saying: “One must share one’s burdens with one’s friends, for possibly we may do something to ease you.”⁶² The contexts of the popular maxim and Paul’s context, however, are radically different. Paul would include not only financial assistance but also help in addressing moral weaknesses and failures (as in 6:1). Further, the apostle’s inspiration is not a Greco-Roman *topos* on friendship, but rather the death and resurrection of God’s own Son who “gave himself for me” (2:19–20)! The cross remains central not only to the Christian’s salvation but also to the Christian life. (CC)

In this manner (οὕτως, “so, thus”), that is, in mutual burden-bearing, “you will fulfill the Law of Christ” (6:2). The exact meaning of “the Law of Christ” (τὸν νόμον τοῦ Χριστοῦ) has been hotly debated. One proposal is that Paul is drawing on the Jewish concept of a messianic age with a reinterpreted or modified Torah. W. D. Davies, who championed this approach, recognized that the evidence is “not impressive” and “ambiguous.” The Jewish texts Davies cited are from several centuries after the origin of Christianity and may well reflect Christian influence. The concept of a messianic Torah is absent in Second Temple texts contemporaneous to or antedating Christianity. (CC)

A second proposal is that Paul is referring to “the Law of Christ” as a distinctively new legal code that should be distinguished from the Torah of Moses. Paul does at various points ground his ethical instruction in the sayings of Jesus (see, for instance, Romans 12–13; Colossians 3; 1 Thessalonians 4–5). Perhaps Paul is treating Jesus as a new lawgiver. C. H. Dodd contended that the similar phrase “in/with the Law of Christ” (ἐννομος Χριστοῦ) in 1 Cor 9:21 refers to the commands of Christ (in 1 Cor 7:10 and 9:14), which Christians must obey. In this scenario, Paul’s teaching in Gal 6:2 would be grounded in “the law of Christ,” perhaps the instruction of Mt 18:15–20 on handling a neighbor’s sin. The parallels with Mt 18:15 are not exact, and not all are convinced of the allusion. Others discern allusions in Gal 6:2 (“bear [βαστάζετε] one another’s burdens [τὰ βάρη]”) and Gal 6:5 (“each one shall bear [βαστάσει] his own load [τὸ ... φορτίον]”) to “the law of Christ” in Mt 11:30, “my load [τὸ φορτίον] is light,” and Mt 23:4, “they tie up burdensome loads [φορτία βαρέα], hard to bear [δυσβάστακτα].” Despite Paul’s use of the identical word “load” (φορτίον, Gal 6:5) and similar words for “bear” and “burdens,” the contexts for these words in Matthew are very different. The very fact that Paul merely alludes to—and does not quote verbatim—Jesus’ teaching suggests that he does not want to treat Jesus’ sayings as yet a new set of rules. For Jesus’ teaching to become a new Law would leave Paul aghast. Jesus is not a second Moses; he is the Galatians’ Deliverer (1:4)! (CC)

A third, rather popular proposal is to translate the disputed phrase “the Law of Christ” instead as “the principle of Christ.” Paul would be expressing a sort of play on words: for a people so absorbed with Moses’ Law, they should consider instead the “law” of Christ. Let Christ be the norm or principle that governs their life, not Moses’ Law. Paul’s formulation would be deliberately ironic. Too many problems, however, prevent this approach from being persuasive. Each of the thirty-two instances of the word “Law” (νόμος) in Galatians up to this point refers to Moses’ Law. That consistent usage creates a burden of proof for a departure from the pattern. Further, 6:2 must be understood in connection with 5:13–14. In both passages Paul speaks of mutual obligation or service: “serve one another” (δουλεύετε ἀλλήλοις, 5:13); “bear one another’s burdens” (ἀλλήλων τὰ βάρη βαστάζετε, 6:2). Both verses employ the reciprocal pronoun “one another” (ἀλλήλοις; ἀλλήλων) in a positive sense. Both employ a verbal form of “fulfill” (πληρώω): “is fulfilled” (πεπλήρωται, 5:14); “you will fulfill” (ἀναπληρώσετε, 6:2). Both verses employ that “fulfill” (πληρώω) language in relation to “Law” (νόμος). Even as Paul refers to the Mosaic Law in 5:14, he must be referring to the Mosaic Law in 6:2. (CC)

Up to this point Paul has been consistent in treating the Law and Christ as opposing approaches to a relationship with God. The conjunction of the “Law” and “Christ” here is rhetorically striking. A fourth proposal, then, is that Paul is co-opting a phrase used by the rival teachers: “the Law of Christ.” Perhaps this was the terminology of the opponents as they contended for compatibility between Moses’ and Jesus’ teachings. Had this phrase been Paul’s own language, he would surely have used it earlier in the epistle or prepared for its usage here. (CC)

On the other hand, had Paul been undercutting his rivals’ choice of language, he would probably have been clearer about his intentions. Paul volunteers a rather similar phrase for *his own* teaching in a far less polemical setting (“in/with the Law of Christ,” ἔννομος Χριστοῦ, 1 Cor 9:21)! The phrasing of 1 Cor 9:21 indicates that Paul may well have coined the language of Gal 6:2 himself. Similarly vexing formulations are frequent throughout Romans: “the Law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus” (Rom 8:2), “the Law of works” (Rom 3:27), “the Law of faith” (Rom 3:27). In these formulations Paul could just as easily appear to *affirm* the Law as he could reject it. Certainly after his vigorous attempts earlier in Galatians to sever the rivals’ association of faith in Christ with Law observance, the apostle’s turn of phrase here, combining the Law and Christ, is eye-catching. Nevertheless, the content with which Paul fills the phrase is his own and reflects his apocalyptic perspective: *the Law in the hands of Christ*. The Law in the hands of Christ does *not* require the gentiles to be circumcised. (CC)

Paul regularly employs genitival modifiers alongside νόμος (“Law”) to indicate the power that holds sway over the Law. In the realm of sin, the Law works death: hence “the Law of sin and death” in Rom 8:2; cf. Rom 7:21, 23. The Spirit can grab hold of the Law with a very different result: thus “the Law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus” (Rom 8:2). The real power is that which takes hold of the Law. The Law itself is powerless. In Gal 6:2 Christ is the one whose power is at work as the Law is understood through the lens of Christ’s self-sacrifice (1:4; 2:20). Christians therefore fulfill Moses’ Law in a Christ-like love in 5:13–14. Jesus often summarized the Law through the command to love (Lev 19:18; see Mt 19:19; Mt 22:39 || Mk 12:31; cf. Mt 7:12; Lk 10:27). Bearing one another’s burdens in Gal 6:1 finds a parallel in Rom 15:1–3, a passage in which the strong “bear” (βαστάζω, as in Gal 6:2, 5) the weaknesses of the weak since Christ did not please himself. Christ-like, self-sacrificing love becomes the means by which Moses’ Law is fulfilled. No one should therefore charge the Galatian Christians with “Lawlessness.” As Christians bear one another’s burdens, they more than sufficiently satisfy the Law as understood through the lens of Christ’s self-sacrifice. No more is required of them. “The Mosaic law ... comes to its fullest and proper expression in the relationships of mutual service within the community of those whose lives are being transformed by the Spirit of Christ in conformity to the character of the faithful life of Christ.” (CC)

The reference in 6:2 to the Mosaic Law from the vantage point of Christ's saving work implies that the apostle has not utterly jettisoned the Law in every respect (cf. 5:13–14). Christians may not set about to “do” the Law, but they “fulfill” it by living in and through Christ and his Spirit. The Law may still function as a standard for human behavior that is fulfilled by those in Christ. Paul may therefore appeal to the Law in other contexts as a warrant for proper Christian behavior (e.g., Rom 12:19; 1 Cor 5:1–5; 6:1–6, 9–10, 12–20; 2 Cor 8:15). This is what the Formula of Concord called “the third use of the Law” (FC Ep and SD VI). Those scholars who opt to take νόμος more generally as “principle” frequently see no continuing role for the Law in the Christian life in Paul's letter to the Galatians. Interpretive choices can have profound doctrinal implications—a reminder of the necessity of careful biblical work behind any attempt at a larger, systematic synthesis. (CC)

bear one another's burdens. The emphasis is on moral burdens or weaknesses (see v.1; Ro 15:1–3). (CSB)

Specifically, loads that temptations and sin bring upon fellow Christians (v. 1) but, in principle, all burdens. (TLSB)

You know Luther had a beautiful example of this when he talked about the Lord's Supper. He said: When you come to the Supper of the Lord, what you do is you come with all your sins, with all your burdens, with all your transgressions, all those impulsive desires of the flesh that have plagued you all week, all the darkness, all of the demons that are plagued you. And you come forward to the altar and you lay them all there for Jesus to bear. You just lay them there. And then you receive that extraordinary refreshing gift of forgiveness and love and mercy in eating and drinking the very body and blood of Christ shed for you for the forgiveness of sins. But when you're there at the altar, you pick up the burdens of those who are marked by the Spirit, those in the congregation who are bringing their burdens forward. And you help them as a member of the community in Christ to bear the burdens. That's what Paul means here. Bear each other's burdens. (Just – V-40)

law of Christ. Love (Lv 19:18; cf Jn 15:12), fulfilled through Christ's sacrificial death (1:4; 2:20). Christians “through love serve one another” (5:13) as Christ served them. Significantly, love heads the list of the Spirit's fruit (5:22). (TLSB)

And it's so important for us to recognize that in the Supper, in our life in Christ, that's what we do. And when we do this, this would have just absolutely shocked the Galatians and his opponents, we bring to fulfillment -- and again, the Greek here says it this way: Bring to fulfillment over and over and over again the law of Christ. Now, what is that law? The law is brought to fulfillment in one word: Love your neighbor as yourself. The law of Christ is now the law fulfilled in love. In Christ on the cross. Serving one another in love. Bearing each other's burdens. Restoring in the spirit of gentleness those who are broken. That which Christ wills and graciously bestows is what is given in the law of love. Through us. As we are manifesting Christ in the world bearing each other's burdens. You can see that there are burdens to bear. There are sins to forgive. There are gross outbursts of sin that need to be publicly restored back into the congregation. This is what it means to be a community that is marked by the Spirit. (Just – V-40)

Test Your Own Works; Bear Your Own Load (6:3–5) (CC)

6:3–5 *For if anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself. But let each one examine his own work, and then he will have a reason for boasting with respect to himself alone, and not with respect to another. For each one shall bear his own load.* Gal 6:3 further develops 6:1–2 (thus the initial “for,” γάρ). In helping a brother or sister who is overtaken in transgression (6:1), pride is a very real danger. Perhaps some viewed themselves as “above” mutual burden-bearing (6:2). Such pride or

vanity (cf. 5:26) is nothing more than self-deception. “He is nothing”; all that he or she has is the gift of the Spirit! As Hansen commented:

Our capacity for self-deception is frightening. It is amazing how blind otherwise brilliant people can be to their own spiritual direction in life. In fact, the more brilliant people are, the more skilled they are at developing rationalizations to deceive themselves and to hide from God. The story of Adam and Eve’s hiding from God behind their skimpy clothes and even skimpier excuses is our common human experience. Paul’s warning needs to be heard, and to be heard often, to warn us against our most brilliant self-delusions. (CC)

Overestimations of the “self” fostered divisions at Galatia that, consequently, prevented fulfillment of “the Law of Christ” (6:2). Paul’s rivals have divided the Galatians into the Law observant, who were of supposedly right status, and the non-Law observant, who were deemed lacking in their faith. The pillars at Jerusalem to whom the rivals appealed were considered “to be something” in 2:2, 6, 9. Now the apostle speaks of those in the Galatians’ midst who think they are “something.”⁸⁹ Paul wants to obliterate arrogant, humanly contrived hierarchies in favor of mutual servanthood. Many Christian preachers these days speak of “servant leadership,” a phrase worthy of serious consideration. Perhaps the phrase should be a “servant attitude” or a “servant lifestyle.” (CC)

The Greco-Roman world was a society of limited goods. Because of the lack of wealth, people distinguished themselves in other ways. They accrued honor, and the loss of that currency was shameful. Honor in antiquity could accrue from one’s wealth, education, social status, or employment. Who would want to take on the burden-bearing of a slave if it could be avoided? For those of higher status, burden-bearing could be shameful. Ben Witherington observed: “How counter-intuitive it was to suggest that some one of higher status should actually step down and become a servant of those less well off and more burdened.” (CC)

This world has its honor conventions as well. Even in Christian churches there are social hierarchies with their varying honor ratings: bishops, archbishops, and popes; district officials and synodical officials. Pastors sometimes accrue honor at the expense of their people. Church bodies are full of people who “think they are something.” Paul will have none of it. Christians are *slaves* of Christ. We serve a common Master and are nothing of ourselves, whether granted the privilege of honor or authority in Christ’s church or not. All that the believer has is a gift from the Lord (see 1 Cor 3:18–23; 4:7). Such gifts were never intended to be glorified at the expense of others. In a status-conscious, self-centered society, church bodies and church leaders must nurture a countercultural humility and comport themselves as slaves for the sake of others, even as God’s people hold their leaders in high regard. The church must remain Christ-oriented to the glory of God rather than self-oriented. (CC)

People in the Greco-Roman world regularly praised themselves, as the rhetoricians and philosophers of the day attest. “Boasting” did not necessarily bear negative connotations for the Greek speaker. The only limits on self-praise were that one must be honest in one’s claims and without arrogance (Cicero, *Inv.* 1.16.22). Plutarch wrote an entire work titled *On Praising Oneself Inoffensively*. In what should the Christian boast? Paul writes of a boast in 6:4 that is “with respect to” (εἰς) one’s own work alone (εἰς ἑαυτὸν μόνον) and not “with respect to” (εἰς) someone else’s (εἰς τὸν ἕτερον). The reflexive pronoun “his own/himself” (ἑαυτοῦ), used twice in 6:4, corresponds to the same reflexive pronoun used in 6:3. The use of the reflexive pronoun in both verses is emphatic (note μόνον, “alone,” in 6:4). The ancients considered self-evaluation the perfect antidote for self-deception (thus Paul’s mildly adversative connective δέ, “but,” at the beginning of 6:4). The verb translated as “examine” (δοκιμάζω) means “test” or “approve” (1 Cor 3:13; 11:28; 2 Cor 13:5; 1 Thess 5:21; 1 Tim 3:10), as here, but elsewhere the word can also mean “accept as proven or approve” (Rom 2:18; 14:22; 2 Cor 8:22; 1 Thess 2:4) or “think best, choose” (1 Cor 16:3). The present tense here implies an ongoing process. Self-examination is therefore a good habit! Paul

does not have in mind some sort of subjective introspection, but rather a review of one's actual deeds (*in toto*). "Work" (ἔργον), placed early in the Greek sentence for emphasis, is a collective noun (see Heb 6:10; Rev 22:12), referring to "the basic character of a person's existence." "Work" in the singular may be intended to contrast with the "works" (plural) "of the Law" in Gal 2:16. Paul writes elsewhere that all people's works, including those of Christians, will be tested (e.g., 1 Cor 3:10–15). This end-times testing begins already in the present. Each Galatian must test his or her own work, "and then" (καὶ τότε, Gal 6:4) he or she will have a worthwhile boast (see the very similar comments in 2 Cor 13:5 about self-examination and testing). Paul regularly speaks of illegitimate and *legitimate* "boasting" (καύχημα and cognates; see Rom 4:2; 15:17; 1 Cor 1:26–31 [in oneself or in the Lord]; 5:6; 9:15, 16; 2 Cor 1:12–14; 5:12; 9:3; Phil 1:26; 2:16). The Greek article in Gal 6:4 (τὸ καύχημα, *his or her* "reason for boasting") restricts the word to an individual's *own* boast. (CC)

The prepositional phrases in the latter half of 6:4 (εἰς ἑαυτόν; οὐκ εἰς τὸν ἕτερον) are capable of differing interpretations. In a first approach, the *basis* for boasting is to be "in oneself" (εἰς ἑαυτόν) and "not in (comparison with) another" (οὐκ εἰς τὸν ἕτερον). As for what it might mean to boast "in another," Paul describes just such boasting in 6:12–13: the rivals hope to boast in the Galatians' circumcision! Certainly Paul himself boasts in others in 2 Cor 1:14 and 2 Cor 9:3. In the heated atmosphere of the Galatian controversy, however, the Galatians as well as the rivals would do well to test their *own* work rather than worry about the work of others. A valid boast in one's own work is ultimately grounded in what God has done in Christ on the cross (6:14)! Such work mirrors the Law as taken hold of by Christ (6:2). Nevertheless, the preposition Paul employs (εἰς) should be translated as "with respect to/in reference to" and not "in comparison with" (cf. 2 Cor 10:13, 15, 16). Also, the two prepositional phrases in 6:4 (εἰς ἑαυτόν; οὐκ εἰς τὸν ἕτερον) likely should be translated the same way. One may boast "in comparison with" someone else, but how does one boast "in comparison with" oneself? Had Paul meant a boast "in" one *basis* or ground and not "in" another, he would have used another preposition, either ἐν, ἐπί, or ὑπέρ (e.g., 2 Cor 8:24). This first approach therefore has its problems. (CC)

