

Class No. 4 Outline
Sexagesima – Evening Prayer, Second Lesson
Galatians 3:19 – 5:26
Week of February 24, 2019

- I. Opening Prayer
 - a. BLESSED Lord, who hast caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our learning; Grant that we may in such wise hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that by patience and comfort of thy holy Word, we may embrace, and ever hold fast, the blessed hope of everlasting life, which thou hast given us in our Saviour Jesus Christ. *Amen.*
(Collect for the Second Sunday in Advent. BCP, p. 92.)
- II. Flash Card (Memory Item) of the Week: **I Corinthians 10:13**
 - a. No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it. (New American Standard Bible)
 - b. If temptation is near, so is God.
- III. Recommended Reading/Listening – See Below
- IV. Paul – Christ’s Suffering Servant
- V. Review/Comments/Questions from Previous Weeks’ Readings
 - a. Epiphany 5 – I Thessalonians
 - b. Septuagesima – Galatians 1:1 – 3:18
- VI. Brief Overview of this Week’s Readings (Time Permitting) – Galatians 3:19-5:26
- VII. Closing Prayer
 - a. O GOD, who, through the preaching of the blessed Apostle Saint Paul, hast caused the light of the Gospel to shine throughout the world; Grant, we beseech thee, that we, having his wonderful conversion in remembrance, may show forth our thankfulness unto thee for the same, by following the holy doctrine which he taught; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.* (Collect for the Feast of the Conversion of St. Paul. BCP, p. 229.)

Recommended Reading/Listening: *Mere Christianity*, by C.S. Lewis, widely available on Amazon. You may recall that Brant Pitre – whose book, *The Case for Jesus*, was featured two classes ago – highly recommended *Mere Christianity*. It is a classic of Christian apologetics by one of the most important Christian writers of the twentieth century. This book was compiled from radio broadcasts which Lewis gave while an Oxford don between 1941 and 1944. Sadly, only one of those broadcasts still exists, and you may listen to it here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aIW7pXbz0xc> (search YouTube for “C.S. Lewis on Christianity”.) You may listen to the entire audio book here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bgwq09sIpLQ&t=829s> (search YouTube for “Mere Christianity Geoffrey Howard”.) Once you get hooked on C.S. Lewis, there is no going back. The official web site is: www.cslewis.com.

Additional Resources

- St. Luke’s web page (www.episcopalnet.org) – Daily Offices, Ordo Kalendar, Tracts for Our Times, archived sermons, adult education classes...*and more!*
- St. Luke’s Facebook Page: – Upcoming events, daily Saints, interesting articles...*and more!* (<https://www.facebook.com/Saint-Lukes-Church-Sedona-AZ-1441369559466896/>)
- Andrew Scourby’s reading of Galatians on YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EjFd9KIgQPk>

NOTES:

(Refer to last week’s class materials for the introduction to Galatians.)

Monday – Galatians 3:19-29. *What Good is the Law?*

19 Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator. 20 Now a mediator is not a mediator of one, but God is one. 21 Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid: for if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law. 22 But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe. 23 But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed. 24 Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. 25 But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster. 26 For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. 27 For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. 28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. 29 And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

v. 19: *Wherefore then serveth the law?*: Why then the law? (RSV); *seed*: offspring; *mediator*: intermediary

v. 22: *hath concluded all under sin*: consigned all things to sin

v. 23: *kept*: confined; *shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed*: kept under restraint until faith should be revealed

v. 24: *schoolmaster*: custodian

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Exegesis: In last week’s readings, Paul established through a skillful synthesis of “Old Testament” scripture that “no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, [but] the just shall live by faith.” (3:11) If that is true, then devout Jews of Paul’s day, as well as readers of Galatians today, can be excused for asking: Why then the law? (v. 19) Paul’s answer, highly simplified, is that the law – given by angels to Moses (the “mediator” or “intermediary”) – was in one sense a placeholder (*i.e.*, a “schoolmaster” or “custodian”) until Jesus (“the seed”) came “in the fulness of time” (4:4), abrogating the need for the law. Until then, sinful human nature amply exposed the utter hopelessness of achieving righteousness through adherence to the law. (Paul’s argument here is particularly striking in that, prior to his conversion, he considered himself “blameless” under the law! (Philippians 3:6)) By being baptized, believers “put on Christ” (v. 27) and, therefore, become “Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise” (v. 29), free of the entanglements of the law.

