

Notes on the Greek New Testament
Day 263 – September 20th – Galatians 5:13-26

Works frequently referenced in these notes on Galatians

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5:13-6:10

"Two dangers threatened Christian freedom in Galatia: the first was the acceptance of Jewish nomism as a lifestyle for Gentile Christians, which in effect brought one right back to the basic question of whether righteousness was to be gained by 'works of the law' or by a response of faith to 'the faithfulness of Jesus Christ' (cf. 2:16); the second was the corruption of the Christian life by reliance on 'the flesh' rather than 'the Spirit.' The most immediate danger was that of Jewish nomism, which was brought in from outside the church by the Judaizers. So Paul deals with that first and most extensively in 1:6-5:12. The danger of libertinism, however, was also present within the Galatian churches, being there in an indigenous fashion from the very first. And Paul must also have dealt with that as a threat to the freedom that believers have in Christ, which he does in the remainder of the body of Galatians in 5:13-6:10.

"Most often Galatians is viewed as the great document of justification by faith. What Christians all too often fail to realise is that in reality it is a document which sets out a Christ-centred lifestyle – one that stands in opposition to both nomism and libertinism. Sadly, though applauding justification by faith, Christians frequently renounce their freedom in Christ by espousing either nomism or libertinism, and sometimes (like the Galatians) both. So Paul's letter to the Galatians, though directly relevant to the Galatian situation, speaks also to our situation today." Longenecker

The key themes of 5:13-6:10 are Christian *freedom*, living by the *Spirit* and a life directed by *love*.

"Loveless strife was evidently present within the Galatian churches, with such attitudes and actions evidencing the dominance of 'the flesh' and certain libertine tendencies within the church – probably not 'libertinism' as a conscious, articulated philosophy, but libertine tendencies which took the form of self-promotion, self-vindication, and disregard of others, with the result that Christian freedom was not being expressed in loving service to others. So Paul in upholding Christian freedom, not only speaks of the Spirit as the effective answer to the Judaizers' call for a nomistic lifestyle, but also argues for the Spirit as the effective power for overcoming the flesh and such libertine attitudes as have arisen within the church. For Paul, in fact, the Christian life is wholly determined by the presence and activity of the Spirit." Longenecker

Verse 13

Ἵμεῖς γὰρ ἐπ' ἐλευθερίᾳ ἐκλήθητε, ἀδελφοί·
μόνον μὴ τὴν ἐλευθερίαν εἰς ἀφορμὴν τῆ
σαρκί, ἀλλὰ διὰ τῆς ἀγάπης δουλεύετε
ἀλλήλοις·

The γὰρ marks a reintroduction of the theme of freedom declared in v 1a.

ἐλευθερία, ας f freedom, liberty

ἐπι with the dative is used to express purpose, cf. Eph 2:10; 1 Thess 4:7.

The freedom spoken of here is freedom from Jewish nomism.

ἐκλήθητε Verb, aor pass indic, 2pl καλεω
call

μονος, η, ον i) adj only, alone; ii) adv μονον
only, alone

ἀφορμη, ης f occasion, opportunity
σαρξ, σαρκος f flesh, physical body, human
nature

Here σαρκί is used in an ethical sense, signifying fallen humanity of sinful nature. "The flesh is what man has made himself in contrast with man as God made him. The flesh is man as he has allowed himself to become in contrast with man as God meant him to be. The flesh stands for the total effect upon man of his own sin and of the sin of his fathers and of the sin of all men who have gone before him. The flesh is human nature as it has become through sin... The flesh stands for human nature weakened, vitiated, tainted by sin. The flesh is man as he is apart from Jesus Christ and his Spirit." Barclay
 "Paul speaks of 'the flesh' [human nature] not as itself the culprit, but as captive of sin. Nevertheless, 'flesh' as a captive also acts in behalf of its captor, and so produces 'desires and passions' (cf. 5:16-17, 19-21) that are at work against the Spirit. Indeed, the Christian has 'crucified the flesh with its passions and desires' (5:24). Yet the Christian continues to exist, anthropologically speaking, 'in the flesh,' and so, ethically speaking, 'the flesh' continues to be a potential threat. Thus the Christian may choose to use his or her freedom in Christ either as 'an opportunity for the flesh' or in response to 'the Spirit.' Paul calls on his converts to renounce the former, thereby being open to the latter." Longenecker

With ἀγαπή Paul picks up the theme of 5:6, though the definite article may also point back to *that* love which has appeared in Christ (cf. 2:20).