A second approach is to convey an emphasis in the translation that the boast is *directed toward* oneself and not toward someone else. In this approach, the ground or basis for the boast is not at issue. Rather, the self-controlled believer (5:23) does not flaunt the good work. The preposition εἰς can indeed mean a boast directed "toward" someone; 2 Cor 8:24 uses the preposition εἰς for boasting "toward," and that boast toward (εἰς) is a boast based on (ὑπέρ) a viable ground. A problem with this second approach is that it remains difficult to understand what it would mean to direct a boast "toward oneself." (CC)

The supporting statement in 6:5 (note the γάρ) about bearing one's *own* load implies one's own load *in contrast to* another's. If εἰς simply means "with respect to/in reference to," as seems preferable in this context, the individual boasts with respect to his or her own work or load and not with respect to another's. The works of the Christian proceed from the life-changing power of Christ! Paul grants that the believer, by Christ's power, will produce a genuine work. Faith *works* through love (5:6), the love the Spirit creates (5:22). Once the priority of Christ's saving and empowering action is restored, a genuine work and a legitimate boast will follow. With proper self-assessment, the Galatians will no longer condemn those caught in transgression but rather will seek to restore the brother or sister in the gentleness Christ's Spirit inspires. Let that be their boast—a different kind of boast from what the world is accustomed! (CC)

The supporting statement in 6:5 that each person should bear his own load as an individual seems to contradict Paul's emphasis in 6:3 on *mutual* burden-bearing. The contradiction is more apparent than real. Mutual assistance does not eliminate the ultimate individual responsibility for one's own load. Since each person must ultimately bear his or her own load (6:5), personal examination is necessary (6:4). Paul's word for "load" in 6:5 (φορτίον) is not the same as "burden" (βάρος) in 6:2. The terms may well be synonymous. Perhaps certain loads are for the individual alone, whereas other burdens require help, but

the apostle does not render such a distinction in loads or burdens explicit.¹⁰⁷ The individual load of 6:5 and the mutual burden-bearing of 6:3 are best taken as another instance of the interplay in 6:1–10 between corporate and individual motifs. Again, while believers in Christ assist one another, each individual is ultimately responsible for his or her load. Gal 6:2 and 6:5 are therefore complementary. (CC)

The future tense of “shall bear” (βαστάσει) in 6:5 suggests to some an eschatological referent. Scholars have debated whether Paul is referring in this verse to the final judgment. The future tense may simply be gnomic as is common in aphorisms.¹¹⁰ The future tense may even be imperatival. Nothing in 6:1–5 requires a reference to end-times judgment. The mutual burden-bearing of 6:2 is in the present. The boast of 6:4 is in the present. The tense of the verb “bear” in 6:5 does not adequately convey in itself a sense of futurity. For example, the same verb with the same tense in 5:10 (the future of βαστάζω) is qualified by the words “the judgment” (τὸ κρίμα), which renders unmistakably clear the eschatological reference of “will bear the judgment.” Such contextual cues are absent in 6:5. The day-to-day financial assistance of 6:6, along with the connection between 6:5 and 6:6, serves as a further argument against the eschatological interpretation of 6:5. On the other hand, an eschatological context is clear in 6:7–10. When Paul speaks of “examining” or “testing” one’s own works in 1 Cor 11:28, he employs the same verb (δοκιμάζω) as in Gal 6:4, and, in that context, such examination has eschatological implications. Paul regularly speaks of the eschatological judging of people’s “works” (Rom 2:6; 1 Cor 3:5–4:5). Since Paul employs the language of judgment elsewhere in eschatological contexts, and since a clear eschatological context *frames* 6:1–5, the possibility cannot be dismissed that 6:5 refers to the end-times judgment. (CC)

6:3 *he deceives himself* – And then Paul goes onto explain this in the next three verses. And you can see here that he's always responding to the context in which he is with his opponents. He says: For if anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself. Now, he of course here is speaking about his opponents and their perfectionism. Their hierarchal arrangements in which they are setting up the law as to who can achieve these things. He said: This is not what it's about. This is not what this whole coming of Christ and his Spirit is about. (Just – V-6)

Our opinion of ourselves shapes our conduct toward others (cf Lk 18:9, 11; 2 Co 10:12). Those thinking they have fewer faults than others, will soon tend not to sympathize with other’s shortcomings. (TLSB)

6:4 ἕκαστος (“each one”)—This reading has strong external attestation but is omitted by ℞⁴⁶ B syr^{pes} cop^{sa}. Scribes may have overlooked this ἕκαστος because of the parallel use of the same word at the start of 6:5. (CC)

Each one test his own work. The emphasis here is on personal responsibility (see 1Co 11:28; 2Co 13:5). (CSB)

John Chrysostom: “This he says ... in the way of concession.... He that is wont to boast with reference to himself only, and not against others, will soon reform this failing [of self boasting] also” (NPNF 1 13:44). (TLSB)

And then in Verse 4 -- and here we have to translate this carefully. The word here is work. And like the ESV says: But let each one test his own work. Now, what this is the Gospel work. And that Gospel work is bearing each other's burdens and thus, fulfill the law of Christ. Each one, each individual is going to be examined according to his own Gospel work. And then it says: And then his reason to boast will be in himself alone and not in his neighbor. You can't boast -- we've always said this: You can't boast in your neighbor's faith or his love or his acts of mercy and compassion and his forgiveness. It has to be you yourself. (Just – V-40)

Now, here you see that Paul understands the big picture. He's always talking about community. But at the end of the day, our salvation is based on our own confession of faith, our own manifestation of Christ in the world, our own Gospel work. Our own bearing the burdens of others. Each one of us has to do that individually. And we don't boast in someone else's. We boast in our own. And in boasting in our own as we're going to see at the end of the epistle, we're not boasting in our own, we're boasting in what Christ is doing through us. It's not our work. It's the work of Christ. Like Paul says: I'm not going to boast in anything but the cross of Jesus Christ and his sufferings. (Just – V-40)

6:5 *carry his own load*. The “for” at the beginning of the verse connects it with v. 4. Each of us is responsible before God. The reference may be to the future judgment (the verb is in the future tense), when every person will give an account to God (Ro 14:12; 2Co 5:10). (CSB)

Not contradictory to v 2, but complementary. Different Gk terms are used. Those who accept personal accountability for their own actions before God (bearing their own “load,” Gk *phortion*) are more willing to bear others’ burdens (v 2, “burden,” Gk *baros*). (TLSB)

And then finally in Verse 5 -- and this brings us to the end of this section -- for each one will have to bear his own load. You bear each other's burdens but at the judgment of God when you stand before God, you must bear your own load. Namely, you must testify there to your faith in Christ and the concrete expressions of that faith as you have lived Christ out in the world by bearing each other's burdens. And thus bringing to fulfillment over and over again the law of Christ. (Just – V-40)

6:6 ὁ κατηχούμενος τὸν λόγον (“the one who is taught the Word”)—The noun τὸν λόγον is an accusative with a passive participle (κατηχούμενος) retained from the double accusative construction in the active form: “he taught him the Word” (κατήχησεν αὐτὸν τὸν λόγον) becomes “the one being taught the Word”; BDF §§ 155, 159 (1). (CC)

Let the one who is taught the Word share in all good things with the teacher. Gal 6:6 offers the earliest NT clue that there may have been a teaching or pastoral office of some sort.¹¹⁴ The singular articular participle translated literally as “the one teaching” (ὁ κατηχῶν) refers to a class of people (cf. 1 Cor 12:28; Eph 4:11). Formal teaching was therefore taking place at Galatia. The congregational teacher is called, literally, a “catechist” (κατηχῶν, *catēchōn*; cf. κατηχέω, *catēcheō*, “catechize,” in Rom 2:18; 1 Cor 14:19). “Teacher” is a more natural, less anachronistic translation. Such teaching, if not a full-time occupation, was sufficiently time-consuming to require financial support. The mere use of the Greek word κατηχῶν (6:6) in the Galatian context provides no evidence for a period of *pre-baptismal* instruction as would be common in later centuries. Acts 8:36; 16:15, 33 suggest that Baptism took place without much delay. The first Christians were simply engaged in studying the significance of Jesus Christ and the Scriptures (Lk 1:4; Acts 17:11; 18:25; 1 Cor 14:36; Col 3:16). Teachers therefore became an identifiable group (Acts 13:1; Rom 12:7; 1 Cor 12:28; Eph 4:11). In Acts 14:23 Paul appointed elders in the churches of south Galatia. Paul may be emphasizing those whose duty it is to teach because of the false teachings (and false teachers) present at Galatia. (CC)

Paul offers in Gal 6:6 an exception (δέ, untranslated) to the rule regarding individual responsibility in 6:5. The one instance where a Christian has a *right* to expect help from others is when one is called to serve as a teacher of the faith (cf. Lk 10:7; 1 Cor 9:3–14; 2 Cor 11:7–11). The ancients often expressed the sentiment that teachers should be supported by their followers. In the Hippocratic oath or “covenant”: “To hold him who has taught me this art as equal to my parents and to live my life in partnership with him, and if he is in need of money to give him a share of mine” (ἡγήσασθαί τε τὸν διδάξαντά με τὴν τέχνην ταύτην ἴσα γενέτησιν ἑμοῖσιν καὶ βίου κοινώσασθαι καὶ χρεῶν χριζόντι μετάδοσιν ποιήσασθαι). The “good things” (Gal 6:6) to be shared with the teacher included not just financial support but also material support such as food (Lk 1:53; 12:18–19; cf. “good things” as what is necessary for life in Deut 28:11;

Sirach 22:23). Sharing “in all *good things*” (ἐν πᾶσιν ἀγαθοῖς, Gal 6:6) is an expression of the Spirit’s fruit of “goodness” (ἀγαθωσύνη, 5:22). (CC)

Paul states the principle of support for teachers of the Word with no qualification or further comment. He assumes the principle as non-controversial. If only the practice were as clear-cut as the principle. The necessity to support teachers of the Word is regularly ignored. These days many pastors in small congregations struggle to survive as they and their families experience genuine poverty. Such situations are utterly shameful! Whatever one may think of the minister as an individual, Christians are required by Scripture to look after those who teach the Word. Daily ministry expenses should be reimbursed. Salaries should always be adjusted for the cost of living and should be sufficient for the teachers’ needs, whether as individuals or as heads of households. (CC)

share all good things. See Php 4:14–19. (CSB)

And so this admonition of Paul, not only to the Galatians but particularly in light of the opponents, is a very significant one. Again, we have to read between the lines here. But what it seems to be that is happening in this congregation is this: That the catechetical instructors that Paul left behind are not being supported by the teachers who are his opponents. So you’ve got two teachers going on. Paul’s teachers. And now these opponents who are teaching. And they are cutting out these catechetical instructors by not supporting them financially. And it appears as if some of the Galatians are going along with that. Now, this is pretty typical. I think every one of you can identify with you know you want to get rid of someone in a parish, you start cutting their salary. This is going to make it impossible for them to live and continue to serve in that congregation. (Just – V-41)

That’s exactly what’s happening here. So this is what Paul says in Verse 6. One who is taught the Word must share all good things with the one who teaches. This is simply what Jesus said when a laborer is worthy of his hire. That you’ve got to support those who preach and teach the truth of the Gospel in your congregations. Now, this is something that indicates that in the teaching of the truth of the Gospel, what’s at stake is the truth of the Gospel. (Just – V-41)

How One Sows Will Be How One Reaps (6:7–8)

6:7–8 *Do not be deceived; God is not mocked. For whatever a person sows, that he or she will also reap, because the one who sows to his or her own flesh, from the flesh will reap destruction; the one who sows to the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap life eternal.* The lack of a transitional particle at the beginning of 6:7 does not thereby sever 6:7–8 from 6:6. Such abruptness serves to regain attention prior to an important point. Paul is bringing his warnings and admonitions from 5:13 to a powerful climax. “Do not be deceived” (i.e., “do not deceive yourselves”) signals the severity of the admonition (1 Cor 6:9; 15:33; also James 1:16; cf. Lk 21:8). “God is not mocked.” “Mock” (μυκτηρίζω) is a NT hapax legomenon, but the verb, along with its cognates, is common throughout the Septuagint (e.g., 2 Chr 36:16). The greatest concentration is in Wisdom literature and the psalms (Job 22:19; Pss 44:13 [MT 44:14; LXX 43:14]; 80:6 [MT 80:7; LXX 79:7]; Prov 11:12; 12:8; 15:5, 20; 23:9; for mocking God, see Prov 1:30 and Ezek 8:17). The word was used for treating with contempt, mocking, or turning up one’s “nose” (μυκτήρ). Such behavior shames another as unworthy of respect and beneath one’s dignity in a society that values honor. God will not stand for it. God will *not* be mocked by human beings or by their choice of lifestyle. The scales of justice will be set right. People will reap what they sow. Paul quotes a common proverbial saying from Greek and Jewish literature applicable to anyone (a/any “person,” ἄνθρωπος). God will *not* be mocked (μυκτηρίζω) since an individual will reap what he or she sows. God guarantees justice in the cosmos: people’s deeds will have their rightful consequences—even if only at the end of the age. (CC)

Paul shifts imagery in 6:8 from seed that is sown (“whatever a person sows,” ὃ ... ἐὰν σπείρῃ, 6:7) to the soil *into* which the seed is sown (“the one who sows to his own flesh,” ὁ σπείρων εἰς τὴν σάρκα, 6:8). This shift permits Paul to apply the agricultural imagery to the flesh-Spirit antithesis he had laid out earlier in the letter, especially in chapter 5 (3:3; 4:29; 5:13, 15–25). With respect to sowing into the flesh, Paul is not talking about sexual lusts or a sinful nature. He is talking about a *power* that holds sway over an otherwise helpless humanity. The believer, however, has a choice. Sowing to one’s flesh stands in contrast to sowing to the Spirit (the Holy Spirit; note Paul’s avoidance of the word ἑαυτοῦ, “the spirit of himself” or “his own spirit”). If one sows “(in) to” (εἰς) the flesh, one will reap “*from*” (ἐκ) the flesh a worthless, corrupted, perishing fruit (“destruction,” φθοράν). The flesh stands on the wrong side of the apocalyptic divide between this world and the next (5:13, 16–21, 24; but also 2:16; 3:3; 4:23, 29; 6:12–13; Rom 8:12–13; 1 Cor 15:42–50). The flesh has no future. Paul is probably including a reference to circumcision in the flesh (see Gal 6:13). Circumcision is impotent against the flesh, despite what the Galatians may have heard from the rival teachers! “Sowing to the flesh” (6:8), of course, includes more than just circumcision. Sowing to the flesh includes also selfish ambition, rage, discord, sexual immorality, drunkenness, and immorality. To sow to the flesh is, ironically, to forfeit the good harvest. If, on the other hand, the believer invests time sowing to the Spirit, the reward is eternal. Christian behavior has eternal consequences. (CC)

Christians are enabled by the Spirit to make serious choices. What began in the Spirit must continue in the Spirit (3:3)! The Christian life always involves, on the one hand, divine empowerment and guidance (5:16, 18, 25) along with, on the other hand, the responsibility to act on the imperative. God’s gracious empowerment and the believer’s own activity work hand-in-glove in the daily Christian walk, a walk that takes some effort. Faith must “work” in love (5:6; 6:4). In the words of Phil 2:12–13: “Work out your salvation with fear and trembling; for God is the one working in you [enabling you] both to will and to work for [his] good pleasure.” An unfortunate, occasional side effect of the Reformation polemic against “works” is a tendency toward complacent inaction. “Heaven forbid, pietism!” or so goes the unfortunate (misapplied) slogan. Paul does not end the letter without vigorously admonishing his hearers. (CC)

