

- In all of Paul's letters, there is no more passionate defense of the Gospel than the letter to the Galatians
 - Galatia describes not a city but a region in present-day Southern Turkey
 - This region was a place Paul traveled during all three of his missionary journeys
 - In fact, traveling through Galatia was required when headed to Greece or Rome from Judea
 - Among the cities of Galatia Paul visited in the book of Acts were Antioch, Derbe, Lystra and Iconium
 - Paul probably wrote this letter shortly after his first missionary journey and probably just after the Council of Jerusalem in AD 49, making it one of Paul's earlier letters
 - You may remember that the Council of Jerusalem was a meeting of Peter and Paul, among others, to resolve how the Jewish church and Gentile church were to coexist
 - In the earliest days of the church, Christians were Jewish and Samaritan
 - But after Paul began his ministry, the church quickly became Gentile
 - This caused significant friction leading to some compromises intended to ease the integration of Gentiles
 - That experience was an important moment in church history, and we'll see why in Chapter 2 of this letter
- After each missionary trip through the region, Paul would return to either Jerusalem or to his home base in Antioch of Syria
 - And that's probably where Paul was when he wrote this letter
 - While there, Paul hears that Jews who claimed to be Christian were moving throughout the region of Galatia spreading false teaching
 - We call these men Judaizers, because the core of their message was that a Gentile must become a Jew to be saved
 - Furthermore, they said that even after one receives Christ, a Gentile must continue in observing the Law of Moses
 - Like the Gnostics (which we studied in Jude's and John's letters), this teaching had the potential to corrupt the church and undermine the spread of the Gospel
 - Naturally, Paul was concerned for the wellbeing of his children in faith, so he writes this letter to counter those false teachers
- Galatians is a relatively simple letter
 - Its focus is to defend the true Gospel of grace
 - More specifically, Paul writes to accomplish three goals:
 - First, to defend his authority in the face of the attacks by these false teachers
 - Secondly, to defend salvation by grace through faith alone
 - Finally, to encourage Galatian believers to stand firm in the truth they had

received by Paul's instruction

Gal. 1:1 Paul, an apostle (not sent from men nor through the agency of man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised Him from the dead), Gal. 1:2 and all the brethren who are with me, To the churches of Galatia: Gal. 1:3 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, Gal. 1:4 who gave Himself for our sins so that He might rescue us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, Gal. 1:5 to whom be the glory forevermore. Amen.

- Right away, we see Paul introducing his themes in his salutation
 - Paul's salutation follows very conventional Greek practice in the day
 - Letters in this day began with a certain pattern
 - Like we begin with "Dear..." or "To Whom It May Concern..."
 - First, there was a statement of the writer's identity
 - Secondly, the audience of the letter was identified
 - Finally, a statement of greeting was offered (often just the word "greeting")
 - Paul identifies himself as Paul, the apostle
 - This introduces Paul's first purpose in writing the letter
 - He is defending his apostolic authority
- Most of his letters include a statement of his apostleship, and there is a good reason why Paul often begins his letter this way
 - No apostle saw his authority questioned more than Paul
 - The twelve apostles were unique in having served Jesus while in the flesh
 - Paul never had the privilege
 - Furthermore, Paul was well known as the man who persecuted the church during its early years
 - The first Christian martyr fell at Paul's feet
 - So Paul's adversaries took every opportunity to cast doubt on his authority to teach doctrine
 - Lastly, Paul's teaching on the meaning of the Gospel and fundamental doctrines of the faith were far beyond what other apostles were teaching in the day
 - Paul was given knowledge to share with the church that no other apostle received, including those who accompanied Jesus
 - So his critics made a case that his position of authority was one he took upon himself or which other men granted him
 - And they said Paul's ideas were so far beyond anyone else's teaching

- Even the apostle Peter acknowledged that Paul was in a league of his own when it came to revealing God's word, when Peter said:

2Pet. 3:15 and regard the patience of our Lord as salvation; just as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given him, wrote to you, 2Pet. 3:16 as also in all his letters, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which the untaught and unstable distort, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures, to their own destruction.

- So as Paul begins the greetings in most of his letters, he takes extra effort to remind his audiences that his apostleship was no less authentic than any other
 - Paul was appointed to his position as an apostle by Christ personally, he says
 - Which is the way every apostle gained his office
 - The criteria to be an apostle is that you have been appointed by Christ in person and called by Him to be His apostle
 - The twelve received that calling before Jesus died
 - And Paul received it after Jesus was resurrected
 - And Paul was sent by God the Father and the Son with the message he delivered
 - If we accept that Paul was called by Jesus personally
 - And if he was sent by God to bring a message
 - Then we must also accept that his message is consistent with God's will
 - I suspect that the book of Acts is in the canon largely to validate Paul's calling and teaching
 - Much in the same way that Jesus' ministry is explained and validated in the four Gospels
 - Paul's ministry is explained and validated by the record of Acts
- The next thing Paul introduces in his salutation in vs.3-4 is a defense of the Gospel of grace
 - He states that we are saved from our sins by Christ giving Himself for us
 - Simply put, we were saved by grace, God's unmerited favor
 - And that grace gave us peace with God, Paul says
 - And that grace came as a matter of the will of God
 - This is the salvation Paul preached everywhere
 - Salvation is a matter of God's grace alone and nothing else
 - If someone claims that any work is required for salvation, they have changed the message and distorted the gospel
 - Men receive grace, men receive peace, men receive salvation

- Men do not earn it
- Men do not retain it
- Men do not even ask for it
- Finally, Paul introduces his final theme that Christians are to stand firm in the peace that comes from the true gospel
 - In vs4-5 Paul says that the true Gospel also rescues us from the evil of this present age
 - When we receive the Gospel, we are born again
 - That spiritual change separates us from the sin of the world, the deadness of the world, the ignorance of the world
 - We are set apart from that evil even as we live around it
 - Secondly, we are set apart in our future destiny
 - We are rescued from the judgment this world will experience
 - We will not share in that fate
 - Now notice, if God's grace has rescued us from the world around us and from the judgment to come, then what more is required than grace?
 - That's Paul's point
 - The Gospel of grace grants us everything we need for our life both now and to come
 - It is the source of our sanctification and justification
 - Nothing else is required
- So having reminded the church of what it means to receive the Gospel, Paul then lobbs a cannonball across their bow...

Gal. 1:6 I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel;

Gal. 1:7 which is really not another; only there are some who are disturbing you and want to distort the gospel of Christ.

Gal. 1:8 But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed!

Gal. 1:9 As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to what you received, he is to be accursed!

- Paul opens with a rebuke asking how they departed so quickly from the truth he delivered
 - He says he's amazed, which is the Greek word *thaumazo*
 - It means to marvel or wonder
 - Paul simply can't believe they have changed their view of the Gospel so easily

- Notice Paul says the church is deserting Christ
 - Paul will speak in these terms at several points in this letter
 - To abandon the Gospel is to abandon Christ
- They are abandoning the One Who called them by grace
- Where are they turning?
 - Paul says they are turning to a different Gospel
 - And to be clear, Paul adds that a different Gospel is really not another gospel
 - The word gospel in Greek means glad tidings or good news
 - So Paul says a different Gospel is not good news at all
- In all our studies of false teaching in the Jude and John letters, we've noted time and again that false teachers always attack at the heart of the faith
 - They bring an alternative preaching or Gospel
 - Whereas the true apostles made the Gospel the center of all their preaching, false teachers make some other point their focus
 - Instead of salvation from hell, they offer salvation from poverty
 - Instead of repairing a dead spirit, they want to repair our physical bodies
 - They substitute a different outcome for the one the true Gospel offers
 - They aren't preaching that we become saved by faith in Jesus Christ and then the Lord may choose to bless us with wealth, health, etc.
 - They set aside the issue of sin and the need for eternal salvation altogether and move to other topics
 - And any message that substitutes for the true Gospel is a false Gospel
- So when we use the word "Gospel," what truth are we describing?
 - Can we all describe in a few sentences what the Gospel really is?
 - Shouldn't every Christian be able to explain the Gospel succinctly?
 - Otherwise, we are ripe for someone to convince us that the Gospel is something other than what it truly is
 - After all, Paul was amazed how quickly they abandoned the Gospel in Galatia
 - Proving that it's easy to succumb to a false message if we are not continually reminded of the truth
 - Therefore, we have to know what the Gospel is before we can know what it isn't
 - In short, the Gospel is the message of salvation, the good news that men may be forgiven of their sins and reconciled to God
 - It is a message centered on the Person and work of Jesus Christ
 - And it comes in two distinct parts
 - First, the Gospel message begins with repentance from dead works

- Repentance is a work that God Himself accomplishes in the hearts of those He saves
- This godly repentance leads a person to a turn away from a life apart from God
 - To turn from the sin of unbelief
 - To acknowledge the need for salvation
- Elsewhere Paul teaches this repentance is a product of God's will

2Cor. 7:10 For the sorrow that is according to the will of God produces a repentance without regret, leading to salvation, but the sorrow of the world produces death.

- Secondly, the Gospel proclaims we are saved by faith in Jesus Christ which is also given to us by grace
 - We believe and confess Jesus is Lord, that He died to pay the debt for our sin
 - And He was resurrected to demonstrate His power over death
 - Elsewhere Paul explains that this faith is also a product of God's grace

Eph. 2:8 For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God;

Eph. 2:9 not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.

- So by God's grace, we are brought to our knees in recognition of our sin before God
- Yet by that same grace we are made to stand by faith in the righteousness of Christ
- This is the true Gospel...nothing more, nothing less
 - Everything else we learn in God's word is connected in some way to furthering this message
 - But nothing in God's word changes the Gospel or adds to it
 - We can't add water baptism, tongues, prayers, circumcision, ceremonies, denominational membership, etc.
 - Sometimes you will see churches claiming to teach "the full gospel" which is a warning sign that they are distorting the Gospel
 - We can't look outside the Bible to find new information to compliment or change this truth
 - And we can't look backward into the Old Testament and find extra obligations to add to this truth
 - The Gnostics were looking outside the Bible for knowledge to add to the Gospel
 - While the Judaizers were returning to the Old Testament to add obligations to the Gospel

- Paul says that these churches in Galatia were being disturbed by men who wanted to distort the Gospel in this way
 - The Judaizers fully intended to change Paul's message; this wasn't an accident or misunderstanding
 - The word for distort literally means to twist or turn around
 - They were manipulating the message to move it in a different direction
 - Remember, false teachers are unbelievers who do not understand the very things they are presuming to teach
 - They claimed that what Paul taught the churches wasn't complete
 - When the church heard this message, it disturbed them
 - It not only confused the believers concerning the true Gospel, but it also left them doubting everything else Paul taught
 - If Paul was wrong on the Gospel, then what value could there be in anything Paul says?
- But Paul draws a hard line between himself and them
 - He says if anyone offers a different message than the one Paul preached – even if it is an angel – then they are to be accursed
 - The word accursed means damnable, as in going to Hell
 - Paul says by definition if someone holds to a different Gospel, that one has been reserved for judgment
 - Notice that even if an angelic being appears with this other Gospel, then that angel is to be considered accursed
 - What is another word for an accursed angel? Demon
 - An angel declaring a Gospel other than the one Paul delivered is to be understood to be a demon, Paul says
 - We know that the Mormon faith begins with a story of an “angel” delivering a different Gospel than the one Paul delivered
 - And there are other traditions that rely on stories of angels or supernatural beings
 - And we are expected to give additional credence to supernatural messengers
 - But the Bible says we give them no credit when they try to change the Gospel message
 - And let's not overlook Paul's choice to repeat this statement twice
 - I can't think of any other time when Paul repeats himself in this way
 - Of all the things Paul said in the New Testament, he reserved his strongest statement to condemn preaching false Gospels
- The rest of the first chapter is devoted to Paul providing background on how he came to know the truth and share it with this church
 - Paul wants this church to have full confidence that he is speaking with the authority

of the Lord

Gal. 1:10 For am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God? Or am I striving to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a bond-servant of Christ.

Gal. 1:11 For I would have you know, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man.

Gal. 1:12 For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ.

- Paul begins his defense with a simple question: was his purpose in preaching to please men and gain their favor?
 - Paul is arguing to the Galatians that his motives in preaching were pure
 - Men who tell lies do so for some self-interest or motive
 - They want to gain something with their lies that the truth couldn't gain them on its own
 - So if Paul was lying to the Galatians, he asks what possible motive would he have had in preaching a lie?
 - Paul says, did my preaching win the favor of men?
 - When Paul taught throughout Galatia and Asia Minor, he was pursued by Jews and persecuted at every step
 - He was thrown out of synagogues
 - Chased out of town by Roman soldiers enlisted by Jewish leaders
 - He was poorly clothed, hungry, thirsty, and treated like scum according to 1 Corinthians 4
 - So he had no incentive to lie, cause it didn't make his life easier
 - If he had wanted to please men, he said he would not be a slave of Christ
- Since Paul's motive in preaching wasn't to gain men's favor, Paul explains how he came to preach his message
 - Before we consider how Paul received his revelation, let's consider that statement for a moment
 - Paul heard the Gospel preached to him not by the mouth of a man but by Jesus Christ Himself
 - Paul says the Gospel was not preached to him by a man
 - Yet we have the story of Stephen in Acts 7
 - In Acts 7, Stephen is confronted by the Pharisees and an angry Jewish mob, which claims he was preaching heresy
 - In his defense, Stephen presents the beautifully detailed summary of how the Old Testament preaches Christ from the beginning

- At the end of his speech, he declared

Acts 7:55 But being full of the Holy Spirit, he gazed intently into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God;

Acts 7:56 and he said, “Behold, I see the heavens opened up and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.”

- At this point, Stephen’s declarations drive the Jewish crowd to attack him and stone him to death, even as Stephen prays for their forgiveness
 - As all this takes place, a Pharisee stands watching and approving the event
 - That Pharisee is described in v.58

Acts 7:58 When they had driven him out of the city, they began stoning him; and the witnesses laid aside their robes at the feet of a young man named Saul.

- So the man who would become the apostle Paul is listening to the Gospel preached by a man named Stephen
 - Yet having heard it, Paul nevertheless approves Stephen’s stoning
 - At the beginning of Chapter 8 in Acts, we read this

Acts 8:1 Saul was in hearty agreement with putting him to death. And on that day a great persecution began against the church in Jerusalem, and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles.

- As Paul heard the Gospel preached by Stephen, he not only didn’t believe it, but it only caused Paul to act in greater opposition to the message
 - Paul demonstrates in his own life a spiritual truth of the Gospel of grace
 - Paul says the Gospel wasn’t preached to him a man, but by Jesus
 - Yet we know Stephen preached in his hearing
 - Paul is demonstrating that the Gospel is a matter of grace
 - Until the Lord determines to grant us repentance and the gift of faith, the message literally bounces off our hard heart
 - It may even cause us to react in anger as it assaults our pride and self-righteousness
 - But when the day comes for salvation, the call of the Gospel is met with repentance and faith by the will of God
- So now Paul gives his testimony of how he came to be an apostle, which is his first defense against his accusers

Gal. 1:13 For you have heard of my former manner of life in Judaism, how I used to persecute the church of God beyond measure and tried to destroy it;

Gal. 1:14 and I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries among my countrymen, being more extremely zealous for my ancestral traditions.

Gal. 1:15 But when God, who had set me apart even from my mother's womb and called me through His grace, was pleased

Gal. 1:16 to reveal His Son in me so that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately consult with flesh and blood,

Gal. 1:17 nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me; but I went away to Arabia, and returned once more to Damascus.

Gal. 1:18 Then three years later I went up to Jerusalem to become acquainted with Cephas, and stayed with him fifteen days.

Gal. 1:19 But I did not see any other of the apostles except James, the Lord's brother.

Gal. 1:20 (Now in what I am writing to you, I assure you before God that I am not lying.)

Gal. 1:21 Then I went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia.

Gal. 1:22 I was still unknown by sight to the churches of Judea which were in Christ;

Gal. 1:23 but only, they kept hearing, "He who once persecuted us is now preaching the faith which he once tried to destroy."

Gal. 1:24 And they were glorifying God because of me.

