

Galatians

Grace, Faith, &
Freedom


John A. Beck, Ph.D.
For Shepherd of the
Hills Lutheran Church
November 2020

Goals

- Enable independent reading and understanding of Galatians
 - By shining a spotlight on its primary subject—the gospel
 - By highlighting the thought structure within the letter
 - By providing Bible background insights
- Offer a forum for questions and concerns about the content of the letter

Content

- Session One: Introduction to the Letter and its Key Content
Galatians 1:1—9
- Session Two: Paul's Credibility and Gospel-Alone Integrity
Galatians 1:10—2:21
- Session Three: Old Testament Illustrations and Cultural Analogies
Galatians 3:1—4:31
- Session Four: Faith Brings the Freedom to Live in Love
Galatians 5:1—6:18



The Gospel
Taught by
Paul—the things
God has DONE
for us

- Predestined by grace
- Justified by grace
- Converted by grace
 - Brought to repentance
 - Called to faith
 - Empowered to believe
- Glorified by grace



The Gospel in Galatians

- The gospel is...
...the forgiveness of sins
acquired for us by Christ,
given to us by grace,
and received by faith
that gives us freedom.

Problem that Motivated the Letter

- Jewish-Christian missionaries (Judaizers) from Jerusalem asserted Paul was wrong.
 - Paul advocated for a gospel-alone path to salvation.
 - Judaizers advocated for a gospel-plus path to salvation.

The Vital Question

Are we saved by what God has done or are we saved when we do
something in addition to what God has done?



Faith Brings the Freedom to Live in Love

Galatians 5:1-6:18



Faith Brings the Freedom to Live in Love

- Faith Brings Freedom (5:1-6)
- Personal Outburst (5:7-12)
- Faith Expresses Itself in Love (5:13-26)
- Faith Persists in Love despite the Challenges (6:1-10)
- Remember What Counts—gospel-alone reprise (6:11-18)



Faith Brings Freedom

“It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.”

(Gal 5:1 NIV)



Faith Brings Freedom

- Malady—return to the uncertainty that attends a gospel-plus path to salvation
- Remedy—embrace the gospel-alone path to salvation that brings freedom from uncertainty



The Yoke of Slavery

- The Roman world was highly stratified and class conscious with slaves occupying the lowest rung of the social ladder.
- Roman slaves comprised 16-20% of the population of the Roman Empire—typically war captives, debtors, or children of slaves.
- Aristotle called them “living tools.” They could be laborers, managers, educators, physicians, accountants, and sea captains.
- They were subject to the absolute power of their owners experiencing a kind of “social death” that took away their autonomy and certainty.

Spiritual Slavery

- A gospel-plus theology creates a slave-like life of obligation and uncertainty, because one can never be sure they have contributed enough to assure their salvation.
- The net effect of this theology is to make Christ of no value (5:2).

Spiritual Freedom

- A gospel-alone theology brings freedom from uncertainty, because it fully depends on what Christ has done for me.

“For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love.”

(Gal 5:6 NIV)




Faith Brings the Freedom to Live in Love

- Faith Brings Freedom (5:1-6)
- Personal Outburst (5:7-12)
- Faith Expresses Itself in Love (5:13-26)
- Faith Persists in Love despite the Challenges (6:1-10)
- This is What Counts—gospel-alone reprise (6:11-18)



Personal Outburst

“As for those agitators, I wish they would go
the whole way and emasculate themselves!”
(Gal 5:12 NIV)



Personal Outburst

- An emotion-filled outburst of lightly connected thoughts.
- Illustrates how passionately Paul felt about this topic and how personally he took the Galatian defection.





Personal Outburst

- Foot race metaphor (5:7)
- Criticism of Paul's common-speak in a world that championed rhetorical flourish (5:8)
- Baking metaphor that highlights exponential growth and harm (5:9)
- Making the gentile quandary worse! (5:10-11)
Circumcision made it difficult for gentiles to become Jewish proselytes and the cross made it difficult for gentiles to become Christians.
- Crude concluding jab taken at the Judaizers (5:12)



Faith Brings the Freedom to Live in Love

- Faith Brings Freedom (5:1-6)
- Personal Outburst (5:7-12)
- **Faith Expresses Itself in Love (5:13-26)**
- Faith Persists in Love despite the Challenges (6:1-10)
- This is What Counts—gospel-alone reprise (6:11-18)



Faith
Expresses
Itself in Love

“You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love.”

(Gal 5:13 NIV)



Faith Expresses Itself in Love

- Malady—following the lead of the old nature (flesh) into a life of sin
- Remedy—follow the new nature (Spirit) and express your faith in acts of love



Justification



Sanctification

Justification and Sanctification

- Justification
 - Speaks of our legal status before God.
 - Is a permanent condition.
 - DONE for us.
- Sanctification
 - Speaks of our moral status in this world.
 - Is an evolving condition.
 - Is a cooperative DOING motivated by our justification, empowered by the Spirit, and guided by the law.