The modern pastor must admonish his people with the apostle Paul. A pastor must boldly and lovingly point out the genuine, eternal consequences of people’s decisions and actions. How little does the ever-imminent end-times horizon function in modern Christian preaching! Choose rightly! Such admonitions will never stray into the realm of “works righteous” semi-Pelagianism as long as the admonitions are constantly and carefully grounded in the indicative statements of Christ’s saving death along with his empowering, motivating Spirit. As Luther said: “If there is anything in us, it is not our own; it is a gift of God” (AE 27:393). Far too many popular, best-selling Christian books these days exhort people to a proper lifestyle or behavior without any anchoring in the indicative of Christ’s completed work on humanity’s behalf. If the cross of Christ and the Spirit’s empowerment (“fruit”!) do not remain ever central to Christian exhortation, such exhortation *ceases to be Christian!* Many Christians these days are being deceived by a false teaching rather analogous to what the Galatians faced! (CC)

6:7 μὴ πλανᾶσθε (“do not be deceived”)—Marcion omitted the negative (μὴ) and read πλανᾶσθε as a present indicative: “you *are* deceived.” That reading is reflected also in Tertullian, *Adv. Marc.* 5.4 (PL 2:479C; cf. ANF 3:438, including n. 2). The majority of the textual tradition, however, has the negated present imperative μὴ πλανᾶσθε, “*do not be* deceived.” Paul employs this same exhortation prior to serious warnings in 1 Cor 6:9; 15:33; so also James 1:16; cf. Lk 21:8; 2 Macc 7:18. (CC)

God is not mocked – Paul addresses a horrible threat here to fine fellows of this kind, who do this sort of thing and yet want to give the impression that they are not poking fun but are true evangelicals who worship God religiously. “Do not be deceived,” he says, “God is not mocked.” It is as though he were saying: “Surely you have not deceived God, but only yourselves. You will not mock God, but God will mock you” (Ps. 2:4). There is a well-known little verse that says: “You have not deceived me, your teacher, but yourself.” (Luther)

Humans cannot turn up their noses at God and expect to get by with it. The immutable law built into creation, illustrated by sowing and reaping, is that actions have consequences (cf Pr 22:8). (TLSB)

one sows...will also reap. See 2Co 9:6. As vv. 8–9 show, the principle applies not only negatively but also positively. (CSB)

And Paul, you know, you kind of go: Whoa, Paul, this is really sharp language. Do not be deceived, he says. God is not mocked. Now, he's talking about support of his teachers financially. God is not mocked. So don't be deceived by this. For everyone who sows, that will he also reap. Now, this is a common expression, it's used all over the place. It's used in Jesus' teaching. But here it's used by Paul and it's very clear that he's talking about support for the catechetical teachers. Financial support. So that the truth of the Gospel might be heard. If they go, so goes the truth of the Gospel. And he says the way in which you sow, you're going to reap. If you don't sow by supporting them, you are not going to reap what is the fruit of the Spirit that comes from the truth of the Gospel of preaching Christ crucified, Christ risen from the dead. (Just – V-41)

6:8 εἰς τὴν σάρκα ... εἰς τὸ πνεῦμα (“to the flesh ... to the Spirit”)—One sows “into” (εἰς) the flesh or the Spirit as figurative soil types. At the same time, such a sowing is “for” or “unto” the flesh or the Spirit. The translation “to” may better convey both nuances. (CC)

sows to his flesh – He keeps the sowing and reaping imagery here, as well. He says. For the one who sows to his own flesh. And here this is circumcision. To his own flesh is circumcision. He will reap -- and look at what is -- the Greek it's the last word of the sentence. He will reap corruption from his flesh. Now, let me read you a translation. The one who sows to his own flesh will reap from the flesh corruption. Now, that is a strong statement. He's talking there about his opponents. They sow circumcision. They are going to reap from that flesh, from that circumcision, that teaching of circumcision, they are going to reap corruption. Corruption. That's a strong word. (Just – V-41)

But then the one who reaps by the Spirit, not his own spirit, but the Spirit of Christ, will reap out of that Spirit of Christ eternal life. Now, look at corruption versus eternal life. Think of the teachings of Jesus. You know, laying up for yourselves treasures in heaven. As opposed to those treasures in which moths can destroy and rust can destroy. Eternal life is what you will reap if you sow from the Spirit by supporting these catechetical teachers who bring the truth of the Gospel, what you will receive is eternal life. Now, this is the first time we've seen that expression, eternal life. Life that never if ends. And this is truly living in liberty now and forever. (Just – V-41)

Now, that is a profound statement. And he's talking here about the fruit of the Spirit which is generosity. He's talking about giving to the church. He's talking about how an expression of love and mercy and compassion is shown in a very, very tangible way by what we give. Now, I wish I had time to go into the teaching of Jesus, as you perhaps know, I've written a commentary on Luke's Gospel. I was so surprised in writing that commentary how much Jesus talks about money. And how money is very important as an expression of what it is that -- you know who it is, I should say, that we are and what it is that we do. (Just – V-41)

corruption. The sinful nature's work. Cf 5:19–21. (TLSB)

Now Paul adds a metaphor and an allegory. He applies the general statement about sowing to the particular case of providing for ministers, saying: “He who sows to the Spirit, that is, he who provides for preachers of the Word, performs a spiritual work and will reap eternal life.” Now the question is whether we merit eternal life by good works, for that is what Paul seems to be asserting in this passage. Earlier (ch. 3) we discussed at sufficient length the passages that speak about works and rewards. It is extremely necessary, following Paul's example, to exhort believers to do good works, that is, to exercise their faith

through good works; for unless these works follow faith, this is the surest possible sign that the faith is not genuine. (Luther)

sows to the Spirit. Living under the Holy Spirit's power and direction (5:5, 18, 25). (TLSB)

eternal life. In 5:21 Paul speaks of inheriting "the kingdom of God," here of reaping "eternal life." The first focuses on the realm (sphere, context) that will be inherited (as Israel inherited the promised land); the second focuses on the blessed life that will be enjoyed in that realm. (CSB)

Cf Rm 8:13. (TLSB)

Do Good to All (6:9–10)

6:9–10 *But let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap [a harvest] if we do not give up. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to the members of the household of faith.* Paul closes 6:1–10 with two concluding exhortations: (1) to *do what is "good"* (τὸ καλόν, 6:9) and (2) to *work for "the good"* (τὸ ἀγαθόν) of all (6:10). These similar admonitions are linked by the key word *καιρός* in both verses (but translated differently): "at the *proper time*" (καιρῶ, 6:9) and "as we have *opportunity*" (καιρόν, 6:10). At the same time, 6:9–10 is linked to the preceding verse by the repetition of the verb "to reap" in the future tense: "the one ... will reap" (θερίσει, 6:8) and "we will reap" (θερίσομεν, 6:9). The Spirit, as people sow to him, will bear fruit within the Christian community (5:22–23), and that fruit will be reaped. The harvest that will be fully realized at the end of time is *even now* being realized among believers to a certain extent as they patiently serve one another in Christ's love. One sows to the Spirit in actions directed toward the benefit of others. The reaping will always be "in due season," at the proper time of harvest. The "but" (δέ, 6:9) signals a qualification of the previous verse (6:8): what Christians sow they may not witness being reaped in the present hour. So Christians must persevere. They must not "become weary" (ἐγκακῶμεν; similarly 2 Thess 3:13: "Do not grow weary of doing good"). The Galatians must endeavor to remain steadfast in sowing to the Spirit. (CC)

Paul strikes a somber note in the condition he expresses on reaping: "if we do not give up" (μὴ ἐκλυόμενοι). Individuals may experience fatigue in their labors for the kingdom. Christians may become discouraged when they find themselves struggling against many of the same problems over and over again. They may grow weary. Reaping fruit is not automatic. A real danger exists that believers in Christ may apostatize, falling away from faith, and miss out on eternal life. The cosmic power of the flesh remains steadfast in its assaults. For some Christians the doctrinal slogan is "once saved, always saved." Paul would not agree. The admonition to stand firm is quite sincere. Human beings can always choose to sever themselves from Christ and God's grace (5:4). God always *calls* in grace (1:6, 15), but that call can be resisted. Once Christians have been granted the power of Christ's Spirit at conversion, they are responsible agents and have a responsibility to use that power to resist the yoke of slavery (5:1). God saves by his unmerited grace, but human beings can always forfeit what they have in Christ and surrender to the flesh (5:24). The warning to the Galatian Christians, indeed to *all* Christians, could not be clearer. Believers must not grow weary in doing good since they will reap what they sow with eternal consequences. A believer should be *active* in self-sacrifice by virtue of the Spirit's power and recognize his or her own personal accountability. Each person should examine his or her work (6:4). Is he or she manifesting a faith expressing itself in love (5:6)? To sow to the Spirit is to avoid sowing to the flesh. (CC)

Paul condemns the "works" of the flesh in 5:19–21 and the "works" of the Law in 3:10. The Galatians would not have missed how they are now responsible to "*work/do good*" (ἐργάζομαι), a cognate verb of "works" (ἔργα, 3:10; 5:19; see also the singular ἔργον in 6:4)! Christians are not saved *by* good works, but they certainly will not be saved without them. Each person will be judged according to his or her own

deeds. Paul emphasizes that repeatedly throughout his writings (e.g., Rom 2:6–11; 1 Cor 3:13–15). A believer’s life gives witness to an identity in Christ and the Spirit. The Spirit manifests itself in a person’s works as he or she labors for Christ and for the sake of others. Believers will give evidence of the Spirit’s presence in how they live and in what they do. Although laboring in Christ can be to the point of fatigue in this life, God’s Spirit will provide the ability to persevere. The Christian is already justified by faith and adopted securely into the family of God (3:26–29; 4:4–5). A new creation has already begun (6:15)! The Spirit will provide the weary Christian the needed energy to continue on! Paul refuses to provide a new Law of Moses, but he nevertheless recognizes the need for prodding and exhorting to good works. (CC)

With 6:10 Paul comes to the conclusion and key point of his admonitions (“therefore,” ἄρα οὖν). Gal 6:10 expresses the sentiment of 6:9 more positively: as time allows, Christians must labor for the good of all. The adverbial temporal particle ὡς with the accusative noun καιρόν can be translated eschatologically as “as long as (we have opportunity)” or existentially as “whenever.” The translation “as” reflects the ambiguity, but the immediate context is eschatological and favors “as long as.”¹³⁶ Since the time is short, seize every opportunity that presents itself! Christians are to be an industrious lot! If the path seems difficult or long, the believer must take it one step at a time while relying on the Spirit’s help and guidance. As Gordon Fee put it, believers will not find “perfection” in this life; they will experience the “infection” of Christ’s dwelling in his people. (CC)

The good works of Christians are directed toward all people, but especially toward those “of the household of faith” (6:10). Clearly Paul is referring to a subset within humanity toward whom the Galatians will especially exhibit good deeds. Some have supposed that the phrase “household of faith” (6:10; cf. Eph 2:19’s “household of God”) may be a Christianized version of the OT “house of Israel” (οἶκος [τοῦ] Ἰσραὴλ). The problem is that Paul’s wording does not correspond to the Septuagint’s phrasing of “house of Israel.”¹⁴⁰ Some have therefore concluded that Paul is referring by “household” to the Jerusalem saints, but elsewhere Paul refers to gentile Christian assemblies as a “household.” The first Christians, after all, met in homes (Rom 16:5, 23; 1 Cor 1:16; 16:15, 19; Philemon 2). “The household of faith” need not imply any particular focus on the Galatian house gatherings (cf. Eph 2:19); Paul likely employs the language as yet another term in the broader constellation of familial imagery throughout this letter (e.g., “sons of God,” 3:26; “brothers [and sisters],” e.g., 6:1). (CC)

The “household of faith” language is significant in another way as well. What binds Christians together is not an ethnic or social identity (see Gal 3:28) but rather a common faith in Christ as Deliverer (1:4). Racism and social exclusivism have no place among God’s people. If God’s grace is no longer limited to a single people, then why should the good works of Christians be limited to the household of God?¹⁴⁴ Such charitable deeds and financial beneficence toward all should never be slandered with slogans of being mere “social Gospel.” Too often people fall into a comfortable, easy “either-or” pattern of thought—as if one could be charitable to fellow Christians at the expense of the rest of the world. Paul and his God will have none of that. Faith always manifests itself in love, whether among Christian family members or not—but especially within the household of faith. (CC)

Is not this the “fast” I choose: to loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to tear off every yoke? Is it not to divide your bread with the hungry and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see a naked person, to cover him, and not to hide yourself from your family member? Then your light shall break forth like the dawn, ... the glory of the Lord shall be your rear guard. (Is 58:6–8) (CC)

6:9 μὴ ἐγκακῶμεν (“let us not become weary”)—The text is well supported externally. The alternate reading in C and the Byzantine text, μὴ ἐκκακῶμεν, “let us not lose heart,” reflects a scribal change to a more common word (cf. 2 Cor 4:1, 16; Eph 3:13; 2 Thess 3:13). ἐγκακέω does not appear in Classical

Greek literature, the Septuagint, or in any other Jewish writing in Greek prior to the NT period. The word may have been coined in the second century BC (cf. Polybius 4.19.10 [ἐνεκάκησαν]; BGU 1043.3). (CC) Christians must not become discouraged when they do not see immediate or observable results from their well-doing (a lesson learned from farmers who must wait patiently). Cf Lk 18:1; 2Co 4:1; Eph 3:13. (TLSB)

not grow weary of doing good – Now, he's not done. Verse 9 he says -- and now he's going to talk in more general ways. But I think still the fruit of the Spirit, generosity, is what is in mind here. Let us not grow weary in doing good. Doing good. Namely, fruits of the Spirit. For in due season, we will reap if we do not give up. Now, you can see that it's a future. We will reap. It's something that will happen in the future. And going back to the previous verse, it's eternal life. But eternal life is already with us now. And Paul knows that. It's that now not yet tension. But what he can see -- and this is true of all of us. This is perhaps some of the things that is most evident of the virus of sin that infects us. Sometimes in this world we get weary. We get weary of living out the christological life. Because we get persecuted for it. Or we don't see people responding as they should. And it is something that can just simply wear us down. I think that's what's happening in the Galatian congregation. They know what Paul said. But these opponents are so much beating on them, the world is beating on them, that they are tired. They are weary. They are warriors on the front lines of that Apocalyptic war. And they are worn out. (Just – V-41)

6:10 ἔχομεν (“we have”)—This reading is well supported externally by \mathfrak{B}^{46} A B² C D F G Ψ Byzantine it vg Marcion Clement. The present subjunctive ἔχωμεν, “we might have,” has good external support as well (κ B* 33). Although the meaning is the same, the subjunctive is probably the result of itacism, the accidental substitution of a similar-sounding vowel or diphthong (ω for o).

ἐργαζώμεθα (“let us do”)—This present subjunctive is better attested (κ B* C D F G Ψ) than the present indicative ἐργαζόμεθα, “we do” (A B² P). \mathfrak{B}^{46} has the first aorist subjunctive ἐργασώμεθα. Burton and Longenecker concluded that, along with the better external attestation, intrinsic probability favors the present subjunctive.

τὸ ἀγαθόν (“good”)—The article τό is generic; the neuter singular substantive is the equivalent of an abstract noun. (CC)

Inspired by God’s generosity. John Chrysostom: “The rule of life which Grace gives invited both land and sea to the [table] of charity, only it shows greater care for its own household” (NPNF 1 13:45). “Help them and promote their interest—in every way and wherever you can—purely out of love for God and to please Him. Do this in the confidence that He will abundantly reward you for everything” (LC I 328). (TLSB)

especially to those who are of the household of faith. And so here is Paul, the pastor, encouraging them. He says very clearly: Let us not grow weary in doing good. For in due season, in the ***chiros that's the word, in the critical time of salvation, we will reap if we don't give up. And now Verse 10 just continues that. So therefore then as that critical time comes, as we have opportunity. In this critical time of salvation. And this is wonderful here what he says. Let us continue over and over again to do good to everyone. To live out the fruits of the Spirit to everyone. And he says especially to those who are of the household of faith. It begins at home. It begins in the church. It doesn't end there. Because this life of love is lived out among the whole world. But it begins in the church. And I think here perhaps Paul is speaking of the Jerusalem church. The fact that they are broken by a famine. They need Paul to take up the collection for them. That there is real tangible expressions of need there. And let's not grow weary in taking up that collection for them, as well. (Just – V-41)

But I think Paul here is showing very clearly that one of the ways in which the impulsive desire of the flesh and living under the law can wear down a church is that they cease to see that the Gospel is

expressed in concrete expressions of mercy. And that's not only just simply kind of in spiritual expressions by loving one another and forgiving one another. But concrete expressions. Where you actually bring tangible evidence of helping people in their lives. (Just – V-41)

6:1–10 Members of God's family restore the erring, bear one another's burdens, support their teachers, and do good to all—especially to fellow Christians. An attitude of moral superiority closes the heart against the brother or sister in need (cf 1 Jn 3:17). The Son of God “loved me and gave Himself for me” (2:20), that I may be free to serve Him and my neighbor in need. • Teach me to be patient with others, Lord, so I may not grow tired of doing good. Restore me with unfailing mercy. Amen. (TLSB)

Final Warning and Benediction

14 But far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which[b] the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. 15 For neither circumcision counts for anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation. 16 And as for all who walk by this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God. 17 From now on let no one cause me trouble, for I bear on my body the marks of Jesus. 18 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brothers. Amen.

