

# INTRODUCTION AND GALATIANS

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## Introduction to Galatians

### I. Probable partial chronology of Paul's life

conversion (Acts 9:1-7)	33/34
Damascus & Arabia (Acts 9:8-25)	33/34 - 36/37
1st Jerusalem visit (Acts 9:26-29)	36/37
Tarsus (Cilicia) (Acts 9:30)	36/37 - 43/45
Peter's Gentile ministry (Acts 10 - 11)	40/41
Antioch (Syria) (Acts 11:25-26)	43/45
2d Jerusalem visit (famine) (Acts 11:30)	46/47
1st missionary journey (Acts 13-14)	47/48
Peter visits Antioch (Gal. 2:11-16)	48/49
<i>Galatians</i>	48/49
Jerusalem Council (Acts 15)	49
2d missionary journey (Acts 15:36 - 18:22)	49-51

### II. Authorship

A. The letter is written by Paul, but he speaks not only for himself but also for the brothers who are with him as he writes it (1:2). Those brothers affirm the gospel Paul proclaims.

B. In Gal. 6:11 he states, "See in what large letters I wrote to you with my own hand!" Presumably he at that point took the pen from the unidentified secretary (amanuensis) who had been writing and wrote in his own hand. Paul may have dictated the letter or he may have given the secretary some freedom in composing it and then approved and adopted that effort as his own.

### III. Destination of Letter

A. The southern part of the Roman province of Galatia included the Phrygian cities of Pisidian Antioch and Iconium and the Lycaonion cities of Lystra and Derbe, cities visited by Paul and Barnabas on their first missionary journey (Acts 13-14). (Phrygia and Lycaonia were not provinces per se but regions with a certain ethnic identity. See Keener, *Acts*, 2:2113 ff.) The northern part of this province was the home of the ethnic Galatians. Although Paul is never explicitly said to have visited the northern area, some think such a visit is implied in Acts 16:6 and 18:23.

B. There is a debate about whether the letter is addressed to the ethnic Galatians in the north or to the political Galatians in the south, but most modern scholars subscribe to the southern Galatian theory. I won't go through all the arguments, but it seems that Galatians was written before Paul's second missionary journey, which means it was written before Paul is thought to have visited the northern regions. The evidence that it was written before Paul's second missionary journey includes:

1. The personal history Paul recounts in Galatians 1-2 ends with the visit he made to Jerusalem with Barnabas in accordance with an unidentified revelation. This best corresponds to Acts 11:27-30, where the church in Antioch sent Barnabas and Paul to Jerusalem in response to Agabus's prophecy of a famine. The fact Luke doesn't mention Titus need not mean that Titus wasn't in the group. It's possible Luke mentioned only Barnabas and Paul because they were charged with the responsibility of delivering the gift. If one equates this visit by Barnabas and Paul to the later Jerusalem Council of Acts 15, then Paul has skipped over his visit to Jerusalem recorded in Acts 11:30. Since in Galatians 1-2 he's correcting errors the Judaizers had told about his history, skipping over the Jerusalem visit of Acts 11 would leave him open to the charge that he was hiding something by not telling the whole story.

2. It wasn't long after the famine visit to Jerusalem of Acts 11 that he went on his first missionary journey, during which he met the southern Galatians. If Paul had been to Jerusalem a third time or had gone on other mission trips, his failure to include that information in the autobiographical material in Galatians 1-2 likewise would leave him open to the charge that he was hiding something by not telling the whole story. (He wouldn't need to mention his first missionary journey because the Galatians were well aware of it, it being where he met them.) So it seems most likely that Galatians was written before Paul's third visit to Jerusalem, the visit in Acts 15, which was before his second missionary journey.

3. This is supported by the near certainty that Paul would have used the Jerusalem Council's decision in his attack on the Judaizers if it had already been given. In a contest for the hearts of the Galatians, why would he fail to mention that the Council in Jerusalem had rejected the Judaizers' claims if the Council had already taken place?

4. As a footnote, N.T. scholar Ben Witherington argues in *The Acts of the Apostles* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 460-467 and *The Indelible Image* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2010), 715-717 that the decree of the Jerusalem Council that Gentiles are to keep away from meat sacrificed to idols, sexual immorality, things strangled, and blood (Acts 15:29, 21:25) was a decree that they not attend temple feasts of pagan gods.

a. His argument in brief is that each of these four things was known or believed to accompany the rites and feasts in pagan temples; they were elements of idol worship. Those feasts involved meat that was sacrificed and eaten in the presence of an idol, so-called sacred prostitution, strangling of sacrifices, and drinking or tasting blood. Regarding the last two, Witherington states (p. 464):

Also relevant to our discussion is the evidence that the choking of the sacrifice, strangling it, and drinking or tasting of blood transpired in pagan temples. In regard to the former, we have evidence from the magical papyri of the attempt to choke the sacrifice and in essence transfer its life breath or spiritual vitality into the idol, and in regard to the latter R. M. Oglivie points to the practice, mentioned occasionally in the literature, of the priest tasting the blood of the sacrifice. The singular reference to blood at the end of the decree would be superfluous after the reference to abstaining from things strangled or choked if the meaning was to avoid meat with the blood still in it. It is more likely that each item in the decree should be taken separately and all be seen as referring to four different activities that were known or believed to transpire in pagan temples.

b. Because the Mosaic law, with its prohibition against the form and substance of idol worship, had been proclaimed throughout the Empire (15:21), there were Jews living all over, in virtually every town and city of the Empire. And through their presence and teaching, the Gentile Christians were aware of their aversion to idol worship. So the Gentile Christians were told not to attend pagan temple feasts so as not to hinder Jews coming to the faith, not to give Jews the opportunity to complain that the Gentile Christians were still practicing idolatry and its attendant immorality.

c. For what it's worth, David Peterson is positively inclined toward Witherington's explanation in *The Acts of the Apostles*, PNTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 433 (n. 55), 434, 446. He states (p. 433, n. 55): "Witherington proposes that the four elements mentioned by James and included in the decree in v. 29 must be viewed together and applied to a particular social context. The most natural way to read the text would be to see it as a prohibition of attending temple feasts and all that they entailed in the Greco-Roman world." In *Acts*, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 506, Darrell Bock thinks "the prohibition relates especially to attending pagan temples and what goes on with them," but he thinks Witherington may go too far in thinking that is the exclusive background.

d. The reference to idol worship may not be as cryptic as critics claim. The phrase "defilements/pollutions of idols" in 15:20 is different from "things/food sacrificed to idols" that is used in 15:29 and 21:25.

(1) "Defilements/pollutions of idols" may be a general reference to all the practices of idol worship that the Jews took to be defiling, sharing in the sacrificial meal being an obvious and understood element. If so, it defines the context for the following activities. The sense of 15:19-20 in that view is: *Therefore my judgment is that we should not trouble those of the Gentiles who turn to God, but should write to them to abstain from the defilements/pollutions of idols, including sexual immorality, what has been strangled, and blood.* Those defiling practices include, in addition to the obvious participation in the temple meal, the other elements noted, which Jews believed surrounded such meals. All these aspects of idol worship were offensive to Jews.

(2) When the requirements were written to Gentiles in 15:29 (cf. 21:25), the general phrase "defilements/pollutions of idols" was particularized into a fourth element, "things/food sacrificed to idols," to make express what Jews assumed. The context of temple worship would be recognized by the Gentiles from the particular suite of things prohibited and presumably from the accompanying message of the Jews who knew the intended context from the Council.

e. Paul prohibits participation in pagan temple feasts in 1 Corinthians 8-10, but in doing so he does not appeal to the practice's potential to turn off Jews. (He also insists in 1 Thess. 1:9 that pagans turn from idolatry in converting to Christ.) Rather, he first shows that, even if attending the temple feast was a matter of indifference to God, love for their immature *Gentile* brothers and sisters still would require them to abandon the practice (1 Cor. 8:1-13). He then makes clear that it is not a matter of indifference to God but is idol worship that is incompatible with Christian discipleship (1 Cor. 10:14-22).

f. If Witherington is correct, one wonders why the Council did not declare that fundamental incompatibility, as Paul did in 1 Cor. 10:14-22, instead of referring to the negative impact of the action on Jews. Why cite that lesser rationale for the prohibition? Perhaps the Spirit judged the Council was not the best setting to raise the complexity of Christians being absolutely obligated to avoid idol worship but not being absolutely obligated to observe other requirements in the Mosaic law like circumcision. What was needed at that time was a clear, quick decision on whether Gentiles were under the Mosaic law – the full set of commands that included circumcision, food laws, holy days, and sacrificial rites – not a debate on the theology of separating eternal moral desires that were included in the Mosaic law from those that were Israel-specific, peculiarly covenantal. Answering "No" and prohibiting idol worship as an accommodation to Jewish sensibilities brought quick peace and left room for later articulation of the absolute prohibition.

g. Paul does not cite the Council's decree in 1 Corinthians presumably because he is prohibiting the same conduct but with a stronger, absolutist rationale. Participating in temple feasts is idol worship that is incompatible with Christian discipleship; it is wrong regardless of its effect on anyone else. Perhaps matters regarding Christian moral duties and their relationship to the Mosaic law were revealed more fully or clearly in the five or six years between the decree and the writing of 1 Corinthians.

#### IV. Date and Location

A. Accepting the southern Galatia destination, A.D. 48/49 is the probable date. This makes it the oldest known writing of the Apostle. Paul has completed his first missionary journey, that included southern Galatia, returned to Antioch, and been visited there by Peter. He writes the letter from Antioch (probably) shortly before the Jerusalem Council.

B. Those who accept a northern Galatia destination must have a later date because there is no indication Paul had visited northern Galatia this early. Under that hypothesis, the letter was not written until the early or mid-50s.

## V. Occasion

A. Paul and Barnabas had made converts among the Gentiles in the southern part of the province of Galatia during their first missionary journey. After they left, some Jewish Christians entered the area and taught, with some success, that those who become Christians must submit to the Jewish law in order to be saved (see, Acts 15:1, 5).

1. The Mosaic covenant was an interim, subsidiary covenant which was given until God's earlier promise to Abraham began to be fulfilled in Christ. Part of what led the Judaizers to their view was that some within Judaism gave the Mosaic covenant priority over the Abrahamic covenant and exalted it to the point that works of the law, the commands of the Mosaic covenant, became the basis of one's relationship with God and thus the basis of one's inheritance (Lk. 18:9-14; Rom. 3:27 - 4:8, 9:30 - 10:8; Gal. 2:16, 3:2, 5, 10; Phil. 3:2-11). In other words, some had turned the Mosaic law into a legalistic path of salvation.

a. But that was never the purpose of the law. The commands of the Mosaic covenant (the "law") provided a *theoretical* way of salvation (Rom. 2:13, 10:5), if they were perfectly obeyed, but because of sin the only way of salvation in practice was by grace through faith. In other words, the commands were never supposed to bring spiritual life because, as Scripture declares, all are under the power of sin and thus fail to keep the law perfectly as would be necessary for the law to be the basis of one's right standing before God (Rom. 3:9-26, 4:15; Gal. 3:10-14, 3:21-22). The problem is not with God's law, which Paul in Rom. 7:12, 14 says is spiritual and holy, righteous, and good; rather the problem is with sin (Rom. 7:8, 11-14), this power that dominates unregenerate mankind.

b. Spiritual life, salvation, under the Mosaic covenant was by faith not by keeping the commands (the "law"). It was the gracious provision of God bestowed on those of genuine faith, which faith naturally and inevitably expressed itself in obedience, including repentance for sin and offering of the prescribed sacrifices. And in conjunction with those sacrifices, God provided forgiveness (e.g., Leviticus 4-6, 17:11, 19:22; Number 15).

c. That is why Paul in Rom. 4:5-8 can cite David, who lived under the law, in support of the idea that justification is by faith. And it is why he (and the writer of Hebrews) can cite Hab. 2:4 in support of the idea that righteousness is by faith (Rom. 1:17; Gal. 3:11; Heb. 10:38). The list of O.T. saints in Hebrews 11 confirms the crucial role of faith in pleasing God under the old covenant.

d. Of course, the sacrifices prescribed under the old covenant were only a shadow of the true atoning sacrifice on which all divine forgiveness is based (Heb. 10:1-4). God forgave sins under that covenant on credit, so to speak, because Christ, the true efficacious sacrifice to which all the shadows of the old covenant pointed, was coming into the world. And because Christ's sacrifice is the reality rather than a shadow, the forgiveness available under the new covenant surpasses that available under the old in that the blood of Christ *utterly* purifies, purifies even our *consciences* from sin that we might serve God in a greater state of intimacy (Heb. 9:8-14).

2. Making salvation something gained by works contradicted the truth it is a gift of grace that is received by faith and impermissibly changed the prior and ongoing Abrahamic covenant by canceling out its promissory character (Rom. 4:13-17; Gal. 3:15-18). It was no longer something promised but something to be achieved, which meant it would not be received.

3. This exaltation of the Mosaic covenant made them resistant to the fact it had been rendered obsolete by the coming of Christ. They clung to it as an indispensable aspect of salvation.

a. This clinging was reinforced by their sense of nationalism. Since the Mosaic law was tied to the Jewish nation and Jewish identity, salvation apart from the law diminished their significance. Salvation was not tied to Jewishness in the same way it had been.

b. This clinging was also reinforced by some political realities. From the late forties until the outbreak of the Jewish war in A.D. 66, the Zealots sought to purge Israel of all Gentile elements in the hope that God would then bring in the Messianic Age. Their activities were directed against all who had Gentile sympathies. This created pressure on Jewish Christians to want the church to be as Jewish as possible.

B. It seems that these Judaizers had painted Paul as a disciple of deviant or lesser apostle(s) and one who watered down the true gospel to make it pleasing to Gentiles (but who in other circumstances preaches circumcision). In support of this claim, they apparently misrepresented Paul's background.

C. Paul wrote the letter to reverse and to prevent the Galatians' defection to the Judaizers' false doctrine. Even his discussion of the Spirit-filled life in 5:13-6:10 is related to the Judaizers' claims.

## The Text

### I. Greeting (1:1-5)

**Paul, an apostle -- not from men or through a man but through Jesus Christ and God the Father who raised him from the dead -- <sup>2</sup>and all the brothers with me, to the churches of**



**Galatia: <sup>3</sup>Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>4</sup>who gave himself on behalf of our sins so that he might rescue us from the present evil age according to the will of our God and Father, <sup>5</sup>to whom [be] the glory forever and ever, amen.**

### *A. An apostle of God, not men*

1. Paul immediately denies the claim that his apostleship, and hence his gospel, is of human origin. He was not sent by men or made an apostle through the desires or actions of a man but through the desires and actions of Jesus Christ and God the Father.

2. We must remember this fact when we hear modern attempts to undermine the things Paul taught. Paul did not speak as a representative of chauvinistic males, contrary to the claims of some modern feminists; and he did not speak as a representative of a homophobic society, contrary to the claim of various liberal theologians. He spoke as an inspired ambassador of the living God.

3. Note that this is the only surviving letter of Paul's that does not contain a thanksgiving for the church to which he's writing. Since this is his earliest letter, it's possible that he had not yet developed the practice of thanksgiving that characterizes his later letters, but I think it's probably a deliberate omission caused by the distressing situation in these churches. Because they're deserting the one true gospel, Paul can find no cause for thanksgiving; he can only express astonishment.

### *B. His gospel in a nutshell*

1. In the face of a false gospel, Paul includes a summary of his gospel in the greeting. In fulfillment of God's plan, Christ died for our sins and was raised to life by God to rescue us from this present evil age. In Christ's death, resurrection, and exaltation, the heavenly state, the age to come, has invaded this present reality. Those who put their trust in Christ, who become Christians, are rescued out of the present age and transferred into a new age, a new order of existence. In the language of Col. 1:13, we're transferred from the domain of darkness into the kingdom of God's Son.

2. Though this new order will not be fully realized or consummated until Christ's return, it is a present reality. In Christ, the page of salvation history has turned; we've entered a new and final stage of God's redemptive work. Thomas Schreiner states in *Galatians*, ZECNT (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 77-78:

We see as well here the eschatological tension of Paul's thought, for even though the new age has come in Jesus Christ, the old age has not vanished entirely. Believers live in the interval between the already and not yet. God's promises are already

realized in Christ, but "the present evil age" still exists, so that believers must remain vigilant and keep putting their trust in the cross of Christ.

3. The implication of this shift is that the old cannot be forced onto the new. This was Jesus' point in Mk. 2:21-22 (Mat. 9:16-17; Lk. 5:36-37), where he said that no one sews a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment or pours new wine into old wineskins. The Judaizers were trying to force the old covenant onto the new, or put differently, to force the new into the form of the old.

4. As commentator Scot McKnight puts it in *Galatians*, NIVAC (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 51, "If we use the categories of 3:19-25, [the Galatians'] departure was a decision to live in B.C. days when the A.D. days had arrived. It was a decision to recede back into the days of Moses and to reject the epoch-altering revelation of Christ." Schreiner similarly remarks (p. 75), "The Galatians were turning the clock back in salvation history by submitting to circumcision and the Mosaic law. Since Jesus has been raised from the dead, believers are no longer under the Mosaic covenant."

5. Paul mentions the brothers that are with him to challenge immediately the suggestion that his gospel is idiosyncratic or somehow defective. Those brothers are "on board" with the gospel Paul proclaims.