**Natural Condition
One Nature**



**Converted to Faith
Two Natures**



**Glorified
One Nature**



The Changing Natures of the Redeemed

**Absence of
Freedom**



**Freedom to
Choose**

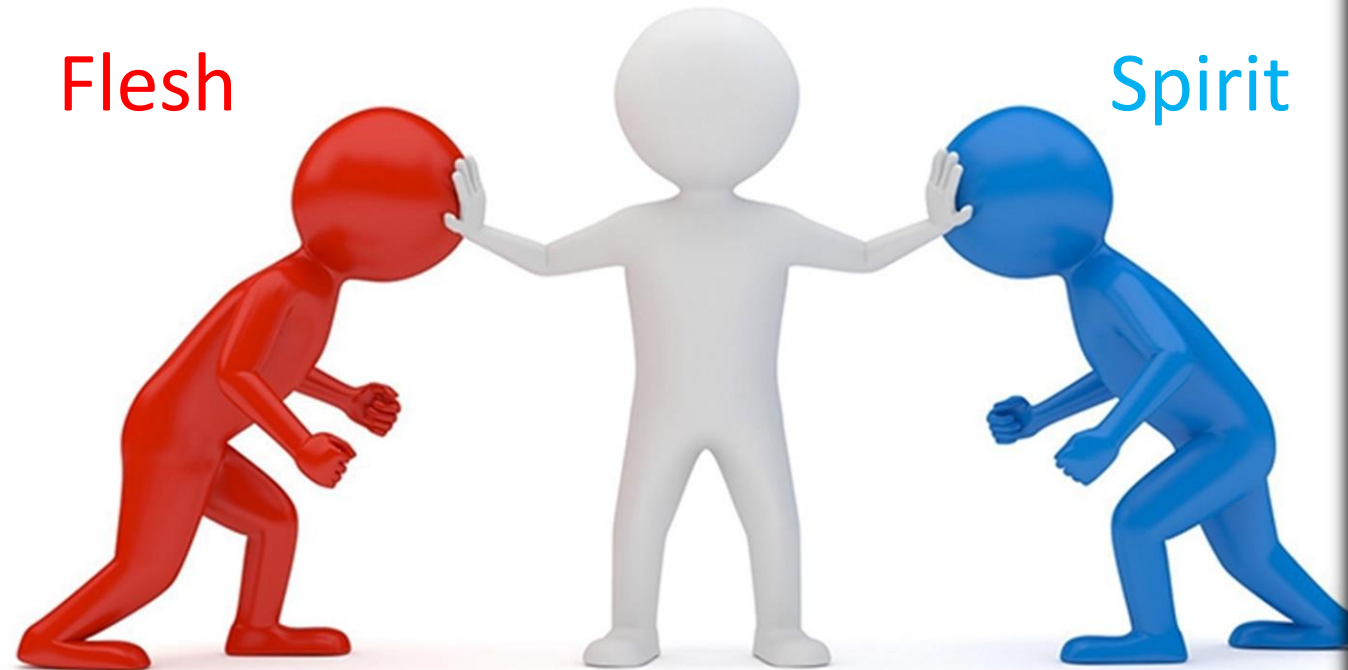


**Freedom
from Choice**



Freedom

Faith Expresses Itself in Love



So I say, walk by the **Spirit**, and you will not gratify the desires of the **flesh**. For the **flesh** desires what is contrary to the **Spirit**, and the **Spirit** what is contrary to the **flesh**. They are in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever you want.

(Gal 5:16-17 NIV)