Exposition: The reference in verse 27 to putting on Christ through baptism recalls our earlier reading from Colossians during the week of Epiphany 4: [P]ut on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after him that created him.” (Colossians 3:10) And, “[p]ut on, therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies [compassion], kindness, humbleness of mind meekness, longsuffering; forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness.” (Colossians 3:12-14)

Paul wrote Colossians perhaps ten to fifteen years after Galatians, so this recurring “put on” theme was clearly important to him. In Paul’s day, being initiated into a mystery cult involved putting on a robe symbolic of the deity being worshiped, and the robe supposedly endowed the worshiper with the attributes and the powers of the deity. Many of the readers and hearers of Paul’s epistle to the Galatians were Gentiles who would have been familiar with this practice, so the “put on” imagery might have had particularly vivid meaning to them. Baptism, though, imparts an even deeper meaning: by being baptized one is immersed in Christ and rises to new life in him. This is far more than mere symbolism.

Questions for Reflection: Do I live life – outwardly and inwardly – based on a firm belief that I am a child of God (v. 26), or is my faith not strong enough to do that?

Spiritual Resolve: _____

1 Now I say, That the heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all; 2 But is under tutors and governors until the time appointed of the father. 3 Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world: 4 But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, 5 To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. 6 And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. 7 Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ. 8 Howbeit then, when ye knew not God, ye did service unto them which by nature are no gods. 9 But now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage? 10 Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years. 11 I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain.

v. 1: *servant*: slave (also v. 7)

v. 2: *tutors and governors* guardians and trustees

v. 3: *in bondage under the elements of the word*: slaves to the elemental spirits of the universe

v. 4: *made*: born

v. 11: I am afraid I have labored in vain. (RSV)

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Exegesis: Paul elaborates on the logic contained in Monday’s lesson by comparing the law to a tutor or a governor (guardian or trustee) given charge over a youthful heir until adulthood. Until the heir reaches “the time appointed of the father,” he is little better than a servant or a slave (v. 1). By being baptized, we “put on Christ” (3:26 yesterday) and we receive “the adoption of sons” (4:6). Consequently, we are no longer under a custodian (*i.e.*, the law) but are “heirs of God through Christ” (v. 7)!

This logic is simple, powerful, and so transformational to Paul that he is astonished that the Galatians now seem both willing and eager to give up the privileges of “adulthood” in Christ and to return to living as child-servants of the law (vv. 8-9). Paul sincerely worries that he has labored in vain.

Exposition: Paul’s logic throughout Galatians hinges on the proposition that man is inherently sinful and that no amount of law-giving and strict observance of the law can produce a truly righteous person. This notion, of course, goes back to the story of the fall of Adam and Eve in Genesis 3. Later, God resolved to destroy the world by flood because He “saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.” (Genesis 6:5 (RSV)) Centuries after Moses had given the law to the tribes of Israel, Isaiah decried man’s continuing sinfulness: “The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even to the head, there is no soundness in it.” (Isaiah 1:5-6) Later, Jeremiah lamented: “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?” (Jeremiah 17:9) This process of demonstrating to man his own sinfulness took many, many centuries. Only then – “in the fulness of time” – did God send Jesus to earth so that we might receive “the adoption of sons” through faith. (4:4-7)

What about Jesus’ return (the Parousia)? God’s timetable is not our timetable: “But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.” (II Peter 3:8-11) Just as God was eminently patient with man in Old Testament times, so is He now giving every man and woman the opportunity to accept “the adoption of sons” through faith in Christ. Just as before, though, God will eventually determine that the “fulness of time” has arrived, and Jesus will return as a thief in the night.

Questions for Reflection: Have I been in bondage to elements of the world this past week (v. 3)? What are they? Is most of my labor expended in the worldly or spiritual arena? How often do I turn again to the weak and beggarly elements (v. 9)?

