



## *Texts in Context*

# God's New Creation in Christ: Teaching and Preaching from Galatians

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**G**ALATIANS IS A LITERARY AND THEOLOGICAL MASTERPIECE. PAUL TAKES US INTO the truth of the gospel in this Magna Charta of Christian liberty. Luther called Galatians his Katie von Bora, expressing his love of Galatians as endearing as his relationship to his spouse, Katie. Luther in fact changed the spelling of his name from Lutter or Ludder to Luther, using the “h” to parallel the Greek word for “freedom,” *eleutheria*, a word that is at the hinge point of the Galatian letter.

How does one teach and preach from Galatians? In teaching from Galatians it is imperative that we know and work with Paul's sustaining argument from 1:1 to 6:18. As the letter progresses, Paul unfolds the gospel of freedom, even anticipating our next question. In preaching from Galatians it is difficult to focus on a pericope without knowing the way Paul's argument has developed to that point and how the following verses sustain his argument. The only time in the common lectionary when there is a sequence of texts from Galatians is on the Second to the Fifth Sundays after Pentecost in Year C: 2:15-21; 3:23-29; 5:1, 13-25; 6:[1-6], 7-16. The text assigned for the Conversion of St. Paul, January 25, in Years A, B, and C is 1:11-24; the text for the First Sunday after Christmas in Year B is 4:4-7.

The sustaining power of Paul's response to the Galatians can be expressed in a single sentence: “*Inherent in the revelation of the gospel (1:1-2:21) is the promise of the Spirit (3:1-4:31) and the reality of living in the Spirit (5:1-6:18).*” In each two-chapter section, Paul draws upon the gospel's empowering claim in Jesus Christ,

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bringing us to and from the hinge point of the letter: “For (living in the domain of) freedom Christ freed us; therefore continue to stand firm (in this freedom), and do not become ensnared again in a yoke of slavery” (5:1).

## I. INHERENT IN THE REVELATION OF THE GOSPEL (1:1-2:21)...

### 1. *Source of the gospel (1:1-10)*

The opening verse of Galatians establishes a rhetorical style that is carried throughout the letter: negative statements, “not...nor,” followed by a strong adversative, “but” (1:1, 11-12, 16-17; 2:6-7; 4:14), or “neither...nor...but” (5:6; 6:15). The first verse establishes the source of Paul’s apostleship: “*not* from human beings *nor* through a human being *but* through Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead” (1:1). Following the customary greeting from sender to recipients, Paul announces the content of the gospel, the lordship of Jesus Christ, “who gave himself for our sins that he might set us free from the evil one of the present age, according to the will of our God and Father.” Paul concludes with a doxology of praise to God: “to whom is the glory for ever and ever. Amen” (1:2-5).

The first main verb of the letter, “I am surprised” (1:6), not only indicates Paul’s complete astonishment at what the Galatians have done, but is in the place where Paul’s prayers of thanksgiving and intercession for the community are customarily found. Paul draws upon a military word to express that they have “deserted” the God who called them in Christ by turning “to another gospel”—though Paul is quick to add, “not that there is another gospel.” Those who are working to trouble/unsettle the young Christian communities in Galatia have turned God’s good news in Jesus Christ to its “opposite”—a program of self-achievement (1:7).

Paul’s confidence in the gospel that he proclaims is put to the test in the strongest way possible. Even if he or an angel/messenger from God proclaims a gospel contrary to what he proclaimed, Paul places himself and God’s messenger under the curse of God (1:8). On the other hand, those who are advocating another gospel even now stand under the curse of God (1:9). Is Paul attempting to please the Galatians or even God? If he were accommodating himself (but he isn’t) he would not be a servant of Christ (but he is). This opening section in Galatians is framed by Paul’s identity: to be a sent one/apostle (1:1) is to be an enslaved one/servant (1:10).

### 2. *Proclamation of the gospel (1:11-24)*

Paul begins this section with three negatives followed by a strong adversative. Paul’s gospel was received independent of any human effort or teaching, “not...not...nor..., but through a revelation of Jesus Christ” (1:11-12). Assuming that the Galatians know of his former life in Judaism and his persecution of “the church of God,” Paul explains that his zeal for the tradition of his ancestors was not exceeded by his contemporaries (1:13-14).