Paul's Boast: The Cross of Christ (6:14–16) (CC)

6:14 ἐμοὶ δὲ μὴ γένοιτο (“but as for me, may I never”)—For the optative expression μὴ γένοιτο (“by no means!”), see the commentary on 2:17.

κόσμος ... κόσμῳ (“the world ... to the world”)—The noun κόσμος is anarthrous twice here and frequently elsewhere. “The world” reflects Paul's apocalyptic worldview as one of the powers of “the present evil age” (1:4). The “world” stands for a former, fleshly reality under the Law and the “elements” (4:3, 9) that has passed away for those in Christ. (CC)

But as for me, may I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me and I to the world. Paul juxtaposes himself over against his rivals: Note the emphatic “as for me” (ἐμοί; a dative of respect) placed at the very beginning of the Greek of 6:14 along with the contrastive “but” (δέ). Paul always employs the optative μὴ γένοιτο—usually rendered as “by no means!” but in this context as “may I never”—to express strong disagreement with a preceding statement or with a false inference that could be drawn from his teaching (see 2:17; 3:21; also, e.g., Rom 3:4, 6). The emphatic “as for me,” the contrastive “but,” and the optative expression together express a contrast in the starkest of terms. The Galatians must choose between two worldviews: Paul's or the rivals'. These two world-views are in no way compatible. While the rivals boast in the Galatians' flesh, Paul boasts in the cross of Christ, the very scandal the rivals are seeking to mitigate! (CC)

What people choose to boast of speaks volumes. Paul's focus is centered exclusively on “our Lord Jesus Christ” (6:14). If only he could say the same for his rivals. For many people, their work has become their focus. Others focus on relationships or seek people's approval (cf. Paul's attitude toward human approval in 1:10). Others boast in worldly possessions or their accomplishments. Paul remains riveted on the crucifixion. In fact, there are *three crucifixions* in 6:14: Christ's, Paul's, and the world's. Paul's and the world's crucifixions are expressed with the perfect tense “has been crucified” (ἔσταύρωται). Christ's crucifixion has lingering effects in the crucifixion of Paul (cf. 2:20). “The life of the apostle is continuously being shaped by the once-and-for-all crucifixion of Christ.” Even the very world structured by the Law and circumcision has *itself* been crucified to Paul. The apostle is presenting himself as a model for *every* Christian in relation to the old age. (CC)

The prepositional phrase (δι' οὗ) “through whom” or “through which” introduces the subordinate clause in the latter half of 6:14. The governing antecedent of the genitive relative pronoun οὗ could be “Christ”

or “cross.” Paul is crucified to the world either through the person of Christ or through the cross. As the exclusive object of Paul’s boast, the “cross” receives the emphasis in the first part of 6:14 and is therefore the more likely antecedent of the pronoun, even if it is further from the pronoun than “Christ.” The decision between “Christ” or the “cross” as antecedent is ultimately moot since the meaning is not significantly different. The emphatic placement of “to me” (ἐμοί) in the latter half of 6:14 parallels the emphatic “to me” (ἐμοί) at the very beginning of 6:14. This pronoun (“to me”) does not signal some personal subjective opinion. Paul is boasting in a fitting fashion of his participation in an objective, new reality. According to Paul’s apocalyptic perspective, the “world” (κόσμος) has been crucified to him, and he to the “world.” One world has passed away and has been replaced by another (thus 6:15: “a new creation”; cf. 2:19–20). Paul came to recognize in Christ that zeal for the Law belongs to an old world that is no more (1:4). If only the rivals had grasped the significance of this new age in Christ! (CC)

From a Roman standpoint, the cross symbolized defeat, humiliation, and shameful degradation. One simply did not utter *crux* in polite Roman circles. Crucifixion was usually reserved for slaves, violent criminals, and political rebels. For Paul and for the first Christians, this otherwise repugnant and horrific sight had become the symbol of God’s power! With Christ’s invasion of the cosmos, one world and its value system is being upended by a new order and a new value system.^a That invasion is not yet finished. The present evil age (1:4) remains in bondage under the Law (3:23; 4:21; 5:1) and under the weak, beggarly elements (4:3, 9). The evil age is crucified, but it is not yet buried. What began with Christ’s cross and the granting of the Spirit (4:6: “sent forth,” ἐξαπέστειλεν, aorist tense) must continue until the crucifixion of this world is complete. For that reason, Paul employs the perfect tense “has been crucified” (ἔσταύρωται) for the crucifying of the world (6:14). For now, this new reality can only be seen through the eyes of faith “to” Paul (“to me,” ἐμοί) and “to” the Christian believer in 6:14. Unlike the Eastern mystic, the believer does not escape the present existence within the world, at least not yet. Rather, this present world and the flesh no longer dictate the believer’s thoughts or way of life.⁷⁹ The believer in Christ lives accordingly with eyes to see the structures of a world that is just now beginning to dawn. The “new creation” (6:15) comes with a *new Lord*, “our Lord Jesus Christ” (6:14). Those in Christ have therefore experienced a change of lordship (cf. 1:10; 4:12). (CC)

boast except in the cross. See 1Co 1:31; 2:2. (CSB)

A sharp paradox to v 13 and, in the first-century context, the height of foolishness and even madness (1Co 1:18). The cross symbolized a cruel, vulgar, shameful, and humiliating death reserved for slaves and criminals. Compressed in “cross” is the powerful message of salvation through Christ’s death. (TLSB)

This is a very powerful statement by Paul that I think sums up the entire theology of grace and the theology of the cross. And I think we need to pause here for a moment and ask ourselves as we come to the end of this letter and we see how Paul is coming back to Christ crucified what in fact the cross means and what it means then to boast in the cross of Jesus Christ. (Just – V-43)

The cross is for Paul a cosmic event. It is an Apocalyptic event because it affects the whole creation. Everything is different after the cross. And here is where God is in fact acting on behalf of fallen humanity that is infected with this virus of sin to make right in the cross what has gone wrong because of our sin. The cross then is a watershed event in the entire cosmos. And what Paul has been saying throughout this letter is it's not the law that is the cosmic event. It's not Mt. Sinai. It's not the delivery of the law to Moses by angels on Mt. Sinai. But it is the cross of Jesus Christ that is the watershed event. And if you accent the law, if you accent what Moses did and superimpose that upon people, then you are going to dilute the cosmic character of the cross of Jesus Christ. (Just – V – 43)

Now, this is an absolutely extraordinary statement for Paul. And let's look at exact language that he uses. Verse 14. And this is an expression he uses in other places. But it does stand out because it's fairly rare.

And in the Greek you're kind of alerted to it. It's hard to sometimes translate. Let it not be to me to boast. Let me see how this translation does it. That is Verse 14. But far be it from me to boast. You know, I like let it be. Let it not be to me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, your Lord and mine, Gentile, Jews, through whom the world is crucified to me and I to the world. (Just – V-43)

Now, usually when you boast in something, it's either -- it's usually something that's yourself. You know, you boast in your own accomplishments. You boast in your golf score, the number of fish that you've caught off a particular fly. You know, you boast in your accomplishments. You can boast in your kids. A lot of people boast in their kids or their wife's accomplishments or their husband's or whatever. But usually it's something personal. Here Paul is saying he's not going to boast in anything that he had anything to do with or anybody else had anything to do with humanly speaking. He's not going to boost in anybody's dead foreskins. He's not going to boast in his rhetorical prowess. He's not going to boast in the number of converts he's got. (Just – V-43)

the world. All that is against God. (CSB)

crucified to me, and I to the world. See 2:19–20; 5:24; see also notes on Jas 4:4; 1Jn 2:15. (CSB)

“Although believers are regenerate and renewed in the spirit of their mind, in the present life this regeneration and renewal is not complete. It is only begun. Believers ... struggle constantly against the corrupt nature and character, which cleaves to us until death” (FC Ep VI 4). (TLSB)

And the third thing he's saying about the cross, and this is where we get that language of the world is crucified to me and I to the world. What the cross is is that defining moment in which the loss of one cosmos, namely, the world of the law, is lost to Paul. And there's the birth of a new cosmos. And that is the birth of the new creation. (Just – V-43)

That was his life before. But now the cross is where he gets his identity. And there, that law life, collided with Christ on the cross. Here this is Galatians 2 and 3. And it killed Jesus. There Jesus is cursed because he is the sinner. Cursed by the law. That is the defining moment for Paul. And it's there that the world, his former world of Judaism, is crucified in Christ. And if that's crucified in Christ, then so is Paul himself. Paul is crucified in that cross of Christ, which is just another way of talking about what happens to him in his baptism. (Just – V-43)

Now, this is a great contrast, as I said, to his opponents. And it places the cross here -- and if this is his first letter -- it places the cross in the final words to the Galatians at the center of his preaching. You know what he's going to say to the Corinthians. I will know nothing except Christ crucified. And I've always been intrigued by that because right before that he's in Athens and he mentions nothing of Christ crucified. I think he learns something from that. That even when you're with pagans, you've got to preach Christ crucified. So when he gets with pagans in Corinth, he says: I'm going to know nothing but Christ crucified to you. Preach nothing but Christ crucified. So the crucifixion of Jesus. It is the center of his preaching. And if you just remember back, remember he says of the. Oh, foolish Galatians, before whom I've publicly portrayed Jesus as crucified. Paul is now going to show very clearly how this crucified Jesus is evident in his own body. (Just – V-43)

6:15 οὔτε γὰρ (“for neither”)—This shorter reading is well attested (℞⁴⁶ B Ψ 33 1175). Although excellent attestation favors ἐν γὰρ Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ οὔτε, “for *in Christ Jesus* neither” (⋈ A C D F G Textus Receptus, most minuscules and versions), this longer reading is likely a variant that assimilated 6:15 to the wording of 5:6. (CC)

For neither circumcision nor uncircumcision is anything, but a new creation [is everything]! Gal 6:15 further explains (“for,” γὰρ) what the believer’s crucifixion to the world in 6:14 entails. Neither

circumcision nor uncircumcision is of any real value. Paul blurts out “new creation”! “The broken syntax of the sentence expresses the utter discontinuity between the abolished cosmos and the new world.”⁸² Ironically, the very rite that was supposed to distinguish the Jews *from* the rest of the world actually marked their participation *in* this present world. Those fixated on circumcision are missing out on the “new creation.” “New creation” could refer to an individual (as in “a new creature,” *καινή κτίσις*, in 2 Cor 5:17) or to the “creation” collectively (as in *κτίσις*, “creation,” without *καινή*, “new,” in Rom 8:19–22). “New creation” would neatly match the crucifixion to the world (6:14; cf. 2:19–20). Paul’s “new creation” language echoes Is 65:17 (cf. Is 65:17–25; 66:22): “For behold, I am about to create new heavens and a new earth; the former things shall not be remembered nor arise upon the heart.” The promises of Scripture are becoming a reality not only for individuals but also for an entire created world! (CC)

The Jews in Paul’s day often looked forward to a “new creation” that would follow the destruction or renewal of this world. What the Jews eagerly anticipated, for Paul has already arrived in Christ. Paul uses the perfect tense in 6:14 (“has been crucified,” *ἔσταύρωται*) and then the present tense in 6:15 (“is,” *ἔστιν*) as he affirms both the “now” and “not yet” dimensions of this “new creation.” The emphasis for the Galatians must remain on the “now” as the rivals seek to denigrate the blessings that the Galatians are already enjoying in Christ. A genuine liberation from “the present evil age” has *already* taken place with Christ’s death for sins (1:4). In being crucified with Christ, the believer genuinely participates in the realities of the cross; believers are crucified to the world. “I no longer live, but Christ lives in me” (2:20). Christ is being formed within the Galatians (4:19). These surpassing new realities render circumcision and the cultic rituals of the old age obsolete. God’s people can no longer be identified with a single, ethnic entity. The Spirit of the “new creation” has exploded the boundary between Israel and the rest of humanity in order to create something larger and far grander. (CC)

neither circumcision. Counts for nothing – Does this mean that laws are evil? No. They are actually good and useful, but in their proper order and proper place, namely, in material and political matters, which cannot be administered without laws. In addition, we also observe certain ceremonies and laws in the churches, not because such observance counts for justification, but for the sake of good order, a good example, tranquility, and harmony, in accordance with the statement (1 Cor. 14:40): “All things should be done decently and in order.” But if laws are set forth and required as though their observance justified and their nonobservance damned, then they must be completely abrogated and repealed; otherwise Christ will lose His position and glory as the only One who justifies, sends the Spirit, etc. With these words Paul clearly affirms that neither circumcision counts for anything nor uncircumcision, but a new creation. But since in Christ neither the laws of the Gentiles nor those of the Jews count for anything, it was a completely ungodly action when the pope compelled us to attach our confidence to his laws. (Luther)

new creation. In Christ man undergoes a transformation that results in an entirely new being. Creation again takes place (see 2Co 5:17). (CSB)

This whole new order of existence inaugurated through Jesus’ atoning death is a radical contrast to a world in which circumcision had religious significance. Those in Christ are already “a new creation” (2Co 5:17; cf Is 65:17; Rm 8:19–22). (TLSB)

Now, here is what Paul is saying I think right here at the end. And I think Verse 15 is one of the most profound statements in all of Paul’s epistles. And you can’t just pull it out. You’ve got to see it in a context. Paul speaks here about the cosmos in the previous verse. And we talked about what that means. This is the law world or the world of Christ crucified. Now he turns to the language of creation. And it’s really interesting what he says here. He said after all these chapters of talking about circumcision and talking about the uncircumcised and talking about the law but particularly in terms of circumcision, you know at the end of the day, that’s not what I want to talk about. Circumcision really is not what this is about. And it’s not about uncircumcision. Circumcision and uncircumcision really don’t matter. And

what I really want to talk to you about is what does matter. And what matters -- and here I think we can even put it in this language: What really exists is not circumcision or uncircumcision. But what really exists, what really matters, is new creation. New creation. (Just – V-44)

Now that the new creation is here, Paul is going to speak about it in such a way that it becomes the norm. It becomes the rule. Or to use kind of the equivalent of the Greek language, it is the canon. It is what is going to guide our lives. It's not the law that does it. It's the new creation. The new creation -- and I'm going to say this carefully. And I'm just using this as an example. The new creation is now our moral code. It's not a moral code. But it's like our moral code. It's what guides us. And that's exactly what Paul says. In Verse 16 he says: As many of you as -- and this is an important distinction here -- as walk along. Let me see how the translation does it here. Yeah. Who walk by this rule. Now that's how this translation is. But it's by this canon. As many of you who live by this canon is what he's saying. Remember he said: Walk in the Spirit and you do. As many of you walk along this canon, this rule. You know the canon of the Scriptures, that's what shows us what God wants us to know about him. The canon here is the new creation. As many of you who walk in this new creation, this is what you get. (Just – V-44)

6:16 στοιχήσουσιν (“will follow”)—The strongest external attestation favors this future indicative (ⲛ B C2 Ψ 0278 33 Textus Receptus). Ⲙ⁴⁶ has the aorist subjunctive στοιχήσωσιν (“would follow”), and several Western witnesses (A C* D F G) have the present indicative στοιχοῦσιν. For the meaning of στοιχέω, see the commentary on 5:25. The verb “follow” or “keep in step with” (στοιχέω) in this instance takes a dative of association; BDF § 193.