6. The letter is directed to the *churches* in Galatia. This refers to the churches in the southern part of the Roman province of Galatia that Paul and Barnabas visited on their first missionary journey (Acts 13-14). It may have included churches in the Phrygian cities of Pisidian Antioch and Iconium and in the Lycaonian cities of Lystra and Derbe.

## II. The Crisis Identified (1:6-9)

**<sup>6</sup>I am astonished that you are so quickly turning from the one who called you into the grace [of Christ] for a different gospel, <sup>7</sup>which is not another [gospel], except there are some who are confusing you and wanting to pervert the gospel of Christ. <sup>8</sup>But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach [to you] a gospel contrary to the gospel we preached to you, let him be accursed! <sup>9</sup>As we have said before, so now I say again: If anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to what you received, let him be accursed!**

### *A. Shock at their turning to Judaizer's "gospel"*

1. Paul is amazed that the Galatians are so quickly abandoning God, the one who (through Paul) called them into the grace of Christ. The so-called "gospel" to which they were turning was not some acceptable variation of what Paul had preached to them; it was a perversion and contradiction of what he had preached.

2. Not every message of salvation that includes faith in Christ is acceptable to God. Even a message that includes faith in Christ is damning if it makes works rather than faith in Christ *the basis* of one's relationship with God, which is what the Judaizers' "gospel" did implicitly.

a. Christ's death, resurrection, and ascension brought to completion the institution of the new covenant. By insisting that Christians submit to the law of the old covenant in order to be saved, the Judaizers were forcing them to choose to relate to God on the terms of that obsolete covenant instead of on the terms of the new covenant. Whether they appreciated that fact or not, Paul makes clear it is an either/or situation, one or the other. He says in Gal. 5:2-4: <sup>2</sup>*Listen! I, Paul, say to you that if you get circumcised, Christ will not benefit you at all.* <sup>3</sup>*And I testify again to every man who gets circumcised, that he is a debtor to obey the whole law.* <sup>4</sup>*You who seek to be pronounced righteous by the law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace.*

b. In choosing to relate to God under the obsolete Mosaic covenant, one chose to relate to God under a covenant in which the animal sacrifices prescribed for forgiveness were no longer recognized. That left one under the "bare" law, under the commands of the covenant but without any applicable sacrifice for one's inevitable sins. In other words, it left one dependent on one's works, one's obedience, for salvation, which contradicts and nullifies Christ's saving work. The key was the Christ-effected change of covenants. Douglas Moo states in *Galatians*, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2013), 29-30:

Paul assumes in his argument [in the letter] that the sacrifice of Christ has rendered the OT provisions for atonement null and void (see 1:4; 3:1, 13). . . . In the time after Christ, then, one is faced with two, and only two, options: find justification in Christ by faith or find justification through the law, a justification that can now, apart from the provision of sacrifice, be secured only by doing "all" the law (see esp. Das 2001: 215-22; Laato 2004: 343-46).

c. So not only did some Jews distort the Mosaic law into a works salvation during the time of the *old* covenant, many Jews in the time of the new covenant in effect did the same thing by insisting that Christians relate to God under the old covenant without the benefit of the now-superseded animal sacrifices. That left them with only their works, their obedience, on which to stand before God.

3. The Judaizers were persuading these recent Gentile converts by "confusing" them, no doubt through their misuse of the Old Testament. That is how false teachers succeed. They prey on the ignorance and spiritual immaturity of people. Doctrine matters; we do not have the luxury of pretending it does not. The fact not every misunderstanding is heresy does not mean that no misunderstanding is heresy.

a. That is why, as Paul said in Tit. 1:9, elders must hold firmly to the faithful word, according to the teaching, that they may be able both to exhort with sound teaching and to

refute those who contradict it. You must know Christian doctrine to serve as an elder; you cannot outsource that responsibility. As Paul told the Ephesian elders in Acts 20:28-31 (ESV):

<sup>28</sup> Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood. <sup>29</sup> I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; <sup>30</sup> and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them. <sup>31</sup> Therefore be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to admonish every one with tears.

b. In this day of abundant English translations and reference tools, we all need to be diligent in studying the Bible for our spiritual nourishment but also as protection against slick talking teachers who twist the will of God. And we who teach need to recall the words of Jas. 3:1, "Not many of you should presume to be teachers, my brothers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly." If you aspire to the role, you must "Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, an unashamed workman who correctly handles the word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15). It is not careful and detailed study of Scripture that is the problem; it is sloppy and theologically uninformed study that is to be avoided. As a teacher, you are under obligation, as Paul told Titus in Tit. 2:1, to teach what accords with sound doctrine.

### *B. Seriousness of perverting his gospel*

1. Paul makes clear that, contrary to whatever may have been said by the Judaizers, his gospel was authentic. That is why he can say that if *anyone*, human or even angel, preached a contrary gospel, they are to be cursed by God.

2. To change the message preached by the Apostles is to reject the authority of Christ who is the source of that message, and to reject the authority of Christ is to incur a divine curse. Peter Oakes says of Paul's authority in *Galatians*, PCNT (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2015), 47:

For Christian theology, Paul occupies a specific kind of position with his claim to authority direct from Christ and God the Father. The early church, in accepting his claim, placed Paul as an apostle in the fullest sense, alongside Peter, Andrew, and the others who had their commission directly from Christ. Paul's claim to unmediated authority is essential to his stance in Galatians. This puts his message in a different category from that of other Christian teachers who were humanly commissioned, as the rival teachers who came to Galatia probably claimed to be.

### III. Refutation of Judaizer's Slander of His Gospel (1:10 - 2:14)

#### A. Direct denial that his gospel was a humanly devised doctrine (1:10-12)

**<sup>10</sup>For am I now satisfying men or God? Or am I seeking to please men? If I were still pleasing men, I would not be a slave of Christ. <sup>11</sup>For I declare to you, brothers, that the gospel that was preached by me is not according to man; <sup>12</sup>for I neither received it from a man nor was taught it, but through a revelation of Jesus Christ.**

1. Paul's rhetorical questions are aimed at what the Judaizers had said about him. They suggested that he distorted the truth to make it more palatable to his Gentile audience.

a. He asks rhetorically if in anathematizing his opponents, in announcing God's curse upon them, he was saying what men want to hear or what God wants to hear ("persuading" [*peithō*] in the sense of saying what satisfies them so that they approve). He then repeats the point probably echoing the words of his opponents' specific charge, "Or am I seeking to please men," meaning seeking their approval rather than God's.

b. Paul's point parallels what he later says in 1 Thess. 2:4-6: *<sup>4</sup>On the contrary, as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak, not as pleasing men but God, who tests our hearts. <sup>5</sup>For neither at any time did we come with a word of flattery, as you know, nor with a pretext for greed - God is a witness - <sup>6</sup>nor seeking praise from men, neither from you nor from others.*

2. One cannot be a slave of Christ and also a pleaser of men in the sense Paul means. Those options are mutually exclusive. There are times when Christ's truth is not what people want to hear. In those times, one must either speak the truth or speak what people want to hear. The slave of Christ speaks what Christ wants spoken, which is what people *need* to hear even if they do not *want* to hear it; that is what it means to love them. The pleaser of men speaks what *they* want spoken, which leaves them without the benefit of the truth of God.

3. In his final charge to Timothy, his fellow servant and beloved child in the faith, Paul wrote in 2 Tim. 4:1-4: *I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: <sup>2</sup>preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching. <sup>3</sup>For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, <sup>4</sup>and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths.*

4. And note that Paul says "If I were *still* pleasing men." He may mean "If I were still pleasing men as my opponents falsely claim I did when I was among you." They claimed that is why he left out the requirement of circumcision (and all that entailed in terms of submission to the

Mosaic law) while still preaching circumcision on other occasions (see Gal. 5:11). Alternatively, he may mean that during his pre-Christian life, especially in his persecution of Christians, he now realizes that he was motivated in part by a desire to curry the favor of those in the high ranks of the rabbinic establishment to advance his own ambitions. That is the kind of introspection and soul searching the Spirit of Christ brings in one's life.

5. Paul's gospel is divine revelation! His background, his culture, his training, his personality, his biases – none of that has anything to do with his gospel. God chose Paul and others, as he chose prophets in earlier days, to be his spokesmen, and the message he brought was the truth of God.

6. Paul's statement here that he did not receive his gospel from human beings but through a revelation of Jesus Christ is not inconsistent with his statement in 1 Cor. 15:3 that he had received from men what he passed on to them. In Galatians he is referring to the gospel itself, the truth of Christ's atoning sacrifice and resurrection and its meaning for Gentiles, not to a creedal formula, a specific shorthand way of expressing of those truths. The tradition, the creedal formula, he received from men was consistent with the gospel he already had received from the Lord.

a. As Joseph Fitzmyer notes in *First Corinthians*, Anchor Bible (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008) 545-546, "in Galatians he is referring not to the formulation, but to the content of the gospel as a whole. In using *tíni logō* ['what word' in 1 Cor. 15:2], he insists on the very formulation, which he has inherited from tradition . . ."

b. Douglas Moo remarks (p. 94): "The point is that there is no conflict in Paul claiming that he received information about the gospel from both sources. The indisputable reality of the gospel that Paul received through revelation (and for which no human is responsible) was also confirmed to him by those who were 'in the faith' before him. We have here no necessary 'either/or' but a 'both/and'."

## *B. Correcting the false history re his gospel (1:13 - 2:10)*

### 1. Did not consult anyone after converted (1:13-17)

**<sup>13</sup>For you heard of my former way of life in Judaism, that I was intensely persecuting the church of God and devastating it, <sup>14</sup>and I was advancing in Judaism beyond many contemporaries in my nation, being much more a zealot for the traditions of my forefathers. <sup>15</sup>But when God, who set me apart from my mother's womb and called me through his grace, was pleased <sup>16</sup>to reveal his Son in me, in order that I may proclaim him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately consult with flesh and blood <sup>17</sup>nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me, but I went away into Arabia and again returned to Damascus.**

a. Indeed, they knew of Paul's Jewish background, which included his intense persecution of Christians, and how his great zeal for Judaism distinguished him from his contemporaries. The implication of that zealous Jewish background is that he would be the last of all people to avoid binding the law of Moses if God intended it to be bound. As he says in Phil. 3:5, he was a "Hebrew of Hebrews" and a Pharisee; he would have had no qualms about binding Judaism on the world but for his calling by God.

b. And they also knew how he did an about-face when God in his grace called him to faith, to a life-transforming conviction that he describes as God revealing his Son *in him* (possibly "to him"). Moo writes (p. 104), "His choice to use ἐν here is likely intended to denote that the revelation of God's Son had a transformative power 'in' his very being: 'the revelation had enlightened his whole soul, and . . . he had Christ speaking within him' (Chrysostom, *Comm. Gal.* on 1:16)." As with Isaiah in Isa. 49:1, God set Paul apart for his apostolic ministry before he was born, and then he called him to begin that work when Jesus appeared to him on the Damascus road.

c. Contrary to what the Judaizers apparently said, after Paul's Damascus experience, he did not go to humans for training in the gospel. He did not consult with or become a disciple of any person, including anyone in Jerusalem. Rather, he went into Arabia and then returned to Damascus. "Arabia" refers to Nabataea, the area next to Damascus (in Syria) that was ruled by King Aretas IV. At the time to which Paul refers, Aretas also may have controlled Damascus itself, but even if he didn't, he exercised strong political influence in the city (see Keener, *Bible Background Commentary*). Recall that in 2 Cor. 11:32 Paul writes, "In Damascus the governor under King Aretas had the city of the Damascenes guarded in order to arrest me."

## 2. First trip to Jerusalem (1:18-20)

**<sup>18</sup>Then, after three years, I went up to Jerusalem to get acquainted with Cephas and stayed with him fifteen days, <sup>19</sup>but I did not see another of the apostles except James the Lord's brother. <sup>20</sup>Now, what I am writing to you -- Listen! In the presence of God [I say] that I am not lying.**

a. It wasn't until three years after his conversion – the phrase could mean anywhere from two to three years (Moo, 108) – that he returned to Jerusalem, a fact that confirms he already had his gospel. He was proclaiming that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God, in Damascus before that time, as Luke records in Acts 9:19-27. And then he only stayed fifteen days. That is hardly consistent with his having become some person's disciple during that visit.

b. In addition, he did not see any apostles during that visit other than Cephas and James, both of whom were respected by the Judaizers. So if the Judaizers' claim is that he learned his gospel from some lesser or deviant apostle, it's a blatant lie. That might explain why he breaks his sentence with the impassioned "Listen! In the presence of God, I am not lying." If the claim is that he was subordinate to or dependent upon the Jerusalem leaders (whose gospel he had

warped), that is hardly consistent with the brevity of his visit and the fact he saw only two of the leaders. He is acting under the authority of the Lord not authority mediated through those in Jerusalem.

c. As he typically does, Paul refers to Peter as Cephas. Here is a quick explanation of Peter's various names.

(1) Peter's given name at birth was the Aramaic name *Shim'on*, which is transliterated into Greek both as *Simōn* (Σίμων) and *Simeōn* (Συμεών), which are transliterated into English as Simon and Simeon, respectively. *Simeōn* seems to be the preferred form of transliteration in certain Jewish circles.

(2) He was given the nickname "Rock" by the Lord Jesus to symbolize his new role as an apostle (Jn. 1:42; see also Mat. 16:18). That nickname probably was given in Aramaic. The Aramaic word for rock is *kêpā'*, which is transliterated into Greek as *Kēphas* (Κηφᾶς), which in turn is transliterated into English as Cephas.

(3) The Greek word for rock is *petra*. Since *petra* is grammatically feminine in form, when applied to a man it becomes *petros*, which is transliterated into English as Peter. So Peter is the English *transliteration* of the Greek *translation* (*Petros*) of the Aramaic nickname (*kêpā'*) and Cephas is the English *transliteration* of the Greek *transliteration* (*Kēphas*) of the Aramaic nickname.

(4) Peter is most often referred to in the N.T. simply as Peter, but sometimes in the Gospels and in 2 Pet. 1:1 his given name and his nickname are combined, yielding Simon (or Simeon – 2 Pet. 1:1) Peter. Paul typically refers to Peter as Cephas, but in Gal. 2:7-8 he uses Peter.

d. Though it is possible to understand v. 19 to exclude James the Lord's brother from the apostolic group (as meaning, "I saw none of the other apostles, but I did see another important person, that is, James, the brother of the Lord" [Moo, 110]), but Paul probably includes James among the apostles. If so, he presumably, like Paul, received some kind of commission after or in conjunction the risen Lord appearing to him (1 Cor. 15:7). Paul's apostleship shows that title could apply beyond the Twelve.

e. Luke's statement in Acts 9:26-30 that Paul was introduced by Barnabas to "the apostles" and that he preached boldly in Jerusalem is not inconsistent with Paul's description of the visit. Thomas Schreiner states (p. 111): "Probably Luke uses the plural somewhat loosely, so that strictly speaking Paul saw only two apostles. Luke's wording does not contradict such a restriction. Or, alternatively, perhaps Paul saw all the apostles, but had significant conversations only with Peter and James." Under that alternative, Paul in Gal. 1:19 "saw" only Peter and James in a different sense than the seeing of other apostles implied by Luke.



### 3. Did not preach in Judean churches (1:21-24)

**<sup>21</sup>Then I went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia, <sup>22</sup>but I was unknown by face to the churches of Judea that are in Christ. <sup>23</sup>They were only hearing, "The one who formerly was persecuting us is now preaching the faith which he was formerly devastating," <sup>24</sup>and they were glorifying God because of me.**

a. Paul declares that when he went to Syria and Cilicia (Acts 9:30), which was after his brief Jerusalem visit, he had not personally visited the congregations in Judea. He obviously is excluding his visit to the Jerusalem church, presumably because Jerusalem often was distinguished from Judea, though geographically and politically a part of it. (See, Cole, p. 97, fn.2.) Perhaps the Judaizers claimed that Paul's doctrine had gotten him in trouble in churches in Judea, that it wouldn't fly with people well-grounded in the truth. Or maybe Paul is emphasizing his lack of contact with churches in Judea to cast doubt on the claim that he was an underling of the Jerusalem leaders.

b. Paul notes that, though the Judean churches did not know him personally, they glorified God because of his conversion. That is a stark contrast to how the Judaizers were reacting to him!

c. There is a question as to how what Paul says here fits with what he told King Agrippa in Acts 26:20. He said in Acts 26:20 that he had "declared both to them of Damascus first and in Jerusalem, and throughout all the country of Judea, and also to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, doing works worthy of repentance." In comparing these texts, two things must be kept in mind.

(1) The statement in Acts 26:20 was made about 10 years after Galatians was written, so what wasn't true when Paul wrote Galatians could have been true when he spoke with Agrippa.

(2) Declaring the message of repentance throughout the land of Judea is not the same as meeting personally with the churches in the region. Paul may have evangelized at times in Judea that are not recorded in Acts, or he may have had in mind how he spread his message throughout the region by preaching to pilgrims who were in Jerusalem when he was arrested (speech in Acts 22) or by teaching Judean Christians who may have visited during his years in prison in Caesarea (Acts 24:23 notes he was given some freedom and friends were allowed to care for his needs).