- At several points, Paul gives his personal testimony in the book of Acts, and we have the full story in Acts 9, but none offer the details Paul supplies here
 - First, Paul reminds the church of his former life as Saul, the Pharisee
 - He lived a life according to the manner of Judaism
 - Notice that Paul speaks of living a life in Judaism as a past tense
 - He isn't saying he was no longer a Jew, but rather he was no longer living a life of Judaism
 - His point is that a true Jew moves to follow the Lord as the Lord reveals more truth
 - So when the Gospel was revealed in Jesus Christ, a true Jew would leave behind the old ways of Judaism to follow Christ
 - Being a good Jew is not following the Law of Moses; being a good Jew is following the Lord
 - And until Paul knew the truth, he was living according to a distorted and manufactured lifestyle called Judaism
 - He was an unbelieving Jew
 - Consequently, he tried to destroy the very thing that was from God even as he

supposed he was a man following God

- This is the classic state of mind of every religious unbeliever
- Religious unbelievers are convinced they have the truth even as they oppose Christianity, which is religious truth
- Their zealousness will often lead them to become persecutors of true believers
- Just as we see in Islam today or Catholicism during the Reformation or among the Roman pagans and Jews of Paul's day
- Paul's point in reminding the church of his former state is to make clear that Paul would have been the last person to naturally choose to begin preaching the Gospel
 - Paul's former life is itself a testimony to the power of God
 - No one who knew the old Saul could ever imagine that he could become a strong advocate for the Gospel in any form
 - It goes to the issue of credibility
 - Paul traded in a position of honor and power within Jewish culture to preach a message he formerly hated
 - Notice in v.14 that Paul says his life in Judaism was going smashingly well
 - He was advancing beyond his peers and had everything to lose by turning his back on that way of life
 - He was selected to carry the letters to arrest Christians in Damascus, which was a choice assignment
 - Additionally, Paul presumably would have been the first person to advocate for Gentile Christians to pursue a Jewish way of life were it necessary, since Paul himself was an expert in that life
 - But he advocated for ancestral traditions, not for the Gospel
 - Paul's past demonstrates the power of the Gospel to change hearts and lives
 - Paul proves no one is beyond God's reach
 - There is no human explanation for Paul's switch...it was a miracle as it is every time a person comes to faith
 - But at the same time, the Gospel is foolishness to those who are perishing
 - Leaving us to conclude that salvation is a work of God alone
 - My own personal background shares some of these elements
 - While I was never a zealous religious person, I was quick to defend my family traditions in Catholicism
 - I didn't know what I was talking about, but I would still defend the Catholic tradition in the face of Christian attacks
 - It took a miracle of God in the Gospel to open my eyes and show me the truth
- The next part of Paul's story reflects how grace works, starting with the plan and will of God to save a person

- Paul says in v.15 that the Lord had set Paul apart from his mother's womb
 - The word set apart is *aphorizo*, meaning to set a boundary around
 - Paul was marked out by God from birth to fill a certain role in God's providence
 - Paul is saying that his mission to serve Christ was something God assigned to Paul from the beginning of his life
 - In fact, we might say as was said to Pharaoh, that the Lord raised him up for this very purpose
 - Or as Jesus said to Nathaniel:

John 1:47 Jesus saw Nathanael coming to Him, and said of him, "Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no deceit!"

John 1:48 Nathanael said to Him, "How do You know me?" Jesus answered and said to him, "Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you."

- We have all been set apart in this same way, according to Paul again in his letter to Ephesus

Eph. 1:4 just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love

Eph. 1:5 He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will,

- All believers are marked out for the call to faith that comes one day
 - We are predestined by God to be adopted by Him through faith in Jesus
 - And these things happen according to the will of God
- This is what Paul is saying to the church in Galatia
 - Paul was set apart and then on an appointed day he was called by grace
 - That call was the call of the Gospel, only in Paul's case that presentation of the Gospel was made by none less than Jesus Himself
 - Notice Paul says the Lord revealed the Son "in" Paul not "to" Paul
 - Paul's point is that the revelation of the truth of Jesus is made in our hearts by the power of the Spirit
 - It is not made as an argument we process intellectually and then receive as we might receive instruction in math
 - Salvation is an inside out process rather than an outside in process
- Then Paul says in v.16 that God directed Paul to preach to the Gentiles
 - Luke describes Paul's commissioning by Christ this way

Acts 9:15 But the Lord said to him, “Go, for he is a chosen instrument of Mine, to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel;
Acts 9:16 for I will show him how much he must suffer for My name’s sake.”

- Paul’s testimony reflects Jesus’ own words
- Paul was God’s chosen instrument to preach to Gentiles and suffer in the process
- Paul’s life is unique in many ways, but his experience of being called to faith and appointed to serve Christ is NOT unique
 - Every Christian is called into faith so we may serve Christ
 - Paul says in Romans 12 we are to present our bodies as living and holy sacrifices to God
 - Paul’s service was unique, but service to God is the call for every Christian
- Now Paul turns to the question of his training and knowledge...how did Paul come to know what he shared with the churches?
 - Paul begins at the end of v.16 by saying he didn’t immediately consult with men
 - Paul uses the phrase “flesh and blood” to make clear that he did not receive his training from human beings
 - Paul was traveling in north Judea when he was saved
 - But he says his first destination was not to meet the other apostles in Jerusalem
 - In fact, had he arrived there first, he likely would have not been received given his recent history
 - Instead, Paul goes to Arabia
 - Arabia refers to the vast desert wilderness southeast of Israel
 - Modern day Saudi Arabia
 - We don’t know exactly what he was doing in Arabia, but we can assume he was being retrained by the Lord Himself
 - We get a hint of that time by something Paul explained to the church in Corinth, when he wrote in the third person speaking of himself

2Cor. 12:1 Boasting is necessary, though it is not profitable; but I will go on to visions and revelations of the Lord.

2Cor. 12:2 I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago — whether in the body I do not know, or out of the body I do not know, God knows — such a man was caught up to the third heaven.

2Cor. 12:3 And I know how such a man — whether in the body or apart from the body I do not know, God knows —

2Cor. 12:4 was caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words, which a man is not permitted to speak.

- Once again, Paul's experience is unique, but it still serves as a useful pattern for every believer
 - When a person comes to faith in Christ, the most important first step that person can take in their walk is to study God's word
 - To "go away" and spend time learning the faith God has given them
 - To build a solid foundation of doctrine and understanding
 - If we do that, we will be so much better prepared to serve Christ
 - If we neglect this step, we will step out in arrogance and ignorance and be more harm than good in many cases
- So Paul was called by God and prepared and trained by God, and then Paul says he talked to virtually no one else before he began preaching the Gospel to Gentiles
 - Only after first returning to Damascus and ministering for three years did Paul eventually go to Jerusalem to meet Peter
 - He went there simply to become acquainted with Peter, not to be trained by him
 - They spent only 15 days together – not enough time for Paul to have been trained by Peter in any case
 - Other than Peter, Paul only met James, the leader of the church in Jerusalem
 - So he had virtually no exposure to the men who learned from Christ
 - From there Paul went directly into Asia Minor to preach
 - As Paul entered into those regions, he was such an unknown commodity that men only knew of his past
 - When Paul arrived, they assumed he was a man coming to kill Christians
 - So naturally, when he preached the Gospel instead it was a shock
 - His point in all this was to demonstrate that his ministry as an apostle was not a product of men, not even the other apostles
 - He is not part of a vast conspiracy to deliver a lie to the churches in Galatia
 - He was not an apostle wannabe that left Jerusalem for better prospects
 - He was an apostle before meeting Peter or James
 - So his authority did not extend from those entities
 - Paul was a man called, trained and commissioned directly by God
- Paul ends by emphasizing that his past as a persecutor of the church and as a man saved by Christ and trained by God was a part of God's plan to bring glory to His name
 - The miraculous nature of his turn around was part of the storyline
 - Consider the encouragement it must have been to a young and persecuted church to hear that the man who previously persecuted the church was now an apostle for Christ?
 - Moreover, he did not arrive at that place because he was threatened or because

other men persuaded him

- From beginning to end, the entire process came at the hand of God
- So the message to the church was clear
 - If God can act in this way to convert a man like Paul and put him to use for the sake of the Gospel, then the church is in good hands
 - Men could understand that Jesus was caring for His church
 - And Paul was making clear that his role was one God authored, God directed and God instructed
- As Paul moved into ministry in this way, he soon found himself correcting even other apostles to ensure they were all teaching and preaching the Gospel accurately
 - Next time we'll move into Chapter 2 as Paul explains how he has defended the true Gospel from the beginning

- In the opening chapter of Paul's letter to the churches in Galatia, he began a defense against attacks leveled by false teachers
 - Paul's teaching of the Gospel differed dramatically from these false teachers
 - Paul taught a Gospel of salvation by grace through faith alone
 - The false teachers taught a false gospel of salvation by the works of the Law
 - So for the Christians in Galatia, the issue came down to a question of credibility
 - Specifically, who should they believe? Who truly spoke for God? Paul or the false teachers?
 - While Paul had been with the Galatians, he gave his testimony and demonstrated his power as an apostle
 - But now that he was gone and living in Ephesus, false teachers took advantage of his absence to disturb and confuse the Galatians
 - Specifically, the false teachers cited Paul's sudden appearance on the scene as an apostle years after Jesus' death and resurrection
 - They pointed to his prior life as a persecutor of the church
 - And by these things, they attempted to discredit Paul's authority and teaching, suggesting he was not a true apostle
 - Naturally, before Paul can defend the proper view of the Gospel, he needed to remind the church of his authority as an apostle
 - In Chapter 1 Paul recounted how he came to faith and to his office as an apostle
 - He emphasized that he was not a product of men or even of the other apostles
 - Most importantly, Paul's knowledge of scripture and his understanding of the mysteries of God came to him without the agency of men but by Christ directly
- So as we leave Chapter 1 and enter Chapter 2, Paul is still in the process of defending his authority, but his focus is shifting
 - While in Chapter 1 Paul defended the source of his apostolic office and knowledge, now Paul defends his message
 - The central disagreement with the false teachers was over the question of Jewish prominence in God's plan of salvation
 - Paul called himself the apostle to the Gentiles, the man called to bring the Gospel to the world outside Israel
 - Paul himself acknowledged the Gospel must go to Jews first before the Lord moved the message outward to the nations
 - But the Judaizers went a step too far in holding that God only saves Jews, and therefore Paul's message of salvation for the Gentiles was a lie
 - So Paul uses this chapter to defend his version of the Gospel – which was that God was at work saving Gentiles now
 - Furthermore, Paul defends that this Gospel didn't require that Gentiles live like Jews to receive God's mercy

- On the contrary, the Jewish lifestyle saved no one in the first place – not even a Jew
- And to demonstrate that his Gospel was the true Gospel, Paul points to his interactions with the foremost Jewish apostles in the church: James, Peter and John
- If these men approved and agreed with Paul's version of the Gospel, then surely Paul's Gospel was the true Gospel

Gal. 2:1 Then after an interval of fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus along also.

Gal. 2:2 It was because of a revelation that I went up; and I submitted to them the gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but I did so in private to those who were of reputation, for fear that I might be running, or had run, in vain.

Gal. 2:3 But not even Titus, who was with me, though he was a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised.

Gal. 2:4 But it was because of the false brethren secretly brought in, who had sneaked in to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, in order to bring us into bondage.

Gal. 2:5 But we did not yield in subjection to them for even an hour, so that the truth of the gospel would remain with you.

- Fourteen years passed between Paul's first visit to Jerusalem to see the apostles and his second visit
 - This is a remarkably long time between visits, especially for a Jew like Paul
 - That interval all by itself says something about Paul's attitude of believers keeping the Jewish law
 - Every Jewish male was expected to make the trip to worship in Jerusalem on at least three occasions each year
 - But having come to faith in Christ and commissioned to preach to Gentiles, Paul evidently saw no reason for him to continue visiting the temple
 - This change in behavior by itself supports Paul's view that a life of Judaism under the Law was no longer required for the believer
 - So why did Paul come back to Jerusalem on this occasion? It was for the council of Jerusalem described in Acts 15
 - Paul was living in Antioch at this time, ministering with Barnabas
 - One of Paul's converts was a Gentile named Titus
 - And in Acts 15 we read this about Paul's visit to Jerusalem:

Acts 15:1 Some men came down from Judea and began teaching the brethren, "Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be

saved.”

Acts 15:2 And when Paul and Barnabas had great dissension and debate with them, the brethren determined that Paul and Barnabas and some others of them should go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and elders concerning this issue.

Acts 15:3 Therefore, being sent on their way by the church, they were passing through both Phoenicia and Samaria, describing in detail the conversion of the Gentiles, and were bringing great joy to all the brethren.

Acts 15:4 When they arrived at Jerusalem, they were received by the church and the apostles and the elders, and they reported all that God had done with them.

Acts 15:5 But some of the sect of the Pharisees who had believed stood up, saying, “It is necessary to circumcise them and to direct them to observe the Law of Moses.”

Acts 15:6 The apostles and the elders came together to look into this matter.

Acts 15:7 After there had been much debate, Peter stood up and said to them, “Brethren, you know that in the early days God made a choice among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles would hear the word of the gospel and believe.

Acts 15:8 “And God, who knows the heart, testified to them giving them the Holy Spirit, just as He also did to us;

Acts 15:9 and He made no distinction between us and them, cleansing their hearts by faith.

Acts 15:10 “Now therefore why do you put God to the test by placing upon the neck of the disciples a yoke which neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear?

Acts 15:11 “But we believe that we are saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, in the same way as they also are.”

Acts 15:12 All the people kept silent, and they were listening to Barnabas and Paul as they were relating what signs and wonders God had done through them among the Gentiles.

- Notice Paul’s visit was prompted by men teaching that Gentiles must become Jewish to participate in the Church
 - This teaching may have been coming from false teachers or by misinformed believers who didn’t understand grace
 - In any case Paul is sent with Barnabas to Jerusalem to confer with the leaders of the Jewish church
 - The hope was that a common understanding would emerge to guide both the Jewish and the Gentile churches
 - As we see, Peter agreed with Paul and Barnabas that the Jewish requirements of the Law were not a requirement for believers, especially for Gentile believers
 - In fact Peter says that Israel’s own fathers could not bear the yoke of the Law

- So it was folly for a Jew to think that they were ever “keeping” the Law
- The best they accomplished was to try and fail to keep the Law
- So all the people kept silent in agreement, having listened to Paul and Barnabas telling of God moving among the Gentiles
 - The point of this report was to show the Jewish church that God was in fact bringing Gentiles to faith
 - And if the Lord is working in this way, then it fell to the Jewish leaders and members of the church in Jerusalem to acknowledge God’s work and accept it despite their natural prejudices
- So moving back to Galatians, Paul says in v.2 that he received a vision that confirmed for him the need to go down to Jerusalem
 - We don’t know the vision Paul received, but it motivated him to go, in combination with the church’s request
 - Why does Paul mention the vision here?
 - I think Paul is saying to the churches in Galatia that he only agreed to make the trip to Jerusalem because the Lord made it clear he should go
 - Otherwise, Paul would have stayed in Antioch and continued to teach as he was called
 - The point being that Paul was never dependent on the Jewish apostles for his direction or for his message
 - Paul knew the message he had been given and he was certain of it
 - The ones preaching the wrong message were those telling the church they must be Jewish to be saved
 - But because of the vision, Paul goes up to Jerusalem to meet with the council
 - Barnabas goes with Paul because he was a fellow apostle and the church sent both together
 - But why did Paul take Titus?
 - He took Titus as a test of sorts
- Notice Paul says he approached the leaders in private, that is away from the church body as a whole, to learn what they were teaching
 - Paul wanted to know if the Jewish leaders of the Jewish church were preaching the same Gospel of grace that Paul was teaching
 - Paul hadn’t been in Jerusalem for fourteen years, yet he knew that Judaizers had been coming down from Jerusalem to deceive the churches in Asia Minor
 - So he must have wondered what the apostles in Jerusalem were teaching their flock
 - Had the Jewish church in Jerusalem moved in the direction of the Judaizers?
 - Were Gentiles rejected unless they agreed to take on a Jewish lifestyle?
 - Was circumcision being made a requirement?