εἰρήνη ἐπ’ αὐτούς (“peace be upon them”)—The Greek lacks an explicit verb. “Be” represents an understood verb, the optative form of εἶμι, “to be”; BDF § 128 (5). For the ἐπί of motion (“upon”), see Acts 10:10; Rom 2:9: blessing or curse rains down from heaven “upon” its recipients. ὅσοι, “as many (as),” and the third person pronoun αὐτούς, “them,” generalize the statement beyond the Galatian readers. (CC)

And as many who will follow this rule, peace be upon them and mercy even upon the Israel of God. Paul signals the utter seriousness of these matters by a conditional benediction on all “who will follow this rule.” The conditional blessing here matches the conditional curse in 1:6–9. The apostle has been urging the Galatians to “walk” or “keep in step” (στοιχῶμεν) with the Spirit (5:25), which includes “following” or “keeping in step” (στοιχήσουσιν, another form of the same verb) with Paul’s rule (6:16). Ironically, the Gospel of Jesus Christ can be reduced to a “rule.”⁹⁰ God’s blessing of peace and mercy depends on the behavior of the Spirit-led Galatians! Paul has no problem exhorting the Galatians with the principles that structure this new reality. A “rule” (κανόν) in this context is a standard for measuring, not a collection of texts or “canon” as in later usage. “This rule” (τῷ κανόνι **τούτῳ**) refers not to circumcision or uncircumcision but rather to the new creation—the concept Paul just blurted out at the end of 6:15. All that matters is the new creation. Only the Spirit of God can enable people to discern this new reality. Nevertheless, the new creation is itself juxtaposed with the irrelevance of circumcision and uncircumcision. Another possible understanding of “this rule,” then, lies in the relationship of 6:15 (which begins with “for,” γάρ) and 6:16 as support for 6:14: The priority of the new creation (6:15) is precisely why Paul as a “rule” (6:16) will boast only in the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ (6:14) and not in this world (6:14) nor in its distinction between circumcision and uncircumcision (6:15). The “as many who” (ὅσοι) follow Paul’s “rule” in 6:16 are taking the opposite approach to the “as many who” (ὅσοι) in 6:12, “who want to present a good face with respect to the flesh.” (CC)

Paul pronounces God’s “peace” and “mercy” to “be upon them” (ἐπ’ αὐτούς) and “upon” (ἐπί) the “Israel of God.” “Peace” (εἰρήνη) comes from the Jewish salutation of שָׁלוֹם , *shalom*: “Peace be upon Israel”

(Pss 125:5; 128:6). “Mercy” (ἔλεος) recalls God’s kindness and faithfulness to his promises; in the LXX ἔλεος is the normal translation of the Hebrew חַסֵּד, *hesed* (e.g., Ex 34:7; Num 14:19). Elsewhere in the NT, whenever “mercy” (ἔλεος) is joined to “peace” (εἰρήνη), “mercy” as the cause *precedes* “peace” as the result (see 1 Tim 1:2; 2 Tim 1:2; 2 Jn 3; Jude 2; so also LXX Is 54:10). Gal 6:16’s reversed order is unprecedented, even for Paul. Some commentators have theorized that the reversed order in 6:16 may reflect the influence of either the Nineteenth Benediction in the Jewish male’s daily prayer or a precursor to that benediction: “Bestow peace, happiness and blessing, grace and loving-kindness and mercy upon us and upon all Israel, your people.” This Jewish benediction refers to God’s “peace” and “mercy.”⁹⁸ On the other hand, Paul’s language does not display any obvious dependence on the Nineteenth Benediction, which was possibly not yet in existence. Other scholars try to account for Paul’s language of “peace” and “mercy” by suggesting an allusion to Ps 125:5 (LXX 124:5) and/or Ps 128:6 (LXX 127:6); cf. Pss. Sol. 9:11; 11:9, but the psalm passages mention only “peace upon Israel” and not “mercy.” In Is 54:10, a more promising text, the prophet speaks of “mercy” (חַסֵּד) and then “peace” (שָׁלוֹם), an otherwise unusual combination, and he does so within a context of God’s impending new creation of *Israel*.¹⁰⁰ “Peace,” “mercy,” Israel, and the concept of new creation are also in Gal 6:15–16. Perhaps Paul is echoing Isaiah. Unfortunately, this suggestion is unlikely as well since the connection ultimately relies on only two shared words, “peace” and “mercy,” neither of which is particularly unusual for Paul or Isaiah. Moreover, the order of the two words is *reversed* in Paul’s unusual syntactical formulation. Although Isaiah discusses what God will do in the future age, the apostle does not draw on any of the prophet’s distinctive language. That passage of Isaiah does not use the language of “new creation” or envision a world in which circumcision is irrelevant. Paul, on the other hand, refers to a “new creation” where there is neither circumcision nor uncircumcision (Gal 6:15). At best, an echo of Is 54:10 is possible, but any interpretation of Gal 6:16 should not rely on a weak potential echo. The reversed order of “peace” and “mercy” remains a mystery. (CC)

Paul employs the peculiar phrase “the Israel of God” (6:16). Some specialists have theorized that this may be the terminology of the rivals since the phrase figures nowhere else in the letter. Paul refers to “the Israel of God” immediately after asserting that circumcision and uncircumcision do not matter. If he is employing the language of his rivals, then he has taken that language, redefined it, and employed it *against* them! He would have redefined Israel in such a way that ethnic Israel per se has been excluded apart from faith in the Gospel message about Christ. On the other hand, “Israel of God” is nowhere employed in Second Temple Judaism or in early rabbinic literature. The lack of any parallel militates against the notion that Paul is drawing on the Jewish rivals’ language. This is likely his own ironic formulation. (CC)

The wording of 6:16 is unusually awkward and capable of varying interpretations. The prepositional phrase “upon them” is peculiarly placed *between* “peace” and “mercy” in the original Greek (and the translation above). Is “peace” only to be “upon *them*” (ἐπ’ αὐτούς) and “mercy” only “upon the Israel of God” (ἐπὶ τὸν Ἰσραὴλ τοῦ θεοῦ)? Should “them” be distinguished as a first group separate from “the Israel of God” as a second group? Perhaps *both* “peace” and “mercy” are “upon” both “them” and “the Israel of God” as separate groups? Or perhaps “them” and “the Israel of God” are, in fact, one and the *same* group? Three interpretive options are therefore available:

1. “Peace” and “mercy” be upon “them,” namely, “the Israel of God”—both blessings upon the same group (“them” = “the Israel of God”).
2. “Peace” and “mercy” be upon both “them” and also upon “the Israel of God”—both blessings upon each of the two separate groups.
3. “Peace” be upon “them” and “mercy” be upon “the Israel of God”—separate blessings for separate groups. (CC)

Option 1

Most interpreters have seized upon the presence of the Greek *καί* (“and/also/namely”) immediately before the words “upon the Israel of God” (ἐπὶ τὸν Ἰσραὴλ τοῦ θεοῦ) and have maintained that this word should be translated as “namely” (an exegetical *καί*), in which case 6:16b would read: “Peace be upon them and mercy, *that is*, upon the Israel of God.” The “them” group would be identical to “the Israel of God.” Paul has spent the bulk of this letter blasting circumcision and Moses’ Law (the distinguishing marks of the OT Israel) as entry requirements for the people of God in Christ. The contrast between circumcision and the cross of Christ in 6:11–16 is the parting shot. Gal 6:16b would therefore conclude with a rhetorically powerful redefinition of “the Israel of God.” “The Israel of God” is a new entity that includes both Jews and gentiles in Christ. An “Israel of God” inclusive of the gentiles in 6:16 would recall the apostle’s description of the Galatian gentile Christians in terms of “the Jerusalem above,” “*our* mother” (4:26, 28–29). Jew and gentile have been brought together once and for all in Christ (Gal 3:26–29) as the true children of Abraham (3:6) and of Sarah, “the free woman” (4:30–31). “The Israel of God” would parallel “the church of God” in 1:13. God’s peace and mercy are only for the Israel that recognizes the “rule” (6:16) of 6:15—a fierce parting shot paralleling 1:8–9’s repeated anathema. Whereas the rivals had been fervently trying to incorporate the gentile Galatians into Israel, Paul would be clarifying that the Galatians are *already* part of Israel, “the Israel of God,” the *true* Israel! The first option neatly conforms to the message of the letter. (CC)

Four difficulties render option 1 the least likely. First, this approach relies on taking the intervening *καί* exegetically as “namely/that is.” An uncontested instance of an exegetical *καί* (“namely”) is not available elsewhere in the undisputed Pauline corpus. Second, more natural Greek expressions are available to express apposition, e.g., οἵτινές εἰσιν, “who are,” or τουτέστιν, “which is.” Third, when the preposition “upon” (ἐπὶ) is repeated, the second instance normally distinguishes a *second* group from those serving as the object of the first instance of the preposition. In Mt 27:25, for instance, the Jews call for the blood of Christ to be “upon” themselves and “upon” their children (ἐφ’ ἡμᾶς καὶ ἐπὶ τὰ τέκνα ἡμῶν). Separate groups are in view: the Jewish adults on the one hand and their (future) children on the other. In Acts 5:11 “fear” not only came “upon” the whole church but also “upon *all* who heard of these things” (ἐφ’ ὅλην τὴν ἐκκλησίαν καὶ ἐπὶ πάντας τοὺς ἀκούοντας ταῦτα), with “all” referring to people outside of the church. In Acts 11:15 the Holy Spirit came “upon” the gentiles as “upon” the Jews at the very beginning. In Heb 8:8 the “new covenant” “upon the house of Israel” stands juxtaposed with “upon the house of Judah.” Rev 20:4 refers to the mark “upon the foreheads” or “upon the hands.” In each of these examples the repeated “upon” (ἐπὶ) likely designates a second, separate group. Fourth, the awkward syntax with the second *καί* (καὶ ἔλεος καὶ ἐπὶ τὸν Ἰσραὴλ τοῦ θεοῦ) draws attention to the last four words of the verse (τὸν Ἰσραὴλ τοῦ θεοῦ, “the Israel of God”) as a separate group from those “who will follow this rule.” Had Paul intended to convey that “the Israel of God” is the same group as those “who will follow this rule,” he would have omitted the unnecessary second *καί* (“also/even/namely”). “The Israel of God” is most likely a different group from the gentile Galatian Christians. Options 2 and 3 may have been too casually dismissed by the majority of interpreters. (CC)

Option 2

Other interpreters have contended that the Greek wording of 6:15–16 (with the *καί* immediately preceding “upon the Israel of God”) distinguishes two separate groups of people and that the *καί* should be translated as “also” or “as well as”: “Peace and mercy be upon all who follow this rule as well as upon the Israel of God.” According to this view, as Paul contrasts his message of the cross of Jesus Christ with the message of his rivals, 6:11–16 closes on as fiercely polemical a note as the letter opens (1:6–9). Throughout the letter Paul condemns his rivals’ insistence (contrary to the “rule” [6:16] of 6:15) that circumcision is somehow necessary. This verse could be one last warning against the false brethren in the Galatians’ midst (cf. 1:8–9; 2:4–5). Those Jews who preach “another Gospel” of gentile Law observance are excluded from “the Israel of God” and from God’s blessings (1:6–9; 2:4–5). Paul may have begun his letter by invoking a curse upon the rivals (1:8–9); now his hope is that the rivals would experience God’s

mercy at the judgment if they will simply abide by this “rule.” “The Israel of God” would be a redefined Israel consisting of those ethnic Jews who adhere to Paul’s Gospel of Jesus Christ and recognize the irrelevance of circumcision in the new creation.¹¹² Lest someone mistakenly draw the conclusion from the letter that Paul was abandoning any place for Israel in God’s plan, he offers a blessing for the ethnic Israel that is of God. Paul is not abandoning “we [who] are Jews by birth” who recognize the exclusive, saving value of faith in/of Christ (2:15–16). While Jew and gentile are indeed united in Christ (3:28–29), Paul nevertheless recognizes that Peter must preach the one Gospel in a distinct mission to Jews as Jews, even as Paul must preach that Gospel message to the gentiles as gentiles (2:7–8). Advocates of option 1 have stressed the oneness of Jew and gentile in Christ (with 3:28). For advocates of option 2, even as oneness in Christ in 3:28 does not dissolve the distinction in roles between male and female, likewise the oneness in Christ of Jew and gentile does not deny differences in role and function for the Jews in God’s plan. In referring to the *true* Israel (“the Israel of God”), Paul is simultaneously commending the Jewish Christians who affirm his Gospel message and at the same time denigrating the Jewish-Christian rivals who demand circumcision as necessary for salvation. Option 2 fits the context of the letter as well with “the Israel of God” as ethnically Jewish Christ-believers who rely not on Moses’ Law but solely on the cross of Christ. (CC)

Option 3

Advocates of option 3 likewise distinguish two separate groups but associate the blessing of “peace” with the first group (“them”) and “mercy” with the second group (“the Israel of God”): “And [καί] for as many who follow this rule, peace be upon them, and [καί] mercy even [καί] upon the Israel of God.” Favoring this translation, the first “and” (καί), the first “upon” (ἐπί), and the first attribute, “peace,” arguably remain separated from the second “and,” the second “upon,” and the second attribute, “mercy.” Jewish benedictions in that time period convey either “peace” or “mercy,” but not both.¹¹⁷ A benediction of *both* “peace” and “mercy” would be unusual in Jewish circles. That problem is avoided if “peace” is for one group and “mercy” for another. Were “mercy” linked with “peace,” then “mercy” would likewise be conditional upon walking according to Paul’s “rule.” That would contradict how the apostle describes “mercy” elsewhere. “Mercy” is unconditional and never dependent upon human behavior or merit. God simply chooses to show mercy (Rom 9:15). In Rom 11:32 God is merciful to all the disobedient. “Mercy,” then, is not likely linked with the “peace” that is bestowed upon those following the “rule.” As “peace” is upon “them” (gentile Christians who rely on the cross rather than circumcision), “mercy” is upon a *separate* group, “the Israel of God.” On the other hand, it is difficult to conceive of an Israel experiencing God’s “mercy” but not also “peace,” *shalom*. (CC)

An Eschatological Interpretation: Ethnic Israel’s Future

In options 2 and 3 “the Israel of God” is a separate entity from the gentile Christians (“them”) walking according to Paul’s rule. Some take these two options a step further by pointing to the future tense of “will follow” (στοιχήσουσιν). If the tense has a truly future sense, perhaps the “mercy” (ἔλεος) for “the Israel of God” is likewise in the future. Perhaps Gal 6:16 should be interpreted like the ethnic “Israel” of Rom 11:26. Perhaps the apostle envisions that ethnic Israel as such will eventually be saved and enjoy God’s blessing. The problem is that Paul does not hint at that sort of future elsewhere in the letter to the Galatians. An automatic blessing of ethnic Israel would be at odds with the letter’s emphasis that circumcision does not matter. Circumcision, in that case, *would* matter since the gentiles do not enjoy the same automatic (future) salvation as the Jews. The apostle has been adamant throughout the letter that such is not the case!¹²² The Gospel message to the circumcised remains the same cross-centered message that Paul is taking to the uncircumcised (2:7–9). The cross of Christ that dominates 6:11–18 continues to dominate this verse as well. Christ’s salvation is God’s exclusive means for all, whether Jew or gentile, to enjoy God’s blessing (3:27–29). (CC)

Conclusion

All three interpretive options could conform to the larger context of the letter, whether option 1 with both blessings to the same group, option 2 with both blessings to separate groups, or option 3 with separate blessings to separate groups. Options 2 and 3 are significantly more likely than option 1. Whether or not “the Israel of God” refers to a church inclusive of Jews and gentiles as in option 1, Paul’s language remains rhetorically potent. He defines God’s Israel in terms of those who adhere to his Gospel message. Having outlined the stark differences between his own view and that of his rivals, Paul wants the gentile Galatians to be clear on the choice that has been laid before them. Either God’s saving blessings come exclusively through the cross of Christ or through Moses’ Law. The paths are mutually exclusive, and the choice is now! For all who walk according to this “rule” there is blessing. (CC)

Peace and mercy. Cf. Ps 125:5; 128:6. (CSB)

And here is his blessing to them. This is a Jewish blessing. It's a beautiful blessing. And it's have liturgical and it shows you how he's bringing them back into the presence of God by means of his language. And they've been there all along. But he's bringing them back to a recognition that that's where they've been. And he's giving them a blessing. Peace on them and mercy. Peace on them and mercy. Those who walk according to the canon, the rule, the guide, of the new creation. Now, we've talked about peace. Peace is wholeness. It is health. It is wellness. It's relational integrity. It's having reconciliation with God. It is what we yearn for. (Just – V-44)

It is what we receive in the liturgy. The peace of God be with you. Go in peace. The Lord bless you, keep you, make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you. The last word you'll hear in the liturgy. Is the Lord look upon you with favor and give you peace. Peace is what comes from heaven with the angels when Jesus is born. Peace is what happens when Jesus enters into Jerusalem. Peace on earth. Peace in heaven in Christ. That's the blessing that Paul is giving them. Peace on them and mercy. (Just – V-44)