### 4. Second trip to Jerusalem (2:1-10)

**Then, after fourteen years, I again went up to Jerusalem with Barnabas, having also taken Titus along. <sup>2</sup>Now I went up in accordance with a revelation, and I set before them the gospel**

**that I preach among the Gentiles, but privately to those reputed to be important, lest somehow I should run or did run in vain.<sup>3</sup>(Yet not even Titus, who was with me, was compelled to be circumcised, though being a Greek.<sup>4</sup>Now [this arose] on account of the infiltrating false brothers, who slipped in to spy on our freedom which we have in Christ Jesus in order that they might enslave us,<sup>5</sup>to whom we did not yield in submission for a moment, so that the truth of the gospel might remain with you.)<sup>6</sup>But as for those reputed to be important -- whatever they once were does not matter to me; God does not show partiality -- those reputed to be important added nothing to me.<sup>7</sup>On the contrary, seeing that I had been entrusted with the gospel of the uncircumcision, as Peter that of the circumcision<sup>8</sup>(for he who worked in Peter for an apostleship of the circumcision also worked in me for the Gentiles),<sup>9</sup>and knowing the grace that had been given to me, James and Cephas and John, those reputed to be pillars, gave to me and to Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, so that we should be for the Gentiles and they for the circumcision.<sup>10</sup>[They asked] only that we should remember the poor, which very thing I was also eager to do.**

a. He did not go to Jerusalem again until fourteen years after his conversion (46/47). That is very odd behavior if he was subordinate to the Jerusalem leaders, if he had received the gospel from them and been sent out by them. And even that visit was in accordance with a revelation from God (about the coming famine – Acts 11:30).

b. At that time he privately presented his gospel to those reputed to be important, to those promoted by the Judaizers as bastions of the true gospel. As 2:9 makes clear, this included James, Peter, and John.

(1) Paul presented his gospel to them "lest somehow I should run or did run in vain." This does not mean that he doubted the authenticity of his gospel and was having it checked for correctness; that would be contrary to everything he has said. Rather, his labor was to extend the one church, a church of both Jews and Gentiles. If the Jerusalem church (wrongly) rejected fellowship with the Gentiles, Christ would be divided and the goal of his efforts frustrated.

(2) The fact the "pillars" added nothing to Paul's message (v. 6) and gave Paul and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship (v. 9) proves that the Judaizers were lying or misinformed about the correctness of Paul's gospel. The very apostles they regarded as bastions of the true gospel had approved the gospel Paul preaches! How then could his gospel be deviant?

(3) Note that the pillars ratified Paul's gospel because they saw he had been entrusted with that gospel (2:7), meaning entrusted by God. Schreiner rightly notes (p. 128), "[T]he Jerusalem leaders did not *establish* Paul's authority; they only *recognized* that God had given him such authority." Presumably they recognized this from information they had received about Paul's work among the Gentiles in Syria and Cilicia (1:21-24) and in Antioch (Acts 11:25-26).

(4) In saying the leaders recognized that he had been entrusted by God with "the gospel of the uncircumcision," the gospel of the Gentiles, as Peter had been entrusted with "that of the circumcision," meaning the gospel of the Jews, he is not speaking of two different

gospels. He is referring to two different cultures in which the one gospel is proclaimed. They had two different primary (not exclusive) fields of service.

(5) In saying (2:6) of those who were reputed to be important, "whatever they once were does not matter to me; God does not show partiality," Paul is cautioning them about venerating the leaders simply because they had been disciples of Jesus during his earthly ministry (Schreiner, 126). The issue is always divine truth not the status or background of any individuals. Paul's gospel is from God, so if the pillars should reject it (which they do not) that would be too bad for them.

c. The fact Titus was not compelled to be circumcised during that visit further proves the correctness of Paul's gospel.

(1) The fact those "infiltrating false brothers" sought to compel Titus, a Gentile Christian, to be circumcised shows that they were Judaizers. This was something they deemed essential for salvation (see, Acts 15:1). This distinguishes the case from that of Timothy in Acts 16:1-3. Paul circumcised Timothy as a matter of evangelistic strategy, not as a requirement of salvation.

(2) In a context where circumcision, representing submission to the Mosaic law, was demanded as a condition for salvation, Paul refused to comply because doing so would lend credence to that damning lie. The fact that stance was accepted in that Titus was not compelled by others to be circumcised shows an agreement with Paul's gospel.

(3) Note Paul's strong language toward the Judaizers: they are infiltrating false brothers who slipped in among them with ulterior motives (to spy on their freedom) and for the ultimate purpose of enslaving them (by binding the law on them). This will continue throughout much of the letter.

(4) The importance of the issue in Paul's mind is again suggested by 2:5. To have accepted the necessity of submission to the law would have been to pervert the truth of the gospel. The Judaizers' doctrine is incompatible with the gospel because its effect, in the new-covenant age, is to throw one on one's own obedience for a relationship with God.

d. The leaders asked only that Paul and Barnabas should remember the poor, meaning in the first instance the poor among the believers. Paul declares that he was already eager to do that very thing; indeed, he was in Jerusalem delivering famine relief to the saints (Acts 11:27-30). So they really were just asking him to continue what he had already been doing not placing some new requirement on him.

### *C. His gospel applied to rebuke a pillar (2:11-14)*

**<sup>11</sup>But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face because he was under condemnation. <sup>12</sup>For before certain men came from James, he ate with the Gentiles; but when they came, he drew back and separated himself because he feared those of [the] circumcision [group]. <sup>13</sup>And the rest of the Jews [also] joined with him in playing the hypocrite, so that even Barnabas was led away by their hypocrisy. <sup>14</sup>But when I saw that they were not acting in line with the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas in front of them all, "If you, though being a Jew, live like a Gentile and not like a Jew, how can you compel the Gentiles to live like Jews?"**

1. Regarding Paul's confrontation of Peter at Antioch recounted in Gal. 2:11-14, we cannot be certain how long before Paul wrote Galatians that the incident occurred. However, some clues point to it probably occurring shortly after Paul and Barnabas returned to Antioch after completing their first missionary journey.

a. The fact Paul reports the confrontation right after reporting his second visit to Jerusalem, the famine-relief visit of 46-47 (Acts 11:27-30), and does so by saying "But when," most naturally reads like the confrontation followed the Jerusalem visit. The sense is "At Jerusalem, Cephas and I agreed on the gospel, *but* when he came to Antioch . . ." (Moo, 144-145). Indeed, the strength of the language Paul uses to criticize Peter is more understandable if Peter's had earlier acknowledged the propriety of Paul's gospel, as Paul says he did in Gal. 2:1-10 (Moo, 141).

b. The first missionary journey was soon after the famine-relief visit to Jerusalem, and if this confrontation with Peter had occurred before that journey one would expect Paul to have taught the Galatians about this theological danger. The fact he did not do so, as suggested by his silence about having previously instructed them on the matter, supports the view that the confrontation with Peter was after that missionary journey.

2. The statement in v. 14 "But *when I saw* that they were not acting in line with the truth of the gospel" suggests that the deterioration was in an advanced state when Paul first became aware of it. Perhaps, as many suppose, Paul was away when the defection took hold and returned to a church that had lapsed into Jew-Gentile segregation. Otherwise, one would have expected Paul to address the issue as soon as the intimidation had begun.

3. Some notable scholars are convinced that what happened with Paul and Peter in Antioch is that certain men sent by James informed Peter that his table fellowship with Gentiles in Antioch was endangering the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem and elsewhere in Judea by agitating the *non-Christian Jews* and thus increasing the risk of persecution. In other words, they understand "certain men from James" to mean Jewish Christians who came with a message from James, and they understand "the circumcision" to refer to non-Christian Jews. Peter's fear of what those non-Christian Jews may do to Jewish Christians prompted him to separate from the Gentile Christians.

4. I and others think it more likely that the men who came "from James" were Judaizers, representatives of "the circumcision [group]." They came "from James" only in a loose sense, in the sense that (a) the Jerusalem congregation was identified with James (perhaps because he was the leader who spent the most time there) or (b) the more conservative or law-conscious

element of the Jerusalem congregation was identified with James (perhaps because of his strong personal choice to observe of the law). In other words, they were not actually sent by James; they simply came from a group that was identified in some way with James.

a. That fits with Acts 15:1, where Luke writes, "Some men came down from Judea to Antioch and were teaching the brothers: 'Unless you are circumcised according to the custom taught by Moses, you cannot be saved.'" Acts 15:24 makes clear that, though these men went out from the Jerusalem congregation, they did not have any authorization or commission to spread their views among the Gentiles.

b. Part of what makes me think it was Judaizers who came is Paul's assertion in v. 14 that Peter's action amounted to *compelling* the Gentiles to live like Jews.

(1) His withdrawal from table fellowship with the Gentile Christians would not amount to compelling the Gentiles to live like Jews if he did so in a context where it was clear he simply was acting from personal conscience. It is withdrawing from fellowship in the context of people insisting that living under the Mosaic law, with its dietary restrictions and purity regulations, was essential for salvation that his doing so was an act of compulsion on the Gentiles. By his action he was assenting to the Judaizers' claim, which meant the Gentile Christians had to convert to Judaism, i.e., "live like Jews."

(2) Recall that Paul had no problem circumcising Timothy as a matter of evangelistic strategy (Acts 16:1-3). But he absolutely refused to circumcise Titus where Judaizers were insisting that it was necessary for salvation (Gal. 2:3-5). In that context, he would be denying the truth of the gospel because he would be consenting implicitly to the false assertion that Christians were obligated to submit to the Mosaic law. I think Peter's conduct in Antioch was like that.

c. If the men who came from James were in fact Judaizers, then Peter's fear may have been more personal. It is possible that they personally intimidated him into pulling back from the Gentiles. That is hard to believe, however, given Peter's courage before the Jewish authorities recorded in Acts, given that seven or eight years earlier Peter, at God's direction, had preached the gospel to the Gentile Cornelius and defended that action before Jewish Christians in Jerusalem, and given that two or three years earlier he had heard Paul's gospel and extended to him the right hand of fellowship (Gal. 2:6-9).

d. Then again, the pressure may have been heightened by the growing influence of the Zealot movement within Judaism. And Peter may have given into that fear because he could justify it with the claim he was doing so for the sake of the non-Judaizer Jewish Christians in Judea. In other words, he may have hidden behind the rationalization that the Judaizers could cause trouble for the other Jewish Christians in Judea by enlisting *non-Christian Jews* to help bring them in line with their Judaizing view. We cannot be certain what fueled Peter's action.

5. What is certain, however, is that Peter's conduct was culpable, blameworthy; it was *hypocritical*. He did not act from his convictions about what was right; rather, he deviated from what he knew at some level was right out of fear of the circumcision group. The Spirit through Paul says that expressly in vv. 12-13. Whatever the precise pressure point and however Peter may have rationalized his conduct, the fact is that he compromised on the truth.

6. What also is certain is that Paul used the truth of the gospel he preached, the truth that Christ provided salvation for mankind apart from the Mosaic law, to rebuke Peter for acting as though salvation required submission to the Mosaic law. The fact his gospel was used to rebuke a "pillar" demonstrates the validity of that gospel, contrary to how the Judaizers portrayed it. That is why he is bringing up the incident. It is not to show he got the better of Peter on that occasion; it is to convince the Galatians that his gospel is indeed the truth and that they are in grave danger in turning from it. If Paul's gospel was some watered-down version of the truth, he wouldn't have dared to rebuke Peter publicly for violating it. Prov. 28:1 says "the righteous are as bold as a lion." Paul's boldness testified to the fact he was right.

7. Peter's hypocrisy adversely influenced some of the other Jews, including Barnabas. We need to understand that what we do influences others, especially if we are in a position of leadership. That makes it all the more important that we have courage to hold to our convictions in the face of our fears. The fact a spiritual giant like Peter can be pressured into hypocrisy is sobering.

8. If this is the incident reported in Acts 15:1-2, which seems likely, Paul presumably convinced Barnabas of his error in following Peter's example, and then he and Paul argued sharply with the Judaizers, perhaps after Peter's departure. If Barnabas recovered quickly from his theological "slip," Luke may have seen no need to mention it when reporting in Acts 15:3 that Barnabas was sent with Paul to Jerusalem to see the apostles and elders about the question. Some have speculated that Barnabas' defection in this regard may have contributed to Paul and Barnabas going their separate ways over whether to take John Mark on their second missionary journey.

9. Paul opposed Peter to his face because Peter was "under condemnation."

a. Some take this to mean that Peter was self-condemned, meaning condemned by his own heart, which is how the NRSV translates it. But Richard Longenecker claims forcefully in *Galatians*, WBC (Dallas: Word Books, 1990), 72, in agreement with TDNT (8:568 n. 51), that the verb here "means 'be condemned before God' and not just 'be blamed' (KJV), 'in the wrong' (JB, NEB), or even 'self-condemned by the inconsistency of his own actions' (as Lightfoot, *Galatians*, 111; Burton, *Galatians*, 10-3, Bruce, *Galatians*, 129; et al.)." He notes that "Josephus regularly used *kataginōskō* to mean 'condemned to death' before God or a tribunal" [cites omitted]. And this is how the Ebionites, the theological heirs of the Judaizers, later understood the word when they used Gal. 2:11 in attacking Paul.

b. Ben Witherington states in *Grace in Galatia* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 152:

Peter's actions are on trial before the assembly of the faithful and in the presence of God, and Paul is saying he is already condemned before the divine tribunal. . . . Notice that the verb is in the perfect, indicating an already existing state which Peter was in before Paul ever confronted him. In short, Paul's action is taken because he believes that God condemns what Peter has done.

c. Douglas Moo states (p. 145):

Peter is "in the state of having been condemned" (the verb καταγινώσκω means "condemn" in five of its other six LXX and NT occurrences [Deut. 25:1; Sir. 14:2; 19:5; Gal. 2:11; 1 John 3:20, 21; cf. also Prov. 28:11]). But condemned by whom? Some think it refers to Peter's condemning of himself (by his actions; cf. Lightfoot 1881: 111); others to other people's condemnation of Peter (Chrysostom, *Comm. Gal.* on 2:11-12 [NPNF 13:19]). But the only way this phrase makes sense in its context (e.g., as the basis for Paul's strong resistance to Peter) is if we assume that Paul means "condemned by God" (R. Longenecker 1990:72).

d. I think Paul is saying that even Peter was in jeopardy of denying the gospel! Paul was concerned for Peter and also for the church in Antioch. That's why he rebuked him publicly.

(1) The sin was public and dangerous and Peter's leadership role made that public sin influential; others followed his example. The truth of the gospel was at stake. We must be willing to correct one another in love and for the sake of the truth. I imagine Paul would sooner have taken another beating than rebuke Peter publicly, but the welfare of others is more important than our own comfort.

(2) John condemned the sin of Diotrephes in a public letter in 2 Jn. 9-10, and Paul instructed Timothy in 1 Tim. 5:20 to rebuke publicly elders who sin so that the rest may also stand in fear. There are situations in which sin needs to be called out publicly.

e. The Apostles certainly were Spirit-filled men, but they were not sinless, just as we have God's Spirit but are not sinless. There is no contradiction between the Apostles being capable of sin and their being incapable of error when used by the Spirit to write Scripture. For example, Moses sinned at Meribah (Num. 20), and yet Jesus made clear that the Scripture written by the Spirit through Moses was inerrant.

10. Paul doesn't say how Peter responded to his rebuke. Perhaps the situation was still fluid when Paul wrote. As F. F. Bruce states in *Paul Apostle of the Heart Set Free* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), 178, "Such information as we can glean about Peter after this does not suggest that he persisted for long in this charade of 'separate tables'." Peter clearly sided with Paul at

the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15, and years later he referred to Paul affectionately in 2 Pet. 3:15 as "our dear brother."

#### IV. Flaw in Judaizers' Gospel: Law Cannot Justify (2:15-21)

##### *A. That's why Jews have come to Christ for justification (2:15-16)*

**<sup>15</sup>We ourselves are Jews by nature and not Gentile sinners, <sup>16</sup>[but] knowing that a man is not pronounced righteous by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, we also have believed in Christ Jesus so that we may be pronounced righteous by faith in Christ and not by works of the law, for no flesh will be pronounced righteous by works of the law.**

1. There are no quotation marks in the Greek language, so it is not clear where the words spoken to Peter end and the words to the Galatians begin. With many commentators, I think Paul essentially quotes in 2:14 his bottom line to Peter, and then in 2:15-21 he summarizes for the Galatians the longer theological case he made to Peter (see, e.g., McKnight, 115). But even if one extends the quote down to v. 21, Paul is still conveying it as a message to the Galatians. He is addressing them in relating to them what he said to Peter.

2. Paul and other "natural" Jews, Jews by birth (like Peter), who became Christians did so in the knowledge that a man is not justified, is not pronounced righteous, by works of the law, by obeying the commandments of the Mosaic law, but through faith in Jesus Christ. Indeed, they put their faith in Christ for that very reason, to be justified by faith, because no person, Jew or Gentile, will be pronounced righteous by obeying the commandments of the Mosaic law. The unstated implication is that they therefore should not bind on Gentiles the "bare law" of the obsolete Mosaic covenant, the covenant of which the sacrificial provisions have been superseded and thus are no longer recognized.