Spiritual Resolve: _____

12 Brethren, I beseech you, be as I am; for I am as ye are: ye have not injured me at all. 13 Ye know how through infirmity of the flesh I preached the gospel unto you at the first. 14 And my temptation which was in my flesh ye despised not, nor rejected; but received me as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus. 15 Where is then the blessedness ye spake of? for I bear you record, that, if it had been possible, ye would have plucked out your own eyes, and have given them to me. 16 Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth? 17 They zealously affect you, but not well; yea, they would exclude you, that ye might affect them. 18 But it is good to be zealously affected always in a good thing, and not only when I am present with you. 19 My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you, 20 I desire to be present with you now, and to change my voice; for I stand in doubt of you.

v. 12: become as I am, for I also have become as you are. You did me no wrong. (RSV)

v. 13: *infirmity of the flesh*: bodily ailment

v. 14: *And my temptation which was in my flesh*: And though my condition was a trial to you

v. 15: *Where is then the blessedness ye spake of?* What has become of the satisfaction you felt? (RSV)

v. 17-20: *They zealously affect you...: See Exegesis*

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Exegesis: Up to this point, Paul has pulled out all the stops to persuade the Galatians to reverse course, and, in doing so, he has used strong, potentially alienating language. (See, e.g., 1:8-9; 3:1; 4:11) But, he is eager to maintain (or repair) what had previously been a mutually rewarding relationship, so he gratefully recalls how well they received him (“as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus”) on his previous visit, even though he suffered from an apparently repulsive physical condition, possibly an eye ailment (vv. 14-15). In today’s language, we might paraphrase verse 16 as “please don’t shoot the messenger.”

Verses 17-20 are challenging to understand in the original Greek, not to mention in translation:

Paul’s language is so compact that a free translation is required. He says in effect: “They [the Judaizers] compete for your favor, not fairly, but because they want to exclude you from the fellowship so as to have you seek their society. Now, it is good to be sought after when the motive is good – but this is true always, and not only when I am present with you, my children, for whom I suffer birth pangs once more until Christ is formed in you; and I wish I could be with you now and change my language, for I am at a loss what to make of you.

Interpreter’s Bible, vol. 10, p. 536 (1953).

Exposition: One might be excused in thinking that “be as I am: for I am as ye are” (v. 12) is not a model of clear writing. The literal translation of the Greek is “Become as I, because I also as you.” What do you think Paul was getting at? Faced with such situations, Bible translators often look to similarly worded or contextually relevant passages – particularly those by the same author – for clues as to meaning. For extra credit, take a moment to read the following passages – using only the KJV and Revised Standard Versions and without consulting a commentary – and try your hand at translating “Become as I, because I also as you” into what you think Paul meant. Galatians 2:19-20; I Thessalonians 1:5-7; Philippians 2:1-5; Galatians 2:15-16; I Corinthians 9:19-23; Philippians 3:4-11.

Translation: _____

Question for Reflection: Paul seems to have made the Galatians upset with him (v. 16). Have I ever offended someone by telling them the truth "in Christ?" If not, why not?

Spiritual Resolve: _____

21 Tell me, ye that desire to be under the law, do ye not hear the law? **22** For it is written, that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondmaid, the other by a freewoman. **23** But he who was of the bondwoman was born after the flesh; but he of the freewoman was by promise. **24** Which things are an allegory: for these are the two covenants; the one from the mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is Agar. **25** For this Agar is mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children. **26** But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all. **27** For it is written, Rejoice, thou barren that bearest not; break forth and cry, thou that travailest not: for the desolate hath many more children than she which hath an husband. **28** Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise. **29** But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now. **30** Nevertheless what saith the scripture? Cast out the bondwoman and her son: for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman. **31** So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman, but of the free.

v. 21: *bondmaid*: slave

v. 24: *gendereth to bondage*: bearing children for slavery

v. 25: *answereth*: corresponds

v. 26: *which is the mother of us all*: and she is our mother

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Exegesis: To better understand today’s lesson, it would be helpful to take a moment to read Genesis 16-17. Those chapters read somewhat like a soap opera, but the essential details are that Abraham’s wife, Sarah, had been unable to bear a son, so – as permitted by ancient custom – she offered up her maid, Agar (Hagar) to Abraham to see if Hagar could bear him a son, in which case, Sarah could claim the son as her own! (*See, e.g.,* Genesis 30:3, 9) Hagar did, indeed, bear Abraham a son: Ishmael. Sarah, of course, later bore Abraham a son as well: Isaac. To say the least, relations between Sarah and Hagar became strained, and Hagar fled to the wilderness.