δουλεύω serve, be a slave

Paul deliberately highlights something of the paradox of the Christian life in the juxtaposition of freedom and servitude. "A Christian man is the most free lord of all, and subject to none; a Christian man is the most dutiful servant of all, and subject to everyone." Luther

ἀλλήλων, οἰς, οὖς reciprocal pronoun one another

Verse 14

ὁ γὰρ πᾶς νόμος ἐν ἐνὶ λόγῳ πεπλήρωται, ἐν τῷ Ἀγαπήσεις τὸν πλησίον σου ὡς σεαυτὸν.

Longenecker follows Betz and Westerholm in emphasising that Paul does not speak of the Christian *doing* the law but of *fulfilling* the law. He quotes Westerholme's conclusions that:

- i) Paul never derives appropriate Christian behaviour by simply applying relevant precepts from Torah;

- ii) Paul never claims that Christians 'do' (ποιεῖν) the law; they – and they alone – are said to 'fulfil' (πληροῦν) it;
- iii) Paul never speaks of the law's fulfilment in prescribing Christian conduct, but only while describing its results.

Longenecker continues, "The focus of Paul's statement in Gal 5:14, as also in Rom 13:8-10, is not on law but on love. So it is love – love that responds to Christ's love and that expresses a new existence in Christ (cf. 2:20) – that motivates the ethical life of a Christian, with the results of that love ethic fulfilling the real purport of the Mosaic law."

πληρωῶ fulfill, make come true, bring about, accomplish

"The perfect indicative passive πεπληρωται ('it is fulfilled') signals past completion with a present result, probably having in mind what Jesus did in fulfilling the law (cf. Matt 5:17). So, in effect there remains no more necessity for commandments." Longenecker

ἀγαπήσεις Verb, fut act indic, 2 s ἀγαπαῶ
 πλησίον i) prep with gen near; ii) ὁ π. neighbour, fellow man.

σεαυτοῦ, ἡς reflexive pronoun yourself

Verse 15

εἰ δὲ ἀλλήλους δάκνετε καὶ κατεσθίετε, βλέπετε μὴ ὑπ' ἀλλήλων ἀναλωθῆτε.

δάκνω bite

κατεσθίω and κατεσθῶ eat up, devour, prey upon

βλέπω see, look, be able to see, beware of

ἀναλωθῆτε Verb, aor pass subj, 2 pl

ἀναλίσκω and ἀναλοῶ consume, destroy

"The hyperbole pictures wild beasts fighting so ferociously with one another that they end up annihilating each other. The implication of the portrayal is that this was what was happening – or at least, what Paul thought was happening – in the churches of Galatia... Perhaps their fighting stemmed from differing attitudes toward the Judaisers' activities among them. More likely, however, it was an expression of their own indigenous and loveless libertine attitudes. So in a comment similar to that of 5:12 Paul here sarcastically denounces the libertine tendencies present among his Galatian converts just as he earlier castigated the Judaisers in their midst." Longenecker

Verse 16

Λέγω δέ, πνεύματι περιπατεῖτε καὶ ἐπιθυμίαν σαρκὸς οὐ μὴ τελέσητε.

περιπατεῶ walk, walk about, live

Frequently used by Paul and John in the sense, 'live' – a Hebrewism. The present imperative implies keep on doing what you are already doing.