- So Paul takes with him a young, Gentile convert named Titus
 - Titus was not circumcised, as would be natural for a Greek man
 - Paul knew that traditionally, Jews would not associate with uncircumcised Gentiles
 - They would not eat with them
 - They would not welcome them into their homes
 - Knowing this, Paul invites Titus along as a test to see how the Jewish leaders react to Titus' presence in the meeting
- The test is whether the Jewish leaders will receive Titus as they might any Jewish believer
 - It's important to remember that the Gospel had only seen its first mass Gentile conversion a few years earlier
 - So the church is still largely Jewish, and the thought that God was inviting Gentiles into the family of God was not only a new concept...
 - It was an offensive concept for many Jewish believers
 - With Titus at his side, Paul would immediately know whether the Jewish apostles had understood and embraced the true Gospel of grace or not
 - Notice Paul says he wondered if he had been running in vain
 - He means he wondered if he had been preaching a different Gospel than the rest of the Apostles
- Notice Paul says in v.5 that he used Titus as a test because of the false brethren, unbelievers masquerading as believers, who had joined the gathering in Antioch
 - These men were the cause for Paul's concern, because they claimed to have come from the church in Jerusalem
 - These false brethren came in secretly, sneaking in to spy on the church, Paul says
 - We remember from our studies in Jude and John that false teachers join the body in this way, secretly and without announcing themselves
 - Paul says they entered to spy on the church's liberty
 - They were investigating or searching to find Jewish Christians trying to live outside the constraints of Jewish law
 - If they found such a person, then they intended to bring that person back under bondage
 - They probably used intimidation, threats or other forms of peer pressure to require compliance with the Law
 - But notice Paul says what they observed was Christian liberty
 - These spies were observing what liberty looks like
 - They were observing a lifestyle apart from living under the Law
 - Of course, they were false brethren, so they didn't understand liberty

- They only knew legalism
- But Paul did understand Christian liberty, perhaps better than any other Apostle, perhaps better than any other man on earth in his day
 - So Paul says he did not yield to these men, not even for an hour
 - Today, we would say not even for a minute
 - Perhaps this reflects the way our culture operates at a quicker pace?
- Backing up to verse 3, Paul reports on the outcome of his test
 - Titus was not required to be circumcised
 - Paul says “not even” Titus to emphasize the seriousness of this test
 - If ever there was a moment when we might expect the Jewish leaders to require a Gentile to be circumcised, it would be this group in this kind of moment
 - Nevertheless, the Jewish leaders made no attempt to enforce Jewish rules on this Gentile believer
 - They accepted the man as he was, saved by grace
 - This event all by itself contradicts the teaching of the Judaizers
 - If the Jewish leaders of the Jerusalem church were willing to accept an uncircumcised Gentile believer, then certainly circumcision wasn’t required for salvation
 - Paul is demonstrating to his audience that his message was consistent with the one preached by the apostles in Jerusalem
- This conference in Jerusalem produced a very positive outcome for Paul and the church
 - His message was validated, and his view of grace was supported by the apostles
 - So Paul then explains what happened as he departed Jerusalem

Gal. 2:6 But from those who were of high reputation (what they were makes no difference to me; God shows no partiality) — well, those who were of reputation contributed nothing to me.

Gal. 2:7 But on the contrary, seeing that I had been entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised, just as Peter had been to the circumcised

Gal. 2:8 (for He who effectually worked for Peter in his apostleship to the circumcised effectually worked for me also to the Gentiles),

Gal. 2:9 and recognizing the grace that had been given to me, James and Cephas and John, who were reputed to be pillars, gave to me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, so that we might go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised.

Gal. 2:10 They only asked us to remember the poor — the very thing I also was eager to do.

- Paul says that the men of high reputation, the apostles in Jerusalem, contributed nothing to Paul's message of the Gospel
 - On the contrary, Paul confirmed that he had been entrusted by Christ with the very same Gospel that Christ delivered to Peter and the rest of the church
 - Paul's mission was to take that truth to the Gentile, the uncircumcised
 - While Peter was entrusted with the mission of taking the Gospel to the Jewish people
 - Notice that James was the leader of the Jewish church
 - But Paul compares himself to Peter, not James
 - Peter was the great evangelist of the Jewish people in his day
 - So Paul compares himself to Peter because they shared a similar mission to different audiences
 - And Paul adds that the same Lord who made Peter's ministry successful among stubborn and unbelieving Jews was making Paul successful among an ignorant Gentile people
 - More importantly, the meeting convinced James, Peter and John that Paul was, in fact, moving in the Spirit and delivering the gospel
 - Paul calls them pillars, which literally means the tallest poles
 - These men were the three tallest standing men in the early church
 - Here we see that even among the twelve, some stood taller
 - And we see that reflected in the Gospel, as these men are mentioned so much more
 - And both wrote Gospels (Peter was the author of Mark's Gospel)
 - Remember, Paul has spent virtually no time with these men except to meet with Peter and James for a few days
 - They knew very little of Paul and what he preached
 - Suspicions probably ran deep
 - But now Paul and the other apostles were of one mind
 - So they shake hands and agree to support each other as they all worked for Christ
- The only thing these men ask of Paul was that he remember the poor Jewish believers suffering in Jerusalem
 - Jewish believers in the city of Jerusalem were ill-treated and had little to show for their labors
 - Their Jewish families rejected them and other Jews wouldn't do business with them
 - That left the Jewish believers in the city dependent on support from other churches in the Diaspora
 - The apostles apparently feared that Paul's focus on the Gentiles might lead him

- to turn his back on Jewish believers
- But Paul says that was the furthest thing from his mind
 - He was zealous for the Jewish people and hoped to see them converted
 - And he certainly wanted to see them supported in Jerusalem
 - We often see Paul in his letters asking churches in Macedonia and Greece to support the Jewish believers in Jerusalem
- Paul has illustrated that his authority is from Christ alone
 - His salvation and commission was from Christ
 - His instruction was from Christ
 - The message He delivered was equal to the gospel Christ gave the Jewish church
 - But now Paul goes a step further
 - He illustrates his leadership role was equal to the most prominent apostle in the church

Gal. 2:11 But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned.

Gal. 2:12 For prior to the coming of certain men from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he began to withdraw and hold himself aloof, fearing the party of the circumcision.

Gal. 2:13 The rest of the Jews joined him in hypocrisy, with the result that even Barnabas was carried away by their hypocrisy.

- After persecution broke out in Jerusalem, Peter could no longer stay in the city
 - Eventually he made his way up to Antioch to be with Paul
 - The church in Antioch, like most churches of the day, were a mixture of Jew and Gentile believers
 - So when Peter arrived, he was immediately confronted with how to live in a mixed culture
 - Paul relates this story of Peter's hypocrisy in that moment
 - Initially, Peter had no concern living with and eating with Gentile believers
 - The reference to eating likely also included eating the communion meal together
 - Peter knew grace as Paul taught, and he agreed that the barriers between Jew and Greek had been torn down by Jesus' sacrifice
 - But there came a day when a delegation of leaders sent by James from the church in Jerusalem came to Antioch to visit Peter
 - When these prominent men arrived, Peter withdrew from fellowship with the Gentiles

- He did this fearing the judgment of the “party of the circumcised”
- Apparently, this group included some of those who were still intent on making Gentiles become Jewish first
- These men refused to fellowship with Gentile believers, including in the communion meal
- Peter feared this group, Paul says
 - Peter stopped eating with Gentiles and joined this Jewish crowd to seek their approval
 - We can wonder what Peter would fear from these men
 - But this pattern is sadly consistent with Peter’s entire testimony
 - He is well known as a man who succumbed to pressure
 - Paul says this was hypocrisy
 - Hypocrisy is acting in ways contrary to one’s stated belief or conviction
 - Peter held a conviction that grace permitted the breaking down of the barrier between the Jew and Gentile
 - That barrier is the Law itself, and it was now gone
 - Because of Peter’s hypocrisy, he drew others away with him into sin
 - Barnabas followed Peter’s lead as did the rest of the Jewish believers in the church
 - What a powerful reminder of the responsibility to model behavior in keeping with doctrine
 - When we lead lives different than our teaching or beliefs, we are potentially guilty of leading others into sin
 - Of setting stumbling blocks for others
 - Peter was doing that here
- So why does Paul choose to relate this embarrassing detail about Peter?
 - Might this even be considered gossip?
 - The answer is no, because Paul’s relating an account without intent to shame Peter or hurt Peter
 - Paul’s point is much more important and entirely appropriate
 - Paul wants to use this example to discredit the Judaizers
 - Paul is relating this story about Peter because Peter was the most popular apostle among the Judaizers
 - They saw Peter’s willingness to conform to their rules as evidence he endorsed their views and they were on the right track
 - So Paul wanted to demonstrate that the Judaizers’ favorite patron apostle (so to speak) was wrong in his behavior
 - His support was not evidence that the Judaizers had the right view of the

Gospel

- Peter's behavior was merely hypocrisy on his part
- More importantly, Paul had the authority to stand up to Peter on this matter
 - He relates how he responded to Peter's hypocrisy:

Gal. 2:14 But when I saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas in the presence of all, "If you, being a Jew, live like the Gentiles and not like the Jews, how is it that you compel the Gentiles to live like Jews?"

- Paul chooses to issue a public rebuke of Peter
 - We might wonder why Paul didn't choose to rebuke Peter in private
 - The answer is probably two-fold
 - First, Peter and Paul had already conferred privately in Jerusalem on this very issue and come to an agreement
 - So the time for private counsel had passed
 - Secondly, the nature of Peter's offense and the nature of Peter's role as leader made the entire affair very public and damaging
 - So Paul likely felt that the best way to correct the situation was to make Peter's rebuke public
 - Paul calls Peter out in front of the entire assembly, perhaps during communion where the Jews has segregated themselves for the meal
 - And Paul gives this passionate defense of grace
 - Different Bibles see Paul's speech running different lengths
 - Some see only v.14 as Paul's words to Peter
 - Others see the speech running all the way to the end of the chapter
 - I think the natural reading has Paul's quote ending in v.14
 - Paul delivers a stinging question
 - He asks Peter why he likes to live as Gentiles but then expects Gentiles to live like Jews?
 - Paul is exposing Peter's hypocrisy, of course
 - Everyone in that church remembers Peter's behavior before these leaders of Jerusalem showed up
 - They remember he ate freely with them
 - And now they see him by his action pressuring his Jewish brethren to withdraw from Gentiles
 - So Paul asks Peter how can you have your matzah and eat it too?

- Paul doesn't explain what happens next, but we must assume his challenge was effective or else why would he mention it in his letter?
 - We wonder how Peter felt when he heard those words from Paul?
 - He probably felt like he did after he heard that cock crow the morning of Passover
 - He probably felt the way he did after Jesus rebuked him in the garden for cutting off the slave's ear
 - He probably felt the same way he did when Jesus called him Satan
 - He felt convicted
 - We don't know how he responded in the moment, but I'm sure the end result was a sigh of relief from among the Jewish believers
 - It's important to note that Paul is defending Jewish believers in Antioch
 - They were the ones suffering by Peter's hypocrisy
 - Had it been allowed to continue unchecked, they would have been pressured to return to living under the Law, which is a tremendous burden
 - Seeing Paul working to defend them and to end Peter's hypocrisy, we must conclude that Paul didn't want Peter to rob Jews of their newly found liberty
- We need to make that connection because there are some in the church working to reimpose a burden of Law on the believer
 - Ironically, that new movement is directed towards the Gentiles, since there simply aren't many Jewish believers in the church
 - This new messianic movement in the church (usually) understands that salvation is by faith alone and not by works of Law
 - But they have their own subtle distortion believing that believers are obligated to keep the Law as a matter of sanctification
 - That it pleases God when Gentile believers place themselves under the Law given to Israel
 - If this were a correct view, then how would we explain Paul's defense of the Jewish believer here?
 - Paul criticizes Peter for moving back under Jewish Law
 - And his critique is very specific: Peter is leading other Jews into hypocrisy by returning to restrictions under Law and custom
 - If living under those restrictions was a requirement for believers – both Jew and Gentile – then Paul would have had no basis for his critique of Peter at this moment
 - The critique would have come at the earlier moment when Peter was living like a Gentile
 - Not now when Peter returns to living like a Jew
 - Clearly, it was Peter's return to Jewish living that triggered Paul's rebuke

- Paul then proceeds to explain to the Galatian church the error of Peter's thinking

**Gal. 2:15 "We are Jews by nature and not sinners from among the Gentiles;
Gal. 2:16 nevertheless knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law but through faith in Christ Jesus, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, so that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the Law; since by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified.**

Gal. 2:17 "But if, while seeking to be justified in Christ, we ourselves have also been found sinners, is Christ then a minister of sin? May it never be!

Gal. 2:18 "For if I rebuild what I have once destroyed, I prove myself to be a transgressor.

Gal. 2:19 "For through the Law I died to the Law, so that I might live to God.

Gal. 2:20 "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.

Gal. 2:21 "I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness comes through the Law, then Christ died needlessly."

- Speaking of himself and the other Jewish apostles, Paul says "we" are Jews by nature and not sinners from among the Gentiles
 - Paul is speaking from the perspective of a believer born a Jew
 - To a Jew, the term Gentile and sinner were synonymous
 - Paul is not saying that all Gentiles sin and Jews never sin
 - He means that Jews were God's people by a covenant of Law
 - While Gentiles were excluded from this relationship because they were not submitted to God's Law
 - But even though Jews had this position of privilege, nevertheless it did not produce righteousness nor salvation
 - In v.16 Paul gives a succinct presentation of the Gospel itself
 - A man – even a natural born Jew – is not justified by works of Law
 - To be justified is the word acquitted in Greek
 - It means to be declared not guilty of an offense
 - So we are acquitted by God for our sin, not by works of Law
 - Said another way, we cannot do anything to earn our acquittal on our judgment day
 - We cannot keep rules, perform penance, make restitution or sweep mistakes under the rug and hope for a good outcome
 - Sin leaves us convicted and no work on our part can erase that guilt
 - And certainly Jewish attempts to keep the law does nothing to achieve righteousness

- But what works cannot achieve, Jesus did through His perfect life and sacrificial death
 - And by faith in that sacrifice, we are justified alone
 - For no flesh, meaning no sinful man, can ever be justified by works of the Law
- Paul says that even though he and the other apostles were Jews, they did not rest on their works of Law to save them
 - They knew they needed Christ, so they rested in their faith and not in their works for salvation
 - So if a Jew recognized this, how much more so should a Gentile realize this truth being without Law in the first place?
- Next Paul points out a contradiction between the Judaizers and the Gospel itself
 - In v.17 Paul asks if setting aside the Law is a sin as the Judaizers teach, what does this say about Christ when His Gospel teaches us to sin?
 - The Gospel says we cannot be justified by Law so we must seek justification another way
 - But the Judaizers said that setting aside the Law of Moses promotes sinful behavior in Christians
 - So we would be saying that Christ is a minister of sin!
 - We are saying that Christ was preaching a Gospel that promoted sinful behavior
 - Paul says may it never be said
 - Paul turns the table on the Judaizers and says that to turn back to living under the Law after receiving justification from Christ is sin
 - That behavior confuses the testimony of the Gospel
 - It suggests that certain works are still required, and this does tremendous damage to the doctrine of Christology
 - That is the truth of Christ
 - What He did for us
 - The Bible teaches that Christ freed us from the Law by accomplishing it on our behalf
 - To return to a life lived under that covenant denies an element of Christology
- Paul could live apart from the Law because he knew he had died to the Law
 - He says that through the Law he died to the Law
 - He means that the Law itself provided Paul's escape from the Law
 - The Law required a death for sin, which Jesus paid for Paul and all believers
 - Once the payment for death has been made, we are no longer under that Law
 - It no longer has jurisdiction over us
 - Its penalty has been paid, the Law's requirements have been fulfilled

- And then we move under a new Law
- Paul says that he was crucified in Christ
 - Spiritually speaking, Paul's old self was put to death with Christ on the cross
 - Christ was Paul's representative in that moment
 - The Father is willing to consider Jesus' death in Paul's place because of Paul's faith in that sacrifice
 - Likewise, Paul says that the life he leads now is one guided by Christ living in him by His Spirit
- So Paul says he is now free to live for God
 - The liberty we enjoy in Christ is, first and foremost, a freedom to serve God unconstrained by tradition, custom and legal restrictions
 - Nothing stands in our way
 - Not food, not calendar, not festivals, not associations
 - We are free to serve Him
 - Not in sin, but in joy
- Paul sums up saying those preaching a return to the Law are advocating that the grace of God is void and ineffective
 - If after we receive the grace of God in Christ we still must keep the Law, then of what worth was God's grace?
 - Works were always a possibility, so of what benefit was God's grace added on top?
 - If there were even one other way to become righteous, then it stands to reason that the Father would have pointed us in that direction
 - He certainly wouldn't have put His only Son to death needlessly, as Paul says
 - So as the chapter ends, Paul has defended his apostolic authority to preach a Gospel that matches the Gospel of Jewish apostles
 - And his authority is equal to any other apostle, including Peter
 - And his teaching is consistent with logic and doctrine
 - Meanwhile, those who oppose Him teach without apostolic authority
 - They are teaching a Gospel that contradicts the one Paul received from Christ personally
 - And it contradicts with Peter, their favorite apostle
 - And it contradicts logic and doctrine
 - With that, Paul is ready to address the Galatians' willingness to be sucked into such false teaching

- There is a short ditty that helps us remember the purpose of each part of the Bible
 - This memory aid helps us recognize the purpose in each major section of the Bible
 - The Old Testament is Christ promised
 - The Gospels are Christ revealed
 - The book of Acts is Christ preached
 - The letters are Christ explained
 - The book of Revelation is Christ anticipated
 - The epistles were given so that we might fully appreciate the meaning and significance of Christ's work of redemption
 - Naturally, that means when we turn to the letters of the New Testament, we're going to find doctrine
 - In fact, virtually all the doctrines of our faith comes out of the letters of the New Testament
 - Knowing that, we must give priority to understanding and appreciating doctrine
 - Doctrine is an examination of spiritual truth
 - And understanding doctrine requires thinking soberly and deeply
 - We come to a study of doctrine to learn why the Lord has done what He has done
 - We're learning the truth about sin, about holiness, about man and about God
 - And to appreciate what is yet to happen
- Ultimately, we learn doctrine for much the same reason that we were taught chemistry or biology in school
 - We learned those subjects so that we could make sense of the way things are
 - I didn't need to understand biology or chemistry to appreciate and enjoy nature
 - But as I learned more about those subjects, I could better appreciate what I saw by understanding it at a deeper level
 - Furthermore, through my knowledge I could live and work in greater harmony than was possible without that knowledge
 - By learning about elements and the reactions of certain chemicals, I could avoid tragic accidents
 - By learning how the body works I could make better choices for my health and wellbeing
 - Similarly, I don't have to study doctrine to know God and enjoy Him
 - I am saved by my faith before I know even the first thing of doctrine
 - But if I take time to study doctrine in Scripture, I gain the benefits of that learning
 - I can enjoy God even more fully through a better understanding

- I can learn how to please Him better, how to avoid potentially dangerous choices and decisions and I can resist false teaching better
 - So studying doctrine is absolutely essential to proper spiritual development as a Christian
- Chapter 3 of Galatians is 100%, full strength Christian doctrine
 - Paul is teaching (he might say re-teaching) the churches in Galatia on the core doctrines of the faith
 - The doctrines Paul touches upon in the next three chapters are:
 - Soteriology, the doctrine of salvation
 - Israelology, the doctrine of Israel
 - Ecclesiology, the doctrine of the Church
 - He addresses these doctrines in a chiastic structure
 - A chiasm is a literary structure in which a series of points are developed in a certain order
 - The order of the thoughts proceed to a point, then the order is reversed and the thought completed in opposite order
 - So if an argument has three points, a chiastic procession of those points would be 1, 2, 3, 3, 2, 1
 - In Chapters 3-5, Paul address the doctrines of soteriology, Israelology and ecclesiology in a chiastic order, loosely speaking
 - He begins with a discussion of soteriology
 - Then he proceeds to a proper view of Israel and the Law
 - Lastly he shows the meaning for the church
 - Finally, he'll look at all three again in reverse order

Gal. 3:1 You foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified?