At this point Paul begins a carefully structured chronology of his story. Intro-

ductory words such as “but when” (1:15; 2:11, 12, 14) and “then” (1:18, 21; 2:1) lead to the heart of the gospel he proclaims (2:15-21). The first “but when” identifies God as the actor who set Paul apart before he was born and called him by grace, words reflective of God’s call of Samson, Samuel, Isaiah, Jeremiah, the servant in Isa 49:1-6, Amos, and Ezekiel. God’s Son was revealed to Paul so that Paul might proclaim him among the nations/gentiles. Once again Paul draws upon the rhetorical style of negatives followed by a strong adversative, “not...nor,” indicating his independence from human experience or leaders but at God’s direction: “*but* I went away into Arabia,” after which he again returned to Damascus (1:15-17).

The first “then” continues Paul’s story, recounting that after three years he traveled to Jerusalem for a fifteen-day visit with Cephas. Paul swears by oath that the only other apostle he saw was James, the brother of the Lord (1:18-20). Was the sole purpose of this visit to confer with other witnesses of the resurrected Christ? Cephas and James are the only two individuals identified by name in Paul’s witness to the earliest proclamation of the gospel (1 Cor 15:3-8).

The second “then” recounts Paul’s movement north to the regions of Syria and Cilicia, where he establishes a base for the gentile mission (1:21). Since Paul was unknown as an apostle to the Judean Christians, the Christians of Syria and Cilicia join in affirming Paul’s mission among the gentiles, noting that their persecutor is “now proclaiming the faith which he once was destroying” (1:22-23). The response of the Judean Christians reflects God’s call of Israel to a servant mission among the gentiles, a mission they see Paul fulfilling: “And they glorified God in me” (1:24). Paul’s identity is reflective of the servant in Isaiah: “You are my servant, Israel, in whom I will be glorified” (Isa 49:3).

### 3. *Truth of the gospel (2:1-14)*

The third “then” records Paul’s second visit to Jerusalem, which comes after an additional fourteen years in the gentile mission. Paul returns to Jerusalem with Barnabas, his missionary companion, and Titus, an uncircumcised gentile. Paul is led to this visit by “revelation” from God. Paul presents to the Jewish Christian leadership in Jerusalem the gospel that he proclaims to the gentiles, a gospel free of Jewish legal requirements. Acceptance of the gospel Paul proclaims is confirmed as Titus is not compelled to be circumcised (2:1-3).

However, not all is well at this meeting. Paul once again draws upon military language to express that false brethren are secretly smuggled in, infiltrating the meeting with the intent of spying out the freedom of the gospel Paul proclaims among the gentiles. To such persons, Paul says, “[W]e did not yield in submission even for a moment, that the truth of the gospel might be preserved for you” (2:4-5). The gospel “for you” was won for the gentiles in Galatia!

The rhetorical style of negatives followed by a strong adversative once again establishes Paul’s independence from human leadership or influence, “no...

not...nothing...but on the contrary,” to identify the separate fields of responsibility entrusted to Peter and Paul (2:6-7a):

- A I have been entrusted with the gospel of the uncircumcision,
- B just as Peter with the gospel of the circumcision,
- B1 for he (God) who worked in Peter for the mission to the  
circumcision,
- A1 also worked in me for the mission to the gentiles.

The chiasmic arrangement of these four lines indicates a working agreement between Peter and Paul, and one which Paul must establish with the present leadership in the Jewish Christian community in Jerusalem—James, Cephas, and John. When they perceive that God’s grace is present in both the gentile and Jewish mission, they extend to Paul and Barnabas the right hand of partnership, thus completing the chiasm and sealing the mission agreement (2:7b-9):

- A2 that we should go to the gentiles,
- B2 and they to the circumcised.

The success of the Jerusalem meeting is acknowledged in the mutual partnership of the gentile and Jewish Christian missions. Paul pledges that the gentile mission will remember the Jewish mission by gathering an offering for the Jewish Christian community in Jerusalem (2:10).

The chronology of Paul’s story continues (“but when” in 2:11, 12, 14). “*But when Cephas came to Antioch....*” Cephas had enjoyed table fellowship with the gentiles until a group from Jerusalem arrives representing James, the leader of the Jewish Christian community. “But when” Cephas withdraws from table and sets himself apart from the gentiles, he brings with him not only other Jews but also Barnabas, a leader of the gentile mission (2:11-13).