ἐπιθυμία, ας f desire, longing, lust, passion

τελέσητε Verb, aor act subj, 2 pl τελεω complete, finish, fulfill, carry out

Verse 17

ἡ γὰρ σὰρξ ἐπιθυμεῖ κατὰ τοῦ πνεύματος, τὸ δὲ πνεῦμα κατὰ τῆς σαρκός, ταῦτα γὰρ ἀλλήλοις ἀντίκειται, ἵνα μὴ ἂ ἐὰν θέλητε ταῦτα ποιῆτε.

ἐπιθυμῶ long for, desire, lust after
κατὰ prep with i) acc according to; ii) gen against, throughout
ἀντικειμαι oppose, be against

"Here in v 17 Paul gives a precis of his basic soteriological anthropology, which underlies not only what he has said in v 16 but also his whole understanding of humanity before God since 'sin entered the world' (cf. Rom 5:12): 'the flesh' and 'the Spirit' are diametrically opposed to one another, with the result that one cannot do what he or she knows to be right in 'the flesh' (i.e., when living only humanly according to one's own guidance and the direction of whatever is simply human) but only when 'in the Spirit' (i.e., when living in the new reality of being 'in Christ' and directed by God's Spirit)." Longenecker
The dualism is neither cosmological nor anthropological, it is ethical.

ἐὰν see v.10

θέλω wish, will

"In effect, Gal 5:17 sets out in rudimentary fashion what is later spoken of more fully in Rom 7:14-25, with both passages expressing the plight of humanity 'of itself' (cf. αὐτοῦ ἐγώ, 'I of myself' or 'dependent on my own resources,' of Rom 7:25)." Longenecker

Verse 18

εἰ δὲ πνεύματι ἄγεσθε, οὐκ ἐστὲ ὑπὸ νόμον.

"The phrase ὑπο νόμον ('under the law') is undoubtedly to be read, as elsewhere throughout the Galatian letter (e.g., 3:23; 4:4, 5, 21), as referring to the nomistic lifestyle advocated by the Judaisers, against which Paul argued and exhorted from 2:15 through 5:12... The antidote to license in the Christian life is not laws, as the Judaisers argued, but openness to the Spirit and being guided by the Spirit. For being 'in Christ' means neither nomism nor libertinism, but a new quality of life based in and directed by the Spirit." Longenecker

"Life by the Spirit constitutes for the apostles a third way of life distinct both on the one hand from legalism and on the other from that which is characterised by a yielding to the impulses of the flesh. It is by no means a middle course between them but a highway above them both, a life of freedom from statutes, of faith and love." Burton

Verses 19-26

Catalogues of virtues and vices were common in Paul's day though Paul may also be influenced by Jewish 'two ways' teaching.

Verse 19

φανερὰ δὲ ἐστὶν τὰ ἔργα τῆς σαρκός, ἅτινά ἐστὶν πορνεία, ἀκαθαρσία, ἀσέλγεια,

φανερὸς, α, ον known, evident, plain, visible

ἅτινά pronoun, n nom & acc pl ὅστις

There are some additions to this list. A number of MSS, followed by the TR, add μοιχεῖα at the head of the list of vices.

πορνεία, ας f sexual immorality

In the Greek world of the NT sexual immorality was not considered a serious fault – it was a commonplace.

ἀκαθαρσία, ας f impurity, immorality, uncleanness

ἀσελγεία, ας f sensuality, vice

Verse 20

εἰδωλολατρία, φαρμακεία, ἔχθραι, ἔρις, ζήλος, θυμοί, ἐριθεῖα, διχοστασίαι, αἵρέσεις,

εἰδωλολατρία, ας f idol worship, idolatry

"In Paul's usage, not only is the worship of an image or the god represented by an image idolatry, but also eating food that had idolatrous associations (1 Cor 10:7, 14) and being covetous or greedy (Clo 3:5)." Longenecker

φαρμακεία, ας f sorcery, witchcraft

ἐχθρα, ας f enmity, hostility, hatred

Perhaps particularly hostile towards God (cf. Rom 8:7; Eph 2:14; Jas 4:4).

ἔρις, ἰδος f strife, rivalry

ζήλος, ου m, and ους n jealousy, envy

TR reads ἐρεῖς, ζήλοι. "The textual tradition shows that many scribes attempted to make the list uniform by recasting the singulars into plurals, but external attestation is not strong enough to warrant our acceptance."