Gal. 3:2 This is the only thing I want to find out from you: did you receive the Spirit by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith?

Gal. 3:3 Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?

Gal. 3:4 Did you suffer so many things in vain — if indeed it was in vain?

Gal. 3:5 So then, does He who provides you with the Spirit and works miracles among you, do it by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith?

- Paul opens with five rhetorical questions that set up his teaching
 - Each question has an obvious answer
 - And those answers drive the reader to natural conclusions that counter the false teaching of the Judaizers

- There is no way to answer these questions honestly without contradicting the tenets of the false teachers
- First Paul asks who bewitched you, oh foolish Galatians?
 - The word foolish can also be translated stupid
 - This is a hard word in scripture, equivalent to an insult
 - How is it that Paul can say this without sinning?
 - In short, Paul is speaking honestly with regard to their thinking on this matter
 - They are acting foolish, like a person who has never learned basic things
- Paul asks are you acting this way because someone bewitched you?
 - The Greek word for bewitched only appears here in the New Testament
 - It means to be placed under a spell
 - So in effect, Paul is saying “Are you acting so stupidly because someone cast a spell upon you?”
- His point is that this is the only way he can imagine they would have come to their present state of confusion concerning Christ and the Gospel
 - Because they were taught properly before Paul left town
 - He says at the end of v.1 that Jesus Christ was portrayed as crucified before their eyes
 - I don’t particularly like this English translation of the original text
 - The Greek words literally say “before your eyes Jesus Christ was described from before all time as crucified”
 - Paul is reminding the church that their own eyes saw the truth of Jesus written in scripture declaring He was the Messiah Who died for sins
 - These new believers had received proper instruction from scripture
 - They saw for themselves the basis of their salvation, which is Jesus crucified as scripture testifies
- Then Paul asks the second question: how did they receive the Spirit?
 - Was the arrival of the Spirit in their hearts a matter of Law or faith?
 - Clearly, the answer is obvious again
 - As they heard the Gospel message Paul preached, that message was united with faith in their hearts
 - And at the moment of faith, they received the Holy Spirit
 - The Spirit didn’t come as a result of keeping the Law of Moses
 - Clearly, the church in Galatia hadn’t been living under the Law of Moses
 - More than likely, they had no knowledge of the Law whatsoever
 - So obviously, the Spirit’s arrival in their hearts had nothing to do with following the Law of Moses

- Why is Paul focused on the arrival of the Spirit?
 - Because the baptism of the Holy Spirit is the moment of salvation
 - In Romans, Paul says that the definition of a Christian is one who has the Holy Spirit

Rom. 8:14 For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.

- So Paul is asking the Galatians, how did you receive eternal life? By faith or by works of Law?
- And the answer is by faith
- Then Paul asks his third question, which is itself predicated on the answer to the second question
 - Paul asks if this church is so foolish (stupid) that they now believe they can be perfected by Law having been saved by faith
 - Obviously, Paul is assuming they knew the right answer to the earlier question
 - The church received the Spirit by faith, that is they were saved by their faith and not by works of Law
 - So then Paul asks why they are switching horses in midstream?
 - If faith was sufficient by itself to bring them to Christ, then why would they foolishly believe that returning to life under the Law was necessary to perfect them?
 - The word for perfect is *epiteleio*, which means to bring something to completion
 - God began the work of salvation in them by faith
 - So Paul asks if the origin of their salvation is by faith, why do they feel the need to bring it to completion through works?
 - Our sanctification – our being made holy – was begun by the Spirit and will be finished by the Spirit
 - God brings it to completion on the basis of our faith in His promises

Phil. 1:6 For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.

- Paul's fourth question directs their attention to what they experienced as believers
 - The churches in Galatia saw immediate and intense persecution as a result of their conversion to Christianity
 - In Acts 14 we have the record of Barnabas and Paul preaching in Galatia
 - As they prepare to leave and go home to Antioch, we read:

Acts 14:21 After they had preached the gospel to that city and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch,
Acts 14:22 strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying, “Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God.”

- Paul was encouraging the disciples to withstand the tribulations they were experiencing
- He reassured them that suffering was a natural consequence of faith – it was a privilege to suffer for Christ
- So now Paul asks what did your suffering mean if you were not actually saved at the time?
 - Remember, the Judaizers were teaching that the churches in Galatia were not actually believers because they hadn’t yet been circumcised or followed the Law
 - So if this teaching was to be believed, Paul asks why were being persecuted? Was it in vain, for no benefit?
 - If persecution is the mark of the believer, then how do they explain the enemy attacking them?
 - A house divided against itself cannot stand
- Finally, Paul’s last question is a summation of all the issues Paul has raised so far
 - When we see God’s work in this church, the giving of the Spirit and the working of miracles, how do we explain it?
 - Did God accomplish these works because the church was working under the Law?
 - Or did He respond to the faith of the church at the proclamation of His word?
 - The answer to this question is as obvious as the earlier questions, so let’s review them all
 - Who cast a spell on the Galatians to lead them away from the testimony of Jesus crucified in agreement with the scriptures?
 - The Judaizers
 - How did the church receive the Spirit, receive salvation and become children of God?
 - By faith having heard the Gospel preached by Paul
 - If their sanctification began in faith by the Spirit, then how should they expect the rest of their walk with the Lord to proceed?
 - In faith by the Spirit
 - Did they experience persecution for Christ in vain, as if they hadn’t yet been saved without circumcision?
 - No, they rightly suffered having believed
 - Has God chosen to demonstrate His desire to work in your life through faith or

through works?

- He has manifested Himself through faith
- These questions and their unavoidable answers deal a devastating blow to the Judaizers' arguments
 - Those false teachers called for works of Law to assure salvation, but Paul proves their arguments can't hold water
 - And now he moves forward to make his argument against the Judaizers
 - First, Paul sets straight the doctrine of salvation by grace through faith
 - Next, he'll look at the doctrine of Israel, which includes the purpose of the Law
 - Then finally, he will address the proper understanding of the Church in God's economy

Gal. 3:6 Even so Abraham BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS RECKONED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS.

Gal. 3:7 Therefore, be sure that it is those who are of faith who are sons of Abraham.

- Paul opens his teaching on salvation with “even so” which means just as, or according to
 - This is a transition intended to alert the reader that Paul is launching into teaching mode
 - He reminds the church that from the beginning God worked through faith to bring righteousness
 - Even before the Law was given, before even circumcision was commanded, the Lord declared Abraham righteous
 - Abraham believed a word of promise God spoke
 - And as a result of that faith, God declared Abraham righteous
 - When God declares anything, it becomes true in the moment it's spoken
 - It may require many years before the truth of it comes to pass for men, but it is no less real and true even as we wait
 - God is not constrained by time
 - Which is why Jesus says the heavens and earth may pass away, but God's word will never pass away
 - The word of God is as eternal as God Himself
 - So if Abraham was declared righteous in this moment in Genesis 15, then righteousness simply cannot be a matter of law or circumcision
 - For we know that God is perfectly just
 - Therefore, if one man can be declared righteous without those things, then they are unnecessary for any man

- So Paul concludes in v.6 that those who are of faith are sons of Abraham
- In these verses Paul raises the next major area of doctrine he wants to address, that is an issue of Israeology
 - Abraham is the father of the nation of Israel
 - He received a promise from God and a covenant
 - That promise and covenant eventually brought the nation of Israel into existence
 - And from that nation came the word of God and the Messiah
 - But the Judaizers had taken Abraham's importance and distorted it
 - They claimed that only those who were Abraham's children would be included in the promises of God
 - Galatians couldn't be blessed, or receive an inheritance or enter the kingdom unless they were part of the family that received those promises – that is to become Jewish
 - So now Paul moves to discuss Abraham's importance and the connection between Abraham and the Gentile believer
 - Those who are of faith, that is those who have received the promises of God in Christ Jesus, are counted as Abraham's sons
 - But in what sense are we Abraham's sons (and daughters)?
 - There are two mistakes we could make doctrinally in interpreting Paul's statement here
 - On the one hand we could assume that Paul means we must in some sense literally become Jewish
 - This was the conclusion the Judaizers had reached
 - On the other hand, we might go in the other direction and claim that belief erases all distinction between Israel and Gentiles
 - This is the mistake of the modern replacement theology movement
 - Paul will eventually come back to settling this question in the letter
 - But first, he uses the next section to give a proper perspective on the Jewish nation, the law and the promises spoken to Abraham

Gal. 3:8 The Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, "ALL THE NATIONS WILL BE BLESSED IN YOU."

Gal. 3:9 So then those who are of faith are blessed with Abraham, the believer.

- Paul says that God always intended to bring salvation to Gentiles in due time
 - And since God intended to save Gentiles, who do not have the Law, he devised a means that did not depend on Law

- He preached to Abraham that through him all nations will be blessed
- The word for nations in Hebrew is *goy*, which simply means Gentiles
- So before the Jewish nation had even been birthed, the Lord declares that salvation would be made available to Gentiles through Abraham's family
- So how was a Gentile to be blessed with salvation through Abraham's descendants if Gentiles didn't descend from the man Abraham?
 - Paul says Gentiles join that blessing by faith
 - By faith we are called Abraham's sons
 - In Jewish thinking, the word "sons" can carry the sense of follower
 - Just as the sons of God are followers of God
 - So the sons of Abraham are the followers of Abraham
 - As Jesus demonstrated to the Pharisees

John 8:39 They answered and said to Him, "Abraham is our father." Jesus said to them, "If you are Abraham's children, do the deeds of Abraham."

- The Pharisees called themselves the sons of Abraham
 - But Jesus pointed out that if they are to be called sons of Abraham, then they should be following Abraham's example
 - So the Gentile becomes the son or daughter of the Lord in faith, because by that faith we become His follower
 - Paul will return to discussing this issue of Jewish and Gentile children
- Meanwhile, Paul continues to develop the doctrine of Israel by turning to the purpose of the Law

Gal. 3:10 For as many as are of the works of the Law are under a curse; for it is written, "CURSED IS EVERYONE WHO DOES NOT ABIDE BY ALL THINGS WRITTEN IN THE BOOK OF THE LAW, TO PERFORM THEM."

Gal. 3:11 Now that no one is justified by the Law before God is evident; for, "THE RIGHTEOUS MAN SHALL LIVE BY FAITH."

Gal. 3:12 However, the Law is not of faith; on the contrary, "HE WHO PRACTICES THEM SHALL LIVE BY THEM."

- The Judaizers had made following the Law of Moses the centerpiece of their argument
 - They taught that believers, whether Jew or Gentile, must live according to the Law to be saved
 - But here Paul says that all who rely on the Law for their justification are under a curse

- The Law itself declares in Deuteronomy 21:23 that all who do not abide by all things written in the Law are cursed to hang on a tree (that is to die)
- James echoes this truth when he teaches

James 2:10 For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one point, he has become guilty of all.

- God's law functions as an indivisible unit
 - Keeping some of the law while failing to keep others gains us nothing, since God's Law is an all-or-nothing standard
 - Scripture defines righteousness as a point, not a scale
 - We see this clearly in an exchange between Jesus and a rich young ruler

Luke 18:19 And Jesus said to him, "Why do you call Me good? No one is good except God alone.

- Only God is good, Jesus says
- Men prefer to think that good is a scale of degrees, but we have the wrong measuring stick
 - Being good means being 100% sinless
 - Even one sin makes us 100% bad by God's standard
 - This is why scriptures say that the one wishing to live according to Law must keep all of it or else be cursed by the penalties of the Law
 - The penalty for failing to keep the Law, according to the Law itself, was death
 - Only those who keep everything written in the Law from birth could escape that penalty
- On the other hand, scripture has always declared that righteousness was obtainable only by faith
 - Abraham was our example of a man declared righteous by faith, and the prophets made similar declarations
 - Habakkuk 2:4 declares that the righteous man shall live by faith
 - The prophet teaches

Hab. 2:4 "Behold, as for the proud one,
His soul is not right within him;
But the righteous will live by his faith.

- Faith in God's promises is and always has been the one and only way to righteousness,

which is the requirement to enter God's presence

- So in v.12, Paul concludes that faith and law are always two mutually exclusive means of seeking righteousness
 - In other words, there are only two options for reaching Heaven, and one is no option at all
 - We can either earn entrance on our own merits living up to the standards of the Law, which is to be equal to God's goodness
 - Which Jesus Himself said is impossible
 - Or we can rely entirely on faith in Jesus Christ
- Paul says it's impossible to seek righteousness by Law and by faith at the same time
 - They are mutually exclusive paths
 - Either I trust in my own ability to meet some standard of performance and demonstrate my righteousness by my actions
 - Or I recognize I can't meet God's standard, and so I trust in God's promises instead of on my own abilities
 - I rely exclusively on His mercy trusting in His provision of Christ
 - To summarize, Paul repeats that he who practices the Law shall live by them
 - Another way to state this principle is to say those who place their trust for salvation in works of Law must be prepared to accept the result
 - They must be prepared to live with what follows
 - And since every man has sin, and breaking even one law leaves us short of righteousness required for Heaven, then following the Law leaves us empty handed
 - Even our choice to follow law for justification is proof in itself that we are not resting in faith in God's promises
 - The Bible teaches that we cannot receive God's promises in faith until we have first repented of dead works
 - So those who seek to be justified by works of Law are giving evidence they have not received Christ in faith
- Because the Law is no solution to the problem of sin, Paul turns back to Christ as our solution

Gal. 3:13 Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us — for it is written, “CURSED IS EVERYONE WHO HANGS ON A TREE” —

Gal. 3:14 in order that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we would receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.