“But when” Paul sees that they are acting hypocritically and not making a straight course to “the truth of the gospel,” he speaks out in the presence of all: “If you (Cephas) are really a Jew (and you are), yet you live like a gentile and not like a Jew (which you have been doing), how can you compel the gentiles to live like Jews?” (you can’t!). When “the truth of the gospel” (2:3) was at stake in Jerusalem, Titus, an uncircumcised gentile, was not compelled to be circumcised (2:5); likewise, when “the truth of the gospel” (2:14) is at stake in Antioch, the gentiles cannot be compelled to observe Jewish table regulations (2:14).

#### 4. *Heart of the gospel (2:15-21)*

Given this confrontation, how are Cephas and Paul, both Jews by birth, to understand their roles as respective leaders of the Jewish and gentile Christian missions (2:15)? In answering this question, Paul goes back to Scripture. We know with the psalmist that “no one will be declared just” (Ps 143:2), it is only “through faith in Jesus Christ” (2:16).

However, we (Cephas and Paul), Jews by birth, now find ourselves in a double-jeopardy situation. How can we be just/righteous in Christ and live among

gentiles, that is, among people who don't know or live by the law? Is Christ a servant of sin? Paul breaks off the argument: "Absolutely not!" (2:17). But, on the other hand, we cannot return to building up the law, a law we were destroying by living apart from it. In returning to the law we demonstrate ourselves to be transgressors—those who break the law knowingly. Either way we are in a lose-lose situation; sinner or transgressor, there is no way out on our own (2:18).

Our only way out is to die to the law as a way of life, so that God might come alive in us, a God who has given us life in the most contrary of ways: "I have been (and remain) crucified with Christ." In Christ's cross the "ego" of my life was crucified and "Christ is living in me." This life "in the flesh" is lived out "in faith," faith that is in "the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me" (2:19-20). In Christ, God's grace has come to all, Jew and gentile alike. If God had determined that justification/righteousness were to have come through the law (but God didn't), then Christ would have died for no purpose (but Christ didn't!) (2:21).

II. IS THE PROMISE OF THE SPIRIT (3:1-4:31)...

1. *God's covenantal relationship (3:1-14)*

Paul addresses the situation in Galatia directly: "O thoughtless Galatians!" They have not thought through the implications of their turning from the gospel Paul proclaimed to a religion of self-achievement. The first rhetorical question sets the issue before them: "Are you under an evil spell in which your eyes have been blinded to the presentation of the crucified Christ?" (3:1). If this has happened, Paul wants them to hear and understand the inherent answers in the following rhetorical questions. They have received the Spirit through "the hearing of faith," not through "the working of the law"; this is how the miracle of faith began among them (3:2-5).

Paul draws upon six Old Testament texts representative of Abraham and Moses, texts which illustrate three covenantal themes brought to fulfillment in Christ (3:6-13):

ABRAHAM	MOSES	CHRIST
Gen 15:6 in Gal 3:6 Gen 12:3 in Gal 3:8	Deut 27:26 in Gal 3:10 Lev 18:5 in Gal 3:12	Hab 2:4 in Gal 3:11 Deut 21:23 in Gal 3:13
Faith Justification Blessing	Law Obedience Curse	Law/Faith Obedience/ Justification Curse/Blessing

God's inclusion of gentiles was "seen beforehand," granting a righteousness/justification on the basis of Abraham's faith. God "announced the gospel beforehand," proclaiming a promise in which all the nations/gentiles will be blessed (Gen 15:6; 12:3): "Therefore those of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham" (3:6-9). The giving of the law through Moses is God's call of Israel to live in the blessing of this cove-

nant; however, not to live in obedience to all things written in the law brings the curse of the law (Deut 27:26). The purpose of the law is not to take the place of faith; however, “Whoever does the works of the law will live by them” (Lev 18:5 in Gal 3:12).