Now, he doesn't use the word here grace. He uses mercy. Because that's what he's having on the Galatians. And that's what in fact Paul hopes that his opponents see as well as being the heart of the new creation. God's merciful miraculous healing of all that has been broken. Mercy is I think the No. 1 characteristic of Christians. Certainly it must be of pastors. And it is certainly what must be of deaconesses. Because it's at the heart of what it means to be baptized. Being merciful as your Father in heaven is merciful. And those who walk along this canon of the new creation, peace on them and mercy. And then this is connected. And I think this is how I would translate it. (Just – V-44)

this rule. See vv. 14–15. (CSB)

Standard or principle, i.e., the one just mentioned: the cross and the new creation. (TLSB)

Israel of God. In contrast to “Israel according to flesh” (a literal rendering of the Greek for “people of Israel” in 1Co 10:18), the NT church, made up of believing Jews and Gentiles, is the new seed of Abraham and the heir according to the promise (3:29; cf. Ro 9:6; Php 3:3)—though some limit the phrase here to Christian Jews (translating the conjunction as “and” instead of “even”). (CSB)

All believers in Christ, both Jew and Gentile; the new Israel (cf v 10, “household of faith”). Paul has argued forcefully that Gentiles are children of Abraham, heirs of the promise (3:6–9, 21; 4:28–31). (TLSB)

That is on the Israel of God. It's not -- let's see how this translation -- for all who walk by this rule, peace and mercy be upon them and upon the Israel of God. I wouldn't translate that and there as and. These aren't two different things. Peace and mercy be upon them. That is anyone who walks according to the rule of the new creation. That is those people who have peace and mercy on them for living in the new creation, that is those people are now the Israel of God. The Israel of God, peace and mercy. Living in the new creation. All the same. (Just – V-44)

Now, think about what he's saying here. He is saying that these Gentiles from Galatia whom Christ died for on the cross, whom Christ showed his mercy and love for by spending out his life for them. They are now the Israel of God. Not because they are circumcised. Not because they kept the law. Simply because God's grace is upon them. They've been united with Christ in baptism. And they believe that Jesus Christ is the Savior of the world. (Just – V-44)

Again, I hope you see how shocking this would be for his Jewish Christian opponents. These Judaizers. These Pharisaical Christians. They are claiming: Wait a minute. We're the Israel. We have the marks of circumcision. And all the other things. And Paul is saying: No, no, no. Anyone who lives in the new creation in which there's neither circumcision, nor uncircumcision, they are the ones upon whom God's blessing rests, peace and mercy. They are the Israel of God. (Just – V-44)

The new creation is what the Israel of God lives in. In the Christian church what you and I are a part of as we gather as the body of Christ around Word and sacrament, we are the new Israel. Founded on the 12 apostles as a cornerstone. Jesus Christ -- excuse me, as foundation stones. Jesus Christ being the cornerstone. The pillars being Peter, James and John and the four brothers of Jesus. We are that Israel. And it's not because we follow certain laws or because we have a certain heritage or because we're circumcised or because we have certain blood lines. It is simply because Jesus has engrafted himself into us by baptism in faith so that we have communion with him like the branches into the vine. And because he is our brother, God is our Father, and we are his children. We are sons. Sons of Jesus Christ. Sons of Abraham. (Just – V-44)

Now, all of that language is the language of Galatians that has been reverberating throughout this epistle. And now Paul names it Israel. New Israel. That is what the Galatians are. And Paul stands with them. And it's interesting he uses the language now here of Israel of God to include both himself as a Jew who has become a Christian by means of conversion to seeing Jesus as the Christ. And with these Gentile Galatians who were as far from the east as from the west from him until Christ came and redeemed them both. (Just – V-44)

This shows you what Paul means in Chapter 3 when he says: There is neither Jew nor Greek. There is neither slave nor free. There is neither male and female. But we are all one in Jesus Christ. And if we skip forward here to the end, we are all one as the Israel of God in Christ. (Just – V-44)

6:17 τοῦ λοιποῦ (“henceforth”)—Paul’s use of (τὸ) λοιπὸν tends to be logical, that is, in relation to the matter under discussion, i.e., “as far as the rest is concerned” (thus 1 Cor 1:16; 4:2; 2 Cor 13:11; Phil 3:1; 4:8; 1 Thess 4:1; 2 Thess 3:1). The problem is that this logical usage is always in the accusative case ([τὸ] λοιπὸν) and never the genitive (τοῦ λοιποῦ). The genitive usage in this verse suggests the temporal meaning “from now on” or “henceforth”: “henceforth” the rivals should not cause Paul any trouble. Marcion thought that τοῦ λοιποῦ was a partitive genitive, referring to part of a larger group *of persons*: let no one “of the rest” of Israel (i.e., the rival teachers) cause me trouble. This is a viable option but depends on the interpretation of “Israel” in 6:16. A weakness of Marcion’s translation is that τοῦ λοιποῦ here is singular, and Paul uses the

singular τὸ λοιπὸν adverbially; the personal use of τὸ λοιπὸν is typically plural (e.g., οἱ λοιποὶ Ἰουδαῖοι in Gal 2:13).

Ἰησοῦ (“of Jesus”)—This word is the reading in \mathfrak{B}^{46} A B C* 33. The single word substitution Χριστοῦ (“of Christ”) is in P Ψ 81 cop^{bo}. The two-word expansion κυρίου Ἰησοῦ (“of the Lord Jesus”) is attested by K L Byzantine vg syr^{pes}. The longer three-word expression κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ (“of the Lord Jesus Christ”) is in \aleph it cop^{sa}. The longest variant, with four words, is κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ (“of our Lord Jesus Christ”), attested by D* F G Ambrosiaster Pelagius. The variants reflect the influence of 6:18, which has the four words κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, “our Lord Jesus Christ.” (CC)

Henceforth let no one continue to cause me troubles, for I bear on my body the marks of Jesus! This final warning may seem anticlimactic after the rhetorically loaded reference to “the Israel of God” (6:16). Whereas the Greek word κόπος normally means “work” or “labor,” here its plural means “troubles.” The word was used in secular Greek for a beating or for a weariness that was the equivalent of having been beaten.¹²⁵ The secular usage gives a sense of the “trouble” Paul has in mind, and the present tense of the verb (παρεχέτω) suggests that the “troubles” are in progress or repeated. These troubles are a personal affront to Paul (“me,” μοι) and disturb the “peace” (εἰρήνη) to which Paul refers in 6:16. (CC)

Cicero, the great first-century BC orator, described a speech by Marcus Antonius, the grandfather of Mark Antony, in defense of Manius Aquilus, a former consul and retired general who was accused of extortion. At a dramatic and tearful moment in the speech, Marcus Antonius tore open the sorrowful, dejected Manius Aquilus’ garment to expose his scars from battle, proof of his dedication and loyalty to Rome (*De or.* 2.47.195–96). The rivals should not trouble Paul because he bears “the marks of Jesus” in his body. (CC)

“Marks” (στίγματα) in Gal 6:17 is a plural noun, which rules out that Paul is referring to a slave’s or criminal’s “brand” (which would be in the singular). Since the letter to the Galatians frequently mentions persecution, Paul is most likely referring to the scars and wounds he suffered because of his witness to the Gospel.¹³⁰ Paul does not say, “I have” these marks, but instead, “I bear” (βαστάζω) them. The Jewish historian Josephus narrated how Antipater reputedly had on nearly every part of his body the marks (σημεῖα, literally, “signs”) of his wounds for the sake of Caesar. In a similar fashion Paul bears the wounds of battle that attest his loyalty to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. (CC)

The further modifying of the “marks” as simply “of Jesus”—and not “of the Lord” or “of Christ”—may be intended to allude to the death of Jesus. In 2 Cor 4:8–9 Paul describes his apostolic sufferings: he is afflicted, perplexed, persecuted, struck down. He has been beaten, lashed, flogged, and stoned (2 Cor 11:23–30). Thanks to these sufferings, he and his coworkers are “always carrying around the death of Jesus in the body, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our bodies. For while we live, we are always being betrayed to death because of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may be revealed in our mortal flesh” (2 Cor 4:10–11). Paul displays in his body the cross of Jesus (cf. Gal 3:1; 4:13). Note the emphatic “I” (ἐγὼ ... βαστάζω, literally, “I ... I bear”) as Paul continues to contrast himself with the trouble-makers. The marks of Jesus are vastly superior to the mark in which the rivals boast (6:12–13). Paul’s suffering serves as a vivid contrast to the rivals’ *avoidance* of suffering in 6:12 (cf. 5:11: preaching Christ led to persecution!). The Christ who suffered lives in and expresses himself through the apostle! (CC)

In a well-known ancient practice, people would dedicate themselves to a god in order to benefit from that god’s protection. They might wear a brand as devotees of the god or goddess. In the magical papyri from antiquity a man claims to be carrying (βαστάζω) the mummy of Osiris (as an amulet) and warns his opponents not to “cause [him] troubles” (κόπους παρέχω, the same vocabulary as in Gal 6:17). Like the mark on Cain in Gen 4:15 (cf. Ezek 9:4; Rev 7:2–4; 3 Macc 2:29–30), those who mess with Paul and his Gospel fall under a curse. The marks of Christ function as the equivalent of a talisman that warns of

serious consequences. Paul is under the protection of his master. As the apostle writes in Gal 2:19–20: “I have been crucified with Christ. I no longer live, but Christ lives in me.” (CC)

NO ONE CAUSE ME TROUBLE – Verse 17 he says: From now on do not let anybody trouble me. Now, I think you've got to see in this statement Paul is basically saying: Listen. I've had it. I'm the Apostle Paul. I have come here. I have preached the truth of the Gospel. You have strayed away from it. Some of you have listened to these opponents. Not all of you. But some of you have. They have abused, you know, my position there as the founding pastor. They have taken you away from the Gospel. The truth of the Gospel has been compromised. He says: I've had it. From now on don't let anybody else bother me. Don't trouble me anymore. Get out of my face. I've had it. That's what he's saying. He is -- I don't want to say he's at his wits end. But I think he's reached the point where he has said everything he has to say. And he's just going to commend this to the Spirit now. Commend this to the Lord and his holy angels to take care of these Galatians so the truth of the Gospel might come out. But having said that, from now on don't let anybody trouble me, these are his final words. And this is why -- and if you look at the Greek, it's the first and last words. For I am bearing -- and had this language of bearing is important. I am bearing the stigmata, those are the marks, the scars, the marks of Jesus in my body. (Just – V-45)

marks of Jesus.† In ancient times the Greek word for “marks” was used of the brand that identified slaves or animals. Paul’s suffering (stoning, Ac 14:19; beatings, Ac 16:22; 2Co 11:25; illness, 2Co 12:7; Gal 4:13–14) marked him as a “servant of Christ” (1:10; cf. 2Co 4:10). Here, since Paul wrote Galatians shortly after the first journey (Ac 13–14), the reference must be to the stoning at Lystra (Ac 14:19), which left bruises on his body. (CSB)

Wounds and scars Paul received in the service of Jesus (Ac 14:19; 2Co 11:23–25). As a true apostle, Paul identified himself with the suffering Savior (cf 2Co 4:8–10; Php 3:10). (TLSB)

And this is what he's saying: The injuries that I have on my body were inflicted by the same powers that crucified Jesus. So my body is a testimony, flesh, my flesh, with its scars on it, with its stigmata, my body preaches the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Because if you look at my body, you will see a sign of the present activity of the redeemer. Not because of who I am. But because of what I've preached. I said before: I will boast in nothing but Christ crucified. I will preach Christ crucified. For preaching that I have been stoned. I have been whipped. I have been scourged. I have been beaten to the point of death. And those marks that I now bear in my body are a sign of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Because I have suffered with my Lord. I have been in a sense co-crucified with him in baptism. And that has led to this suffering. (Just – V-45)

Now, I don't know about you. But I think that's a profound way to end this epistle. Because Paul has shown throughout this epistle that it is really in many ways about how he as an apostle to the Gentiles bears in his own body, his speaking, his character, his own sufferings, he has borne the Gospel to them. And they loved him so much they were willing to take out their eyes and give them to him. Now, that's an extraordinary act of love. And Paul is appealing now had in his final words to them that his bearing in his body these stigmata of Jesus is a sign that he is the true apostle who speaks the truth of the Gospel. The Gospel of a crucified Christ. (Just – V-45)

6:18 ἡ χάρις τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ (“the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ”)—Some witnesses omit ἡμῶν (“our”): 1241 69 κ^s 1739 1881 2464. In favor of the pronoun ἡμῶν (“our”) are ℣⁴⁶ A B C D F G K L Ψ 33 88 104 131 1734, among others.

μετὰ τοῦ πνεύματος ὑμῶν (“be with your spirit”)—As in 6:16, Paul assumes that the audience will supply the optative form of the verb εἰμί, “is,” namely, “be.” See the second textual note on 6:16.

ἀμήν—After the “amen,” πρὸς Γαλάτας (“to the Galatians”) is added as a *subscriptio* in κ A B* C (D F G) Ψ 33. The longer *subscriptio* in B¹ and the Majority text is πρὸς Γαλάτας ἐγράφη ἀπὸ Ῥώμης, “It [the epistle] was written to the Galatians from Rome,” or perhaps “‘To the Galatians’ [the epistle] was written from Rome.” These are, in all likelihood, later scribal additions that clarify the addressees and circumstances behind the letter. (CC)

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brothers (and sisters). Amen. Paul closes the letter with a benediction. “Grace” is a key term from the beginning of the letter (1:3). The Galatians were called by God’s “grace” (1:6) even as Paul was called by God’s “grace” and granted “grace” for his ministry (1:15; 2:9). God “has graciously given” Abraham an inheritance through the promise (κεχάρισται, 3:18). How fitting that Paul should bless the Galatians with nothing other than God’s unmerited grace! Nothing more is required of them to enjoy God’s favor. Whereas Paul normally opens his letters as he does Galatians with a note of “grace ... and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ” (1:3), here the “grace” is simply that of “our Lord Jesus Christ.” The focus remains on Jesus because his saving work has been jeopardized by the rivals’ teaching. (CC)

Paul prays that the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ might be “with your [the Galatians’] spirit” (μετὰ τοῦ πνεύματος ὑμῶν; so also Phil 4:23; Philemon 25; and 2 Tim 4:22 with the singular σοῦ, “you”). Paul chooses to close with this phrase instead of just “with you” (μεθ’ ὑμῶν, Rom 16:20; 1 Cor 16:23; Col 4:18; 1 Thess 5:28; 1 Tim 6:21; 2 Tim 4:22) or “with you all” (μετὰ πάντων ὑμῶν, 1 Cor 16:24; 2 Cor 13:13 [ET 13:14]; 2 Thess 3:16, 18; Titus 3:15). Although “spirit” (πνεύματος) is singular and “your” (ὑμῶν) is plural, one should not read too much into this fact. Paul simply prefers the distributive singular for what belongs to each person in a group.¹⁴¹ This may be the only verse in Galatians in which Paul uses πνεῦμα to refer to the human “spirit” rather than God’s “Spirit.” Why would the letter to the Galatians, along with the letters to the Philippians (4:23) and to Philemon (25), close with a prayer that the “grace” of the Lord Jesus Christ might be with the recipients’ “spirit” (see also the similar benediction in 2 Tim 4:22)? Fee has observed that Philippians, Philemon, and 2 Timothy are the most overtly affectionate Pauline letters. Perhaps “with your spirit” just before “brothers (and sisters)” (ἀδελφοί) serves as a closing offer of affection after the tension and distress of the letter’s content. Paul does not call his recipients “brothers (and sisters)” in any of his other epistolary farewells with the exception of Eph 6:23. This fraternal appellation is a last reminder that the Galatians belong to “the household of faith” (6:10; see also 1:2). They are all family to each other! They share the same Lord, “our Lord Jesus Christ” (6:18, as in 6:14). May the Galatians hear this letter as an expression of a fellow family member concerned out of love for their well-being. (CC)

“Amen”—“may it be so!” Paul ends where he began (1:1) by invoking God, that God’s will may be done. The apostle’s fervent hope is that the Galatians would join in his prayer and that there might be, by God’s sheer “grace” (6:18), a positive outcome to the situation in Galatia. Paul would have *all* his hearers join in this prayer for their spiritual well-being, that is, for *our* spiritual well-being. (CC)

with your spirit. Not the Holy Spirit, but simply an expression meaning “with you.” (TLSB)

brothers. The last word of the Epistle is this kind greeting. (TLSB)

Amen. A word of confirmation often used at the close of a doxology or benediction. (CSB)

This is Paul’s final farewell. He ends the epistle with the same words with which he began it, as though he were saying: “I have proclaimed Christ to you purely. I have begged you and scolded you. I have not

omitted anything that I thought you needed. There is nothing further that I can do for you except to pray from my heart that our Lord Jesus Christ may add His blessing and His increase to my labor, and may rule you by His Spirit forever. Amen.” (Luther)

6:11–18 In a handwritten postscript, Paul leaves us with an interpretive lens through which to evaluate all Christian teaching and life: the message of the cross. Against all self-righteous pride in spiritual accomplishments, the cross speaks a word of judgment. Yet to those who believe, the cross is God’s power to make all things new. • Lord, in Baptism, You put my old nature to death. By Your grace, dear Lord Jesus, continue to renew me. I already am a new creation in You. Amen. (TLSB)

GOSPEL – LUKE 10:1-20

Jesus Sends Out the Seventy-two

After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them on ahead of him, two by two, into every town and place where he himself was about to go. 2 And he said to them, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest. 3 Go your way; behold, I am sending you out as lambs in the midst of wolves. 4 Carry no moneybag, no knapsack, no sandals, and greet no one on the road. 5 Whatever house you enter, first say, ‘Peace be to this house!’ 6 And if a son of peace is there, your peace will rest upon him. But if not, it will return to you. 7 And remain in the same house, eating and drinking what they provide, for the laborer deserves his wages. Do not go from house to house. 8 Whenever you enter a town and they receive you, eat what is set before you. 9 Heal the sick in it and say to them, ‘The kingdom of God has come near to you.’ 10 But whenever you enter a town and they do not receive you, go into its streets and say, 11 ‘Even the dust of your town that clings to our feet we wipe off against you. Nevertheless know this, that the kingdom of God has come near.’ 12 I tell you, it will be more bearable on that day for Sodom than for that town.