Paul notes that Ishmael was not born according to any promise from God, but Isaac was. (Genesis 16:15; 17:16; 21:2-3) To Paul, Ishmael allegorically represented Mt. Sinai, the law, and the sin-shackled Jerusalem of Paul’s time. Isaac, on the other hand, was the ancestor-by-promise of the “Jerusalem above,” populated both by believers who had died in Christ and believers on earth.

Fundamentally, today’s lesson (which uses the technique of allegory – see Exposition below) represents the “suspenders” in Paul’s belt-and-suspenders attempt to convince the Galatians (and the Judaizers) through scripture of the insufficiency of the law (leading to bondage) and the superiority of faith in Christ (leading to freedom).

Exposition: Paul openly admits in verse 24 that his interpretation of the Hagar/Ishmael—Sarah/Isaac account is an allegory. The *Interpreter’s Bible Dictionary* defines “allegory” as “[t]he treatment of an ancient tradition (generally narrative in form) whereby one ignores its literal meaning and discovers new, hidden meanings in each term of the tradition.” This definition precisely fits what Paul has done with the account in Genesis 16-17. Paul used allegory in four passages in his epistles: I Corinthians 5:6-8; 9:8-10; 10:1-11; and in today’s lesson. Take a moment to read those other passages to see how Paul used allegory to make his points. Don’t be disappointed if the allegorical aspects aren’t immediately apparent. Today’s lesson is by far the most obvious use of allegory. Paul used this method of “proof” from scripture sparingly.

The Questions for Reflection today are really tough. Good luck! (Hint: see Exegesis.)

Questions for Reflection: What truth does the allegory of Hagar and Sarah portray? Which covenant am I under? Does my life reflect that in an obvious way? How so? If not, why not?

Spiritual Resolve: _____

1 Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage. **2** Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing. **3** For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law. **4** Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace. **5** For we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith. **6** For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love. **7** Ye did run well; who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth? **8** This persuasion cometh not of him that calleth you. **9** A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump. **10** I have confidence in you through the Lord, that ye will be none otherwise minded: but he that troubleth you shall bear his judgment, whosoever he be. **11** And I, brethren, if I yet preach circumcision, why do I yet suffer persecution? then is the offence of the cross ceased. **12** I would they were even cut off which trouble you.

v. 4: *Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law:* You are severed from Christ, you who would be justified by the law (RSV)

v. 11: *then is the offence of the cross ceased:* In that case the stumbling-block of the cross has been removed

v. 12: *I would then they were even cut off which trouble you:* I wish those who unsettle you would mutilate themselves! (RSV)

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Exegesis: Having established at length that Christians are free of the law, Paul addresses – again – the circumcision controversy that dogged him throughout his ministry. Although the controversy never went away entirely, this epistle to the Galatians almost certainly helped to steer most churches down the right path, as the letter undoubtedly received wide circulation. Even so, Paul’s exasperation with this recurring controversy shows through in his exclamation: “I wish those who unsettle you would mutilate themselves!” (v. 12 RSV) Despite his frustration and exasperation, Paul expresses optimism that the Galatians will do the right thing despite ongoing opposition from the anonymous person mentioned in verse 10.

Exposition: The “liberty” Paul speaks of in verse 1 is not a license to sin at will (as some “libertines” argued). Rather, it is a warning not to slip back into the comfortable slippers of the law. Living the Christian life is actually harder than merely attempting to adhere to a list of do’s and don’ts. Although we are certainly justified by faith, we also “wait for the hope of righteousness” – a righteousness that will not be fully realized until we join Christ in heaven. Meanwhile, we strive for that heavenly righteousness in our daily walk with Christ:

8b For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as refuse, in order that I may gain Christ 9 and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own, based on law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith; 10 that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, 11 that if possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead. 12 Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect; but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. 13 Brethren, I do not consider that I have made it my own; but one thing I do, forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, 14 I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. 15 Let those of us who are mature be thus minded; and if in anything you are otherwise minded, God will reveal that also to you. 16 Only let us hold true to what we have attained.

(Philippians 3:8b-16) 24 And, as the epistle for Septuagesima Sunday reminded us: “Do you not know that in a race all the runners compete, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it. 25 Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. 26 Well, I do not run aimlessly, I do not box as one beating the air; 27 but I pommel my body and subdue it, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified.” (1 Corinthians 9:24-27)

Questions for Reflection: Am I standing fast (v. 1) or sitting slow in Christ? What did Paul mean in verse 12?