Faith Expresses Itself in Love

- **Acts guided by the flesh (5:19-21)**

- Chaotically organized

- Absent love

- Socially destructive

- With eternal consequences

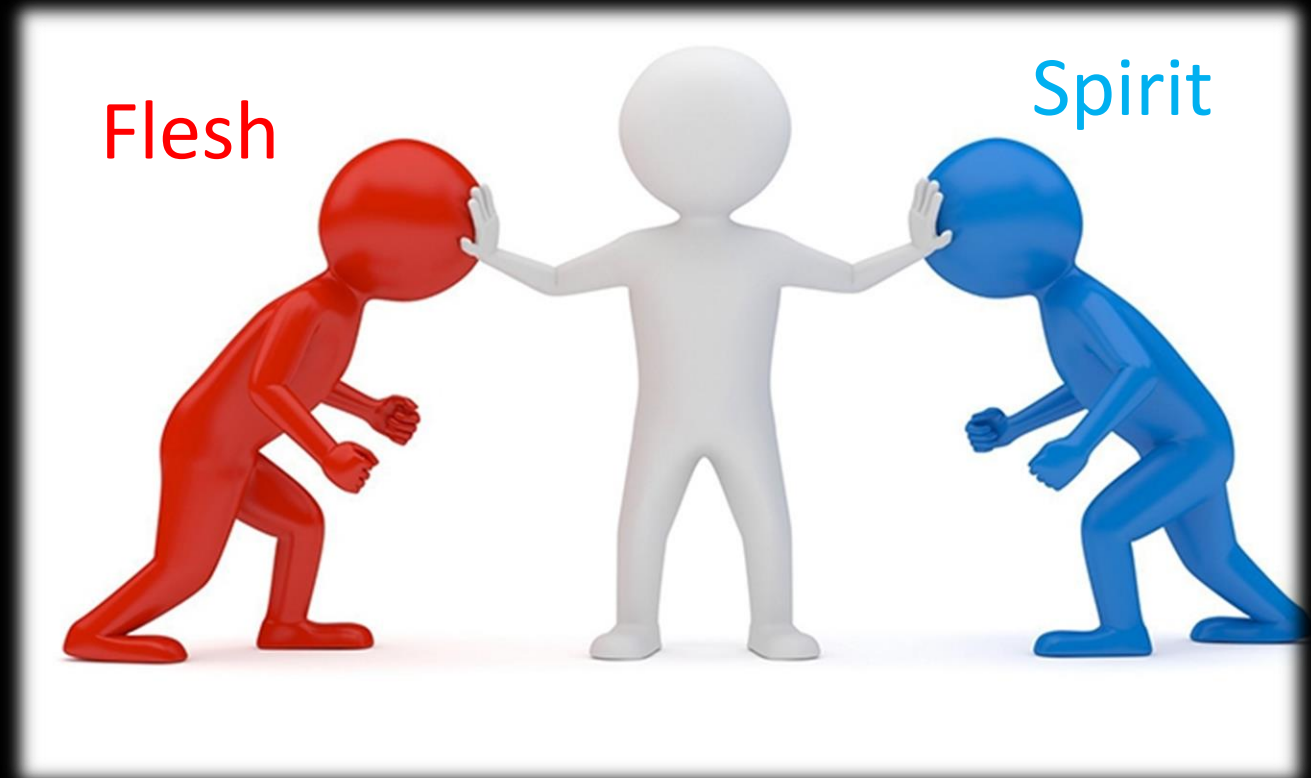
- **Acts guided by the Spirit (5:22-26)**

- Elegantly organized (groups of 3)

- Based on love

- Socially supportive

- With eternal consequences





Faith Brings the Freedom to Live in Love


- Faith Brings Freedom (5:1-6)
- Personal Outburst (5:7-12)
- Faith Expresses Itself in Love (5:13-26)
- Faith Persists in Love despite the Challenges (6:1-10)
- This is What Counts—gospel-alone reprise (6:11-18)



Faith Persists in Love

“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 people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.”

(Gal 6:9-10 NIV)



Faith Persists in Love

- Malady—surrendering the fight to live in love when things get difficult
- Remedy—lean on the Spirit and one another to energize our persistence





Challenges

- Spiritual hubris that prevents us from showing love to those caught in sin (6:1)
- Rabid individualism fueled by conceit that prevents us from helping others (6:2-4)
- Unhealthy dependence on the goodwill of others (6:5-6)
- Assuming we can game the system (6:7-8)

Flesh

Spirit



Our Choice Matters

“Whoever sows to please their **flesh**, from the **flesh** will reap destruction; whoever sows to please the **Spirit**, from the **Spirit** will reap eternal life.” (Gal 6:8 NIV)

The Peril of Persistent Sin

- Faith brings eternal salvation.
- Sin is doubt—the opposite of faith.
- Doubt in its most mature form is unbelief.
- Unbelief brings eternal condemnation.



Faith Brings the Freedom to Live in Love


- Faith Brings Freedom (5:1-6)
- Personal Outburst (5:7-12)
- Faith Expresses Itself in Love (5:13-26)
- Faith Persists in Love despite the Challenges (6:1-10)
- This is What Counts—gospel-alone reprise (6:11-18)



This is What
Counts

“Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision
means anything; what counts is the new
creation.”

(Gal 6:15 NIV)



A close-up photograph of a person's hands writing Hebrew text on a scroll. The person is wearing glasses and using a quill pen. The scroll is held open, and the text is written in a clear, legible hand. The background is dark, and the lighting is focused on the writing process.

Elevating the Rhetoric

“See what large letters I use
as I write to you with my
own hand!”