3. Paul does not here give the reason for his assertion that no person will be pronounced righteous by works of the law, by obeying the commandments of the Mosaic law, but that reason becomes clear later in Galatians and in other letters. The commandments of the Mosaic law, and any commandments for that matter, will not justify anyone because no one fully obeys them, as would be necessary to stand justified before an absolutely righteous God. Because fallen humans sin inevitably, commandments result in condemnation rather than justification.

##### *B. Response to charge this makes Christ a servant of sin (2:17-20)*

**<sup>17</sup>But if, while seeking to be pronounced righteous in Christ, we ourselves were also found to be sinners, then is Christ a servant of sin? Absolutely not! <sup>18</sup>For if I again build the things I**



**destroyed, I show myself [to be] a lawbreaker. <sup>19</sup>For through the law I died to the law, so that I might live to God. <sup>20</sup>I have been crucified with Christ, and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me; and that [life] which I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me.**

1. Paul denies that Christians disobeying the Mosaic law makes Christ a servant of sin. The fact those seeking to be made righteous in Christ (i.e., Christians) are accused by the circumcision group ("found" in the sense of Lk. 23:2 and Acts 24:5) of being sinners for violating food and purity regulations in the Mosaic law by eating as and with Gentiles (for "living like a Gentile" as Peter did [2:14]) does not mean Christ promotes sin. The answer to that claim is "Absolutely not!"

2. On the contrary, Paul says the sinning would come if he rebuilt what he destroyed, meaning if, like Peter, he reverted to obeying the food and purity laws of the obsolete Mosaic covenant by segregating from Gentile Christians after having recognized the inapplicability of those laws by eating as and with the Gentiles. The Mosaic law was a religious and social barrier between Jews and Gentiles, as Paul specifies in Eph. 2:14-18. Christ tore down that barrier objectively by rendering the Mosaic covenant and its accompanying law obsolete through his death and resurrection, as stated in Eph. 2:14-15. But Paul subjectively tore down that barrier in his own life when he surrendered his life to the Son of God who loved him and gave himself for him. Rebuilding that barrier truly would be wrong.

3. In becoming a Christian, Paul died with Christ and was born anew with Christ living in him (through the Spirit). In that act of conversion, he died to the Mosaic law in that he recognized and accepted the inapplicability of that law which Christ had brought about and thus was free to live to God in the sense of serve him as he desires to be served in the new covenant. That freeing rejection of the Mosaic law's ongoing authority was "through the law," by means of the law, in the sense Christ's covenant-changing, law-ending, vicarious death for sinners was, for Jews, a death for the sins they had committed under the law. So Christ's death was "through the law," in satisfaction of the penalty for disobeying the law, and Paul died to the law when he shared by faith in the Lord's "through-the-law death." That was his epiphany about Christ's epoch-altering work.

4. Verse 20 is Paul's rightly famous description of a consecrated life. A new reality has dawned. He is no longer the man he was but someone whose entire life is animated by his faith in who Jesus is and what he has done, the Son of God who loved him (and you and me) and gave himself for him (and for you and me). His life is all about gratitude and devotion to the Lord.

### *C. Contrary view renders Christ's death meaningless (2:21)*

**<sup>21</sup>I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness [is] through the law, then Christ died for nothing.**

1. Paul indicates in Gal. 2:21 that the effect of the contrary view, insisting on the applicability of the Mosaic law in the time of the new covenant, is to render Christ's death meaningless. It does so because it leaves one relating to God under the terms of the Mosaic covenant, which is now obsolete and thus without any accepted sacrifice for sins. Therefore, it leaves one under "bare law," with only one's obedience as a basis for one's standing before God, and thus implicitly denies the need of God's grace. And if there is no need for God's grace, Christ died for nothing because the grace of which his death is the basis was unnecessary.

2. The truth is that justification and the salvation that is part of it is by grace which is received through faith (Gal. 3:11-12; Rom. 4:1-8, 11:5-6). That is contrary to and inconsistent with any claim that it is earned by one's works; it is an either/or proposition. That is a fundamental truth.

## V. Foolishness of Their Defection to Judaizers' Gospel (3:1 - 4:11)

### *A. Received Spirit by accepting his gospel (3:1-5)*

**O foolish Galatians! Who bewitched you, [you] before whose eyes Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed [as] having been crucified? <sup>2</sup>I want to learn only this from you: Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law or by hearing with faith? <sup>3</sup>Are you so foolish that having begun with the Spirit you are now ending with the flesh? <sup>4</sup>Did you suffer so many things in vain <sup>5</sup>(if indeed [it was] really in vain)? Does he, then, who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you [do so] on the basis of works of law or on the basis of hearing with faith?**

1. Paul calls them foolish for having been lured from his gospel by the Judaizers. He is so astounded that they fell for it, he asks who "bewitched" them, meaning who confused their minds, probably implying some kind of evil spiritual influence. It's like someone hypnotized them into believing something that was patently false.

2. He describes them as those before whose eyes Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as having been crucified. Moo remarks (p. 182), "The reference is undoubtedly to Paul's preaching about Christ among the Galatians: by means of vivid word pictures, Paul presented to them the central salvific reality of the cross of Christ (esp. see 1 Cor. 2:1-5)." The focus is not so much on the physical details of the crucifixion as on vividly communicating the significance of Christ's cross. It is the atoning sacrifice, the basis of all divine reconciliation; it is the pivot-point of all history.

3. They knew they had received the Spirit, complete with miracles, when they trusted in the gospel Paul preached, which was before they began listening to the Judaizers. Since believing rather than obeying the law was the pathway to receiving the Spirit, whose presence is an essential hallmark of one's belonging to the people of God (Rom. 8:9), it should be obvious to them that coming under the Mosaic law was unnecessary. It would be terribly foolish after having

received the Spirit by trusting Paul's gospel to switch to the works-based program of the Judaizers, to end with "the flesh," meaning to end up relying on human effort.

4. Paul asks rhetorically if they suffered so many things in vain. Given the hostility he and Barnabas faced in bringing the gospel to the Galatians (Acts 13:50, 14:5, 14:19), it is no surprise that the Galatians themselves experienced persecution. Paul alludes to that fact in Gal. 4:29. His question is whether the suffering they had endured, which may have been limited to discrimination and verbal abuse, was for nothing. By turning to the Judaizers' false gospel they were surrendering the blessings of the gospel they initially received, the blessings for which they had suffered, which makes their having suffered pointless.

5. But Paul refuses to give up on them. He hopes they will heed what he is telling them in the letter and reject the lie of the Judaizers. That is reflected in his comment, "if indeed it was really in vain."

6. Paul summarizes his point in v. 5b. They knew from their experience that God had given them the Spirit in conjunction with their acceptance of Paul's gospel, on the basis of their believing the message they heard from him, which was before any claims that submission to the Mosaic law was necessary. That ought to make it obvious that submission to that law was not necessary for a relationship with God, as the Spirit's presence was a hallmark of that relationship.

### *B. Abraham's example of faith (3:6-9)*

**"So also Abraham "believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness." <sup>7</sup>You know, then, that those of faith are the sons of Abraham. <sup>8</sup>And the Scripture foreseeing that God would pronounce the Gentiles righteous by faith, declared the gospel beforehand to Abraham, [saying] that "All the nations will be blessed in you." <sup>9</sup>So then, those of faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith.**

1. First-century Judaism generally emphasized Abraham's obedience rather than his faith, often referring to his test with Isaac in Genesis 22. The Judaizers probably pointed to Abraham "as the father of the Jewish people and the one to whom the saving promises were made" (Schreiner, 191) and argued that the Galatians could only find righteousness by connecting with Abraham through submission to the Mosaic law, by becoming an obedient one as he was obedient one.

2. Verse 6 is a transitional verse which could end the preceding paragraph rather than begin a new one, but either way the point is that Abraham is an example of what Paul is claiming at the end of v. 5: God's blessings are received by faith (cf. Romans 4). Paul does not discount Abraham's obedience, but works do not enter the picture in terms of the *basis of the blessings*. Works naturally and inevitably flow from faith, from that disposition of trusting allegiance (see, Jas. 2:22-23), but they are not the basis on which righteousness is credited.

3. Paul quotes Gen. 15:6 which declares that the blessing of a right standing with God was bestowed on Abraham through faith, through his believing God. And given the fact that faith was the basis on which righteousness was credited to Abraham, the Galatians know that those who have faith like Abraham are sons of Abraham. They are identified with him in their sharing of that premier characteristic; they are his spiritual descendants in their emulation of his faith.

4. Indeed, God revealed through Scripture that the Gentiles likewise would one day be pronounced righteous by faith when he declared the gospel, the good news, to Abraham saying that "All nations will be blessed in you." Abraham's seed, his physical descendant Jesus of Nazareth, would be the doorway of this future divine blessing of Gentiles by faith.

5. The bottom line in v. 9 is that, contrary to what the Judaizers were claiming, the criterion of blessing is not doing the works of the Mosaic law. It is having faith like Abraham, the man of faith.

### *C. Reliance on law yields a curse (3:10-14)*

**<sup>10</sup>For as many as are [relying on] works of the law are under a curse, for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all the things written in the book of the law, to do them." <sup>11</sup>Now it is clear that no one is pronounced righteous before God by the law, because "The righteous by faith shall live." <sup>12</sup>But the law is not based on faith; on the contrary, "The man who does these things will live by them." <sup>13</sup>Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse on our behalf -- for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree" -- <sup>14</sup>in order that the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, in order that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.**

1. Paul says in v. 9 that it is those of faith who are blessed. In v. 10 he explains this is the case because those who are "of" the law, meaning those who depend or rely on the works of the law for their standing with God, are under a curse because Scripture (Deut. 27:26) says "Cursed is *everyone* who does not *continue* in *all the things* written in the book of the law, *to do them*." The law in the specific sense of the commands themselves puts everyone under a curse because no one among fallen humanity continues to do all the commandments all the time as would be required to avoid condemnation according to law.

2. It is clear that no one is pronounced righteous by obeying the law because Scripture (Hab. 2:4) testifies that "The righteous by faith shall live." But the commandments, the "do's and don'ts," are not "of faith" in the sense their only potential means of providing life is by continuing to obey all of them. Commands demand performance: "The man who does these things will live by them" (Lev. 18:5). Schreiner remarks (p. 211-212), "The law does not bring life, for human beings are unable to fulfill the required condition. Human sinfulness intervenes. 'All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God' (Rom 3:23). Law obedience, then, is contrary to faith since

it is predicated on obeying instead of believing to obtain salvation, on performing what is required instead of trusting God's work in Christ."

3. The statement in v. 12 that "the law is not of faith" sometimes gets misunderstood to mean there is a fundamental incompatibility between Christian faith and commands of God, which then leads to all kinds of negative talk about rules, laws, and commands. To hear some people talk, you would think divine commandments are sub-Christian or anti-Christian, but that certainly is not the case. Indeed, there are hundreds of commands in the New Testament. As Schreiner states (p. 211):

When Paul says that the law is not of faith, it is a mistake to read this as a wholesale rejection of the law in the lives of Christians. Paul can speak positively about believers fulfilling the law by the power of the Spirit (Gal 5:13-15; cf. also Rom 8:4; 13:8-10). He maintains that Christians, through the work of the Spirit, are empowered to keep the law of Christ (Gal 6:2), which can be described as the law of love (5:13-14).

4. With Richard Longenecker (p. 121-122) and Timothy George (*Galatians*, NAC [Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1994], 237), I think Paul probably quotes a stock *Jewish* Christian confession, a shorthand summary of the gospel, when he says in v. 13 that Christ redeemed the *Jews* ("us") from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, citing Deut. 21:23 as support, "Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree." McKnight comments (p. 156-157):

Christ ransomed Jewish Christians from the curse of the law "by becoming a curse." What Christ did was to die the death of a transgressor (this is the point of quoting Deut. 21:23). In so doing, he becomes the transgressor because Christ was publicly crucified (cf. 2 Cor. 5:21). But because he was innocent and sinless, he can die on behalf of those who have sinned and so absorb their curse. And because he was divine, he could perfectly satisfy the justice of God (see Rom. 3:21-26).

5. The implication of this stock Jewish Christian confession is that Christ cannot properly be used to bring Gentiles under the law. After all, those who were under the Mosaic law have been redeemed from its curse by Christ, so why drag Gentiles under it, force them to relate to God under the obsolete Mosaic covenant, which would deprive them of the benefit of his redeeming death and thus leave them with only the law's curse?

6. Having employed this stock confession, Paul focuses in v. 14 on the reference to Christ's death rather than on the reference to Jewish redemption from the curse of the law. The death that redeemed the Jews from the law's curse was died in order to extend the blessing of Abraham, which is by faith (vv. 7-9), to the Gentiles; it was died so that all nations, Jew and Gentile ("we"), might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith, the accompaniment of a relationship with God under the new covenant.

#### D. Promise to Abraham not affected by giving of law (3:15-18)

**<sup>15</sup>Brothers, I speak in accordance with human [experience]: [it is] of man, yet no one nullifies or adds to a will that has been ratified. <sup>16</sup>Now the promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. It does not say, "And to the seeds," as referring to many, but "And to your seed," as referring to one, who is Christ. <sup>17</sup>So I say this: the law that came into being 430 years later does not cancel the covenant previously ratified by God so as to abolish the promise. <sup>18</sup>For if the inheritance is based on the law, it is no longer based on the promise. But God has graciously given it to Abraham through a promise.**

1. Paul speaks in accordance with their experience of wills, testamentary bequests. The Greek word (διαθήκη) rendered "will" can refer to a variety of legally binding agreements, but here it probably has its common meaning of a document that grants one's property to designated heirs upon one's death (a "will" or "testament"). David deSilva states in *The Letter to the Galatians*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2018), 307-308:

[This] sense is rather clearly in view in this paragraph, given both the strictly promissory, one-sided nature of the particular agreement to which Paul refers (the promise to Abraham), as well as the mention of "inheritance" in 3:18 as the practical consequence of this agreement. The hearers would also have been more familiar with last wills and testaments as a feature of their everyday legal world and thus might be predisposed to understand the word in this sense (rather than confuse it with a "covenant") after Paul's announcement that he is drawing an analogy from human practice.

2. The point of testamentary law on which Paul is relying in the analogy is that the terms of a will, though made by mere mortals, are nevertheless sacrosanct. No one nullifies or alters the terms of a will that has been validated or ratified, that has been shown to be an authentic will of the testator. Rather, the inheritance passes just as stipulated by that will.

3. Paul analogizes that situation to the covenant (διαθήκη) God made with Abraham in which he addressed various promises to Abraham and to his seed. Paul is probably alluding specifically to Gen. 17:1-8 (esp. v. 8), a passage in which σπέρμα (seed) and διαθήκη (covenant/will) occur frequently.

4. Scrutinizing the wording of the Genesis text(s), Paul notes that "seed" is singular rather than plural.

a. Though the singular noun "seed" can be a collective noun that refers to multiple descendants, Paul reveals that there is a sense in which this singular form focuses on a specific descendant of Abraham, *the* seed, the descendant to whom the promises were spoken. And he identifies this descendant as Christ. He is the seed by whom all the nations of the earth will be blessed (Gen. 22:18) rather than all the natural descendants of Abraham. He is the doorway through

which the promises spoken to Abraham become applicable to a worldwide people. In Jason Meyer's words (*The End of the Law* [Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2009], 144), "Jesus Christ stands as the sole 'seed of Abraham,' and heir to the Abrahamic promises. Therefore, people become the 'seed of Abraham' and heir to the promised inheritance only by belonging to Christ through faith."

b. Paul is emphasizing that the age of fulfillment has arrived in Christ. Schreiner states (p. 230): "The promises made to Abraham have become a reality in Jesus Christ. They always pointed to the one offspring, Jesus Christ. Hence, to move backward in salvation history to the Mosaic law and covenant is a serious mistake."

5. After commenting about the singular seed, Paul completes his point in vv. 17-18. Just as the terms of an authenticated human will are sacrosanct, so the terms of a covenant (διαθήκη) that God has authenticated as his own are sacrosanct. God will not deviate from or go back on that covenant but will bestow all of its blessings according to its terms.

6. And because God will not deviate from or go back on his ratified covenant with Abraham, it cannot be true that the Mosaic law, which was introduced long after Abraham – 430 years after Jacob and his family moved to Egypt in 1876 B.C. (Ex. 12:40) – had the effect of canceling that covenant so as to abolish its promises. But that is the implication of the Judaizers' insistence that the inheritance is to be gained by obedience to the Mosaic law. That constitutes a cancellation of the promises of blessing because no one fully obeys the Mosaic law as would be necessary to gain the blessings if one relates to God under the old covenant in the age of the new covenant.

7. Put differently, if the inheritance is made contingent on absolute obedience to the Mosaic law, which is the implication of the Judaizers' teaching, it makes the promises of the Abrahamic covenant empty or illusory. That represents a fundamental change to the terms of God's covenant commitment, a shift from blessings graciously given through a promise to blessings withheld for failure to achieve, so one can be sure that such an understanding is wrong. God's covenant terms certainly will not be honored by him less than the testamentary bequests of sinful humans are honored by others.