Longenecker

θυμός, ου m anger, rage, fury

ἐριθειά, ας f selfishness, selfish ambition, self-seeking

διχοστασια, ας f division, dissension
 αίρεσις, εως f religious party, faction, false
 teaching

Verse 21

φθόνοι, μέθαι, κῶμοι, καὶ τὰ ὅμοια τούτοις, ἃ
 προλέγω ὑμῖν καθὼς προεῖπον ὅτι οἱ τὰ
 τοιαῦτα πράσσοντες βασιλείαν θεοῦ οὐ
 κληρονομήσουσιν.

φθονος, ου m envy, jealousy, spite

A large number of MSS include φονοι (murders) after φθονοι. Metzger writes in the Textual Commentary on the UBS text, "Although the shorter reading may have originated in accidental omission due to homoeteleuton, a majority of the Committee, impressed by the age and quality of the witnesses supporting φθονοι, was inclined to think that φονοι was added by copyists who recollected Rom 1:29."

μεθη, ης f drunkenness

κωμος, ου m orgy, revelry, carousing
 ὁμοιος, α, ον like, of the same kind as

Suggests that the list is intended to provide a number of examples; it is not intended to be comprehensive.

προλεγω say beforehand, warn in
 advance

τοιουτος, αυτη, ουτον correlative pronoun and
 adjective such, of such kind, similar,
 like

πρασσω practice, do

κληρονομεω receive, gain possession of,
 inherit

Longenecker says, "The language of the statement, 'Those who do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God,' seems not quite Pauline at a number of points... So what we probably have here is a ὅτι *recitativum* used to introduce a portion of the catechetical instruction of the early church given by Paul to his converts when he was with them and now repeated by way of warning, the purpose being, of course, that they might again realise the seriousness of allowing their freedom in Christ to degenerate into only 'an opportunity for the flesh' (cf. 5:13b)."

Verse 22

Ὁ δὲ καρπὸς τοῦ πνεύματός ἐστιν ἀγάπη,
 χαρά, εἰρήνη, μακροθυμία, χρηστότης,
 ἀγαθωσύνη, πίστις,

καρπος, ου m fruit, harvest, outcome

Note the singular, καρπος – one fruit with many evidences. The fact that the list begins with 'love' highlights the unity of the fruit, for Paul has stressed in 5:14 that love is the source of all Christian virtues (cf. 5:6).

"Perhaps also the last of the items on the list, that is, ἐγκρατεία ('self-control'), should be seen as being emphasised as well, for the final position in a Greek structure is also where one would expect to find anything being stressed. And 'self-control,' which became by the time of Paul a central virtue in Hellenistic ethics, certainly makes an important, positive contrast to the vices of 'drunkenness' and 'orgies' that conclude the catalogue of vv 19-21."

Longenecker

χαρα "In the Holy Spirit' joy is associated with 'righteousness,' 'peace' and hope (cf. Rom 14:17; 15:13, 32-33) and not just with pleasant circumstances." Longenecker

εἰρήνη, ης f peace

Reflects the OT understanding of Shalom but now with its focus in the work of Christ which has brought peace with God and has made peace a hallmark of the Christian life in all its relationships.

μακροθυμια, ας f longsuffering, patience

"Most commonly ... it occurs in the NT in the sense of patient endurance of wrong without anger or taking vengeance (so 2 Cor 6:6; Eph 4:2; Col 1:11; 3:12; 2 Tim 3:10; 4:2; Heb 6:12; Jas 5:10), with Paul urging his readers to live out their faith in terms of μακροθυμια toward one another and toward all people (so Eph 4:2; Col 1:11; 3:12; cf. also the verb μακροθυμω of 1 Thess 5:14)." Longenecker

χρηστοτης, ητος f kindness, goodness,
 mercy

ἀγαθωσυνη, ης f goodness

"πιστις, though used repeatedly elsewhere in Galatians to signify a person's response of trust regarding God's salvation provided in Christ Jesus (cf. 2:20; 3:6ff.; 5:6), here undoubtedly means the ethical virtue of 'faithfulness.'"