10:1 *appointed seventy-two.* Recorded only in Luke, though similar instructions were given to the Twelve (Mt 9:37–38; 10:7–16; Mk 6:7–11; cf. Lk 9:3–5). Certain differences in early manuscripts make it unclear as to whether the number was 72 or 70. Jesus covered Judea with his message as thoroughly as he had Galilee. (CSB)

Selected or chosen, just as Jesus had previously done when he appointed the Twelve (6:12–16) and then sent them out (9:1–6). *seventy-two.* May subtly symbolize the number of Gentile nations around Israel. On that understanding, Jesus broadens the scope of the outreach here, building on what He had just done in reaching out to Samaritans (9:52). (TLSB)

ἑβδομήκοντα [δύο]—These are seventy (-two) other disciples apart from the Twelve (see comments on the audiences of Luke in the introduction and comments on disciples in the Sermon on the Plain at 6:20–49.) The manuscript evidence here for seventy or seventy-two is evenly divided. One must evaluate the intrinsic evidence of probabilities. The symbolic value of the two numbers becomes important for deciding what Luke might have written or copyists changed. Here it depends somewhat on the interpreter. The easier reading would be “seventy,” to show that Jesus is like Moses who chose seventy elders (Num 11:16–17, 25; cf. also Ex 24:1, 9–14). As the feeding of the five thousand (9:10–17) showed, Jesus is the new Moses for Luke. However, there is strong textual support for seventy-two at 10:1 and 10:17, and it is the more difficult reading thematically. And so “two” is included in parentheses in the translation (see B. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary*, 150–51; see also J. Nolland, *Luke 9:21–18:34*, 549–55; J. Fitzmyer, *Luke X–XXIV*, 845–46; I. H. Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, 414–15). It is likely that Jesus spoke of

seventy-two and Luke wrote the same, but that later scribes introduced seventy, recalling Moses. (CC p. 436)

While Jesus' focus was on the Twelve, many others also followed him. How they were selected we can only imagine. Undoubtedly devoted followers, they also must have been bold and trusting. They were sent to prepare the way for Jesus. Lenski suggests that Jesus' route would take Him "along the border of southern Galilee and down along the eastern side of the Jordan and through Perea" (Lenski, 565). (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 8, Part 3)

two by two. During his ministry in Galilee, Jesus had also sent out the Twelve two by two, a practice continued in the early church (Ac 13:2; 15:27, 39–40; 17:14; 19:22). (CSB)

ἀνὰ δύο [δύο]—By sending two out at a time, Jesus fulfills the OT requirements (Deut 19:15; Num 35:30) that two witnesses are necessary if there is to be any judgment made, as there will be in Lk 10:10–15. (CC p. 436)

Matthew 18:19, "Again, I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything you ask for, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven."

10:2 *harvest is plentiful* – ὁ μὲν θερισμὸς πολὺς—The image of the harvest recalls the parable of the sower (8:4–8). The seventy (-two) are sent out both to sow the seed and to "bring in the sheaves." Bringing hearers into the church is the harvest of the "now" in preparation for the harvest of the "not yet." (CC p. 436)

The Church continues praying that the Lord will raise up new generations of workers to harvest souls unto eternal life. (TLSB)

A familiar verse about a plentiful harvest but few workers. Isn't this a problem in our church today. There never seems to be enough church workers! Jesus not only sends these 70, He also instructs them to ask the Lord of the harvest to multiply their numbers. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 8, Part 3)

John 4:35, "Do you not say, 'Four months more and then the harvest'? I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest."

1 Corinthians 3:6-9, "I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow. ⁷ So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow. ⁸ The man who plants and the man who waters have one purpose, and each will be rewarded according to his own labor. ⁹ For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, God's building."

- If you don't cut grain when it is ripe it will spoil. If we miss our opportunity with unbelievers we may not get another one.

10:3 *go your way* – ἰδοὺ ἀποστέλλω ὑμᾶς—"Behold" (ἰδοὺ) alerts the hearer to the significance of this statement. Like the Twelve (9:2), the seventy (-two) are *sent*; they *represent* the one who sent them. (CC p. 436)

lamb in the midst of wolves – It's not comforting to be compared to a lamb sent among wolves. Please note, not just sheep, but lambs. The picture expresses a danger about which Jesus briefly, but clearly, warns them. The comforting news is the identity of the sender: "I [Jesus] am sending you [ἀποστέλλω ὑμᾶς ὑμᾶς]," with the implications that those sent will be protected by Him. They are sent with His authority. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 8, Part 3)

The commission of the seventy (-two) is *Christological and sacrificial* in nature. Jesus subtly implies this when he describes them “as lambs in the midst of wolves” (10:3). (In Is 11:6 and 65:25, wolves and lambs will dwell together in peace in the eschaton as a little child leads them.) By describing them as lambs, Jesus suggests that they will be rejected and suffer the consequences of announcing the presence of the kingdom of God. They enter a cruciform ministry of preaching and healing that will receive the hostility of the world and result in violence. Like their Lord, they will become sacrificial victims of the Gospel that calls for a reversal of the world’s values. After the calling of the Twelve and the description of the passion, Jesus had told the Twelve about their own cross-bearing as his followers (9:23). To save their life they must lose it. They are *sacrificial lambs*, who go forth in full knowledge of the world’s enmity. But in their proclamation they will show that they are not ashamed of Jesus and his words. They are part of that privileged group to whom the Father, through Jesus, has revealed the secrets of the kingdom of God (10:21 and 8:9–10). Lk 10:17–20 describes the success of the mission of the seventy (-two) in eschatological terms, and 10:21–24 seems to resemble Jewish wisdom sayings concerning eschatological secrets. (CC pp. 441-442)

Moreover, the seventy (-two) carry in themselves, in their own bodies, Jesus’ redemption and his peace. The peace that has come down from above in Jesus they can now give—and receive back when it is not received. As his emissaries, they now represent Jesus. They carry “in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in [their] body” (2 Cor 4:10). This is *the Christological principle of representation* according to which the emissaries bear in themselves the person of Christ. In bearing the cross daily, they also bear the image of Passover lamb who must be sacrificed for the people. Thus the twelve disciples and the seventy (-two) follow the pattern of sacrifice first exhibited in the prophets, “from the blood of Abel until the blood of Zechariah, who perished between the altar [θυσιαστηρίου] and the temple-house [τοῦ οἴκου]” (11:51). As Jesus said to them: “Many prophets and kings wished to see what things you are seeing” (10:24). By calling the seventy (-two) “lambs,” Jesus says they must depend completely on the Lord and expect to give up their lives for the kingdom. (CC p. 442)

Stephen will be the first disciple to suffer the death of a sacrificial lamb. He is the first of many martyrs who follow Jesus’ pattern of suffering and death. His death by stoning takes place outside of the city (Acts 7:58) because the temple is no longer the place of sacrifice (cf. Heb 13:12–13). (CC p. 442)

Warns that Christian witness will often be met with opposition and even persecution (cf 21:12–19). (TLBSB)

Matthew 28:20, “...And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

10:4 *carry no money bag, no knapsack or sandals.* They were to travel light, without moneybag, luggage or extra sandals. (CSB)

It won’t take these people long to pack! No purse, no bag, no sandals (probably meaning no extra sandals), and no small talk on the road. Jesus has already dealt with any objections in His discourse on the cost of discipleship in the previous chapter. The admonition now is simply to go! The implied promise is that all of their needs will be met. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 8, Part 3)

μη ... βαλλάντιον, μη πήραν, μη ὑποδήματα—Only πήραν, “bag,” from 9:3 is repeated here, although purse, bag, and sandals are repeated in 22:35. See comments at 9:1–6. (CC p. 436)

greet no one. They were not to stop along the way to visit and exchange customary lengthy greetings. The mission was urgent. (CSB)

Polite greetings could be time-consuming, involving long discussions of one's family. (TLSB)

μηδένα κατὰ τὴν ὁδὸν ἀσπάσησθε—Normally faithful Israelites would greet one another while traveling. The command not to do so suggests the earnestness and single-mindedness the disciples must have about their mission. Elijah gave the same command to Gehazi for the same reason (2 Ki 4:29). Cf. textual note on 9:61. (CC p. 436)

Psalms 37:5, “Commit your way to the LORD; trust in him and he will do this.”

Matthew 6:33, “But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.”

10:5-6 Greetings delivered from the Lord are not mere formalities, but actually impart a blessing. (TLSB)

10:5 *house you enter* – Instructions are brief and simple: the house is entered, the peace is extended. Although it appears at first that the houses entered are the result of a door-to-door cold-calling campaign, the parallel text in Mt. 10:11 indicates that the 12 disciples are to “search for some worthy person there and stay at his house until you leave.” (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 8, Part 3)

οικίαν—On the house as a precedent to the early house church, see comments in the introduction and at 9:4. (CC p. 436)

peace – εἰρήνη—On “peace,” see comments at 1:79. This is an eschatological greeting of the messianic kingdom. It will be the greeting that Jesus will speak to the disciples after the resurrection (24:36). It is not just a word, but a divine blessing that goes out, may abide, or may return. This divine blessing rests upon the disciples and those who receive them. (CC pp. 436 – 437)

Note their priorities. “First day ‘peace to this house.’” This peace is more than a pious wish. Jesus refers to a greeting from them as apostles and bearers of His own divine peace. By their greeting they are to extend this peace as Jesus Himself did in John 20:19. This peace is an objective gift, the peace wrought by the Gospel, which makes God our-friend and us His children so that all is well with us. It is to be a permanent possession. And from it the subjective feeling and enjoyment of peace are to flow. This feeling may fluctuate, but its source is permanent, and the feeling can be thus renewed again and again” (Lenski, Luke 570). (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 8, Part 3)

In the context of John 20:19-23, peace has to do with the Holy Spirit and with forgiveness: “‘Peace be with you! As the Father has sent Me, I am sending you.’ And with that He breathed on them and said, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive them, they are forgiven’” (John 20:21-23). In other words, there is a strong connection among peace, the Holy Spirit, and forgiveness. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 8, Part 3)

10:6 *a son of peace* – Peace is either warmly and thankfully received or coldly and quickly rejected. There will be no doubt whether or not the occupant of the house is a person of peace. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 8, Part 3)

One who receives God's messengers worthily. Cf v 16. (TLSB)

will return to you – Only those who receive a blessing in good faith will actually benefit from it. (TLSB)

10:7 *remain in...what provide* – ἐν αὐτῇ δὲ τῇ οἰκίᾳ μένετε ἐσθίοντες καὶ πίνοντες τὰ παρ’ αὐτῶν—Here are the elements of table fellowship that will be continued in the worship of the post-Pentecost church: preaching and eating and drinking in the presence of Christ. The place is the house church (ἐν αὐτῇ δὲ τῇ οἰκίᾳ). The presence of Christ comes and abides through the presence of the seventy (-two) (μένετε; see 24:29) and through the word of the kingdom (10:9, 11), and the eating and drinking creates an intimate fellowship with God’s messengers. Those who receive and provide hospitality are welcoming into their house the preaching and feasting of the kingdom, that is, the Gospel. In this way also, the messengers’ need for physical sustenance and temporary shelter is met. (CC p. 437)

James 5:4, “Look! The wages you failed to pay the workmen who mowed your fields are crying out against you. The cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord Almighty.”

Do not go house to house μὴ μεταβαίνετε—“Unlike itinerant philosophers who begged their way across the country, the disciples are to accept, as did Elijah (1 Ki 17:15) and Elisha (2 Ki 4:8), the hospitality of *one house*” (F. Danker, *Jesus and the New Age*, 127 [emphasis Danker]). (CC p. 437)

Stability and security for His workers were important to Jesus. No need to move from motel to motel. “The thing that Jesus forbids is that they keep going from house to house, hunting out the best quarters” (Lenski, Luke, 571). Just stay put. Partake of the hospitality offered. The worker is worthy of his wages. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 8, Part 3)

10:8 *receive you* – δέχωνται—See comments at 9:5. This is the language of hospitality (10:10). R. Tannehill, *Narrative Unity I*, 235, notes this about δέχομαι:

The same language is applied to Jesus in Luke, for he also must endure the insecure life of the traveling missionary. The Samaritan village did not “receive” him (using δέχομαι, 9:53); neither did Nazareth, where Jesus was not δεκτός (“acceptable,” 4:24). However, Martha (10:38) and Zacchaeus (19:6) did receive (ὑποδέχομαι) Jesus. In Acts, similar language is applied both to receiving the word or witness (δέχομαι, 8:14; 11:1; 17:11; ἀποδέχομαι in 2:41; παραδέχομαι in 22:18) and to receiving a missionary as a guest (ὑποδέχομαι in 17:7; ἀποδέχομαι in 18:27; 21:17; ἀναδέχομαι in 28:7; παραδέχομαι in 15:4). This vocabulary set is used more frequently in Luke-Acts than in the rest of the NT combined.

NT synonyms include λαμβάνω (2 Jn 10), κοινωνέω (Gal 6:6), προσλαμβάνω (Rom 15:7); cf. ἐκ τοῦ εὐαγγελίου ζῆν (1 Cor 9:14). (CC p. 437)

eat what is set before you – Sounds repetitious, but it’s not. Jesus would have no reason to so quickly repeat what He said in the previous verse. Lenski says: “When Jesus now speaks of whatever city they may come to and tells His disciples they to eat whatever is set before them (the present participle to indicate repetition), we see at once that He is not repeating the injunction given in v. 7 in regard to food. In v. 7 He refers to whatever the people can afford even when they are poor; here it is whatever is placed before them in such a city. Most of the cities on their itinerary had a heavily mixed population where Jews and Gentiles live together. In these places there might often enough be doubt as to the Levitical cleanness of the food even in Jewish houses. The messengers are not to hesitate in regard to eating the food that is served them, much less to refuse it. Any rabbinical scruples on that score are to be completely set aside. Their work is not to be hindered by anything that is so worthless” (Lenski, Luke 572) Is this the same point that is made in Mark 7:18-19? (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 8, Part 3)

Expands on v 7. More important, the missionaries are to share table with people considered ceremonially unclean and consume what may not be ceremonially clean. (TLSB)

Acts 2:41, “Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.”

1 Corinthians 9:22, “To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some.”

1 Thessalonians 2:13, “And we also thank God continually because, when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but as it actually is, the word of God, which is at work in you who believe.”