### *E. Giving of law is consistent with Paul's gospel (3:19-29)*

#### 1. Why given (3:19-20)

**<sup>19</sup>Why then the law? It was added for the sake of transgressions, until the seed to whom it has been promised should come, having been ordained through angels by [the] hand of a mediator. <sup>20</sup>Now a mediator is not of one, but God is one.**

a. Given Paul's insistence that one cannot be justified by doing the commands of the law (2:16) and that the Mosaic covenant and its associated law function "as a subordinate and interim covenant that cannot invalidate the terms of the [prior] Abrahamic covenant" (Schreiner, 231), the question arises as to why God gave the law. Paul's answer here is simply that the law was added, meaning given by God after the Abrahamic promise, "for the sake of transgressions." To grasp Paul's point, it is necessary to understand the distinction between "sin" and "transgression."

## Excursus on "Sin" and "Transgression"

1. The Mosaic covenant included the grandest and most complete expression to that time of God's moral requirements, but moral requirements did not begin when God gave the law to Moses at Mount Sinai. Mankind was under moral requirements *from creation*. It was wrong for Cain to murder Abel (Gen. 4:8-14) and for Lamech to kill a young man for striking him (Gen. 4:23-24). Indeed, it was mankind's rejection of God's moral requirements that caused God to flood the Earth in the days of Noah, long before Moses. He did so because the *wickedness* of man was great and the intentions of his heart were *evil* continually (Gen. 6:5); the earth was *corrupt* in God's sight and filled with *violence* (Gen. 6:11-13). The people of Sodom and Gomorrah sinned greatly (Gen. 13:13, 18:20), Er was killed for his wickedness (Gen. 38:7), Joseph's brothers sinned in selling him into slavery (Gen. 42:21-22, 50:17), and Abimelech and Joseph would have sinned if they had slept with another man's wife (Gen. 20:4-6, 39:8-9).

2. But until the Mosaic covenant, God's moral requirements had not been given as "law," had not been laid down as express commandments. (The only prior "law" in this proper sense was the express commandment that had been given to Adam.) Rather, they were known intuitively or innately as part of the law written by God on the human heart (see Rom. 2:15), which is part of our being made in God's image (Gen. 1:26-27). Remnants of that knowledge were reflected in various pagan cultural norms (e.g., Amos 3:9-10; 1 Cor. 5:1).

3. Violating these non-law moral requirements was sin. In other words, the existence of "law," express edicts to be obeyed, is not necessary for sin to occur. The Lord said in Gen. 4:7, long before the giving of the Mosaic law, "And if you do not do well, *sin* is crouching at the door. Its desire is for you, but you must rule over it." The pre-Mosaic examples of sinning given in paragraph 1 confirm the point. That is why Paul can say in Rom. 2:12, "For as many as *sinned without the law* will also perish without the law" and say in Rom. 5:13a that sin was in the world *before (until) the law was given*. Despite not having a "law," the conduct of the Canaanites was sinful (Gen. 15:16 and Lev. 18:24-25), the conduct of the pagan nations was sinful (e.g., Amos 1:2-2:3), and the conduct of the Gentiles was sinful (Rom. 1:18-32).

4. "Transgression," however, is a different story. To *transgress* is to violate the will of God as revealed in an express commandment.



(a) C. E. B. Cranfield states (*Romans*, 1:170, fn. 3), "The idea contained in these words [transgression and transgressor], as they are used in the NT, is that of the transgression of a known, concrete divine commandment." Douglas Moo says (*The Epistle to the Romans*, 277), "'Transgression' denotes a specific kind of sin, the 'passing beyond' the limits set by a definite, positive law or command. While every 'transgression' is also a 'sin,' not every 'sin' is a 'transgression.'" Thomas Schreiner says (*Romans*, 367), "Twice already in Romans (4:15; 5:13-14) Paul has distinguished between sin without the law and sin committed in violation of specifically revealed commandments. The latter is sometimes called "transgression" (cf. 4:15, *παράβασις*, *parabasis*), and it can be distinguished from sin in general because it involves disobedience to a command revealed by God."

(b) So the existence of "law," in the sense of express commands, is a precondition to transgression but not to sin. That's what Paul means when he says in Rom. 4:15b, "And where there is not law, neither is there *transgression*." As Moo notes (p. 277), Paul in Rom. 4:15 "is not claiming that there is no 'sin' where there is no law, but, in almost a 'truism,' that there is no deliberate disobedience of positive commands where there is no positive command to disobey." It is the difference between "You knew better than to . . ." and "I specifically told you not to . . ."

(c) The statement in Rom. 5:13 that "sin is not *charged* when there is no law" does not mean it is not sin or that it is ignored and not punished. How could it mean that in light of the Old Testament witness? Rather, it means that without law sin cannot be counted as a violation of specific commands and prohibitions. As Ben Witherington remarks (*Paul's Letter to the Romans*, 147), "Paul cannot mean that God simply ignored sin since he surely knows the story of Noah. Thus what Paul seems to mean is that sin was not reckoned as transgression, for the latter involves a willful violation of a known law." Cranfield writes (1:282):

["Not charged"] must be understood in a relative sense: only in comparison with what takes place when the law is present can it be said that, in the law's absence, sin [is not charged]. Those who lived without the law were certainly not 'innocent sinners' – they were to blame for what they were and what they did. But, in comparison with the state of affairs which has obtained since the advent of the law, sin may be said to have been, in the law's absence, 'not registered', since it was not the fully apparent, sharply defined thing, which it became in its presence.

Schreiner writes (p. 279):

How then do we explain verse 13, which says that sin is not reckoned apart from law? The purpose of that verse is to explain that apart from the Mosaic law sin is not equivalent to transgression (Cranfield 1975: 282-83; Bornkamm 1952: 84). This is confirmed by both Rom. 4:15 and the present context, for Paul notes explicitly in 5:14 that Adam's sin was different in kind from those who lived before the Mosaic law in that he violated a commandment disclosed by God.

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(1) In saying in Gal. 3:19 that the law was added "for the sake of transgressions," Paul probably means that the law was added to convert their sinful conduct (that which violated the law of the sound heart - Rom. 2:14-15) into the graver offense of "transgression," i.e., the conscious disobeying of specific commandments (Rom. 4:15; like Adam - Rom. 5:14). This was to expose their spiritual state, to make it more difficult to deceive themselves about their own righteousness (Rom. 3:20, 7:7), and thus to point the way to Jesus Christ by highlighting their need for a redeemer.

(2) In line with that same purpose, Paul also may have in mind the fact that the Mosaic law, being given to people who in general were not regenerated by the Holy Spirit, stimulated and provoked disobedience (Rom. 5:20, 7:5, 8). The stimulation of sin magnified the Israelites' failure and thereby reinforced the point that grace was the only path of righteousness. As Paul makes clear in Romans 7, it is Sin not the law that is to blame for this. Sin used the holy and good law against its subjects (Rom. 7:8, 11-14).

b. Paul indicates that the Mosaic law was intended by God to have a limited duration. It was added after the Abrahamic covenant and was to remain in effect only until Christ, the Seed to whom the promise referred (3:16), had come. The Mosaic covenant was a subsidiary and interim covenant not something eternal as many Jewish traditions held (e.g., Josephus, *Ag. Ap.* 2.277; Jub. 1.27; Wis. 18:4; 2 Esd [4 Ezra] 9:37).

c. Paul says in the last part of 3:19 that the law was ordained or established through angels (not *by* angels; it is ultimately from God) by means of a mediator.

(1) There are only hints in the Old Testament of an angelic role in the giving of the Mosaic law (Deut. 33:2; Ps. 68:17), but it is mentioned in nonbiblical Jewish writings (*Book of Jubilees* 1:27; 2:1, 26-27; Josephus, *Antiquities* 15.36) and at several places in the New Testament (Acts 7:38, 53; Heb. 2:2). Paul probably mentions this to reinforce the subordinate nature of the law to the promise; the promise was delivered directly by God to Abraham.

(2) The mediator of the law was Moses. This title was commonly assigned to him in the Judaism of Paul's day. You will recall that the Israelites at Sinai were afraid of the manifestations of God's presence and asked that Moses act as their go-between, that he rather than God speak to them (Ex. 20:18-19; Deut. 5:23-27, 18:16).

(3) Paul's point here is obscure. Many interpretations have been proposed. Indeed, Moo states (p. 235): "Having introduced the 'mediator' in verse 19c, Paul now adds an argument based on the concept of mediation. Unfortunately, what argument he intends to make is unclear and perhaps not even recoverable." Paul seems to be implying that a covenant that comes from God through a third-party mediator (the law through Moses) is secondary to one that comes directly from God (the promises to Abraham) because such a mediator does not represent *only* God. A third-party mediator is not "of one" because he is a liaison between at least two parties, whereas the Shema, the standard Jewish confession, declares that "God is one." Since God is one, a

singular entity, and the mediator represents more than one party, the mediator does not represent *only* God.

(4) Christ, of course, is the sole mediator between God and mankind in terms of reconciling them through his atoning death (1 Tim. 2:5), but that is different from Moses' role in conveying to the Israelites the terms of the Mosaic covenant. Christ *effects* the new covenant; he does not merely convey its terms. As for Christ's role in conveying the terms of the new covenant, he differs from Moses in that he is the God-man not a merely human third-party.

## 2. Not opposed to the promise (3:21-22)

**<sup>21</sup>Is the law, then, opposed to the promises [of God]? Absolutely not! For if a law had been given which was able to impart life, righteousness would indeed have been based on law. <sup>22</sup>But the Scripture imprisoned all things under sin, so that the promise, based on faith in Jesus Christ, might be given to those who believe.**

a. Having suggested the incompatibility of the law and the promise as a basis of the inheritance (3:18), having described the law as being added for the sake of transgressions until the coming of Christ (3:19), and having implied the Mosaic covenant is subordinate to the Abrahamic covenant (3:20), Paul anticipates that some will accuse him of claiming the Mosaic law is inconsistent with the promise of God, claiming that God is at war with himself. He flatly rejects that conclusion, declaring "Absolutely not!" The Mosaic law and the Abrahamic covenant play different roles in God's plan, but they do not contradict one another; they are not contradictory ways of salvation.

b. Paul explains that the Mosaic law would contradict the Abrahamic promise only if it had been given as a means of imparting spiritual life. In that case, righteousness would be based on one's obedience to the law and thus would not be based on the promise, as he pointed out in 3:18. Providing the blessings on the basis of works would contradict the promise to give them on the basis of faith.

c. The fact, however, is that the commands of the Mosaic covenant are *not* able to impart spiritual life because Scripture, meaning God as revealed in Scripture, has imprisoned all things under sin. In other words, in texts like Deut. 27:26 (referred to in Gal. 3:10), God has demanded perfect obedience to all the law as a requirement of relating to him on that basis. The effect of that demand was to put all things under the curse that accompanies sin because the corruption (Sin) that invaded creation in the Garden prevents the commands from being perfectly obeyed and thus being able to impart life (see, Rom. 8:2-3).

d. This preserves the harmony of God's law and God's promise. It is not the case that justification is based on the law contrary to the promise. The result of fallen mankind being

imprisoned under sin is that the blessings promised to Abraham might be given to those who put their faith in Jesus Christ rather than earned by works of law.

### 3. Custodial function until Christ (3:23-25)

**<sup>23</sup>Now before the faith came, we were held in custody under the law, being imprisoned until the coming faith that was to be revealed. <sup>24</sup>Therefore, the law has been our trainer until Christ, in order that we may be pronounced righteous by faith. <sup>25</sup>But since the faith has come, we are no longer under the trainer.**

a. Paul says that before the coming of "the faith" that he just mentioned, before the faith by which humans have always related to God became defined and particularized by the appearance in history of the person Jesus Christ, the Son of God, he and his fellow Jews were under the Mosaic law. They were bound by the requirements of that law until Christ was revealed.

b. Given that the law was applicable only until the coming of Christ, Paul says it functioned in that interim period as a *paidagōgos*.

(1) A *paidagōgos* was usually a slave who had charge over one or more of the minor sons in the family. He was not a formal teacher but a trainer and disciplinarian. He reared the child according to the directives of the father, seeing that they did their chores, got back and forth to school safely, etc. I have rendered it "trainer," but others render it guardian, tutor, disciplinarian, or custodian.

(2) The Mosaic law was analogous to that function in that it controlled or supervised their behavior during their minority, during the period before Christ was revealed. The ultimate objective of that supervision was that they be justified by faith in Christ. The law served that objective by preparing them for Christ in various ways, such as revealing God's holiness and sharpening their sense of sin and need for a redeemer.

c. Paul reinforces the obsolescence of the Mosaic law in v. 25. Since the coming of the faith that is focused on the person Jesus Christ, they are no longer under a *paidagōgos*, no longer under the Mosaic law. (Though *paidagōgos* is anarthrous, anarthrous nouns that precede the verb often are definite. Moo, 244.)

### 4. Since Christ, only faith in him has salvation relevance (3:26-29)

**<sup>26</sup>For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, <sup>27</sup>for as many as were baptized into Christ, clothed yourselves with Christ. <sup>28</sup>There is neither Jew nor Greek; there is neither slave nor free; there is neither male and female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. <sup>29</sup>And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, heirs according to the promise.**

a. The inapplicability of the Mosaic law ("For"), the passing of the period of the trainer, is confirmed by the fact *all* the baptized believers in Galatia, Jew and Gentile, are sons (and daughters) of God through faith in Christ Jesus. Faith in Christ was the criterion of their adoption, the basis of their sonship, not submission to the Mosaic law, so clearly that law no longer defines God's people.

b. Rather, in Christ all enjoy the full status of God's people. In terms of a relationship with God, there is no distinction between Jewish and Greek Christians, slave and free Christians, and male and female Christians. By faith, they all as one have been reconciled to God in Christ Jesus; they are Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise. So clearly the Judaizers' attempt to maintain a salvific Jew-Gentile distinction among those who have put their faith in Christ is wrong.

c. Paul does not here rule out differing obligations and responsibilities among Christians. For example, he makes clear elsewhere that slaves must still serve their masters and that women may not teach in the assembly of the saints or have leadership roles in the church. He means that, contrary to the Judaizers' position, none of these differences affects one's standing before God.

d. Notice the close connection between "faith in Christ Jesus" in v. 26 and "baptized into Christ" in v. 27. The reason they are sons of God through faith in Christ ("for") is that they clothed themselves with Christ by being immersed in penitent faith, by being baptized into him. The late Baptist scholar G. R. Beasley-Murray said of this verse in *Baptism in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1962), 151:

Baptism is the baptism of faith and grace, so that in it faith receives what grace gives. Above all grace gives Christ, for Christ is the fullness of grace; faith therefore receives Christ in baptism. If Paul were pressed to define the relationship of the two statements in vv. 26-27, I cannot see how he could preserve the force of both sentences apart from affirming that baptism is the moment of faith in which the adoption is realized – in the dual sense of effected by God and grasped by man – which is the same as saying that in baptism faith receives the Christ in whom the adoption is effected.

#### *F. Submitting to law is a return to slavery (4:1-11)*

##### 1. Christ freed them from their former enslavement (4:1-7)

**Now I say, however long a time the heir is a minor, he in no way differs from a slave, though being lord of all. <sup>2</sup>Rather, he is under guardians and trustees until the time set by the father.**

<sup>3</sup>So we also [were]: when we were minors, we were in slavery under the elements of the world. <sup>4</sup>But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth his Son; born of a woman, born under the law; <sup>5</sup>in order that he might redeem the ones under the law, in order that we might receive the adoption as sons. <sup>6</sup>And because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying out, "Abba, Father." <sup>7</sup>So you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, also an heir through God.

a. Paul says that when an heir is a minor he is like a slave in that, despite his future authority over the entire estate, he is controlled by guardians and trustees until the time set by his father, until the age at which his father determined he would be freed from those constraints and assume authority over the property. It is unclear precisely what inheritance law or laws Paul has in mind, but his description of the legal situation is reasonably clear.

b. Paul then asserts that before becoming Christians people were in a situation analogous to the underage heir. Specifically, Jewish and Gentile Christians, the heirs (3:29, 4:7), were living in a state of slavery under the *stoicheia tou kosmou* (*lit.* elements of the world) until the time set by God, that is, until the coming of Christ.

c. There is much debate about what Paul means here by "elements of the world." In the first century, the phrase regularly referred to the fundamental components of the material world, but it may already have shaded over into a reference to spiritual beings through their popular association with the material components of the universe. Thus, it is sometimes rendered "elemental spirits of the universe" (RSV; NEB; REB), "elemental spirits of the world" (NRSV), "elemental powers of the world" (NAB), and "elemental spiritual forces of the world" (NIV). Galatians 4:8-9 offer some contextual support for that rendering.

d. The basic point seems to be that before the coming of Christ Jews and Gentiles were in slavery in the sense each was bound by its own restrictive religious requirements – the Mosaic law for Jews and pagan rituals for Gentiles – which requirements were in some sense overseen or enforced by spiritual beings. Jesus came at the time set by the Father so that they, Jew and Gentile, might receive full *sonship* rights, the effect of which was to free them from that slavery, from their respective religiously-restricted states. This has occurred, as evidenced by the Jewish and Gentile Christians having received the Spirit by whom they cry "Abba, *Father*."

e. Paul expresses the change by quoting in vv. 4-5 what is probably another early, *Jewish* Christian confession (see Longenecker, 171-172) with the "we" in the final clause (v. 5b) being contextually extended to encompass *all* Christians. (The inclusion of pre-Christian *Gentile* enslavement becomes clear in 4:8-9.) The implication may be that, at the time set by God, he sent Jesus to redeem those under the law (Jews) and through them to adopt the Gentiles in keeping with the sequence of "Jew first and then Gentile" that is expressed elsewhere (Rom. 1:16, 11:17-24; see also, Lk. 24:46).