- Here we have the entire Gospel message and the central point of the Bible
 - Christ redeemed sinful men from the curse

- The word redeemed means to pay a ransom, to free someone by means of a payment
 - Jesus purchased or ransomed us from the curse of the Law
 - By hanging on the cross, a tree of sorts, Jesus died in our place
- So with the penalty of the Law satisfied, we have the opportunity to be saved by faith rather than works
 - Everyone who stands in God's presence must possess a righteousness equal to God's own goodness
 - The Law of God is the standard we must meet
 - But working to keep that Law is a fruitless path
 - So if we can't fulfill it, our only hope is that someone else fulfill it on our behalf
- Paul says Jesus died to give us that way
 - He makes possible the blessing given to Abraham and also to the Gentiles
 - Those who rest in God's promises by faith are blessed
 - In contrast to those who rest in works and are cursed by their sin
- It seems so clear that faith trumps works of Law, especially given the futility of working to earn perfection
 - So why did the churches in Galatia agree with the Judaizers? What argument did they make to convince the church to keep the Law?
 - In short, it was historical sequence
 - The Judaizers had argued that since the giving of the Law to Moses came later in God's plan, it took precedence
 - It took priority over the early revelation to Abraham
 - So while faith was good enough for Abraham, once the Law came to Israel at Sinai, it superseded the earlier revelation
 - This analysis was wrong and completely misunderstood the purpose in the giving of the Law
 - And if Paul is going to defend salvation by grace through faith alone, then he needs to teach the proper perspective of the Law
 - He is going to teach more doctrine, ecclesiology, the doctrine of the Church, and use examples from human experience to show the proper relationship between God's promises and the law

Gal. 3:15 Brethren, I speak in terms of human relations: even though it is only a man's covenant, yet when it has been ratified, no one sets it aside or adds conditions to it.

- Paul's argument begins with a human example of covenants

- A covenant is a special form of relationship, one we don't see today outside of marriage
 - It is a legally binding agreement similar to contracts
 - Covenants had terms and obligations like a contract
- But covenants always differed in important aspects as well, and Paul points those out here
 - First, Paul says that once a covenant is ratified, no one sets it aside
 - Paul's referring to a covenant's most enduring quality...it endures
 - A covenant is legally binding for life
 - There is no "cancel" button on a covenant
- To break a covenant meant paying with your life
 - So it was said that only by death does a covenant come to an end
 - This is why Jesus says to divorce and remarry is always adultery
 - A marriage is a type of covenant before God, and therefore is an agreement that only comes to an end when a death occurs
- Secondly, Paul says no new conditions can be added to it
 - It's not a living agreement, like the US Constitution
 - It is formed in a moment, according to certain terms, and thereafter it remains unchanged
 - So every covenant must continue until its terms come to pass
- Now these limitations are true even for a regular, everyday human covenant, Paul says
 - So why should we expect a covenant set by the Lord to be any less certain and unchangeable?
 - Will not God honor His covenants at least as well as men honor their covenants?
 - Certainly, that's the conclusion we should make, and that's the application Paul begins to make starting in the next verse

Gal. 3:16 Now the promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. He does not say, "And to seeds," as referring to many, but rather to one, "And to your seed," that is, Christ.

- The promises Paul mentions are those made in the Abrahamic covenant
 - The terms of that promise were given to Abraham personally and his seed
 - Paul is referring specifically to the moment in Genesis 22 when God spoke to Abraham

Gen. 22:16 and said, "By Myself I have sworn, declares the LORD, because you

**have done this thing and have not withheld your son, your only son,
 Gen. 22:17 indeed I will greatly bless you, and I will greatly multiply your seed as
 the stars of the heavens and as the sand which is on the seashore;
 and your seed shall possess the gate of their enemies.**

**Gen. 22:18 “In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you
 have obeyed My voice.”**

- When the Lord spoke these words to Abraham, He used the singular form of the word seed in Hebrew (*zera*)
 - If God had simply meant that Abraham and his offspring were to receive these things, then God would have used the plural form of the word seed
 - But Paul says God purposely used the the singular form of seed because He had a certain person in mind, that is Christ
 - These promises had Christ’s arrival in mind, because Christ was the One to fulfill these promises
 - Now earlier, the Lord had spoken to Abraham about this same covenant and said Abraham’s descendants would receive the blessings
 - In those earlier presentations, God used a plural word for descendants
 - So the promises do extend to Abraham’s family in the sense of believing Jews
 - But in Chapter 22, God changed His language to use a singular version of seed to show His promises revolve around Jesus’ arrival
 - This was Paul’s point
 - The covenant given to Abraham was given by a promise, and that promise was spoken to Abraham and to Christ
 - Until both Abraham and Christ receive what God has promised in the covenant, then the covenant cannot be set aside or changed

Psa. 110:1 The LORD says to my Lord:

“Sit at My right hand

Until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet.”

Psa. 110:2 The LORD will stretch forth Your strong scepter from Zion, saying,

“Rule in the midst of Your enemies.”

Psa. 110:3 Your people will volunteer freely in the day of Your power;

In holy array, from the womb of the dawn,

Your youth are to You as the dew.

Psa. 110:4 The LORD has sworn and will not change His mind,

“You are a priest forever

According to the order of Melchizedek.”

- Until Christ is given all that the Lord promised for Abraham and his Seed, the covenant

will remain in force

- So then Paul makes the application

Gal. 3:17 What I am saying is this: the Law, which came four hundred and thirty years later, does not invalidate a covenant previously ratified by God, so as to nullify the promise.

Gal. 3:18 For if the inheritance is based on law, it is no longer based on a promise; but God has granted it to Abraham by means of a promise.

- The Law of Moses arrived 430 years after the Lord spoke the promises of the covenant to Abraham
 - This later arrival of the Law was the reason Judaizers claimed that the Law was a requirement for the believer
 - Their logic was the Law must be a requirement if the Lord added it after the promises spoken to Abraham
 - But Paul argues such a conclusion is impossible given the nature of covenants
- Nothing that comes after an existing covenant can invalidate a covenant already in effect
 - Therefore, nothing can nullify the promises God made to Abraham
 - Abraham and Christ were going to receive the things God promised
 - And those promises were no less sure because of the Law's arrival
- In v.18 Paul brings the argument to a close
 - We remember that our salvation, which includes our inheritance, comes either by works of Law or by the means of God's promise
 - But as we established earlier, these two things cannot both be true at the same time
 - Righteousness and the inheritance we receive in the Kingdom cannot be by both a promise and by works
 - Either I give you something and it is a gift, or you obtain it by earning it for yourself
 - Something cannot both be earned and be a gift
 - So in v.19 Paul says if we gain our salvation and with it our inheritance by keeping the Law, then we cannot also say we gain it as a gift from God
 - We must say that the Law replaces the promises of God
 - But as Paul demonstrated, our inheritance in the Kingdom was made available to Abraham and all who follow him by faith alone
- So which will it be? Working the Law or receiving a promise?
 - While the issue may be settled in our hearts, and I hope it is, still Paul knew this church needed to hear more

- Maybe you have the same question the church did in Paul's day
- That question is why the Law then?
- If salvation didn't depend on the Law, why was it given to Israel?
- As Paul continued to teach Israelology and moves into Ecclesiology, we'll get our answer next time

- Throughout the Bible, we're continually presented with the contention of two spiritual ideas
 - Faith and Law
 - In both the Old and New Testaments, we find countless references to both faith and works of law
 - Men and women called to faith in God's promises
 - Yet at the same time, those same men and women are challenged to accomplish works in keeping with their faith
 - And from the beginning, men have confused one with the other
 - The troubles in Galatia that gave rise to Paul's letter were just another example in that history of confusion
 - False teachers persuaded Greek Christians that the way to eternal life was by becoming a Jew first
 - Then following circumcision, the church must follow the Law
 - They had convinced believers in the church to take circumcision and to adopt a Jewish lifestyle as a prerequisite for pleasing God
 - For the believer, this behavior was destructive
 - It robbed the believer of their liberty in Christ
 - And it sent a confusing message about the relationship between faith and works
 - More troubling, this teaching gave opportunity for the unbelievers to join the congregation merely through works
 - Works cannot save
 - Yet by offering a recipe of works, the Judaizers were encouraging unbelievers to become an illegitimate participant in the church
- So as we've studied, Paul wrote to set straight the relationship between faith and Law
 - First, he defended his authority to teach
 - Paul was an apostle with authority and a message given by Christ
 - Paul answered to no man for his teaching
 - And in fact, Paul was even required to correct other apostles to preserve the truth
 - Then after re-establishing his base of authority, Paul moved last week to refute the false teaching
 - He is teaching on three central areas of Christian doctrine
 - Soteriology, or the doctrine of salvation
 - Israelology, or the doctrine of Israel
 - And ecclesiology, or the doctrine of the church
 - The Judaizers were assaulting all three areas of doctrine with their lies

- They taught salvation included works of Law
- They taught that only Jews could be saved, so Gentiles must become Jewish
- They taught that the church wasn't distinct but rather was to become part of Israel
- So in response, Paul began in Chapter 3 with an appeal to their past experiences and to Israel's history
 - He reminded the Galatians of all they had experienced by faith alone and without works of the Law
 - And he argued the truth of Abraham saved by faith alone
 - And he finished with an examination of the covenant that resulted in the promise of salvation for Gentiles
 - So we can summarize all that Paul taught in the first part of Chapter 3 this way
 - It was the Galatians' faith that brought the church its first experience with the Lord
 - And faith has always been the basis of every saint's relationship with the Lord
 - And by that same faith, we receive the blessing reserved for the children of God
 - So the Law of Moses plays no role in justifying nor sanctifying the saint
- Now Paul moves deeper into a discussion of Israelology, particularly as it pertains to the Law
 - And tonight we begin with a simple but profound question, which was set up by his earlier defense of salvation by faith alone

Gal. 3:19 Why the Law then? It was added because of transgressions, having been ordained through angels by the agency of a mediator, until the seed would come to whom the promise had been made.

- Why the Law then?
 - If the Law is not the basis for our faith and blessing, then why did God give it in the first place?
 - The answer to this question is important for the Galatian church, since the Judaizers were distorting the Law
 - But this issue is also important for our church today, because numerous church traditions have over-emphasized the Law
 - Even to the point of teaching Christians to live according to it as a matter of sanctification
 - So the question for us today is how should a Christian relate to the Law, knowing it was not given to save us or sanctify us?
- Paul explains the Law's unique purpose in the next section, beginning with it was

“added”

- The word in Greek translated added means to place something beside
- So the Law came in a covenant to Israel 430 years after the covenant given to Abraham
- And it comes alongside the original covenant
 - It doesn't join it
 - It doesn't replace it
 - It sits next to it
- Why couldn't the covenant of Law replace the covenant given to Abraham? Because laws cannot make a person righteous
 - Laws exist only to tell us when we are unrighteous
 - For example, we have a law saying I cannot murder
 - So far, I haven't murdered anyone
 - But can we say that this law has made me righteous?
 - No, because righteousness is much more than merely whether I murder
 - And the law itself does not possess power to stop me from murdering should I chose to do so
 - That law only exists to convict me of sin when and if I should choose to murder
 - Therefore, a law's purpose doesn't even go into effect until after someone has already sinned
 - As such, the Law only serves to create greater awareness of sin
- So this is why Paul says the Law was added “because” of transgressions or sins
 - Man's sin necessitated the giving of God's Law
 - Paul teaches the same thing to the Romans in Chapter 3:

Rom. 3:19 Now we know that whatever the Law says, it speaks to those who are under the Law, so that every mouth may be closed and all the world may become accountable to God;

Rom. 3:20 because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law comes the knowledge of sin.

- The chief purpose of God's Law was to make clear how unrighteous men truly are
 - So, the Law didn't come to ensure the blessing God promised to Abraham
 - It came to point out sin, to moderate it and nothing more
- Thirdly, Paul emphasizes that the Law's delivery reflects its different purpose
 - The Law was given to Israel by angels through a mediator
 - The Law came as part of the Old Covenant through a complex delivery

mechanism that included God working through angels and a man, Moses, to form His covenant

- Paul is emphasizing the fundamental difference between the Old Covenant and the New Covenant
 - When a covenant has a mediator, it tells us that both parties participate in keeping the agreement
 - Both parties have terms to fulfill and penalties if they fail to keep the agreement
 - In the case of a covenant, the penalty is death
- This means the covenant of Law is a covenant that can only bring blessing if men keep the terms perfectly
 - If we break a covenant, then the terms are forfeited
 - And the only expectation is death
- But the covenant given to Abraham came very differently
 - It didn't have a mediator
 - God alone made promises
 - Abraham was put to sleep so that he could do nothing but receive what God granted him
 - So that covenant is not based on performance
 - It depends entirely on God being faithful and keeping His promises, which He always does
- That leads us to the final difference Paul lists between the Law and the Promise
 - The Law sits alongside the covenant of Moses only for a time
 - Paul says it was added "until"
 - Don't pass by that word too quickly
 - The Law was, until it wasn't
 - The word until makes clear that at a certain point, the covenant of Law ceases
 - The Law no longer sits alongside the covenant of Promise once the promised Seed had come
 - Remember, Paul has said that the seed referred to Christ, as indicated by Paul's use of the singular "seed"
 - So when Christ came, He brought an end to the Law
- So Paul says in v.19 that the Law came in a different way than the covenant of Abraham, and exists for different purposes and exists only until the Promised Messiah arrived
 - So why did the Law need to exist for a time alongside the covenant of promise?
 - Paul now explains that answer

Gal. 3:20 Now a mediator is not for one party only; whereas God is only one.

Gal. 3:21 Is the Law then contrary to the promises of God? May it never be! For if a law had been given which was able to impart life, then righteousness would indeed have been based on law.

Gal. 3:22 But the Scripture has shut up everyone under sin, so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.

- Again, Paul emphasizes that the covenant of Law required a mediator, while the covenant of the promise only involved God acting by Himself
 - So the Law and the promises of God are two distinct and different covenants
 - But Paul asks another obvious question the reader may be thinking
 - Does this mean the covenant of Law is against or opposed to the covenant of the promise in the sense that there are two competing ways to get to Heaven?
- Paul says not at all...for if any Law were capable of bringing us to righteousness, then God would have said so
 - He would have told us explicitly that the way to the Father was by works of Law
 - Instead, Paul says in v.22 that the Law shut everyone up in sin
 - As we read earlier in Romans 3:19
- Then Paul explains how to understand the relationship between the Law and the covenant of Grace
 - Paul says that the Law's capacity to bring conviction for sin is actually part of God's plan to save those who believe
 - God displays the whole world as guilty for their works according to His Law
 - And that when He granted mercy, it came through an entirely different mechanism
 - By a promise given to those who believe in Jesus Christ
- So how did the Law accomplish its good purpose in bringing men to faith?
 - Paul concludes this examination of Israelology to answer

Gal. 3:23 But before faith came, we were kept in custody under the law, being shut up to the faith which was later to be revealed.

Gal. 3:24 Therefore the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ, so that we may be justified by faith.

Gal. 3:25 But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor.

- Before you and I came to faith in Jesus Christ, we were in custody under the Law

- For the Jew, this literally meant it kept Israel separated from the world and under custody of its care
 - But for the Gentile, it carries the opposite meaning
 - The Law shut out the Gentile from the promises of God
 - The Law was a barrier to Gentiles entering into the assembly of God's people
- So whether you were Jew or Gentile, the Law dictated your relationship to God, either holding you close or holding you off
 - In either case, it served to convict you of sin
 - And demonstrate man's unholiness in comparison to God's holiness
 - Meanwhile, Jews and Gentiles could enter into the blessings of God's promises to Abraham and be declared righteous by their faith
 - Even still, they would still be required to live under the Law until the Messiah arrived
- During this waiting period of human history, Paul says the Law became a tutor to Christ
 - In the original Greek, it says the Law became the children's teacher about Christ
 - In other words, the Law was a teacher for God's people, teaching of Christ so that we would find him
 - And by faith in Christ, we would be declared righteous
- Now that Christ has come, we no longer find use for the Law
 - We no longer need to rely on the Law to learn about Christ since He has been revealed
 - We don't need a tutor, since Christ Himself has spoken
- Now we can still learn about Him in a study of the Law
 - But studying the Law is very different from following the Law
 - We are encouraged to study about Christ in the Law, because all scripture is useful for instruction
 - But we are not expected to live according to it now that Christ has appeared, because His appearing becomes greater testimony than our attempts to keep the Law
- To illustrate what Paul's saying, let's imagine these two covenants as trains moving on tracks
 - The covenant of promise spoken to Abraham is the Grace train headed in a straight direction to the promised kingdom
 - There are a countless number of cars on this train
 - And in these cars, we find empty seats prepared for the saints of God
 - Suddenly, another train appears on another set of tracks

- This second train is called the Law train, and it's also moving
- But it's going in the opposite direction
- And its destination is the Lake of Fire
- And unlike the Grace train, the Law train is already full to overflowing
- As the people in the Law train consider their surroundings and their destination, they become aware of their jeopardy
 - They come to realize they are on the wrong train, headed to a terrible destination
 - But there's no way to steer the train, because it's glued to the tracks
 - If they stay on this train, there is no avoiding the outcome
 - Then in their search for an answer, some notice the train on the nearby tracks headed in the opposite direction
 - On the side of the train is written the conductor's name, Jesus Christ
 - Immediately, they see their chance
 - They decide to jump from one train to the other
 - They leave the Law train to join the Grace train
 - Instantly they begin to move in the opposite direction
 - Now they are moving toward the Kingdom
 - But then at a point, the tracks diverge and the Law train's head away and fades into the distance
 - Meanwhile, the Grace train continues onward
 - Only now, we notice the train conductor has his head outside the window yelling "All aboard!"
 - And still more people are running up to the train and jumping on
 - When we look out more closely, we notice that train conductor is Christ Himself
- In a sense, that's how Paul describes the relationship between Law and grace
 - The law shut up everyone, made them aware of the jeopardy and gave them reason to look for a better way
 - The Law train was never a solution for sin
 - But it made them aware of the need to find a solution
 - Then at the right time, they encounter the Grace train
 - They come to realize by faith that the promised Christ is the Messiah
 - In that recognition, they must leave a reliance on works of the Law in order to accept the grace of God
 - When they receive grace, they move in a new direction and obtain a new hope in God's promises
 - And then when the conductor of the Grace train made Himself known, the call of the Gospel goes out to the world

- As that happens, the Law is no longer the vehicle to bring men to Christ
 - Now the name of Christ Himself draws men to salvation
 - So the Law leaves the scene and all that remains is the conductor yelling “all aboard”
- So the Judaizers were teaching that these two trains worked together
 - That somehow God took the Law train and hooked it to the caboose of the Grace train
 - And now these two trains were headed in the same direction
 - Furthermore, they wanted the church to spend all its time in the Law end of the train
 - I think I’ve run this analogy into the ground, so let’s move forward with Paul

Gal. 3:26 For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.