In Christ the promise of the prophetic word is brought to fulfillment: “The just one shall live by faith” (Hab 2:4). In Christ’s death, we have been delivered from the curse of the law’s demands, that we might receive the blessing of God: “Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree” (Deut 21:23). The Old Testament texts are brought to fulfillment in Christ in two parallel statements which express God’s covenantal purpose and promise:

A that the blessing of Abraham		A1 that the promise of the Spirit
B might be given to the gentiles		B1 we might receive
C in Christ Jesus,	and	C1 through faith (3:14)

The blessing of Abraham and the promise of the Spirit are expressed with two passive verbs, “might be given” and “might receive.” God’s covenant of blessing is realized in the promise of the Spirit, a promise centered in Christ Jesus through whom faith is given/received.

2. *God’s covenant of promise (3:15-4:7)*

The word “promise” was introduced in 3:14 and is the linking word to the conclusion of chapter four (3:16, 17, 18, 21, 22, 29; 4:23, 28). Paul continues to center around three persons who illustrate God’s covenant of promise:

Abraham	430 years	Moses	Christ
faith/seed		law/mediator	seed/faith

From human experience we know that once a person has written a will/testament/covenant no one can nullify it or add a codicil to it. So it is with God’s will/testament/covenant with Abraham: “and to your seed” (Gen 12:3; 13:5; 17:7; 24:7). God’s promise to Abraham is brought to fulfillment in Christ: “who is Christ” (3:15-16). God’s covenantal promise to Abraham not only precedes the covenant of law through Moses by 430 years, but is a previously validated covenant that cannot be invalidated. If God had intended the inheritance to come through the law (but God didn’t) then it would not be by promise (but it is), for God graced/gave it to Abraham by promise (3:17-18).

Thus the question: “Why then the law?” By placing the law in a secondary relationship to the covenant with Abraham, Paul responds in a threefold way: (1) it is because of transgression; (2) it is provisional until the seed (Christ) comes; and (3) it is mediated by angels and Moses to God’s people. In contrast to the word of promise spoken directly to Abraham, the law is a mediated word of God. God’s oneness is the promise/seed/Christ (3:19-20).

Thus the next question: “Is the law against the promises of God?” Paul’s response is immediate: “Absolutely not! For if the law were able to make alive (but it

can't), then God's gift of righteousness/justification would have been by the law (but it isn't!)" (3:21). The purpose of the law was to reveal that everything is under the bondage of sin, so that the promise of faith might indeed be God's gift in Jesus Christ (3:22). Promise and gift are one, thus the words "faith" and "Christ" are interchangeable in 3:23-25. Until the coming of faith/Christ, the law serves in a custodial role and guide until the fulfilling reality of faith/Christ.

The gospel's declaration is that all are heirs of God through baptism into Christ (3:26-27). Clothed in Christ's righteousness, distinctions are no longer present: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, neither slave nor free, there is not male and female, for you are all one in Christ" (3:28). And since we belong to Christ, we are seed of Abraham, inheritors according to God's promise (3:29). Whether one lives under human guardians or astral powers, an inheritor will continue to live either as a minor child or slave until the father's decision. Paul incorporates a chiasmic statement, expressing that the fullness of time has come in which God has sent forth his Son:

- A who was born of a woman,
- B who was born under the law,
- B1 that he might redeem those under the law,
- A1 that we might receive adoption as heirs.

The identity of the heir is expressed in the familiar language of a child: "Abba, Father." The source of the cry is God's Spirit, confirming that we are no longer enslaved to the powers of this age, but rightful inheritors of God's covenantal promise of life in Christ (4:1-7).

### 3. Paul's ministry in Galatia (4:8-20)

Paul establishes a "once...now...again" sequence through 5:1, linking three time frames that express his relationship to the Galatians. *Once* they were enslaved to various powerless deities, but *now* they have come to know and be known by God. In light of the transforming power of the gospel, why would they want to *again* live under the powerless gods of the universe and *again* be enslaved? (4:8-9). In their returning to the enslavement of calendar observances, Paul wonders if his exhaustive work among them has been in vain (4:10-11).

Using this sequence, Paul recounts the *once* when he proclaimed the gospel among them. His presence had not been a demonstration of personal strength; it was God's power alone in the gospel. They had every reason to reject Paul on the basis of human standards. Drawing on the rhetorical style of negatives followed by a strong adversative, Paul says they did *not* despise him *nor* show contempt toward him, *but* they received him as God's own messenger/angel—as Christ Jesus. In fact they would have given him their most prized possession, their own eyesight. In speaking the truth of the gospel to them has he become their enemy (4:12-16)?