## 2. How can they return to slavery by accepting the Judaizers' gospel? (4:8-11)

**<sup>8</sup>But at that time, when you did not know God, you were slaves to those beings which by nature are not gods. <sup>9</sup>But now, having known God, or rather having been known by God, how are you turning again to the weak and impoverished elements to which you once again wish to be enslaved? <sup>10</sup>You are observing days and months and seasons and years. <sup>11</sup>I fear for you, that perhaps I have labored among you in vain.**

a. Pre-Christian *Gentile* slavery under the "elements of the world" was distinct from the pre-Christian *Jewish* slavery under the "elements of the world" in that it involved pagan deities, which are not gods at all but are (or are associated with) demons (1 Cor. 10:18-22). Yet, for a Gentile Christian to submit to the Mosaic law was for him to return in principle to his former enslavement, his prior religiously-restricted state.

b. The "elements" that oversaw or enforced the Gentile's religious requirements, his cultic devotion to idols, had been weakened and impoverished by Christ's work – through which work the Gentiles came to know and be known by God – so that those who became Christians had been freed from that burdensome existence. Why then would they in effect turn back to that situation by submitting to the analogously-restrictive Mosaic law with its similar requirements about observing days and months and seasons and years? It makes no sense.

c. Paul is deeply concerned for their spiritual welfare. He fears for them, that they will be devoured by this heresy and thus that his labor among them would have been in vain. But again, he has hope that will not be the case. He fears that *perhaps* he labored in vain.

## VI. Personal Appeal (4:12-20)

### A. To accept his view (4:12-16)

**<sup>12</sup>I plead with you, brothers, become as I am, for I also [became] as you are. You in no way wronged me. <sup>13</sup>You know that I first preached the gospel to you because of an infirmity of the flesh, <sup>14</sup>and you did not despise or disdain your trial because of my flesh, but you received me as a messenger of God, as Christ Jesus. <sup>15</sup>Where then is your blessing [of me]? For I testify to you that, if possible, you would have torn out your eyes and given them to me. <sup>16</sup>So then, have I become your enemy by telling you the truth?**

1. He urges them to become like him in rejecting the essentialness of the Mosaic law just as he had earlier become like them in rejecting it (see, 1 Cor. 9:19-21).

2. He reminds them that when he formerly preached the gospel to them they in no way wronged him, perhaps alluding specifically to the fact they did not condemn or reject him for his non-observance of the Mosaic law. On the contrary, despite the trial his physical illness caused them, they received him as a messenger (angel) of God; indeed, as if he were Christ Jesus himself.

a. The phrase "weakness of the flesh" (*astheneian tēs sarkos*) is here understood by most interpreters to refer to the persistent or periodic severe physical problem to which Paul refers in 2 Cor. 12:7 as his "thorn in the flesh." It is commonly rendered in English Bibles as "infirmity of the flesh," "physical infirmity," "physical illness," "bodily illness," and "bodily ailment." We cannot identify the malady with any confidence, but many think the best guess is that it was some kind of eye problem (e.g., Moo, 283), perhaps hinted at in v. 15.

b. Paul's physical illness was a trial for them, an obstacle to their acceptance of Paul as a divine spokesman, because it easily could have been interpreted as a sign of divine rejection. David deSilva comments (p. 380):

Paul's physical condition was such that he might have expected the Galatians to turn away from him in contempt and reject anything he might have had to say. Bodily ailment or disability could be interpreted as a sign of divine displeasure or as shameful defect, and therefore "despised." How could a person who was so obviously not enjoying the favor and protection of the gods (indeed, appearing more as one who endured their disfavor) claim to be speaking on behalf of one of them? What kind of spiritual power could he have, or could this Christ give, if Paul, Christ's ambassador, could not gain the upper hand over his own sickness or infirmity? Or perhaps he had himself been overcome by the evil spirits by means of which he worked his magic?

3. Despite whatever struggle his illness presented, they received his message as the truth of God. In light of that, he wants to know what has happened to the blessing they previously pronounced on him, the great appreciation they previously expressed for him. They were so appreciative at that time that they would have torn out their eyes and given them to him!

4. Having accepted the word Paul preached as truth and having been extremely grateful for it, Paul asks if he has now become their enemy by telling them that very truth. The gospel he preached to them, which they accepted and rejoiced over, did not include a requirement of submitting to the Mosaic law, and yet he is now being criticized and rejected by some for that same gospel.

5. From this, it sounds like Paul's original plan had been to go elsewhere on his journey (perhaps westward toward Ephesus) and that his missionary visit to the Galatians was in some way due to his illness. How or why his ailment caused him to go to Galatia is not known. When Luke wrote Acts, fifteen or more years later, he either was unaware of this reason for the visit to Galatia or did not consider it necessary to include.



## *B. To reject the Judaizers (4:17-20)*

**<sup>17</sup>[Those people] are zealous for you not in a good way; rather, they want to exclude you in order that you might be zealous for them. <sup>18</sup>It is always good to be sought zealously in a good way, not only when I am present with you. <sup>19</sup>My children, for whom I am again suffering birth pains until Christ is formed in you -- <sup>20</sup>I wish to be present with you now and to exchange my voice [for this letter], for I am perplexed about you.**

1. The Judaizers are not honorably courting the Galatians. Rather, they want to exclude them from the people of promise, convincing them that as Gentiles they are outside the people of God despite their faith in Christ, so that they will be zealous for them as supposed heralds of the true saving message. David deSilva states (p. 384):

Paul alleges that the rival teachers are showing a great deal of interest in the Galatians, but not to the latter's advantage. Instead, the rival teachers' goal is to "exclude" the Galatians – to shut them back outside of the people of promise (i.e., by convincing them that, as gentiles, they have no place in the people of God) so that the Galatians will be put in the position of trying to reenter the people of promise by courting the rival teachers and becoming their followers.

2. To be nobly sought after is a good thing, whether by Paul, as when was there pursuing them with the gospel, or by someone else in his absence, but that is not what is happening in the case of the Judaizers. As he just said, they are after them for their own advantage.

3. Paul, who previously had suffered "birth pains" in bringing the Galatians to their new birth in Christ, is experiencing analogous suffering as their flirt with apostasy threatens to abort their Christian development, to prevent their maturation into Christlikeness. He longs to be present with them where they can speak face to face rather than to appeal to them by letter because he is puzzled by their defection. You can just feel Paul's distress. He loves them and wants to be with them so he can more effectively address what is going on.

## **VII. Hagar and Sarah Allegory (4:21 - 5:1)**

### *A. Children of present Jerusalem and Jerusalem above (4:21-27)*

**<sup>21</sup>Tell me, those who want to be under the law, do you not listen to the law? <sup>22</sup>For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by the slave woman and one by the free woman. <sup>23</sup>But the one of the slave woman was born according to the flesh, and the one of the free woman through the promise. <sup>24</sup>These things are being spoken allegorically, for these [women] are two**

covenants, one from Mount Sinai, bearing children into slavery, which is Hagar. <sup>25</sup>Now Hagar stands for Mount Sinai in Arabia and corresponds to the present Jerusalem, for she is in slavery with her children. <sup>26</sup>But the Jerusalem above is free, which is our mother. <sup>27</sup>For it is written: "Be glad barren woman who does not bear children, break forth and cry aloud, you who do not suffer birth pains; for more are the children of the desolate woman than of the woman who has a husband."

1. Paul indicates by a rhetorical question that plays on the range of meaning in the word "law" that those Galatians who want to be under the Mosaic law are not paying attention to what the law says. As Moo states (p. 297):

In an obvious play on words, Paul then challenges the Galatians, who want to be "under the law," to "hear the Law." Paul mostly uses νόμος (*nomos*, law) to denote the body of commandments given by God to Israel through Moses; but in keeping with Jewish usage, he also uses the word in a "canonical" sense, to denote the Pentateuch (as here; cf. also Rom. 3:21b; 1 Cor. 9:8, 9; 14:34[?]), or sometimes the entire OT (Rom. 3:19a; 1 Cor. 9:8, 9; 14:21; see Moo 1983: 75-90).

2. It is written in the law that Abraham had two sons, one by the slave woman (Hagar) and one by the free woman (Sarah). The son of the slave woman, i.e., the son born into slavery (Ishmael), was born according to the flesh, according to human decision and effort. The son of the free woman, i.e., the son born into freedom (Isaac), was born through God's fulfillment of his promise, not by human doing.

3. In light of the unfolding of God's plan of redemption, the Spirit reveals to Paul that the historical events involving Hagar and Sarah (Genesis 16-21) include a deeper symbolic meaning. Hagar stands for Mount Sinai and the old covenant, including the law, that issued from that mountain. As Hagar's son (Ishmael) was born into slavery, so are the sons of the old covenant. They are in slavery under the law. Thus, Hagar corresponds to present Jerusalem, meaning those who insist on the ongoing applicability of the Mosaic law, which includes the Judaizers.

4. But Christians are sons of the free, heavenly Jerusalem, implicitly represented by Sarah. As support, Paul takes the "barren one" of Isa. 54:1 (LXX), a reference to Jerusalem, to include a reference to the "barren" Sarah. Though once "barren," Sarah has now become the mother of a miraculous number, mother of all the Christians.

5. Since Christians are the sons of the free, heavenly Jerusalem, the implication is that they have been born into freedom, not slavery. The Judaizers' attempt to pull them under the old covenant, to enslave them under the Mosaic law, is therefore wrong.

6. "Heavenly Jerusalem" is a symbol of the consummated kingdom of God (see, Heb. 11:10, 11:14-16, 12:22, 13:14; Rev. 3:12, 21:2), a reality in which the Galatians were already participating in some way (the now and not yet). Schreiner remarks (p. 303):

Elsewhere in the NT the heavenly Jerusalem (cf. Heb 12:22; Rev 3:12; 21:2, 10; cf. 2 Bar. 4:2) represents the heavenly city that awaits believers. The Jerusalem above, according to Paul, is the eschatological Jerusalem that has reached down into the present evil age. Even though the heavenly Jerusalem had not arrived in its fullness, the age to come had invaded the present evil age, so we have an example here of Paul's already but not yet eschatology.

### *B. Relationship of children of promise and children of flesh (4:28-30)*

**<sup>28</sup>Now you, brothers, like Isaac, are children of promise. <sup>29</sup>But just as at that time the one who was born according to the flesh persecuted the one who was born according to the Spirit, so it also is now. <sup>30</sup>But what does the Scripture say? "Cast out the slave woman and her son; for the son of the slave woman will in no way inherit with the son of the free woman."**

1. The Galatian Christians are, like Isaac, children of the promise. But just as Ishmael, born according to the flesh, persecuted Isaac, who was born according to the Spirit (see, Gen. 21:9 and traditional Jewish interpretations), so the law-fixated Jews, of whom the Judaizers were a Christian subset, persecuted Christians. (Moo remarks [p. 310-311] that Paul in this paragraph "moves beyond the agitators to the more basic law-observing perspective that they represent.") There are hints of the Galatian Christians being persecuted by unbelieving Jews in Gal. 3:4 and 4:29, as Paul and Barnabas had been persecuted.

2. Though the children of the flesh, the Jewish law-binders, were persecuting Christians, the fact is that those law-binders, be they Judaizers or non-Christian Jews, are excluded from the spiritual inheritance of Abraham, as declared by Scripture (Gen. 21:10). They are not part of the people of God. David deSilva notes (p. 405), "The recitation [of Gen. 21:10] perhaps most importantly communicates a warning to the Galatians of their own potential loss of inheritance should they follow the rival teachers back into slavery, since only the children of the 'free woman' will inherit."

3. This warning may also be in the first clause of the citation, "Cast out the slave woman and her son." Moo states (p. 312):

The Galatians will "cast out the slave woman" by refusing to have anything to do with those who continue to insist on law observance as necessary for righteousness and by distancing themselves from the theology of the "present Jerusalem," with its continuing insistence on reading the Abrahamic promise covenant in the context of the Mosaic law covenant (Dunn 1993a: 258); they should "exclude" those who are trying to "exclude" them (see v. 17; Lincoln 1981: 28-29).

### *C. Conclusion of allegory argument (4:31 - 5:1)*

**<sup>31</sup>Therefore, brothers, we are not children of the slave woman but of the free woman. <sup>5</sup> For freedom Christ set us free! Stand firm, therefore, and do not again be burdened by a yoke of slavery.**

1. Paul sums up what he has been saying with the declaration that he and the Galatians are children of the free woman, *not* of the slave woman. Schreiner states (p. 306): "Since the Galatians were born of the Spirit instead of the flesh, they were children of the Jerusalem above rather than of Hagar and were thereby children of the promise. Therefore, they are children of the free woman, belonging to the heavenly rather than the earthly Jerusalem."

2. It is debated whether v. 5:1 concludes this section or introduces the next, but it probably is a transitional verse that concludes the prior section and bridges to the next. Paul is speaking of freedom and slavery in terms of submission to the Mosaic law. Schreiner comments (p. 307):

For the Galatians to submit to circumcision and adopt the OT law is to return to the Sinai covenant, which is one of slavery. They will effectively put themselves into Ishmael's family rather than Isaac's. Surely the Judaizers argued the opposite! Paul argues strenuously that they must continue in the freedom from the law that was theirs at the inception of their Christian lives (cf. 2:4). This freedom was won for believers by Christ through his redeeming work (explained in 3:13 and 4:5).

3. They must refuse to return to the slavery inherent in the Judaizers' gospel, as he explained in 4:8-11. To do otherwise would be foolish and fatal.

## VIII. Warning (5:2-12)

### *A. Grave danger of seeking justification by law (5:2-6)*

**<sup>2</sup>Listen! I, Paul, say to you that if you get circumcised, Christ will not benefit you at all. <sup>3</sup>And I testify again to every man who gets circumcised, that he is a debtor to obey the whole law.**

**<sup>4</sup>You who seek to be pronounced righteous by the law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace. <sup>5</sup>For we, through the Spirit [received] by faith, eagerly await the hope of righteousness. <sup>6</sup>For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything; rather, [what matters is] faith working through love.**

1. The gravity of the issue is emphasized by the command that they listen (behold) and by his identifying himself to underscore his authority as an apostle. Paul strongly warns that if

they accept the Judaizers' heresy by submitting to circumcision, Christ will not benefit them. As Moo notes (p. 322), "One cannot choose circumcision *and* Christ: it is circumcision *or* Christ." They will be choosing to relate to God under the old, obsolete covenant instead of relating to him through Christ and the new covenant. Schreiner comments (p. 313): "[I]f the Galatians think they find 'profit' or 'benefit' in circumcision for salvation, there is no saving benefit that accrues to them in Christ. If they rely on circumcision for salvation, they cannot lean on Christ for the same. No middle way exists between circumcision and Christ. If the Galatians turn to circumcision, they lose Christ and all his benefits."

2. He explains in v. 3 that by submitting to the Mosaic law, represented by their getting circumcised, they assume the obligation of obeying all the commands of the law. As he said in 3:10, this puts them under a curse because no fallen humans continue to do all the commandments all the time. When combined with the alienation from grace that is inherent in their choice to be alienated from Christ (v. 4), there is no remedy for that curse. So their choosing to submit to the Mosaic law spells spiritual doom. Moo comments (p. 322), "Of course, the Jewish view was that the guilt incurred by breaking even one commandment could be atoned for by means of the law's own provisions. . . . But in the new age inaugurated by Christ's death and resurrection, the old sacrifices no longer have validity."

3. It is Paul and the adherents of his gospel who, through the Spirit received by faith, eagerly await the hope of righteousness, the blessings that are in store for the righteous. It is not the Judaizers and their followers. For the truth of the matter is that in Christ the distinction between the circumcised and uncircumcised, between Jew and Gentile, is no longer relevant. What matters is faith in Jesus Christ. And anticipating the coming discussion, he indicates that the faith of which he speaks is not "faith only," a mere mental assent, but a faith that manifests in love for others.

### *B. They are being lured by God's opponents (5:7-12)*

**<sup>7</sup>You were running well; who hindered you from following the truth? <sup>8</sup>This persuasion is not from the one who calls you. <sup>9</sup>A little yeast leavens the whole lump [of dough]. <sup>10</sup>I am confident about you in the Lord that you will think no other way. But the one who is confusing you will bear the judgment, whoever he may be. <sup>11</sup>And I, brothers, if I am still preaching circumcision, why then am I still being persecuted? In that case, the stumbling block of the cross has been abolished. <sup>12</sup>I wish [that] those who are troubling you also would emasculate themselves!**

1. By means of a rhetorical question (see, 3:1), Paul indicates that the Judaizers had hindered the Galatians pursuit of the truth. He adds that this type of persuasion does not come from God, thereby denying the Judaizers' claim to divine backing.

2. Employing a proverbial saying ("a little yeast leavens the whole batch of dough"), Paul warns them against taking the Judaizers' destructive influence lightly. Though the heresy may

be relatively small at this point, it holds the potential for totally corrupting the Galatian churches, for making them unacceptable to God.

3. He is confident that they will agree with his assessment of the danger and give the matter the attention it deserves. He is also confident that the persons advocating this heresy will be condemned by God (see, 1:8-9). The singular "the one who is confusing" is probably generic, denoting the adversaries as a whole (the plural, "those confusing," is used in 1:7).