Gal. 3:27 For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.

Gal. 3:28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

Gal. 3:29 And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s descendants, heirs according to promise.

- **Paul is now turning to the third major area of doctrine, ecclesiology, the doctrine of the Church**
 - He transitions out of the discussion of the relationship between the Law and grace with a comforting statement
 - All believers are made sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus
 - Our faith alone brings us into the family of God
 - And if we are sons, then we are also heirs
 - Moreover, this new identity takes precedence over any identity we possessed prior to faith
 - We are all baptized into the Body of Christ by faith
 - Believers are clothed in the righteousness of Christ
 - Paul is drawing upon Greek culture, since in Greek society a young person was recognized as an adult when they were allowed to wear a toga
 - Furthermore, that clothing covers over our past distinctions
 - Whether we were Jew or Gentile
 - Whether we were enslaved or a free man
 - If we were man or woman, nevertheless we are all of the same identity having

come to faith in Jesus Christ

- And if we all belong to Christ in this way, then we are all brothers and sisters in the same family
 - Therefore, we are all descendants of Abraham in Christ
 - Remember, Jesus Himself descended from Abraham (in the sense of His earthly affiliation)
 - So if we join Christ's family by faith, then we likewise join Abraham's family
 - So by faith, we all become the descendants of Abraham and of the Seed, Christ
 - So we receive the promised blessings
- Before we move further, let's understand what Paul is saying and not saying
 - Paul is saying that believers no longer need to be concerned with issues of Jewishness vs. Gentile, or other issues of culture in the question of salvation
 - Those distinctions only made sense in the first place because God established them through the Law
 - Choosing to work in Israel to the exclusion of Gentiles for the most part
 - But once Christ came, the Law had met its purpose, and it went away
 - So if the Law has gone away, then distinctions between Jew and Gentile went with it for the purpose of salvation
 - Gone as well are any other earthly distinctions for the purpose of determining righteousness before God
 - Faith in Christ is the great equalizer
 - On the other hand, Paul is not saying that we no longer observe practical differences between members of the Body of Christ
 - Both Jews and Gentiles still exist in the church
 - Men and women still exist
 - And in some cultures and times, slavery still exists
 - The moment a man or woman comes to faith they do not cease being male or female
 - Likewise, other natural distinctions will remain
 - But Paul is teaching that these differences are irrelevant for the purpose of salvation
 - Therefore, as Christians we need not place ourselves back under a Law given to Jews to lead them to Christ
 - In other words, we don't need to become Jews to be saved, since salvation doesn't depend on any identity except our identity in Christ
- Now as we enter into Chapter 4, Paul is still talking about being sons of God by faith, but now he begins to raise the question of why the church is submitting to the Law unnecessarily?

Gal. 4:1 Now I say, as long as the heir is a child, he does not differ at all from a slave although he is owner of everything,

Gal. 4:2 but he is under guardians and managers until the date set by the father.

Gal. 4:3 So also we, while we were children, were held in bondage under the elemental things of the world.

Gal. 4:4 But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law,

Gal. 4:5 so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.

Gal. 4:6 Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!"

- Paul is now teaching the church that our entrance into salvation and away from the Law came according to a timing God determined
 - Paul compares believers under Law and awaiting grace as a child
 - In this early stage of life, a child has a status barely better than a slave or servant in the family
 - He can't make his own decisions, he can't direct his own affairs
 - Nevertheless, he is an heir
 - In a date in the future, he will come into the things he is promised as an heir
 - While he awaits that day, the Master places His child under the care and instruction of guardians and managers
 - He is instructed by these authorities
 - He is disciplined by these authorities
 - And he is restrained by these authorities
 - But at a date set by the father, the child is set free from these restrainers
- Likewise, we were under the restraints, conviction and instruction of God's Law or the general conviction of our conscious
 - These things acted to preserve us to a degree until the time the Father appointed
 - And then at the appointed time, we came to faith in Christ
 - By that faith we were set free from the bondage to the Law
 - We were like that child that has matured to the point he is no longer under the custodian
 - Notice that Paul says in v.4 that this time of living under the custodian of the Law existed only until Christ was born
 - At the point that Christ was born of a woman, and He was revealed as the Messiah, the Law was no longer our tutor

- Now Christ spoke for Himself directly
- So Paul isn't saying that individually the Law is still in effect until we individually come to faith
- Paul is speaking in terms of dispensations
- As the Messiah was revealed in the flesh, then the bondage of the custodian was released for all
- The dispensation of Law gave way to the dispensation of grace
- So now Paul makes the application for the church

Gal. 4:7 Therefore you are no longer a slave, but a son; and if a son, then an heir through God.

- To conclude, Paul says if we are no longer a slave to works of law, then that can only be true if we have moved to a position of sons by faith
 - And if have become sons of God by faith, then we should expect to receive what sons receive
 - We have been promised an inheritance in Heaven
 - Which means our salvation is assured
 - As every son is a son for life
 - So if the Judaizers were putting pressure on the believers to become Jewish or else lose what had been promised, Paul says this isn't possible
 - These blessings came as a result of a covenant God delivered to Abraham by means of a promise
 - If they are the result of a promise, then we need do nothing to earn them or secure them
 - And if we have received them, then we are sons with an inheritance
 - So nothing more is required
 - Next week, we'll look at Paul's questioning of the church for their seeming willingness to return to such things
 - And he raise questions of what it means about their claimed faith

- In scripture, it's common to find comparison between earthly fathers and our Heavenly Father, and between earthly children and the children of God
 - The comparison is useful and instructive, even if it falls short of fully describing our relationship with the Lord in many cases
 - Fathers are to be loving caretakers over their children
 - Fathers are to be teachers instructing their children
 - Fathers are to be disciplinarians and guardians over children
 - And fathers are to be authority figures over children
 - While children are to be respectful, obedient, and honoring of their fathers
 - Concerned with pleasing their father and winning his approval
 - And as we'll see today, even the bond between fathers and children pictures the relationship between God and His children
 - Paul uses this analogy extensively in the first half of Chapter 4 to complete his thought on the relationship between the church and Christ
 - This analogy – and the way Paul applies it – will form his teaching on ecclesiology, the doctrine of the church
 - So far in his response to the Judaizers, Paul has substantiated his authority and message
 - He has defended salvation by grace alone
 - And he has set forth the true purpose on the Law
 - He will return to these topics in time
 - But as we ended last week, Paul was transitioning out of a discussion of the law and into the proper understanding of our relationship to the Father
 - He used an analogy of a child growing up under the care of a guardian

Gal. 4:3 So also we, while we were children, were held in bondage under the elemental things of the world.

Gal. 4:4 But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law,

Gal. 4:5 so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.

Gal. 4:6 Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, “Abba! Father!”

Gal. 4:7 Therefore you are no longer a slave, but a son; and if a son, then an heir through God.

Gal. 4:8 However at that time, when you did not know God, you were slaves to those which by nature are no gods.

- As I taught last week, Paul is teaching on two levels in this comparison

- First, Paul is describing the individual's experience in moving from under a state of law and into a position of sonship by grace
 - Before we come to faith, we are like children in a household
 - We are held in a form of enslavement
- Paul says that bondage was under the elemental things of the world
 - Elemental things means basic principles
 - As in the fundamental truths of the world
 - Like children bound by their guardians, before we came to faith we were restricted from access to the kingdom and our inheritance
- What were these elementary things that bound us as unbelievers?
 - That thing differed depending on whether we are Jewish or Gentile
 - In the case of the Jew, the bondage was to the Law given to limit the Jew's sin and point them to Christ
 - Notice Paul makes reference to "those under the Law" in v.5 and says "we" might receive adoption as sons
 - The reference to "we" is a reference to Paul's Jewish brethren who were under Jewish Law
 - Then notice also in vs.6-8 Paul addresses Gentiles in a similar way
 - Paul says "you" and says the Gentiles in Galatia are no longer slaves either
 - But in v.8 Paul clarifies they were in bondage to that time when they did not know of God at all
 - They were slaves to idols and pagan rituals, which were no gods at all
- So while the Jew and the Gentile might have experienced that bondage differently, they arrived at the same result
 - As unbelievers, both Jews and Gentiles were in bondage to something prior to coming to faith
 - Like Bob Dylan sings, "everyone has to serve someone"
 - Jews served the Law in works of flesh, while Gentiles served pagan idols
 - But then Paul says in v.6 that because we are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts
 - Paul is describing the moment of our salvation
 - It is the arrival of the Spirit in our hearts that brings us to the moment of salvation
 - Remember, Paul says in 1 Corinthians

1Cor. 12:3 Therefore I make known to you that no one speaking by the Spirit of God says, "Jesus is accursed"; and no one can say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the Holy Spirit.

- As a result of the Holy Spirit coming into our heart, we respond by calling out to our Father in Heaven
 - The word “Abba” is Aramaic for father, and it is a very personal intimate form of father
 - It is the word used by someone who knows the father like a child knows his daddy
- Did you notice the chain of events in v.6?
 - Paul says our salvation moment came about because we are sons of God
 - Doesn’t that seem backwards?
 - Don’t we become a child of God because of our confession of faith and the arrival of the Spirit?
 - Paul answers that question no
 - Paul said we did not become a child of God because we confessed Christ and received the Holy Spirit
 - Paul says we confessed Christ and received the Holy Spirit because we were a child of God
 - Paul is referring to God’s election of His children before the beginning
 - Notice the analogy Paul has chosen to use has a child living under bondage
 - The analogy says we were always a child of God
 - God knew it and God planned it
 - But we were unaware of that plan and were in bondage under elementary world principles
 - But we were always a child because God had determined to call us into faith on an appointed day
 - Paul describes this truth in Ephesians

Eph. 1:3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ,

Eph. 1:4 just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love

Eph. 1:5 He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will,

- Notice again in this passage that Paul is calling the believer a child or son of God
 - In this case, he says we are adopted sons of God
 - And that adoption was something God planned from before the foundation of the earth
 - And He placed us in His family as a result of the kind intention of His will
 - God chose us, Paul says, we didn’t choose Him

- This truth fundamentally destroys the Judaizers' argument
 - You were chosen by God to know and follow Him, to become an adopted son or daughter of God
 - Then what possible value are your works in bringing you into the Kingdom?
 - The Law or the pagan rituals we observed prior to salvation are part of that process
 - In fact, Paul says they were the barrier that kept us under bondage and away from our Father
- But our Father knew us and chose us and when the time was right, sent His Holy Spirit into our hearts
 - And when the Spirit was sent to us, we received the gift of faith
 - And by that faith, we came to know Jehovah as God and Father
 - Therefore, we cried out to the Father, calling daddy as only a true child can
 - The chain of events begins with God and leads us to follow Him
- So the first way Paul is using the analogy of a son under a guardian is to describe our individual experience of leaving bondage to law and entering salvation by faith
 - But there is a second application implied in this analogy
 - As we discussed last week, there is a giving way of one dispensation to another
 - In the time of Law, the Jew was under bondage to the Sinai covenant while the Greek was excluded from the promise
 - This was a time when God was laying the groundwork for His Son's arrival
 - Then notice in v.4 Paul says everything changed in the fullness of time, when Jesus was born of a woman
 - That moment wasn't the moment of our personal salvation
 - That was a moment when a dispensation was changing
 - The phrase "fullness of the time" means at the completion of an age
 - So when the age of Law had come to its end, then the next age began
 - This was the age of grace in the face of Christ
 - That is why the Law is no longer the primary instrument to lead men to Christ
 - Now men are called by the proclamation of the Gospel
- This leaves us at the end of v.8 with Paul having laid out his arguments against the Judaizers
 - He has argued that scripture and experience taught the Galatians that faith alone brought them to God
 - He dispelled the power of Law to save
 - He showed its purpose to convict and send us to Christ
 - He explained that the church is not an entity of Jew and lessor members, that

such distinctions no longer matter

- And he has demonstrated that our very adoption of sons and daughters was the result of an act of the Lord according to His will
- After piling up all that evidence in his corner, Paul then turns to admonishing the church for their failure to apply these truths

Gal. 4:9 But now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, how is it that you turn back again to the weak and worthless elemental things, to which you desire to be enslaved all over again?

Gal. 4:10 You observe days and months and seasons and years.

- The Galatian believers had transitioned away from a state of bondage and into a state of sonship by which they knew God and called Him Father
 - So Paul asks why if they have come to know God would they ever want to go back to weak and worthless things?
 - Notice Paul catches himself and adds a correction
 - He says you have become known by God
 - This further confirms that Paul is teaching that this church didn't find God
 - God found them
 - And therefore since God found them, why in the world would they prefer to live as someone who had yet to know God fully?
 - And Paul says this return to the Law was a voluntary submission to re-enslavement
 - How were they returning to slavery? Paul lists the ways in v.10
 - The church in Galatia was observing days, months, seasons and years
 - Each of these time periods was a shorthand way of describing an aspect of regular Jewish observance under the Law and tradition of Israel
 - Days refers to observing all the restrictions of the Sabbath day observance
 - Months refers to the monthly new moon festival
 - Seasons refers to the Jewish festivals associated with the Spring and Fall harvest seasons
 - And the years refers to the New Year, sabbatical year and jubilee yearly observances
- Paul is unequivocal in his critique of these observances
 - He says to make a lifestyle of observing these patterns is a return to weak, worthless things
 - They are weak with respect to mitigating our sin
 - And they are worthless in bringing us righteousness

- Furthermore, they represent a form of slavery that is entirely unnecessary in light of Christ's arrival in our hearts
- Elsewhere in Colossians Paul says we have liberty to observe the Sabbath, festivals and new moons as we choose

Col. 2:16 Therefore no one is to act as your judge in regard to food or drink or in respect to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day —

Col. 2:17 things which are a mere shadow of what is to come; but the substance belongs to Christ.

- The observance of such things were intended as shadows of Christ
- But once the real thing has arrived, the shadow is no longer necessary or even preferred
- But taking this together with Paul's teaching in Galatians, we see that liberty doesn't give us the right to confuse other believers – or even ourselves – concerning their meaning
 - In a sense, we can sin by observing the Law too much
 - In that our observance confuses the purpose of such things and causes immature believers to be confused over the Law
 - We don't have liberty to use our lives to testify to the wrong things
 - Living a testimony that the Law has value and should be a part of our daily life is wrong, Paul says, and therefore it is sin
- So in v.11 Paul expresses concern for what he is hearing

Gal. 4:11 I fear for you, that perhaps I have labored over you in vain.

Gal. 4:12 I beg of you, brethren, become as I am, for I also have become as you are. You have done me no wrong;

Gal. 4:13 but you know that it was because of a bodily illness that I preached the gospel to you the first time;

Gal. 4:14 and that which was a trial to you in my bodily condition you did not despise or loathe, but you received me as an angel of God, as Christ Jesus Himself.

Gal. 4:15 Where then is that sense of blessing you had? For I bear you witness that, if possible, you would have plucked out your eyes and given them to me.

Gal. 4:16 So have I become your enemy by telling you the truth?

Gal. 4:17 They eagerly seek you, not commendably, but they wish to shut you out so that you will seek them.

Gal. 4:18 But it is good always to be eagerly sought in a commendable manner, and not only when I am present with you.