The present *now* reflects that there are some among them who wish to court their favor, to establish a personal dependency so they might mutually court each

other's favor—not that fair courting is inappropriate (4:17-18). In light of this development Paul is *again* as a mother about to give birth, waiting in anguish until Christ is formed in them. Since Paul cannot be present with them and change his tone, this letter must suffice; Paul is at a loss to know what more he can do to win them back to the promise and freedom of the gospel (4:19-20).

#### 4. *Children of the free woman* (4:21-31)

In desperation Paul asks: “Don’t you understand the enslaving reality of living under the law?” In response to the question, Paul sets up contrasting mothers, Hagar and Sarah, and their sons, Ishmael and Isaac. These persons are illustrative of human effort to achieve God’s promise in contrast with God’s way of effecting the promise to Abraham (4:21-23).

To recount the story in this fashion, Paul draws upon allegory, a human story that illumines God’s divine purpose. Hagar and Sarah represent God’s two covenants. Hagar represents the Sinai covenant of law and is representative of the present Jerusalem; Sarah represents the covenant of freedom/faith brought to fulfillment in the gospel that Paul proclaims among gentiles. Paul’s gospel reflects the song of reversal in Isa 54:1, cited in 4:27. Just as the exiles who returned from Babylon in the sixth century B.C. did not consider themselves to be the ones through whom God’s covenantal promise would be fulfilled, so too the Galatians/gentiles do not consider themselves to be the children of promise. However, the Galatians are in fact the promised children of the mother thought to be forsaken; they are being birthed and given life in the gospel. Those of faith are the promised children, just as Isaac. But remember that just as *once* the older brother, Ishmael, taunted his younger brother, Isaac, so too is this taking place *now* in Galatia. Since the ones taunting you show by their action not to be the rightful heirs, Sarah’s words in Gen 21:10, cited in 4:30, are the words to your oppressors: cast them out! In these words Paul confirms for the Galatians: “[W]e are not the children of the maid servant but of the free woman!” (4:24-31).

### III. AND THE REALITY OF LIVING IN THE SPIRIT (5:1-6:18)

We have reached the hinge point of the letter. On the basis of all that Paul has said (1:1-4:31), we have been set free in Christ from any enslaving reality, and we are called to live in the domain/realm of freedom that God has established in Christ. The indicative reality of the gospel is inseparable from the imperative response to live in the empowering reality of the Spirit. In this freedom we are called continually to stand firm/fast in this reality, and not become ensnared *again* in whatever yoke of slavery might be present (5:1). Paul now exposes two yokes that enslave: living under the law (5:2-12), and living outside the law (5:13-15).

#### 1. *Two Yokes of Slavery* (5:2-15)

The symbol of enslavement to the law in Galatia would be the gentiles’ taking on the sign of circumcision. Paul observes that circumcision is only one law, yet

one that carries an obligation to keep the entire law. Paul takes the image of circumcision, a cutting, to say that circumcision for gentiles results in being cut off from Christ, a falling from grace (5:2-4). The gospel proclaims that righteousness in Christ Jesus is a gift of the Spirit. The rhetorical style of negatives followed by a strong adversative identifies that it is “*neither* circumcision *nor* uncircumcision that has value, *but* the gift of faith made effective through love” (5:5-6).

Continuing with the image of cutting, Paul now draws on the arena in which a foot race takes place. Someone has cut in on them, forcing them to break stride; they know that this runner is automatically disqualified from the race (5:7). The image of a little yeast that leavens the entire batch of dough expresses Paul’s confidence that the power of the gospel’s leaven will continue to transform the Galatian community (5:8-9). On the other hand, if the image of yeast is reflective of those who are permeating the community, drawing them away from the gospel, such persons bear the judgment of God (5:10).

If it is being claimed that Paul, a circumcised Jewish Christian, is advocating circumcision for gentile Christians (which he isn’t), then Paul and the Galatians have been cut off/severed from the scandal of the cross (but they haven’t). Angered at this apparent charge, Paul expresses his sharpest words against the false teachers who are advocating circumcision: “Let them completely dismember themselves!” (5:11-12).