4. The phrase "whoever he may be" expresses God's impartiality in this judgment. As Paul said in 1:8-9, it does not matter who it is who presents this heresy, even if it be an angel, they are to be cursed by God.

5. As proof that he does not still preach circumcision, contrary to the Judaizers' slander of him, he points to the fact he is still being persecuted by those who insist on binding the Mosaic law. If he preached circumcision, they would not be after him because he would have removed the stumbling block of the cross, meaning he, like they, would be claiming that salvation was in doing the works of the law instead of by faith in Jesus and his atoning death. That is the truth the Judaizers' refused to accept.

6. Paul expresses his righteous anger toward the Judaizers by declaring his wish that they would carry their fixation on cutting flesh (circumcision) to the extreme of castration! We dare not condemn Paul's words, for this rhetoric was judged by the Spirit of God to be helpful in impressing on the Galatians the enormity of the Judaizers' sin. It is reminiscent of Luke's reporting of Peter's words to Simon in Acts 8:20 and Paul's words to Elymas in Acts 13:9-11. Timothy George comments (p. 373):

In this emergency situation Paul summoned the courage to utter a word of imprecation. It had to be said, and it was right for him to say it because a lesser rebuke would have signaled an unconscionable compromise and retreat. Let no one ever utter such words lightly, unadvisedly, or in a spirit of personal aggravation and revenge. Those kinds of statements are likely to return upon the one who pronounces them with all the reciprocal force of a boomerang. Luther's comment on Gal 5:12 spoke to this issue: "Here the question arises whether Christians are permitted to curse. Yes, they are permitted to do so, but not always and not for just any reason. But when things come to the point where the Word is about to be cursed or its teaching – and, as a consequence, God himself – blasphemed, then you must invert your sentence and say: 'Blessed be the Word and God! And cursed be anything apart from the Word and from God, whether it be an apostle or an angel from heaven!'"

## IX. His Gospel and Holy Living (5:13 - 6:10)

### *A. Through love be servants of one another (5:13-15)*

**<sup>13</sup>For you were called for freedom, brothers; only [do] not [use] that freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love be slaves to one another. <sup>14</sup>For the whole law is fulfilled in one word, in the [command]: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." <sup>15</sup>But if you bite and devour one another, watch out that you not be consumed by one another.**

1. They were called by God through Paul for the purpose of freedom, to be free from their prior restrictive religious requirements, their former slavery under the "elements of the world" (4:1-7). As he has explained, their having been freed is inconsistent with their returning in principle to that slavery by embracing the Judaizers' gospel (4:8-11). Here he cautions them not to use that freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, as a platform from which base impulses or desires produce sinful behavior. Schreiner comments (p. 333), "Here the concern is that freedom may be abused and become an occasion for the selfish will to dominate." Instead, that freedom is to be used for loving service of one another.

2. They are to render loving service to one another because that is how God has called his people to live. "For the whole law is fulfilled in one word, in the [command]: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'" As I have said many times, the "law," as the complete set of commands under the Mosaic covenant, is no longer in force, but the moral norms included among those commands have ongoing or renewed applicability and find their full expression under the new covenant.

a. That some commands included within the Mosaic law have ongoing or renewed applicability while others do not is evident from 1 Cor. 7:19, where Paul says, "Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing, but the keeping of the commandments of God [is everything]." Clearly the command to circumcise is not among the commands Paul now considers important to keep; there is a qualitative difference among the commands that were included in the Mosaic law. Some represented the eternal moral desires of God that existed before the Mosaic law, were included in the Mosaic law, and continue after the Mosaic law. Others, like circumcision, food laws, and holy days, were peculiar to Israel's specific role in God's unfolding plan of redemption.

b. The fundamental ethical requirement for the Christian is love (Mat. 7:12, 22:37-40; Rom. 13:8-10), but some specific conduct is loving and other conduct is not. Love is the center, but there are definite requirements on how it expresses itself. As Paul indicates in Rom. 13:9, the command to love your neighbor as yourself encompasses the commands of the law not to commit adultery, not to murder, not to steal, and not to covet (and other commands he does not specify). Thus, the Christian, though not being under the Mosaic law, the set of commands that are part of Mosaic covenant, upholds the transcendent moral requirements that are included in that law (e.g., Rom. 13:8-10; 1 Cor. 10:14; Eph. 6:2). It is this ongoing moral law centered in love that is the "law of Christ" mentioned in 1 Cor. 9:21 (see also, Gal. 6:2 with 5:14).

c. So Paul and other inspired writers can cite commands from the Mosaic law as something Christians are obligated to obey. A classic example is Paul commanding children in Eph. 6:2 to "honor your father and mother," quoting from the Ten Commandments in Ex. 20:12 and Deut. 5:16. The Ten Commandments also are reflected in New Testament commands and prohibitions against idolatry, swearing of oaths, murder, adultery, stealing, slandering, lying, and coveting. Indeed, there are literally hundreds of commands in the New Testament issued by Spirit-inspired writers, many of which are rooted in the Old Testament.

d. An important point to note is that commands in the Mosaic law are not applicable *as Mosaic law*, that is, by virtue of being in the Mosaic law. Rather, they are applicable because they are universal moral desires of God that were included in the Mosaic law. And because those eternal desires were articulated for the people of Israel in the Mosaic law, one can cite that articulation of God's universal desire as a Christian requirement. That does not mean the Mosaic law or the old covenant are still in effect. It means only that the Mosaic law included articulations of divine moral desires that preceded their embodiment in the Mosaic law and that continue after that set of laws was rendered inoperative.

3. If instead of using their freedom to render loving service to one another they misuse it to attack one another, as may have been occurring in the wake of the agitating Judaizers, they run the risk of spiritually destroying one another. If the community of faith devolves into a warzone of anger, dissension, and hostility, the faith of brothers and sisters becomes a casualty; they are destroyed spiritually.

### *B. Walk by the Spirit, not the flesh (5:16-18)*

**<sup>16</sup>So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will in no way carry out the desires of the flesh. <sup>17</sup>For the flesh desires [things] contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit [desires things] contrary to the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, so that you may not do whatever you want. <sup>18</sup>But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.**

1. The key to avoiding the kind of sinful, spiritually destructive behavior he just mentioned is to be walking by the Spirit, to be living in a way determined by the Spirit, "who directs and empowers Christian living" (Moo, 353). If they continue to do that, they will not carry out the desires of the flesh because the desires of the flesh and the desires of the Spirit are opposed to each other. So yielding to the empowering Spirit means they will be victorious over the impulses of the flesh – they will not live according to them.

2. The Judaizers probably claimed that immoral living was the only alternative to submitting to the Mosaic law, but Paul says that is a false dilemma. Moral living does not require the applicability of that body of laws. Indeed, the power of the Spirit who is freely available by faith in the new covenant *enhances* moral living, living in the way God intends his people to live. Paul's gospel is not one of moral license, one that rejects moral obligations.



3. He adds in v. 17d that this fundamental opposition of Spirit and flesh means they are not two equivalent paths that leave Christians free to do whatever they wish in terms of which to pursue. It's not "tit for tat" or "six of one, half a dozen of the other." Rather, the fact they are opposed to each other means one is right and the other is not, and Christians are obligated to yield to the Spirit.

4. He adds that the choice to walk by the Spirit, to be led by the Spirit, is available only to those who are not under the Mosaic law. He says, "But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law," the converse implication being that if you are under the law, you are not led by the Spirit. As I have said, seeking in the era of the new covenant to relate to God under the old covenant is to resort to the flesh in the sense it leaves one standing before God on the basis of human effort, on the basis of one's obedience to the Mosaic commands (the sacrificial elements of that covenant no longer being recognized). Paul here indicates that doing so leaves one without the Spirit, which is consistent with his earlier indications that the Judaizers are damned; they have no relationship with God and thus do not have the Spirit whose presence is a hallmark of a that relationship.

### *C. Living by the flesh (5:19-21)*

**<sup>19</sup>Now the works of the flesh are obvious, which are: sexual immorality, impurity, licentiousness, <sup>20</sup>idolatry, sorcery, hostilities, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambitions, dissensions, factions, <sup>21</sup>outbreaks of envy, instances of drunkenness, acts of revelry, and such things as these. I tell you these things beforehand, even as I previously told you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.**

1. Paul declares that the actions of the flesh, those deeds that are opposed to the Spirit, are *obvious*. Schreiner remarks (p. 346), "those things that issue from the flesh are obvious and clear to anyone with an ounce of discernment." They are a matter of common human knowledge, part of the law of the heart that is tied to mankind being made in the image of God.

a. As I explained earlier, mankind was guilty of sin before the Mosaic law was given based on its innate or intuitive knowledge of core moral principles and the additional moral principles that followed from that core. The flood of Noah's day and the culpability of Gentiles after the Mosaic law testifies to the fact they were under moral obligations despite not having a law, a body of express commandments. Paul writes in Rom. 2:14-15b: "For whenever Gentiles who do not have the law by nature do the things of the law, these not having the law are a law to themselves. <sup>15</sup>They show the work of the law written in their hearts, as their consciences and commonly held thoughts also testify . . ."

b. So the Mosaic law is not necessary to know core moral principles and their derivatives. We can seek to suppress those principles and refuse to acknowledge them, but as

philosopher J. Budziszewski and other have argued, "we cannot not know" the core principles. Against the modern claim that knowledge of core moral truths has been obliterated so that we truly are ignorant of right and wrong and are blamelessly doing our best to find moral truths, Budziszewski writes (["The Revenge of Conscience"](#)):

All this sounds persuasive, yet it is precisely what the older tradition, the natural law tradition, denies. We do know better; we are not doing the best we can. The problem of moral decline is volitional, not cognitive; it has little to do with knowledge. By and large we do know right from wrong, but wish we didn't. We only make believe we are searching for truth – so that we can do wrong, condone wrong, or suppress our remorse for having done wrong in the past.

If the traditional view is true, then our decline is owed not to moral ignorance but to moral suppression. We aren't untutored, but "in denial." We don't lack moral knowledge; we hold it down.

c. That resonates with the human *modus operandi* described in Rom. 1:18-19. Paul there writes: "For the wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who *suppress the truth in unrighteousness*, <sup>19</sup>because what is knowable of God is evident among them, for God displayed it to them."

2. As a reminder of what works of the flesh look like, Paul gives some examples of things that are contrary to the desires of God's Spirit and thus have no place in the life of a Christian. Engaging in these things is wrong, sinful, despite the fact Christians are not under the Mosaic law. That they are illustrative and not exhaustive is clear from the statement "and such things as these."

3. The specific examples are provided in vv. 19b-21a.

a. Sexual sins are specified by the terms sexual immorality, impurity, and licentiousness. Schreiner states (p. 346), "We need to remember in a vice list that the terms used are not necessarily sharply distinguished from one another, and hence there is overlap among the three words that designate sexual sin here. Indeed, Paul uses the same three terms (with a different order) to designate sexual sin in 2 Cor 12:21."

(1) Sexual immorality – The word translated "sexual immorality" is *porneia*, regarding which Sam Storms wrote in his article "[The Problem of 'Porneia'](#)":

Every Greek lexicon or dictionary of the NT is in agreement, that *porneia* refers to any form of sexual activity before or outside the relationship of monogamous marriage between a man and a woman. It can refer to pre-marital sex, adultery, homosexual practice, prostitution, bestiality, and all other expressions of sexual activity outside the marital relationship between a husband and wife. . . . If you want to continue living in unrepentant sexual sin, call yourself culturally

sophisticated, call yourself socially liberated, call yourself in step with changing times. Just don't call yourself a Christian.

Douglas Moo comments (p. 359):

The Greco-Roman world in which Paul was proclaiming the gospel was noted for considerable "openness" in sexual matters, and so he and the other early Christian evangelists specially emphasized that conversion means a fundamentally new orientation to sexual habits. See, for example, 1 Thess. 4:3: "It is God's will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality" (and also 1 Cor. 5:1; 6:13-18).

(2) Impurity – Here it refers to moral impurity rather than an outward ritualistic impurity (such as from touching a corpse), and more specifically, to a moral impurity in the sexual realm. It often has this meaning in Paul (e.g., Rom. 1:24; 2 Cor. 12:21; Eph. 5:3; Col. 3:5; 1 Thess. 4:7). It is another broad term that overlaps with *porneia*.

(3) Licentiousness – This word characterizes wild, unrestrained living. Schreiner states (p. 346), "[It] is also a common word used for sexual sin (Mark 7:22; Rom 13:13; 2 Cor 12:21; 1 Pet 4:3; 2 Pet 2:2, 7, 18; Jude 4) and emphasizes the lack of restraint and unbridled passion of sexual license. It "throws off all restraint and flaunts itself."

b. Sins of religion are mentioned in v. 20: idolatry and sorcery/witchcraft. Idolatry is worshiping anything apart from the one true God, and sorcery/witchcraft is a secret tampering with and at times worship of the powers of evil to manipulate them for a desired outcome.

c. Sins of division are mentioned in vv. 20-21a. Since these community-disrupting sins, sins that foment discord, dominate the list, it seems Paul is particularly concerned about the division that has been sown in the Galatian churches. Again, "[t]he terms overlap in meaning so that we cannot always distinguish sharply how one term differs from another" (Schreiner, 347).

(1) Hostilities – These are actions based in animosity that are intended in some way to harm the other person.

(2) Discord – This "characterizes the unprofitable and self-oriented bickering that erupts between rival factions (1 Cor. 1:11; 3:3; cf. Phil. 1:15; 1 Tim. 6:4; Titus 3:9; cf. also 2 Cor. 12:20 [a vice list])" (Moo, 360).

(3) Jealousy – This is resenting someone for something they have and wanting it for yourself or simply wanting them to be deprived of it. That attitude easily manifests in divisive ways.

(4) Fits of rage – Such outbursts of anger stir alienation and resentment and can damage relationships beyond repair.

(5) Selfish ambitions – This is desiring exaltation for personal interest. Self-promotion generates the kind of negative interaction we see in politics, where competitors are put down and maneuvered against and one constantly seeks to one-up the other.

(6) Dissensions – These are inappropriate separations in heart or spirit within the community of faith. As I view them, they are the attitudinal predicate for actual factions.

(7) Factions – These are more formally conceived parties within the community of faith. The separation and lines have become more pronounced.

(8) Outbreaks of envy – Envy is difficult to distinguish from the negative use of jealousy that Paul employed earlier, but the plural may express specific actions motivated by that spirit. Such things will tear a community apart.

#### d. Sins of alcohol

(1) Instances of drunkenness – This is self-explanatory. As Bruce observes (p. 249-250), drunkenness "weakens people's rational and moral control over their words and actions." The damage that drunkenness has done to mankind truly is staggering.

(2) Acts of revelry – This refers to what we would call "partying," a word that carries a sense of unrestrained indulgence in intoxicants and the associated immoral conduct.

4. Far from being a proponent of moral license, as though Christians are free from moral obligations, Paul repeats for them in v. 21b what he had told them before: those who practice such things, who use their freedom from the Mosaic law to indulge the flesh in the kind of objective ways he has specified, will not inherit the kingdom of God. They will not enter into the consummated kingdom at Christ's return; rather, they will be cast out with the unbelievers on that Day. Moo comments (p. 363):

As we note from the texts quoted above, Paul uses the language of "inheriting the kingdom" to describe the believer's eschatological hope. In keeping with these other texts, the warning here in Galatians underscores an important element in Paul's view of this inheritance. While promised by God and secured apart from the law by our faith and through the Spirit's provision (3:18; 4:28-31; cf. 5:2-5), the inheritance of God's kingdom will not come to those who continue to manifest "the works of the flesh" in their lives. In light of NT teaching elsewhere and Paul's own blunt appraisal of continuing sinfulness among the holy people of God, this does not mean that the kingdom is reserved only for the sinless. But it does

mean that a consistent preoccupation with these sins resulting in a life marked by them rather than by the fruit of the Spirit reveals that such a person is not "being led by the Spirit." Clear NT warnings of the necessity of putting away sin in order to gain eternal life (see also esp., Rom. 8:12-13) must not be swept under the carpet by a one-sided and unbiblical understanding of "justification by faith alone."

#### *D. Living by the Spirit (5:22-26)*

**<sup>22</sup>But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, <sup>23</sup>gentleness, and self-control. The law is not against such things, <sup>24</sup>and those who belong to Christ [Jesus] have crucified the flesh with the passions and the desires [it has]. <sup>25</sup>If we live by the Spirit, let us also follow the Spirit. <sup>26</sup>Let us not become conceited, challenging one another, envying one another.**

1. In contrast to the works of the flesh, the embracing of which correlates with a denial of the eternal inheritance, Paul lists qualities and characteristics that the Spirit produces in the life of the Christian who walks by the Spirit, who yields to the Spirit's leading. McKnight states (p. 271):

The image of fruit has a certain sense of passivity to it, it is the Spirit of God who produces such things, and they grow in the life of the Christian.

However, while this may be one reason for the change of terms [from 'works' of the flesh to 'fruit' of the Spirit], it is also clear that Paul sees evil as having fruit (6:8) and thinks that the Christian is responsible to let the Spirit be operative in his or her life. Note that Paul shoulders the responsibility of the Spirit's fruit onto the Christian: "have crucified their flesh" (v. 24), "let us keep in step" (v. 25), and "let us not become conceited" (v. 26) – not to mention verses 13, 16, and 18.