Gal. 4:19 My children, with whom I am again in labor until Christ is formed in you

—

Gal. 4:20 but I could wish to be present with you now and to change my tone, for I am perplexed about you.

- Paul fears he labored over them in vain, meaning his work achieved nothing
 - Now at first glance, we might think Paul worried his work had failed to convert them to Christianity
 - That perhaps their behavior was proof they weren't actually Christian
 - But Paul himself said earlier that the Galatians (like all men) came to faith because of God's work, not Paul's and not even their own will
 - Notice in v.19 Paul says he is again laboring for them until Christ is formed in them
 - And also notice he still calls them "my children"
 - Later in v.28 he will refer to them as the children of the promise
 - So Paul isn't questioning their faith or salvation
 - Paul is referring to his work in maturing them into enjoying the freedom of their liberty
 - He is concerned that all his teaching and modeling for them has been in vain
 - And instead, they are choosing to remain in the bondage that their faith freed them from
- Furthermore, notice Paul's call to the church: be as I am
 - Paul is saying become free of these things as I have become
 - Ironically, Paul is saying to Gentiles "You should act like me, a Jew who no longer keeps the Law"
 - Rather than being Gentiles trying to act like Jews
 - He adds they should become like him as Paul himself became like them
 - He means in the way he willingly adopted a Gentile lifestyle while living among them in Galatia
 - That was Paul's style to become all things to all men to win a few
- And now Paul's argument becomes intensely personal based on their past history together
 - At the end of v.12, Paul says to the church you have not wronged me
 - In other words, Paul is saying that the church has not offended him or lost his support and affection
 - Then notice the next verse begins with the word "but"
 - Paul then reminds the church of how they first became acquainted
 - Apparently, Paul was suffering from some physical ailment
 - It was may have been an illness to his eye, since he mentions the church wishing to transplant their eyes for his sake

- According to v.14, it was also difficult for some others to be around
 - Paul says it was to the church's credit that they did not loathe him, which is a strong word
 - In any case, this ailment led to the opportunity for Paul to preach the gospel for the first time in Galatia
 - Perhaps it placed Paul in an infirmary or local home from which he began to preach
 - The occasion of his illness was the means God used to bring the church the Gospel
 - At that time, Paul says they received him as an angel, because the Lord opened their eyes and showed Himself to them through Paul's teaching
- He asks where has their sense of blessing from Paul gone?
 - He's asking them why they no longer receive his teaching and authority as a source of blessing?
 - Why do they treat his teaching with so little regard and in its place accept the teaching of the Judaizers?
 - Why not continue to receive Paul's teaching for the blessing it is?
- So then based on their history Paul asks, what's changed?
 - How had Paul suddenly become their enemy simply for teaching them the truth?
 - Of course Paul knows exactly what's happened
 - His question was intended to lead them to that same conclusion
 - The arrival of the Judaizers were to blame for the church turning their backs on the very man who had delivered so much blessing in the first place
 - So in v.17 Paul points out the true motives of the Judaizers
 - Paul says these men are seeking the church but not commendably
 - In this context, to seek means to win men over to a point of view
 - The Judaizers were seeking to convert the Galatians to their point of view
 - But it wasn't commendable because their motives weren't honest and righteous
 - Paul says they want to shut the Galatians out so they will seek after the Judaizers
 - The term shut out is *ekkleio* which means excluded
 - The Judaizers wanted to exclude the Galatians so that then the Galatians would seek after them
- In that statement, you find the key to understanding almost all Christian cults, legalistic false teachers and the like...including Messianic Christian movements
 - The true motivation for the Judaziers imposing Law and the obscurity of Jewish practice, custom and regulation upon the Gentile was a matter of power
 - Knowledge is power, and these men were interested in honor and power

- They knew that by teaching that Law was required, they could set themselves up as Pharisees over the church
- Then those in the church would feel a need to seek after them for access to that wisdom and approval
- Of course, these men would not give up their secrets and approval easily
- And that's where their opportunity to obtain power and control came from
- Knowing this will give you an invaluable defense against legalism and those who propagate it in the church
 - Those pushing rules, regulations and the like on the church are seeking control through the power of knowledge
 - And for any who have bought into such things, it's very hard to ever let go of that false teaching
 - Because in doing so, it renders all our work and effort to amass that knowledge useless
 - We would first have to admit that our pursuit of that knowledge and our conformance to the rules was a wasted effort
 - It's a matter of pride and it's tough to back away from such a pattern
 - That's what makes legalism in any form so dangerous in the church
- In contrast to the Judaizers, Paul says he has sought after the Galatians in a commendable fashion
 - Paul had pure motives and intentions and he spoke with the truth
 - Paul sought after them first for the sake of their salvation
 - And then he sought for their maturity in the faith
 - And now he seeks for their benefit from a distance, he says
 - Paul says in v.19 that he knows he is again laboring for them
 - The term for laboring literally means giving birth again
 - Paul is saying he is willing to endure the painful birth process a second time for their sake if it means bringing Christ to development inside them finally
 - He is working to rescue them from the clutches of these false teachers
 - And he wishes he could be in their presence to make the case in person
 - Furthermore, he wishes he could speak in a better tone
 - Already he has called them foolish
 - And now he says he's perplexed by their behavior

Gal. 4:21 Tell me, you who want to be under law, do you not listen to the law?

Gal. 4:22 For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by the bondwoman and one by the free woman.

Gal. 4:23 But the son by the bondwoman was born according to the flesh, and the

son by the free woman through the promise.

Gal. 4:24 This is allegorically speaking, for these women are two covenants: one proceeding from Mount Sinai bearing children who are to be slaves; she is Hagar.

Gal. 4:25 Now this Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia and corresponds to the present Jerusalem, for she is in slavery with her children.

Gal. 4:26 But the Jerusalem above is free; she is our mother.

Gal. 4:27 For it is written,

**“REJOICE, BARREN WOMAN WHO DOES NOT BEAR;
BREAK FORTH AND SHOUT, YOU WHO ARE NOT IN LABOR;
FOR MORE NUMEROUS ARE THE CHILDREN OF THE DESOLATE
THAN OF THE ONE WHO HAS A HUSBAND.”**

Gal. 4:28 And you brethren, like Isaac, are children of promise.

Gal. 4:29 But as at that time he who was born according to the flesh persecuted him who was born according to the Spirit, so it is now also.

Gal. 4:30 But what does the Scripture say?

**“CAST OUT THE BONDWOMAN AND HER SON,
FOR THE SON OF THE BONDWOMAN SHALL NOT BE AN HEIR WITH THE SON OF
THE FREE WOMAN.”**

Gal. 4:31 So then, brethren, we are not children of a bondwoman, but of the free woman.

- I mentioned in an earlier lesson that Paul develops his teaching in a loosely structured chiasm
 - Here we see Paul having taken his turn and he’s working his way back out
 - We’ve left the topic of ecclesiology and returned to the topic of Israeology, or the doctrine of Israel and the Law
 - And Paul comes back to this topic with a provocative question
 - Tell me, you who want to be under the Law, do you not listen to the Law?
 - Notice how Paul words that question
 - He says you who “want” to be under the Law...
 - If Christians were truly under the Law, then Paul wouldn’t have said “want”, he would have said “you who are under the Law”
 - Clearly, Paul is indicating that these believers are not truly under the obligations of the Law, though they have a desire to believe it
 - It’s all in their heads
 - Then he follows with the question “do you not read the Law?”
 - What Paul means is do you not see what the Law itself teaches concerning its purpose in God’s plan
 - If a student of scripture reads the Law carefully, he or she will see that the Law

itself never portrays itself as an instrument of righteousness

- To prove his point, Paul uses an allegory taken from Genesis
 - Paul says this is the “Law” because to a Jewish mindset, the Law was the entire book of Moses, which is the first five books of the Bible
 - So in the Law, that is Genesis, Paul find this allegory to prove that the Law was never intended to be a lifestyle for obtaining righteousness
 - The example is of Abraham’s two sons, Ishmael and Isaac
 - In v.24, Paul says this is an allegory, so that means we must take each player in the story and draw a comparison to spiritual matters under review in Paul’s argument
 - For example, Abraham is a representative for every believer
 - And Abraham received a promise from God, just as every believer receives a promise from God in the New Covenant
 - The question of the allegory is how does the believer obtain the fulfillment of that promise from God?
 - In Abraham’s case, he tried two different options
 - In the case of the first option, Abraham tried to bring about the promise of God through his flesh, that is by human works
 - Specifically, Abraham tried to conceive the promised son by lying with his concubine Hagar
 - The result of that liaison was Ishmael
- In the end, both Hagar and Ishmael were cast out of Abraham’s family
 - His works amounted to nothing lasting
 - And they certainly didn’t amount to the promised child
 - They merely counterfeited the promise in a way that could not stand God’s scrutiny
 - Ishmael was forever a reminder of Abraham’s sin
 - The allegorical application to believers is clear: we have our promise, but how can we obtain what God has promised in Christ?
 - Are we to obtain it through our works?
 - Whether by works of the Mosaic Law or any set of rules, we will arrive at the same place as Abraham
 - We will only produce further condemnation, because our works will merely serve to remind us how far we fall short of the Lord’s standards
 - Any product of those works will be cast out, because they will pale in comparison to the work of Christ
- The second option is to rely on faith in God’s promises, for both Abraham and for us
 - And Paul develops the rest of the allegory with five sets of pairs
 - These pairs apply the contrast of Abraham’s two options

- The pairs are of the wives, the sons, the covenants, the mountains and the cities
- Each of these pairs represents an aspect of the contrast between relying on works vs. trusting in God's promises
 - First, Hagar represents the Mosaic Covenant, while Sarah represents the Abrahamic Covenant
 - Hagar was a wife of Abraham's works
 - While Sarah was the woman God promised would bear Abraham's son
 - Ishmael represents the product of works, while Isaac represents the product of faith
 - Ishmael was a source of anguish and a reminder of sin for Abraham
 - While Isaac was a blessing and reminder of God's faithfulness
 - Mount Sinai represents the place of bondage, while Mount Calvary represents the place of freedom
 - At Mt Sinai God's people entered into the bondage of the restrictions of the Law
 - While at Mt. Calvary the Lord purchased the believers' freedom with His blood
 - Present Jerusalem represents the destiny of those held in bondage, while the New Jerusalem represents the destiny of those of faith
 - The Jerusalem of Paul's day was in bondage to Roman soldiers and filled with unbelieving Jews under penalty of the Law
 - The New Jerusalem is prepared for those who know Jesus, and offers a destiny of glory
- Paul's application is obvious in v.28
 - We are like Isaac, the child of the promise
 - We are on the path of faith and blessing, relying on promises and not making the mistake Abraham made
 - We don't need to supplement God's work with our own worthless and weak methods
 - But realize that because we are children of the promise, we will experience the things that God's children have always experienced
 - We will suffer persecution at the hands of those who are not God's
 - Just as Isaac suffered at the hands of Ishmael, so should we expect to be persecuted by unbelievers
 - And in the case of the Galatian church, the persecution they are experiencing is the persecution of the Judaizers
 - As these false teachers attempted to place a burden and yoke on the brethren, they were unintentionally proving the allegory true
 - They were like Ishmael persecuting Isaac

- This proved both that they were false and that their interests were not commendable
 - There was nothing the Judaizers could offer that would add to what the church had already by faith
- As Paul concludes in v.31, we are not children of the flesh and works
 - We are children of freedom
 - Of liberty, not Law
- The liberty we have in Christ permits us to live in a variety of ways short of sinning
 - But only to the degree it doesn't compromise our witness concerning the meaning of such things
- We may need a sabbatical from the Law to remind ourselves we don't depend on it, we depend on Christ alone

- As we exit Chapter 4 and enter Chapter 5, Paul has effectively argued that Law is not the means to our salvation
 - In fact, it never accomplished that purpose and it can never do so
 - Using Sarah and Hagar as an allegory, Paul stressed that even the Law itself teaches God justifies through faith alone
 - We ended Chapter 4 last week teaching that we are children of Sarah, children who depend on God's promises
 - Rather than children of Hagar, who seek to be justified through works of flesh
 - So as we enter Chapter 5, Paul is ready to wrap back around to the doctrine of soteriology
 - First, Paul will remind the church that any dependence on the Law instead of grace for righteousness is a no-win proposition
 - One that demands perfect compliance
 - But then Paul will turn in a new direction
 - This new direction is explaining how a Christian lives under grace instead of law
 - Since the Law of Moses is no longer our guide for living, the question becomes how should a Christian follow the Lord?
 - While it's easy to understand how grace saved us from the penalty of sin
 - How does it preserve us from the reality of sin?
 - If the Law doesn't regulate our lives, what does?
- So the outline for tonight in Chapter 5 has three points
 - First, Paul discusses two extreme and incorrect responses to grace
 - On the one hand, we can make the mistake of trying to combine grace and Law
 - On the other hand, we can make the opposite mistake of living a licentious lifestyle with no regulation or limits
 - Then thirdly, Paul will explain the proper middle ground that all Christians should seek
 - That is living in the grace of God, enjoying the freedom won for us on the cross
 - While always remaining under the control of the Spirit in holiness and self-restraint
- Turning to Chapter 5, Paul opens with a thesis statement to set up the rest of the chapter

Gal. 5:1 It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery.

- Paul's opening statement sets forth the principle of a Christian's relationship to the Law of Moses

- There is no stronger statement in all the Bible on this topic
 - Highlight it, underline it, memorize it, and follow it
 - So much burden, misery, heartache and confusion could have been avoided in the history of the church if only more Christians understood this verse
- First, Paul says it was for our freedom that Christ set us free
 - Christ released us from the obligations of the Mosaic Law so that we might serve Him freely
 - Under the Law, Gods people endured severe restrictions on the ways they could serve the Lord
 - The Law restricted who could serve
 - When they could serve
 - How they could serve
 - And even the audience they could reach
- But now Christ has fulfilled all that the Law required, both in His life and in His death
 - Jesus fulfilled our obligations under the Law on our behalf, so all that the Law required has been met in Him
 - That's why Christ declared on the cross that it is finished
 - He was referring to His work under the Law
 - The work of keeping Law was finished
 - And the penalties of the Law had been paid
 - Therefore the Law itself was “finished” for those who accept Jesus’ accomplishment on their behalf
 - Therefore, we are now free to serve God without concern for what the Law says about who, when and how we may serve
- Paul says Christ came for this very purpose, to set us free from these restrictions
 - Obviously, the first purpose in setting us free from Law was to save us from the penalty of the Law for our sin
 - We now live in freedom from fear of death and the judgment that follows
 - What a difference it makes to serve the Lord without guilt or fear!
 - We serve Christ free from such worries and burdens
 - But secondly, Christ fulfilled the Law so that we would not need to be burdened by trying to do it ourselves, for we could not possibly meet its requirements anyway
 - What a shame it is when we refuse to take advantage of the very freedom Christ has won for us
 - Imagine yourself living as a slave, when the king pledges his entire fortune to win your freedom from your master
 - By His grace, you are set free from your enslavement

- But then imagine that despite the king's payment, you voluntarily choose to remain in your enslavement
 - You opt to continue suffering under your burdens
 - Burdens the king paid dearly to remove
 - How do you think the king would view your return to slavery?
 - Would he be happy?
- Essentially, this is the situation Christians assume when they legalistically mix grace and Law
 - They assume upon themselves a limited form of slavery, thinking they please the Lord by voluntarily adopting restrictions He intended for an entirely different purpose
 - In reality, they throw His gift of freedom in His face, so to speak
 - They refuse to live in the freedom Christ won through His perfect life and sacrificial death
 - They haven't lost salvation, of course, but they are forfeiting the freedom grace provides
 - In his letter to the Colossians, Paul warns the church not to succumb to pressure to re-enter slavery to Law

Col. 2:18 Let no one keep defrauding you of your prize by delighting in self-abasement and the worship of the angels, taking his stand on visions he has seen, inflated without cause by his fleshly mind,

Col. 2:20 If you have died with Christ to the elementary principles of the world, why, as if you were living in the world, do you submit yourself to decrees, such as,

Col. 2:21 "Do not handle, do not taste, do not touch!"

- Paul commands us not to allow someone to defraud us of our prize
- The "prize" is a reference to liberty, that is our freedom to live without regard to Law
- Paul says if we have died with Christ to the Law, then why act as if such restrictions still have power over us?
 - Clearly, such a lifestyle is not only unnecessary
 - It is also sin, because it testifies to a lie that Christians must keep the Law
- This is why Paul taught earlier in this letter that we do not have the liberty to place ourselves back under Law in a systematic fashion
 - We may have liberty to enjoy on occasion certain memorials or other rituals taken from the Law
 - But we do not have liberty to reimpose a lifestyle of slavery to Law in an attempt to

- mimic or recreate the Jewish lifestyle
- Doing so is an affront to the work of Christ on the cross
- Instead, Paul gives us a command to keep standing firm and not be subject to a yoke of slavery
 - Paul's command is in the active imperative voice, which means we must continuously make effort to keep this command
 - We must actively protect our freedom, standing unwaveringly in the confidence that we do not need the Law for anything
 - Men will come along from time to time, trying to convince us that slavery to Old Testament rules and regulation is necessary for our righteousness
 - But Paul says we must continuously resist such men and their teaching
 - As James Montgomery Boice said:

“...Obstinate perseverance in freedom [is] the only proper response to an attempt to bring Christians once more under legalism.”