Longenecker

Verse 23

πραΰτης, ἐγκράτεια· κατὰ τῶν τοιούτων οὐκ
 ἔστιν νόμος.

πραυτης, ητος f gentleness, humility
 ἐγκρατεια, ας f self-control

"The position of the word here corresponding to that of μεθη, κωμοι in the list of the works of the flesh, suggests a special reference in this case to control of the appetite for drink and of the consequent tendency to unrestrained and immodest hilarity. But this parallelism does not warrant the conclusion that the apostle had exclusive reference to this form of self-control." Burton

τοιουτων see v.21

"In the context of Paul's argument throughout Galatians, the statement 'against such things there is no law' is probably best understood as an understatement given for rhetorical effect. As such, it reiterates in a latent manner the assertion made in 5:14 that 'such things' fully satisfy the requirements of the law, for they go beyond the law's requirements. Furthermore, the statement makes it clear that the list of enumerated virtues is not given as a set of legal prescriptions – that is, it is not to be taken as some kind of new law for Christians, as though by setting such goals and seeking to put them into practice believers can present themselves as acceptable before God." Longenecker

Verse 24

οἱ δὲ τοῦ Χριστοῦ τὴν σάρκα ἐσταύρωσαν σὺν τοῖς παθήμασιν καὶ ταῖς ἐπιθυμίαις.

σταυρωω crucify

παθημα, τος η suffering, passion, desire

ἐπιθυμια, ας f desire, longing, lust,
passion

"The self-giving of Christ through death on a cross is the central soteriological theme of Galatians (cf. 1:4; 3:1, 13; 6:12, 14), just as it was the focus of early Christian preaching (cf. the sermons recorded in Acts and the passion narratives of the Gospels). Identification with Christ in his crucifixion means a new type of existence for the believer, for now 'Christ lives in me' (2:20). Likewise, just as the proclamation of 'Christ crucified' has implications for issues having to do with legalism and nomism (cf. comment on 3:1), so identification with Christ in his crucifixion has implications for issues having to do with libertinism (so here at v 24). For Paul, to claim identification with Christ in his crucifixion means that one cannot espouse a lifestyle that expresses either a legalistic or a libertine orientation. For in being crucified with Christ both the demands of the law and the impulses of the flesh have been crucified as well (cf. Rom 7:1-6; Col 2:13-15)." Longenecker

Verse 25

εἰ ζῶμεν πνεύματι, πνεύματι καὶ στοιχῶμεν.

A precis of Paul's message.

ζαω live, be alive

στοιχεω walk, conduct oneself

"The verb στοιχεω has as its basic meaning the idea of 'stand in a row' (cf. comment on the cognate expression τα στοιχεια at 4:3; also 4:9), and so came to connote 'be in line with' or 'agree with.' Its use elsewhere by Paul, however, suggests 'walking in the footsteps' of another (cf. Rom 4:12) or 'living in accordance with a standard' (cf. Gal 6:16; Phil 3:16; also Acts 21:24). So here by exhorting his converts to 'be in line' or 'keep in step' with the Spirit, Paul is asking those who claim to live by the Spirit to evidence that fact by a lifestyle controlled by the Spirit. That he exhorts believers to do what is the work of the Spirit to produce (cf. vv 22-23) is typical of Paul's understanding of Christian ethics, for Paul never views the ethical activity of the believer apart from the Spirit's work nor the Spirit's ethical direction and enablement apart from the believer's active expression of his or her faith." Longenecker

Verse 26

μη γινώμεθα κενόδοξοι, ἀλλήλους προκαλούμενοι, ἀλλήλοις φθονοῦντες.

κενοδοξος, ον conceited, boastful

ἀλληλων, οις, ους reciprocal pronoun one
another

προκαλεομαι irritate, make angry

φθονεω envy, be jealous of

Longenecker suggests that 6:1-10 unpacks what Paul has in mind in this verse.