2. Though some read significance into the fact "fruit" is singular, I am with those (e.g., Moo, 363) who think it more likely serves as a collective noun that encompasses the multiple expressions. Specific examples of the fruit of the Spirit are given in vv. 22-23. This is an illustrative portrait of a Spirit-led life.

a. Love is first on the list, probably by design. It is the center of Christian ethics, the paramount quality of Christian character.

(1) Love for others, a sacrificial commitment to their welfare, fulfills the Mosaic law, meaning it is expressed in ways that fulfill the interpersonal commands of that law. Paul states in Rom. 13:8-10: "Owe nothing to anyone except the [well known] to love one another; for the one who loves the other has fulfilled the law. <sup>9</sup>For the [well known] "You shall not commit adultery," "You shall not murder," "You shall not steal," "You shall not covet," and if there is any other commandment, it is summed up in this word, in the [command]: "You shall love your

neighbor as yourself." <sup>10</sup>Love does not work evil against a neighbor. Therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law."

(2) In the famous passage in 1 Corinthians, Paul fleshes out the nature of Christian love where the Corinthians' conduct regarding spiritual gifts was exposing a lack of such love. He writes in 1 Cor. 13:4-7: "Love is patient; love is kind; it does not envy; [love] does not boast; it is not puffed up; <sup>5</sup>it does not behave shamefully; it does not seek its own things; it is not provoked to anger; it does not take account of evil; <sup>6</sup>it does not rejoice over injustice but rejoices together in the truth; <sup>7</sup>it puts up with all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things."

b. Unlike in the Greco-Roman world where joy was generally understood as an emotion closely associated with pleasure, Christian joy is deeper and more stable. Moo writes (p. 364), "In Paul, however, 'joy' is a settled state of mind that arises from a sense of God's love for us, produced by the Spirit (1 Thess. 1:6) and that exists even in the face of difficulties and trials (2 Cor. 7:4; 1 Thess. 1:6)." Schreiner states (p. 349), "Believers are called upon to rejoice in all circumstances (1 Thess. 5:16), trusting that God is working in all things together for their good. Sorrow is the portion of believers in this life, but even sorrow is mingled with joy (2 Cor 6:10) since God grants grace even in the deepest of pain."

c. Peace here may be both personal and communal. It may encompass the peace of heart one experiences from the Spirit-given assurance that one is at peace with God and the state of peace among believers that flows from the Spirit-induced attitudes that are conducive to such peace. Certainly love, as described in 1 Cor. 13:4-7, will generate peace in the community.

d. Patience here probably refers to maintaining "gentleness in the face of others' failures or slights, a slowness to take offense or, especially, vengeance" (deSilva, 467, citing Fee). This is "an attitude both God the Father and Christ display toward sinful creatures (Rom. 2:4; 9:22; 1 Pet. 3:20; 1 Tim. 1:16; 2 Pet. 3:15)" (Moo, 365), and the Spirit produces it in our lives.

e. Kindness has been paraphrased by someone as "the art of being a dear." David deSilva (p. 467) calls it "the disposition to treat others well, to help them if possible, to be a harbor for them in the midst of a stormy life."

f. Goodness refers to an overall moral excellence. Schreiner remarks (p. 350), "Those who have the Spirit of God are strengthened to live lives of moral beauty, and their decency shines forth in a world blighted by evil."

g. Faithfulness here means reliability and trustworthiness. It is the quality that makes one the kind of person in whom confidence can be placed, a person on whom one can depend. Schreiner comments (p. 350), "Those led by the Spirit are loyal and dependable, and one can count on them to fulfill their responsibilities."

h. Gentleness refers to treating people with a proper sensitivity for their feelings. There are times when love demands righteous anger and forceful confrontation, but the Christian's default mode is gentleness. Those transformed by the Spirit are not callous toward people that they just as soon filet them and bandage them. This is obviously an important quality in terms of community harmony.

i. Self-control is the ability to control one's desires and passions. Schreiner states (p. 350), "Those who have self-control are able to restrain themselves unlike those who are dominated by the desires of the flesh." So as one yields to the Spirit in one's life, he not only produces godly qualities but also enables and empowers one to resist the pull of base impulses.

3. Though 5:23b is routinely translated "Against such things there is no law," it can just as properly be rendered "The law is not against such things," as in CSB (see Moo, 366. n. 12). And I think that better captures Paul's thought.

a. On the one hand, Paul says (v. 23b) the Mosaic law does not prohibit having and expressing the qualities that characterize the Spirit-led (i.e., Christian) life. On the other hand, he says (v. 24) that Christians in their conversion, in their decision to share in Christ's crucifixion, have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. In other words, they have, at least by intent, put to death what generates the kinds of sins enumerated in vv. 19-21, works that are contrary to the law.

b. So the (presumed) claim of the Judaizers that dispensing with the Mosaic law will lead Christians into rampant immorality, to living contrary to the moral vision laid out in the law, is wrong. As he indicated in Gal. 5:14 (see also, Rom. 13:10), the whole law is *fulfilled* in a life of love, and the Spirit directs and empowers Christians to live such a life. Paul later writes in Rom. 3:31, "Do we, then, nullify the law through the faith? Absolutely not! Rather, *we uphold the law.*" In other words, though not being under the Mosaic law, Christians live in accordance with the eternal moral desires of God. Those desires existed before the Mosaic law (and being known innately or intuitively – the law of the heart – were the basis of sin before the law), were then embodied in the Mosaic law, and continue after the obsolescence of the Mosaic law.

4. If they have been made alive by the Spirit, have been "born again" by his work of regeneration, as all Christians have, their conduct should fall in line with the Spirit. Particularly relevant to the Galatians, this means they should not become conceited, challenging and envying one another. They should yield to his transforming work in this area of interpersonal relations.

### *E. Helping the erring brother (6:1-6)*

**Brothers, if a person should be caught in some transgression, you who are spiritual must restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness -- though watch yourself, lest you also be tempted. <sup>2</sup>Bear one another's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ. <sup>3</sup>For if anyone**

**thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself. <sup>4</sup>But let each man test his own work, and then only in himself will he have cause for pride, not in the other man, <sup>5</sup>for each man will bear his own load. <sup>6</sup>And let the one who receives instruction in the word share in all good things with the one who instructs.**

1. If a brother or sister should succumb to the flesh and get tangled up in some transgression, some violation of the revealed will of God, Paul commands those who are spiritual to restore the wayward saint in a spirit of gentleness. He commands the "what," the "who" and the "how."

a. The "what" that *must* be done – it is a command, an imperative – is to restore the fellow believer who gets entrapped in some sin. Ignoring it is not an option. The wayward Christian is to be restored to spiritual health and vitality, meaning he or she is to be brought to repentance and set back on the road of sanctified living. They are to be restored to the state they were in before they got caught up in the sin.

b. The "who" that are to do the restoring are those who are "spiritual." He is not referring to some elite group of "super Christians." As he has explained, the norm is that Christians are "spiritual," meaning they have the Spirit and live Spirit-led lives. Those succumbing to the flesh are atypical, people not characteristic of the community. So "spiritual" does not distinguish some elite group from the rest but "normal Christians" from those indulging the flesh.

(1) We are indeed our brother's keeper, and love demands that we not ignore their spiritual plight just because our culture teaches that no one has a right to hold anyone else accountable for anything. That is not Christianity.

(2) Of course, if they refuse to be restored, if they insist on persisting in their sin, they ultimately must be disfellowshipped, as Scripture makes clear in texts like Mat. 18:15-17 and 1 Cor. 5:1-5. I think Timothy George is spot on in stating (p. 412):

It is a sign of the spiritual stupor that has befallen the body of Christ that church discipline is seldom if ever raised as a viable concern in evangelical churches today. Historically, the practice of discipline served a twofold function in the Free Church tradition: it aimed at restoring the lapsed brother or sister to full fellowship if possible, and it marked off clearly the boundaries between the church and its envioning culture. In both of these ways, discipline helped preserve the purity of the church's witness in the world. The loss of this historic distinctive has resulted in the crisis of spirituality that pervades so much of our church life today.

c. The "how" of the restoration is in a spirit of gentleness. There is no place for harshness, insensitivity, or a desire to wound. We should correct as mildly as possible. Timothy George comments (p. 412):



Restoration cannot be accomplished without confrontation, and this may require firm words and a stern rebuke. Yet even – especially! – in these cases, Luther's advice to a pastor charged with setting a lapsed brother back on the right path should be heeded: "Run unto him, and reaching out your hand, raise him up again, comfort him with sweet words, and embrace him in motherly arms."

2. He warns that that in doing the restoration they watch themselves lest they also be tempted. Judging from vv. 3-4, he probably has in mind their being tempted with self-righteousness or pride because of the absence of that sin in their lives. There also may be a temptation to get pulled into the sin one is correcting.

3. Restoring a straying brother or sister is one way in which we bear one another's burdens. And bearing one another's burdens, helping them in the difficulties of life, is a way of fulfilling the law of Christ because that law encompasses the various specific obligations that come under the umbrella command to love. Burden-bearing is part of loving, and love is the center of Christian ethics. Moo comments (p. 378):

[W]e think Paul's phrase "the law of Christ" refers, in direct counterpart to "the law of Moses," to the broadly ethical demand of the gospel. R. Longenecker (1990: 275-76) summarizes it especially well: "prescriptive principles stemming from the heart of the gospel (usually embodied in the example and teachings of Jesus), which are meant to be applied to specific situations by the direction and enablement of the Holy Spirit, being always motivated and conditioned by love."

4. Paul reinforces the connection between bearing others' burdens and the law of Christ ("For") by declaring in v. 3 that if anyone thinks he is something (though in fact he is nothing) and thus considers himself above bearing the burdens of others, he deceives himself. Instead of judging himself relatively and getting puffed up over how he compares to another person, he needs to judge himself objectively in the light of God's expectations, for that is how God will assess his life on the day of judgment. Each person will bring his own life before God, not that of others.

5. Speaking of erring brothers and correction, Paul mentions in v. 6 that those who instruct the church, those who guide the group in God's ways, are entitled to support from those who receive that instruction (see, 1 Cor. 9:3-14; 1 Tim. 5:18). Christian teaching is a time-consuming occupation that deserves financial or material compensation.

#### *F. Final exhortation to sow to the Spirit (6:7-10)*

**<sup>7</sup>Do not be deceived: God is not mocked. For whatever a man sows, this also he will reap.**

**<sup>8</sup>For the one who sows to his own flesh, from the flesh shall reap destruction, but the one who sows to the Spirit, from the Spirit shall reap eternal life. <sup>9</sup>So let us not grow weary in doing**

**good, for at the proper time we shall reap a harvest if we do not give up. <sup>10</sup>Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, but especially to the members of the household of the faith.**

1. Paul warns them solemnly to make no mistake in the matter. We cannot with impunity mock God, that is, treat his will for our lives as a joke. The one who chooses to live in the flesh, to live a life opposed to the Spirit, will be condemned. On the other hand, the one who chooses to live by the Spirit will receive eternal life.

a. Schreiner states (p. 369): "Paul's gospel of grace in Galatians does not countenance moral laxity. Righteousness is not based on works, but those who do not practice good works will not receive the final inheritance. The Pauline gospel of grace does not provide a foundation for license." He adds (n. 15), "In Paul's theology obedience is necessary for salvation and the evidence of salvation but never the basis of salvation."

b. McKnight states (pp. 287-288):

What Paul is saying is what I have said on numerous occasions in this book: while works do not save us, no one is saved without works. Why? Very simply, because works are the sure indicators of a person's heart, orientation, and status before God. Every judgment in the Bible is a judgment according to works (cf. Matt. 7:13-27; 16:27; 22:1-14; 25:1-46; 2 Cor. 5:10; Rev. 20:11-15). A person's final standing before God will be determined by that person's relationship to Jesus Christ as revealed in his or her works. While it is absolutely true that our grounds of acceptance is the sacrifice Jesus Christ made on our behalf, our connection to that sacrifice is by way of a faith that works itself out in many good works in a person's life.

So Paul speaks of "doing good," because doing good is what it means to sow "to please the Spirit."

2. We must not grow weary in doing good, in yielding to the Spirit's work in our lives, for we will reap that harvest of eternal life if we do not give up. Note that there is effort involved in doing good, as it is something in which we can grow weary. We must repeatedly choose to give expression to the Spirit in our lives, to let him have his way with us.

3. As a result, we need to do good to *all* people, not only to brothers and sisters, but we need to do good *especially* to brothers and sisters. It is right and necessary to offer loving care and assistance to all people as we are able, but there is a priority on helping fellow Christians. Timothy George notes (p. 428), "This is not merely a recognition of the general maxim that 'charity begins at home' but rather an affirmation of the supernatural bond that obtains among all those who belong to the household of faith."

## X. Concluding Comments and Greeting (6:11-18)

### A. Judaizers' motives contrasted to his (6:11-16)

**<sup>11</sup>See in what large letters I write to you with my own hand! <sup>12</sup>As many as want to make a good showing in the flesh, these are the ones who compel you to be circumcised, only so that they may not be persecuted for the cross of Christ. <sup>13</sup>For not even those who are circumcised themselves keep the law, but they want you to be circumcised so that they may boast about your flesh. <sup>14</sup>But may I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me and I to the world. <sup>15</sup>For neither circumcision nor uncircumcision is anything, but new creation [matters]. <sup>16</sup>And as many as will follow this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, upon the Israel of God.**

1. Most take the aorist verb (*egrapsa*) as an "epistolary aorist" that is rendered as a present tense and believe Paul at this point takes the reed pen from his secretary (*amanuensis*) and writes the remainder of the letter in his own hand as a kind of authentication of the letter. We know Paul used an *amanuensis* in writing some letters (e.g., Tertius identifies himself in Rom. 16:22), but it is possible he wrote the entire letter to the Galatians personally (see most recently, deSilva, 502-505). In any event, the import of the large letters is unclear. Perhaps that simply was an identifying mark of Paul's handwriting, the way he wrote, so he calls attention to it as confirmation that he is indeed writing it himself, or perhaps he was calling them to pay special heed to his final thoughts.

2. Paul refers to the Judaizers as those who want to make a good showing in the flesh, meaning they want to impress people with their zeal for circumcision. He says they compel the Galatians to be circumcised only to avoid being persecuted for the cross of Christ. In other words, though the cross of Christ brought salvation apart from the Mosaic law, they continue to bind that law so as not to be persecuted for that law-freeing consequence of the cross.

3. Their desire to avoid this persecution is evident in the fact they do not keep the law completely, as would be necessary to relate to God on that basis, but they still want the Galatians to be circumcised so they can boast about the Galatians' flesh. In other words, they want to use the fact of the Galatians' circumcision to avoid being persecuted by the Zealot sect within Judaism for fraternizing with Gentiles.

4. Paul, on the other hand, is interested in boasting about nothing but the cross of Christ! Through the crucified Christ, Paul's connection with the world had been radically altered in that he no longer danced to the tune of this fallen realm of sin, death, and evil; he was no longer subject to its lures and threats. He was focused on Christ and was not going to allow anything to turn him from his calling.

5. He explains this radical reorientation of his perspective by rephrasing it in v. 15. In light of Christ's sacrifice, the distinction between circumcision and uncircumcision that mattered

in the old, pre-cross age, no longer has any salvific relevance. Christ's coming was "game changing," as we might say; the old state of affairs has ended. What matters is the new creation, the radically new (albeit presently nonobvious) state of affairs that Christ has brought about, which at his return will reach its full and ultimate manifestation. Schreiner states (p. 379):

What is remarkable is that circumcision is assigned to the old world order, the old creation rather than the new creation. The law is part of the old age, while the cross inaugurates the new age. The centrality of the new creation functions as an envelope with the introduction to the letter, where the death of Christ delivers from the present evil age (1:4). The new creation has dawned, in other words, through the cross of Christ.

6. Paul asks for peace and mercy on all who will follow this rule, meaning on all who will accept the preeminence of the new creation and in so doing reject the salvific relevance of the circumcision/uncircumcision distinction. The last clause in v. 16 is best taken as epexegetical, meaning it identifies Christians, the church, as the Israel of God. There is *ethnic* Israel (physical descendants of Abraham), *true* Israel (physical descendants of Abraham who emulate his faith by accepting Jesus as Messiah), and *new* Israel (true Israel with the ingrafted Gentile believers).

### *B. His suffering for the name (6:17)*

**<sup>17</sup>Finally, let no one cause me difficulties; for I bear on my body the marks of Jesus!**

1. Paul warns that no one should cause him difficulties, referring to the advocacy and embrace of the Judaizers' doctrine. These heretics were dragging the old covenant into the new creation.

2. He grounds this warning in the fact he bares on his body the marks of Jesus. In other words, the scars and disfigurement from the sufferings he experienced as an apostle serve as a kind of tattoo or mark of Christ's ownership of him. They distinguish him from the Judaizers who had no such marks because they avoided persecution for the cross by denying its law-freeing consequence, by denying its inauguration of the new creation.

### *C. Final greeting (6:18)*

**<sup>18</sup>May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brothers. Amen.**

This is a familiar prayer for the Lord's grace, but the addition of "brothers" is unique. Moo notes (p. 405), "Perhaps Paul has added it to emphasize one last time that the Gentile Galatian believers, along with the Jewish believers, belong to one spiritual family."