Spiritual Resolve: _____

13 For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another. 14 For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. 15 But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another. 16 This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. 17 For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would. 18 But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law. 19 Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, 20 Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, 21 Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. 22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, 23 Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. 24 And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. 25 If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. 26 Let us not be desirous of vainglory, provoking one another, envying one another.

v. 19: *variance, emulations*: strife, jealousy; *strife, seditions, heresies*: selfishness, dissension, party spirit

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Exegesis: Today’s lesson is straightforward, containing practical, hortatory advice on daily Christian living. Paul’s admonition not to “bite and devour” one another in verse 15 illustrates just how bitter and contentious the Judaizing controversy had become in the Galatian churches. Verse 24 underscores the fact that the Christian “liberty” mentioned in 5:1 and 5:13 is not a license to succumb to the lusts of the flesh.

Exposition: Paul is such a spiritual giant in the life of the church that it is sometimes hard to think of him struggling to heed the warnings and the advice he gives in today’s lesson. Yet, in Romans 7, he confesses:

14 We know that the law is spiritual; but I am carnal, sold under sin. 15 I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. 16 Now if I do what I do not want, I agree that the law is good. 17 So then it is no longer I that do it, but sin which dwells within me. 18 For I know that nothing good dwells within me, that is, in my flesh. I can will what is right, but I cannot do it. 19 For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do. 20 Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I that do it, but sin which dwells within me. 21 So I find it to be a law that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand. 22 For I delight in the law of God, in my inmost self, 23 but I see in my members another law at war with the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin which dwells in my members. 24 Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? 25 **Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!** So then, I of myself serve the law of God with my mind, but with my flesh I serve the law of sin.

(Romans 7:14-25 RSV) What Christian has not experienced this same struggle – some of us more frequently than others? Even after baptism; even after the in-dwelling of the Holy Spirit; even after weekly receipt of the Holy Eucharist; even after daily prayer and struggle, we continue to “do not the good we want.” Such candor from Paul is a breath of fresh air when we examine our own lives and find ourselves falling short.

Questions for Reflection: What do I use my freedom for? When was the last time it was an occasion to the flesh (v. 13)? What are each of the sins contained in verses 19-21, 26? Do I indulge in those more often than I do the fruit of the Spirit (vv. 22, 23)? Are the sins of verse 26 a large temptation in my life? What can I do in order to disarm their power?

Spiritual Resolve: _____

Appendix

Paul – Christ’s Suffering Servant

Following Paul’s conversion, Jesus shows him how much he must suffer: 10 In Damascus there was a disciple named Ananias. The Lord called to him in a vision, “Ananias!” “Yes, Lord,” he answered. 11 The Lord told him, “Go to the house of Judas on Straight Street and ask for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for he is praying. 12 In a vision he has seen a man named Ananias come and place his hands on him to restore his sight.” 13 “Lord,” Ananias answered, “I have heard many reports about this man and all the harm he has done to your holy people in Jerusalem. 14 And he has come here with authority from the chief priests to arrest all who call on your name.” 15 But the Lord said to Ananias, “Go! This man is my chosen instrument to proclaim my name to the Gentiles and their kings and to the people of Israel. 16 I will show him how much he must suffer for my name.” (Acts. 9:10-16.)

Paul accepts his calling, and Jesus’ prediction comes true: 21b But whatever any one dares to boast of—I am speaking as a fool—I also dare to boast of that. 22 Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they descendants of Abraham? So am I. 23 Are they servants of Christ? I am a better one—I am talking like a madman—with far greater labors, far more imprisonments, with countless beatings, and often near death. 24 Five times I have received at the hands of the Jews the forty lashes less one. 25 Three times I have been beaten with rods; once I was stoned. Three times I have been shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been adrift at sea; 26 on frequent journeys, in danger from rivers, danger from robbers, danger from my own people, danger from Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brethren; 27 in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure. 28 And, apart from other things, there is the daily pressure upon me of my anxiety for all the churches. 29 Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is made to fall, and I am not indignant? (II Corinthians 11:21b-29)