The other yoke of slavery Paul exposes is that of living totally outside of the law, using freedom as an occasion for self-indulgent living. In contrast Paul calls for servitude in love for one another, a love that completely fulfills every individual law. The word from Lev 19:18 is promise realized in Christ: “You shall/will love your neighbor as yourself.” On the other hand, to live outside of the empowering reality of love is to live like wild animals, tearing and devouring to the point of consuming one another (5:13-15).

## 2. *Being led in the Spirit* (5:16-25)

Life in the Spirit is a call to walk in the empowering reality of the Spirit’s presence. For those led by the Spirit, the battle between the realm of the Spirit and the realm of the flesh has been won. In the power of the Spirit we are no longer under the domination of the flesh or the law (5:16-18). In Christ and the working of the Spirit we are set free from living under the domain and power of the works of the flesh in areas of wanton sexuality, demonic religious practices, personal estrangements, and intemperate lives. The listing of such in 5:19-21a is not exhaustive, and those who continue to live enslaved to self-indulgent living will not inherit in “the kingdom of God” (5:21b).

In contrast to a self-indulgent life in the flesh, the produce/fruit of the Spirit expresses that life under Christ’s lordship frees one for living in the domain and power of the Spirit. The domain and power of the flesh has been crucified with its passions and desires. Since there is no law that can create such fruit, it is the pure gift of the Spirit: “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faith(fulness), hu-

mility, self-control.” Paul concludes: “Since we live in the Spirit (and we do), then let us walk a straight course forward in the Spirit” (5:22-25).

### 3. *Living in the Spirit’s realm (5:26-6:10)*

Paul structures this section around two prohibitions. The first one calls the Galatians not to live on the basis of self-glory, which is expressed in turning against one another and turning from one another (5:26). In language reflective of the medical field, Paul calls the community to restore/mend/suture the one who has fallen into a transgression. Only in being led by the Spirit’s gift of humility, can we look beyond ourselves to the other (6:1).

The gift of the Spirit empowers the community to carry one another’s burdens, and in so doing, the law of Christ is fulfilled: “You shall/will love your neighbor as yourself” (Lev 19:18, cited in Gal 5:14) (6:2). On the other hand, if we think we are beyond transgressions, we live in self-deception. We are called to self-examination, not establishing the self in comparison with the other. Rather we bear the burden of self-examination and live in the confidence that alone comes from God (6:3-5). Living in community is sharing the word of God: “Let the catechumens share the word with the catechist in all good things” (6:6).

The second prohibition expresses our relationship with God: “Do not be deceived; God is not to be mocked (made a fool)” (6:7a). God knows our inmost being. If we continue to sow in the self-indulgence of the flesh, we will harvest that which is perishable—death. If we continue to sow in the Spirit, from the Spirit we will harvest that which is of God—eternal life (6:7b-8). As we live in the Spirit, we are called not to despair or lose heart. The harvest will come in God’s time. In the meantime, we are called to work the good, especially with those closest to us, “the household of faith” (6:9-10).

### 4. *The servant’s signature (6:11-18)*

In concluding the letter, Paul takes pen in hand, noting that what follows reflects not the hand of a trained scribe but an impassioned servant of Christ. The issue of circumcision and its compulsion by the false teachers is to remove the scandal of the cross; faith’s assurance is solely in the crucified Christ. The duplicity of those who advocate circumcision is that they do not themselves keep the law. Their motive is for personal glory, so that they may boast in the number of gentiles they have circumcised (6:11-13).

For Paul there can be no boasting except in the cross of Christ. This is Paul’s sole identity: “I have been (and remain) crucified with Christ” (2:19). In this identity the world no longer holds claim on Paul, nor is Paul beholden to the world as his source of life (6:14). For the final time, Paul uses the rhetorical style of negatives followed by a strong adversative: “For *neither* circumcision *nor* uncircumcision is anything, *but* a new creation” (6:15).

To walk “in formation” is to live as a new creation in Christ. This new creation is for gentiles in Galatia and for God’s chosen people, “the Israel of God.” The

name Israel was given to the patriarch, Jacob, “the one who strives with God” (Gen 32:28). In this way God’s new creation in Christ has brought peace to all people, Jews and gentiles (6:16). As a slave/servant of Christ, Paul bears the marks of his identity in the crucified Christ. In this mark there is no one who can trouble Paul, and he concludes with a doxology to a community he loves: “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ is/be with your spirit, sisters and brothers. Amen” (6:17-18). ☩