(Gal 6:11 NIV)

The Difference Matters

- **Gospel Alone**

What God has DONE

+

Nothing I DO

Certain Salvation

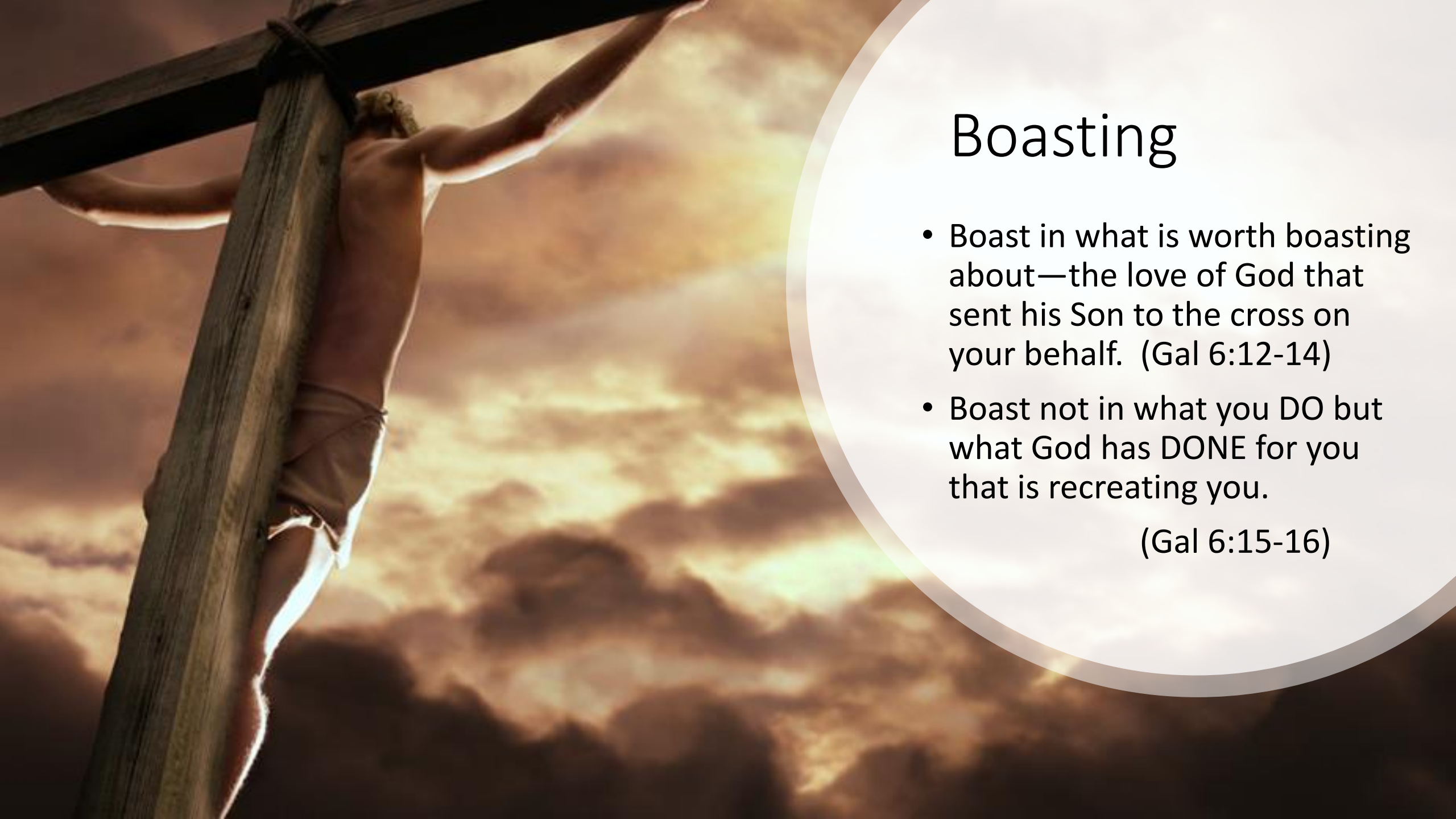
- **Gospel Plus**

What God has DONE

+

What I DO

Possibility of Salvation



Boasting

- Boast in what is worth boasting about—the love of God that sent his Son to the cross on your behalf. (Gal 6:12-14)
- Boast not in what you DO but what God has DONE for you that is recreating you.

(Gal 6:15-16)

The Vital Question

Are we saved by what God has done or are we saved when we do
something in addition to what God has done?

Justification and Sanctification

- Justification
 - Speaks of our legal status before God.
 - Is a permanent condition.
 - DONE for us.
- Sanctification
 - Speaks of our moral status in this world.
 - Is an evolving condition.
 - Is a cooperative DOING motivated by our justification, empowered by the Spirit, and guided by the law.

Goals

- Enable independent reading and understanding of Galatians
 - By shining a spotlight on its primary subject—the gospel
 - By highlighting the thought structure within the letter
 - By providing Bible background insights
- Offer a forum for questions and concerns about the content of the letter

Galatians

Grace, Faith, &
Freedom

John A. Beck, Ph.D.
For Shepherd of the
Hills Lutheran Church
November 2020