10:9 *The kingdom of God has come near you.* The heart of Jesus’ message. (CSB)

The healing of the sick was to be closely connected to the source of that healing by their message to those healed: “The kingdom of God is near you.” The manifestation of this godly kingdom was portrayed, in this special instance and circumstance, in the healing power which Jesus was now imparting to the 70. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 8, Part 3)

ἤγγικεν ἐφ’ ὑμᾶς ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ—On ἐγγίζω, see comments at 15:1. It is followed by ἐπί and the accusative only here in the NT (cf. LXX Ps 26:2 [MT/ET 27:2]). The proclamation of the nearness of the kingdom anticipates the kingdom’s presence in Jesus, who is about to come to every town and place the seventy (-two) go (10:1). This expression can also mean that it “has arrived” (J. Nolland, *Luke 9:21–18:34*, 554); Nolland defines the kingdom of God in Luke as “a future eschatological reality that has broken in upon the world in the coming of Jesus but awaits future consummation.” ἤγγικεν means that the kingdom of God “has come” (M. Black, “The Kingdom of God Has Come,” *Expository Times* 63 [1951–52] 289–90, and W. R. Hutton, “The Kingdom of God Has Come,” *Expository Times* 64 [1952–53] 89–91, both cited by Nolland). I. H. Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, 422, describes the kingdom this way: “The kingdom of God is not therefore a timeless reality ... but it comes near to men in and through Jesus and his disciples; the reference is not so much to the glorious manifestation of the kingdom as to its saving power for men.” (CC p. 437)

Ultimately, there is little difference between the nearness of the kingdom and the arrival of the kingdom, for in the preaching of the seventy (-two), Christ is present as if he himself were preaching, and the presence of the kingdom in him or in his representatives is seen only by faith. Perhaps the expression means that through the seventy (-two) and their preaching, the kingdom actually does arrive, but in a preliminary way that remains to be fulfilled in the eschaton, when the kingdom will come in all its fullness. (CC p. 438)

10:10 *do not receive you* – In today’s church, we perish the thought that someone might resist our efforts at witnessing the truth of God’s love, but it does happen. And it happened then, as well. Jesus predicts that, in some towns, their witness would be welcomed. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 8, Part 3)

10:11 *even the dust of your town that clings to our feet we wipe off against you.* Note 9:5 TLSB – Ritual act symbolizing God’s judgment against those who reject the Gospel, as if to indicate that the Twelve should not even associate with these unbelievers’ dust. Jesus commands the Seventy-two to do the same when He sends them out (10:10–11), and Paul also does this during his mission journeys (Ac 13:51; 18:6). (TLSB)

τὸν κονιορτὸν τὸν κολληθέντα ἡμῖν ἐκ τῆς πόλεως ὑμῶν εἰς τοὺς πόδας—On “the dust that sticks to our feet,” see comments at 9:5. All three modifying phrases that follow κολληθέντα go with that attributive participle: the dust sticking to-us from-your-city onto-our-feet. (CC p. 438)

In those cases, the 70 were to declare in judgment: “Your dirt we leave with you. But make no mistake! The Kingdom of God is near! It’s coming! And you better be ready!” Or, perhaps this is to be a kindly word intended to one more remind the city’s inhabitants “the greatest grace (of Jesus Christ) has come near, the kingdom of God, itself, and some may perhaps realize this so as to regret their present action and to accept that Kingdom” (Lenski, Luke 573). (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 8, Part 3)

kingdom of God has com near – ἤγγικεν ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ—Repeating “the kingdom of God” here shows its importance in the interpretation of this section. (CC p. 438)

10:12 *more bearable ... for Sodom.* Although Sodom was so sinful that God destroyed it (Ge 19:24–28; Jude 7), the people who heard the message of Jesus and his disciples were even more accountable, because they had the gospel of the kingdom preached to them. (CSB)

Those receiving such unmistakable signs of the Kingdom’s presence will bear a greater responsibility for rejecting it. See note, Mt 10:15. (TLSB)

ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ ἐκείνῃ—This refers to the final, eschatological judgment, using an expression common in the OT prophets. (CC p. 438)

Σοδόμοις—L. T. Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke*, 168, notes that “the wickedness of Sodom was proverbial (see Gen 13:13; Isa 3:9; Ezek 16:48, 56), but its great sin was the betrayal of hospitality to God’s messengers (Gen 19:1–23).” Cf. Lk 17:29. Both homosexuality and the abuse of strangers were part of Sodom’s great sin. (CC p. 438)

Picture yourself in that situation and you might imagine a bit of anxiety in such a dramatic proclamation. To assure those proclaimers that they were on solid ground, Jesus compares those unaccepting cities to Sodom. Yes, they are even worse than Sodom. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 8, Part 3)

that day. Judgment day. (CSB)

Sodom – Ancient city near the Dead Sea that was destroyed by God for its extreme sinfulness (Gn 19:1–29). (TLSB)

10:1–12 Having previously sent out the Twelve (9:1–6), Jesus expands the breadth of His Gospel outreach by sending out 72 more workers. Then and now, many people who hear of Jesus’ kingdom end up rejecting it. Much as we hate to admit it, we, too, have responded indifferently and, at times, have rejected God’s will for our lives. How heartening to know that Jesus continues to reach out with compassion through the Gospel ministry He has established. • Lord, even as You have called me to faith and hope in the Gospel, keep me steadfast in the same. Amen. (TLSB)

Woe to Unrepentant Cities

13 “Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. 14 But it will be more bearable in the judgment for Tyre and Sidon than for you. 15 And you, Capernaum, will you be exalted to heaven? You shall be brought down to Hades. 16 “The one who hears you hears me, and the one who rejects you rejects me, and the one who rejects me rejects him who sent me.”

10:13 *Korazin ... Bethsaida.* An Exclamatory warning. These were towns near the Sea of Galilee. Residents there were aware of the teaching and miracles Jesus performed in that region. (TLSB)

Βηθσαιδά ... αἱ γενόμεναι ἐν ὑμῖν—The miracles that may be referred to here are the healings that preceded the feeding of the five thousand, since Luke notes that these things happened near Bethsaida (9:10). The evangelist links the commissioning of both the Twelve and the seventy (-two) with the miraculous feeding. (CC p. 438)

10:14 Tyre and Sidon. Gentile cities in Phoenicia, north of Galilee, which had not had opportunity to witness Jesus' miracles and hear his preaching as the people had in most of Galilee. (CSB)

Pagan cities farther north, along the coast of the Mediterranean Sea. (TLSB)

would have repented – Jesus repeatedly contrasted more receptive pagans with children of Abraham who were less open-minded (cf 7:9; 13:28–30). (TLSB)

sackcloth and ashes – Symbolic of repentance. (TLSB)

Note Job 16:15 TLSB – Hebrew *saq*; rough cloth woven from goat or camel hair. He wears the tokens of grief. All his power and dignity had been covered with the deepest humiliation.

10:15 Capernaum. Jesus' headquarters on the north shore of Galilee, whose inhabitants had many opportunities to see and hear Jesus. Therefore the condemnation for their rejection was the greater. (CSB)

Note Matthew 11:23 TLSB – Capernaum's inhabitants may have felt a sense of pride because Jesus had adopted it as His hometown. But their failure to heed His message would plunge them into the depths of Hades, a term that here designates hell. (TLSB)

Καφαρναούμ—The Lukan hearer would recall that Capernaum was mentioned in the Nazareth sermon (4:23) as a place of miracles. The people of Nazareth demanded that Jesus repeat those miracles in his hometown. After the sermon, Jesus returned to Capernaum (4:31) for another series of miracles (4:33–43). The healing of the centurion's slave also took place in Capernaum (7:1). (CC p. 438)

exalted to heaven – μή ... ὑψωθήσῃ—The question is framed so as to evoke a negative answer; the sense is “You will not be exalted to heaven, will you? No! You will go down to Hades!” (CC p. 438)

10:16 hears you hears me – And now, the final word of sending explains a four part linear relationship: The Father has sent me. I am sending you. Therefore, there is a connection. If someone listens to you, he listens to me. Whoever rejects you rejects me and the one who sent me! (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 8, Part 3)

Rejecting God's representatives is equivalent to rejecting Him. “They [Church authorities] have been given the ministry of the Word and Sacraments. They have no other authority according to the Gospel than the authority to forgive sins, to judge doctrine, to reject doctrines contrary to the Gospel, and to exclude from the communion of the Church wicked people, whose wickedness is known. They cannot exclude people with human force, but simply by the Word” (AC XXVIII 21). “Ministers act in Christ's place and do not represent their own persons.... Ungodly teachers are to be deserted because they no longer act in Christ's place, but are antichrists” (Ap VII/VIII 47–48). Apostolic authority guided the work of the Early Church (cf Ac 6:2–3; 15:6, 22). (TLSB)

ὁ ἀκούων ὑμῶν ἐμοῦ ἀκούει—Hearing the Word through Jesus' disciples is the same as hearing the Word from Jesus himself. On ἀκούω as a term for catechumens, see comments at 5:1; the Sermon on the

Plain (6:27, 47, 49); the parable of the sower (8:8, 10, 12, 13, 14, 15, 18); and Jesus' discussion of the new kinship (8:21). (CC p. 438)

rejects you rejects me – ὁ ἀθετῶν ὑμᾶς ἐμὲ ἀθετεῖ—The one who does not hear rejects the Word. This entails a rejection of the person of the messenger, a rejection of his bodily presence. Jesus will be rejected *in his body* in crucifixion. Those who receive the messengers of the Gospel provide physical sustenance for them (10:7–8), and those who reject the messengers may do physical violence to them. The disciples who are sent out must be prepared for this. (CC p. 438)

rejects him who sent me – ὁ δὲ ἐμὲ ἀθετῶν ἀθετεῖ τὸν ἀποστείλαντά με—This prepares for the upcoming discourse by Jesus on the relationship he has with his Father (10:21–24). (See I. H. Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, 426–27, on the different variations of this saying in the gospels.) (CC p. 439)

10:13–16 As Jesus sends out the Seventy-two, He warns that whoever rejects Him will be in danger of eternal condemnation. Such warnings continue in force today and apply especially to those who have heard the Gospel frequently. However, the fact that our familiarity with God sometimes breeds contempt does not mean that He acts likewise. He is faithful and just and forgives all who repent. • Give me a grateful heart, O Lord, ever ready to serve You and Your people. Amen. (TLSB)

The Return of the Seventy-Two

17 The seventy-two returned with joy, saying, “Lord, even the demons are subject to us in your name!” 18 And he said to them, “I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. 19 Behold, I have given you authority to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall hurt you. 20 Nevertheless, do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.”

10:17 returned with joy – ὑπέστρεψαν ... μετὰ χαρᾶς—Just as the seventy (-two) return with joy (cf. 10:20), so also after the ascension the disciples will return *with joy* to worship in the temple (24:52; ὑπέστρεψαν ... μετὰ χαρᾶς; cf. also 1:14, 28; 2:10; 6:23; 15:5, 7, 10, 32; 24:41). (CC p. 439)

in your name – As was previously evidenced, the authority of Jesus' name was such that it could even cast out demons (9:49). After Jesus' resurrection, God enabled the apostles to work wonders through the almighty power of Jesus' name (Ac 3:6; 4:30). (TLSB)

10:18 *I saw* – ἐθεώρουν—“I was watching” captures the continuous nature of the imperfect. Jesus will continually watch Satan fall like lightning from heaven as his ministry continues in the preaching and sacraments of the church. As Jesus did in his exorcisms, the church will free people from Satan's bondage and transfer them into God's kingdom. (CC p. 439)

Satan – τὸν σατανᾶν—This is the first time Luke has used “Satan” for the devil (cf. 11:18; 13:16; 22:3, 31). Up until now, he has used διάβολος (“devil”), particularly in the temptation of Jesus (4:2, 3, 6, 13; cf. also 8:12). The defeat of Satan in 10:17–18 constitutes the first of six miracles during Luke's journey narrative (10:17–20; 11:14–23; 13:10–17; 14:1–6; 17:11–19; 18:35–43). (This categorization and insight comes from D. Moessner, *Lord of the Banquet*, 120.) And this definitely is the first of three straight confrontations with Satan (10:17–20; 11:14–23; 13:10–17). (CC p. 439)

Satan fall. Even the demons were driven out by the disciples (v. 17), which meant that Satan was suffering defeat. (CSB)

Vividly portrays the effect that the proclamation of the kingdom had on Satan and his minions: their grip on humanity was loosened. Cf Lk 11:14–22; 13:10–17; Rv 12:1–12. (TLSB)

from heaven – ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ—On Satan’s presence in heaven and his role as accuser of humanity, see Job 1:6–12; 2:1–7; Zech 3:1–2. (CC p. 439)

When Jesus reports seeing Satan falling like lightning from heaven, he is summing up the effects of the mission of the seventy (-two). In their preaching and in their healing, in their activity of proclaiming Christ and his Gospel comes the victory over Satan and his angelic armies. As the disciples exclaimed, “Even the demons subject themselves to us in your name” (10:17). (CC pp. 443-444)

fall – πεσόντα—J. Nolland, *Luke 9:21–18:34*, 563, notes that “the use of the aorist participle for the verb ‘to fall’ ensures that the reference is to a final fall and not some temporary reversal, and to the fact of the fall, rather than to the movement of transition as such.” Satan’s fall is described in Rev 12:7–10 (cf. Rev 20:1–3, 10; Jn 12:31; Rom 16:20). There St. Michael the archangel, the great prince of God’s chosen people, leads God’s angelic armies in battle against the armies of Satan and his hordes, who threaten to destroy God’s chosen Child, the Messiah. (CC p. 439)

10:19 *snakes and scorpions ... power of the enemy.* The snakes and scorpions may represent evil spirits; the enemy is Satan himself. (CSB)

ὄφρων καὶ σκορπίων—Both serpents and scorpions are well-known embodiments of evil. See Gen 3:1–15; Num 21:6–9; Deut 8:15; 1 Ki 12:11, 14; 2 Chr 10:11, 14; 2 Cor 11:3; Rev 9:3, 5, 10; 12:9, 14–15; 20:2. In Ezek 2:6, thorns and scorpions are metaphors for the rebellious people to whom the prophet is called to minister. (CC p. 439)

nothing shall harm you – οὐδὲν ... οὐ μή—The triple negative is translated as “in no way.” (CC p. 439)

Jesus promises His people protection from evil while they are engaged in spiritual warfare. Luther: “ ‘The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear him.’ ... This is one of the special and most memorable consolations in the psalms and should be applied to our advantage” (AE 6:94). Such pledges of divine protection, however, are tempered by Jesus’ prediction that His witnesses will encounter hostile rejection (12:11) and even suffer persecution (21:12) (TLSB)

10:20 Man’s salvation is more important than power to overcome the evil one or escape his harm.

your names are written. Salvation is recorded in heaven (see Ps 69:28; Da 12:1; Php 4:3; Heb 12:23; Rev 3:5). (CSB)

Rather than focus primarily on the lesser (albeit impressive) gifts of divine protection and power over the demons, Jesus directs the Seventy-two to make the greater gift of eternal salvation their first and final hope. (TLSB)

ἐγγέγραπται ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς—This is a theological passive; God is the one who writes names in the heavens. For OT precedent, see Ex 32:32–33; Pss 69:28 (MT 69:29); 139:16; Dan 12:1; and in the NT, Phil 4:3; Heb 12:23; Rev 3:5; 13:8; 17:8; 20:12, 15; 21:27. (CC p. 439)

Jesus directs the attention of the disciples away from thoughts about sensational success to contemplation about their heavenly status. The authority to tread upon snakes and scorpions and power over the enemy should not puff them up to seek visible achievements. Pride and a theology of success would be tools Satan could use to attack them and thwart true ministry. Their focus must be on the heavenly gift of grace. Their names are written in God’s book of life, beside the names of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and all the

chosen people of old. They are merely part of a pattern that stretches back to the OT prophets and is centered in Jesus, the greatest Prophet, who testifies to God's presence and salvation through teaching and miracles. The seventy (-two) speak his words and represent his person; as one might say, they stand "in [his] stead and by [his] command." (CC p. 444)

10:17–20 Empowered by Jesus, the Seventy-two advance into Satan's territory as people believe the Gospel. Until Christ's return, we, too, remain in this war zone, where Satan does everything he can to destroy us and halt the Gospel's advance. In Christ, however, we are protected. In Him, we cannot lose, even though put to death, for in the end Christ grants us eternal life. • "Lord, be our light when worldly darkness veils us; Lord, be our shield when earthly armor fails us; And in the day when hell itself assails us, Grant us Your peace, Lord." Amen. (*LSB* 659:3) (TL*SB*)