Specific examples from the *Acts of the Apostles*

- First Missionary Journey
 - Paul and Barnabas are driven out of Antioch by the Jews and by “devout women of high standing and the leading men of the city.” (13:50)
 - Paul barely escapes stoning in Iconium. (14:5)
 - Paul is stoned in Lystra and left for dead. He revives and leaves for Derbe the next day. Paul returns to Lystra, Iconium and Antioch not long afterwards! (14:19-22)
- Second Missionary Journey
 - Paul casts out the spirit of divination from a slave girl in Philippi. The girl’s enraged owners precipitate a riot, and Paul and Timothy are illegally beaten, imprisoned and fastened in stocks under orders from the local magistrates. (16:19-24)
 - Under threat of injury or death from local Jews, Paul and Silas escape from Thessalonica to Beroea under cover of darkness (17:10)
 - The Thessalonian Jews pursue Paul and Silas to Beroea where, again, they are driven out of town. (17:13-14)
- Third Missionary Journey
 - Paul is restrained by his disciples from joining Gaius and Aristarchus, who had been detained by a mob during a riot in Ephesus. The riot was started by local merchants who feared declining sales of statues of the local goddess, Artemis, because of Paul’s preaching. (19:21-41)
 - Paul escapes a murder plot in Greece. (20:3)
 - Paul mentions multiple “plots of the Jews.” (20:19)
 - Paul resolves to go to Jerusalem even though the Holy Spirit has shown him that “in every city imprisonments and affliction” await him. (20:23)
 - Paul’s disciples warn him not to go to Jerusalem. (21:4)
 - The prophet Agabus warns Paul that he will be delivered to the Gentiles in Jerusalem. Paul responds that he is ready to be imprisoned and to die at Jerusalem “for the name of the Lord Jesus.” (21:10-14)

- **From Jerusalem to Rome**

- Paul, while worshipping in the temple in Jerusalem, is dragged out by a mob, which intends to kill him. A Roman tribune stops the beating. (21:30-32)
- Paul asks to defend himself, and his speech further enrages the mob, so a Roman tribune orders Paul to be taken to the barracks “to be examined by scourging.” Paul avoids the flogging by invoking his Roman citizenship. (22:1-29)
- Paul defends himself before the council (Sanhedrin) and has to be taken away by Roman soldiers “to avoid being torn to pieces.” (23:1-10)
- More than forty zealous Jews – with the apparent blessing of the chief priests and elders – take a vow neither to eat or drink until they have killed Paul. Paul’s nephew hears of the plot and, on Paul’s instructions, warns the Roman tribune. (23:12-22)
- Paul is taken from Jerusalem – again under cover of darkness – by an escort of 200 soldiers, 70 horsemen, and 200 spearmen! (23:23-32)
- Paul is taken to the governor, Felix, in Caesarea, where he is held for two years. (23:33; 26:27) Felix is succeeded by Festus. Festus goes to Jerusalem, where the chief priests “and principal men of the Jews” ask him to order that Paul be returned to Jerusalem – with the plan that Paul would be murdered *en route*. Festus declines, and he instructs the “men of authority” to come to Caesarea if they want to press their case. (25:1-5)
- Paul defends himself before Festus and Herod Agrippa, ultimately appealing to Caesar. (25:13-26:32)
- Paul is sent to Rome via a long and perilous sea voyage which includes being shipwrecked and bitten by a poisonous serpent (without ill effect). (27:1-28:16)
- In Rome, Paul is kept under house arrest for at least two years. (28:30) According to tradition, he is beheaded in the latter days of the reign of Caesar Nero.

Selected passages from Paul’s Epistles: “For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.” (Romans 8:18) “If the dead are not raised at all, why am I in peril every hour?” (I Corinthians 15:29b-30) “For we do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, of the affliction we experienced in Asia; for we were so utterly, unbearably crushed that we despaired of life itself.” (II Corinthians 1:8.) “We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed.” (II Corinthians 4:8) And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure. For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. (II Corinthians 12:7-9) “For his sake, I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as refuse, in order that I may gain Christ.” (Philippians 3:8) “For I am already on the point of being sacrificed; the time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Henceforth, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that Day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing.” (II Timothy 4:6-8)

What about Us?

- “Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ.” (II Timothy 2:3)
- “If we suffer, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us.” (II Timothy 2:12)
- “Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.” (II Timothy 3:12)
- “So we do not lose heart. Though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed every day. For this slight momentary affliction is preparing for us **an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison**, because we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen; for the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal. (II Corinthians 4:16-18)