- Secondly, Paul says do not be subject...
 - The English phrase “do not be subject” in Greek means to fall into entanglement
 - The sense here is being caught in a trap from which we cannot escape
 - So we cannot allow ourselves to become entrapped by clear argument, twisted use of scripture, debates over meanings of words or an appeal to tradition over the word of God
- Legalism, whether to the Law of Moses or some other set of rules, can sound seductive and become a persuasive trap
 - It is set by those who do not understand our freedom in grace
 - They often have very deep and convoluted arguments, usually based on twisting Hebrew or Greek words, emphasizing history and the Old Testament commands to the Jews
 - If we are not prepared to stand firm in the Bible's teaching, we can easily find ourselves taken away by the arguments, leading us to fall into the trap
- Paul calls the burden and restriction of the Law of Moses a “yoke”
 - We are like that slave voluntarily re-entering slavery even after freedom has been purchased
 - If we are ever fooled into thinking that Law has a place in our Christian walk, we place a yoke of slavery on our necks
- Remember from our prior studies in Exodus that the Law is a single, indivisible entity
 - We cannot divide the Law into parts, like ceremonial or moral law
 - We cannot divide the ten commandments out from the rest
 - It is all or none, and Paul says we owe it nothing because Christ has met it all

- So either you wear the entire yoke or you throw it off once and for all
- Having set forth the principle of Christian freedom, Paul now addresses the first error of attempting to unite Christ and Law together in the Christian experience

Gal. 5:2 Behold I, Paul, say to you that if you receive circumcision, Christ will be of no benefit to you.

Gal. 5:3 And I testify again to every man who receives circumcision, that he is under obligation to keep the whole Law.

Gal. 5:4 You have been severed from Christ, you who are seeking to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace.

Gal. 5:5 For we through the Spirit, by faith, are waiting for the hope of righteousness.

Gal. 5:6 For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything, but faith working through love.

- Paul gives clear and bold direction to the church (I, Paul, say to you...) in direct contradiction to the teaching of the Judaizers
 - Paul says to receive circumcision means that Christ was of no benefit to you
 - These verses are often a source of some confusion or bad doctrine because we fail to see the nuances of Paul's argument
 - But when we examine the text carefully, it comes together properly
 - Paul teaches a conditional cause-and-effect relationship
 - The condition is if someone (a man, obviously) receives circumcision
 - Paul's verb conjugation implies a willing acceptance on the part of the man to receive circumcision along with all that circumcision represents
 - A person who receives circumcision is agreeing with all that the Judaizers were teaching concerning Law
 - He agreed that salvation was by means of the Jewish Law and lifestyle
 - He agreed that the death of Christ was not sufficient to save
 - He was demonstrating that his trust for eternal life resided in the keeping of Law instead of trusting solely in the work of Christ
- So for that person, Paul says Christ is of no benefit
 - If we add anything to the work of Christ, we nullify belief in Christ
 - Many people have tried to "roll their own" formula of salvation
 - They take a little of religion "A" and some of religion "B" and concoct their own recipe for salvation
 - Paul says if you have added Christ to such a recipe, you might as well subtract Christ from your recipe, because He's of no benefit under such circumstances
 - There is no point in adding Christ to a formula that includes other steps or

requirements, because grace doesn't work that way

- The Gospel declares we are saved by our trust in Christ alone
- And if we place our trust in anything else – whether works of Law or other gods or acts of the flesh – then it demonstrates we haven't placed our trust in Christ
- Therefore, Christ does nothing for our salvation in such a situation
- So Paul says adding circumcision to Christ effectively denies Christ in the process
 - Just as when the Catholic Church teaches that salvation is a combination of faith in Christ plus doing penance, it denies Christ
 - Just as when the Mormons teach that salvation is a combination of Christ plus good works and temple observances, they deny Christ
 - Just as when so-called Messianic Christian movements require adherence to the Mosaic Law as a condition of righteousness, they deny that Christ is sufficient to bring us righteousness
- And to emphasize his point, Paul repeats himself in v.3
 - He says that if someone receives circumcision, they show they place their trust in the Law to obtain righteousness
 - Such a person is expecting to be granted eternal life on the basis of their works under the Law, beginning with taking circumcision
 - Paul says if you choose that route, you had better be prepared to keep the entire Law and to do so perfectly forever
 - Because there is no credit to be gained for partial compliance with the Law of Moses
 - God designed His Law to be an all-or-nothing standard for good reason
 - He wanted to demonstrate to us that we are unrighteous and in need of grace
 - So we get no benefit for keeping even 99% of it
 - To break one Law, James says, is equal to violating all the Law
 - So the Law's standard is unforgiving and impossible
 - Therefore, Paul says the one who receives circumcision is obligated to keep all the Law since they are placing their trust in it for righteousness
 - And of course, this is an impossible standard, which God designed to be futile
 - Therefore, every man or woman who places his trust in Law will be disappointed in the end
 - They will find that neither their justification nor their sanctification will have been achieved by that method
- Certainly, trusting the Law for salvation reveals the absence of saving faith in a person's heart, but a believer relying on the Law for sanctification is equally wrong
 - Christians who have been deceived into thinking that following some or all of the Mosaic Law will achieve greater holiness have also missed the point of the Law
 - God is not pleased with partial obedience

- Even if a Christian should keep 612 of the 613 Laws of the Old Testament Law, they would still have failed to please the Lord
 - Because even just one violation of the Law leaves us guilty of all the Law
 - Technically, we are just as sinful had we failed to keep all the Law
- But partial obedience to the Law is the only thing possible, as God has intended
 - The temple and Jewish priesthood have been destroyed
 - So it is literally impossible to accomplish most of the Law's requirements
 - Therefore, if we place our trust in the Law for our sanctification, we will always be frustrated
 - For the same reason Jews of today are frustrated in their attempts to seek justification by Law
- The writer of Hebrews tells us God took away the ability of men to keep the Law so that we would understand He had provided a better way

Heb. 8:13 When He said, “A new covenant,” He has made the first obsolete. But whatever is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to disappear.

- To sum up, Paul says in v.4 that anyone who takes circumcision in the belief it will make him more righteous has been severed from Christ and fallen from grace
 - Because they have placed their trust in the Law, they benefit none at all from knowing of Christ and the Gospel
 - Some have read these words and concluded Paul was describing a believer losing his salvation
 - But the context of Paul's argument (to say nothing of the rest of the New Testament) precludes that interpretation
 - Paul is speaking of someone who has never come to faith in the first place
 - Look back to the description in v.2 where Paul said that taking circumcision means you have not benefitted from Christ
 - Christ doesn't provide benefit when combined with other sources of righteousness
 - It's like adding a useless ingredient in any recipe
 - You might as well leave the ingredient out
 - So Paul said such a combination is pointless, and demonstrates the person is still relying on works rather than on faith alone
 - Therefore, Paul says that when we depend on something other than Christ, we are forfeiting any benefit from Christ
 - We are severed from Christ in the sense that we gain no benefit from adding Him to our recipe of salvation
 - We have fallen from grace in the sense that we have come up short of accepting

God's grace on its own terms

- Like someone who leaves his fiancé at the altar
- They got close to a lasting relationship, but in the end they came up short of a true marriage
- The writer of Hebrews speaks in similar terms about someone who fails to embrace the Gospel in faith

Heb. 4:1 Therefore, let us fear if, while a promise remains of entering His rest, any one of you may seem to have come short of it.

Heb. 4:2 For indeed we have had good news preached to us, just as they also; but the word they heard did not profit them, because it was not united by faith in those who heard.

- Or later he says

Heb. 12:15 See to it that no one comes short of the grace of God; that no root of bitterness springing up causes trouble, and by it many be defiled;

- The writer says that some may “come short” of the grace of God, which is similar to the phrase Paul uses here in Galatians
 - Coming short of something implies not fully receiving or accepting it
 - They hear the message, perhaps joining themselves for a time, but eventually something reveals their false heart
 - Like when the Galatians willingly receive circumcision and accept the teaching that Law was a necessary part of the Christian experience
 - They are coming up short of grace
- In contrast to falling from grace, true Christians depend upon faith exclusively, Paul says
 - In vs.5-6, Paul says we (the Christians) are those who by the Spirit are content to wait for the righteousness to come, through the faith we have been given
 - We too desire righteousness
 - But we don't seek to obtain it through the works of our flesh by following a Law we know we cannot keep in the first place
 - Instead, we hope for righteousness, trusting it will be ours one day in the future, by God's grace through our faith
 - We understand that our faith will bring us righteousness in a future day of God's choosing
 - We will receive a glorified body by His power
 - And the moment of our glorification will be our moment of true righteousness
 - And that in the meantime, we depend on the Spirit to lead us toward sanctification

- We don't fool ourselves concerning our ability to become righteous through our works
- We know we continue to fall short of God's glory each day
- Yet each day we move closer to Christ, knowing we are promised better things in the future
- Simply put, nothing a Christian accomplishes by flesh moves us a step closer to our ultimate righteousness
 - It is not as though our righteousness is a tank becoming a little fuller each day by our works
 - In reality, it is a story of two tanks
 - Our spirit tank is already filled by Christ's righteousness
 - While our flesh tank remains as bankrupt as ever
 - So we are not to waste time trying to fill our flesh tank with righteousness
 - Because we simply cannot fill it enough to please God
 - And in the end, God will replace it
 - So keeping Law does nothing to bring us closer to sanctification
 - Whether we are circumcised or not
 - Whether we are abstaining from certain foods or not
 - Whether we are observing certain festivals, days of rest or whatever
 - These things are not our path to righteousness
 - Neither for justification nor for sanctification
 - The recipe for sanctification must be the same as for justification
 - It comes by grace alone through faith in Jesus Christ
 - As Paul says, faith working through love
 - This is the recipe for godliness and pleasing God
- This is the full sense of freedom and liberty
 - God has already done the work of righteousness
 - He has already granted us a spirit of righteousness
 - And one day in the future, He will grant us a body of righteousness
 - So we are freed to serve Him without concern for recovering from our sin or achieving righteousness
 - Those things are settled, so now we just serve Him freely
 - All our worries for righteousness have been settled at the cross
 - So why then remain preoccupied with seeking righteousness by Law or any other means apart from faith alone?
 - This church knew these things at one point in the past, when Paul taught them

originally, but they have since slipped back

Gal. 5:7 You were running well; who hindered you from obeying the truth?

Gal. 5:8 This persuasion did not come from Him who calls you.

Gal. 5:9 A little leaven leavens the whole lump of dough.

Gal. 5:10 I have confidence in you in the Lord that you will adopt no other view; but the one who is disturbing you will bear his judgment, whoever he is.

Gal. 5:11 But I, brethren, if I still preach circumcision, why am I still persecuted? Then the stumbling block of the cross has been abolished.

Gal. 5:12 I wish that those who are troubling you would even mutilate themselves.

- This church was running well, Paul says, but someone hindered them from obeying the truth
 - The church had been running well
 - Like a foot race, our spiritual life is a test of endurance requiring effort and leading to reward if we persevere
 - And then Paul extends the metaphor by asking who hindered them?
 - The Greek word for hinder means to impede, as in to block the path of a runner
 - So Paul asks the church rhetorically, who is standing in your path on the way to the finishing line?
 - To drive the knife even deeper, Paul says they weren't being persuaded by the Lord, Who called them into faith
 - Instead, this teaching was the product of a sinful motive
 - Like leaven in a lump of dough, the church was introduced to false teaching, which was polluting the entire body
 - And once again, the obvious answer to the question of "who" was the Judaizers
 - These men were disturbing the church, Paul says, and they will bear God's judgment for their false teaching
 - They were the ones placing stumbling blocks in front of the Church
 - Leading them away from the truth and into diversions that profit them nothing
 - Nevertheless, Paul says he has better hope for them that they might recover from these deceptions
- To help that process along, Paul takes specific aim at one of the Judaizers' lies
 - Specifically, in vs.11-12 Paul denounces an accusation these men made against Paul himself
 - They claimed Paul had been preaching circumcision and keeping the Law to the Jews
 - But then when Paul came to Gentiles, he changed his story, thereby withholding

the true Gospel

- Of course, then the Judaizers claimed to be setting the record straight
- This was a lie, but it was a convincing lie to Gentiles who didn't respect Paul's authority
- Paul blows holes in their logic
 - He says if it were true he were preaching to Jews that circumcision and law were required for salvation, then why did Jews still persecute Paul?
 - The main objection the Jews had to the message of the Gospel was that salvation could be on the basis of faith and not by the Law of Moses
 - They objected to Paul's claims that salvation was available to Gentiles without circumcision or Law
 - Paul says this truth was a stumbling block for the Jewish people, leading them to reject the Gospel altogether
- But if Paul was, in fact, preaching that circumcision and Law were required, then certainly there would be no stumbling block
 - And then the Jews would have embraced the Gospel
 - And they certainly wouldn't have persecuted Paul
 - In other words, the Judaizers' accusation didn't add up
- And then in a rare display of strong language, Paul says he wished the men who advocate circumcision would mutilate themselves
 - What Paul says in the original Greek is quite graphic
 - Paul is saying that if these men believe a little cut to their foreskin made them more holy, then they should go all the way and cut the rest off too
 - If a little cut is good, then more would be better, according to the logic of their teaching
 - Do we need a more strongly worded denunciation of any attempt to impose Jewish law or custom on the Christian?
 - I think not
- With that parting comment, Paul puts to rest his attack against the Judaizers and the error of trying to combine both grace and Law into a single plan of salvation
 - Now he moves to the opposite mistake Christians might make with regard to LawGal. 5:13 For you were called to freedom, brethren; only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.

Gal. 5:14 For the whole Law is fulfilled in one word, in the statement, "YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF."

Gal. 5:15 But if you bite and devour one another, take care that you are not consumed by one another.

- The second error is the opposite problem of living as we have no restrictions on our behavior at all
 - What led Paul to go down this line of attack?
 - Perhaps he was concerned that his strong arguments against following the Jewish Law would lead Christians to adopt antinomianism
 - Antinomianism is a false doctrine that see Christians as living under no restrictions of law whatsoever
 - It becomes an opportunity to engage in sin thinking that we have liberty to do anything we wish
 - Or perhaps Paul was merely preempting the Judaizers from accusing him of teaching antinomianism
 - Perhaps the Judaizers would claim Paul was teaching Christians to live lawlessly
 - They could say that if the Mosaic Law (including the Ten Commandments) were null and void as Paul taught, then he would be inviting all manner of sin
 - Regardless of his motivation, Paul makes a clear statement against Christians abusing freedom
 - Paul says we cannot allow our freedom to become an opportunity for the flesh to lead us into sin
 - We have freedom to enjoy many activities, to associate with any person, to spend our time and money in many ways
 - We have freedom to eat and drink anything, including eating pork, shellfish and drinking alcohol
 - But our freedoms can become opportunities for us to pursue sin as well
 - We can stimulate lust for the wrong things, including eating or drinking too much
 - We can act in ways that offend others, including causing others to stumble by exercising our freedom carelessly
 - We can promote lust in others, we can promote greed or envy in others
 - In all cases, we are allowing the flesh to take over and drive us away from the Spirit's influence
- Rather than provoking lust, we must consider everything we do from a perspective of love for a brother or sister
 - We are to regard the needs of everyone else as equal to our own, and we live in such a way that we concern ourselves with how to love others
 - Guided by the Spirit in us, we seek to make godly and holy choices in the face of an infinite number of situations
 - Rather than acting without restraint, we act with great sensitivity to the needs and concerns of others in love for all
 - This standard is the furthest thing possible from antinomianism

- It is self-restraint under the leading and conviction of the Spirit
- This standard will take us far beyond anything the Mosaic Law established
 - The Law couldn't mandate or even prescribe love
 - Yet Jesus said that everything the Law required is fulfilled by loving our neighbors as we love ourselves
 - Clearly, if Jesus commanded us to the standard of love, yet the Law did not promote love, then Jesus was appealing to a better way than Law
 - And that way is by the Spirit through faith
- Paul says if we attempt to live without love or self-restraint, we will devour one another, Paul says
 - Our liberty will become excuse to take what we want, to have what we want, and to live as we want – and all to the detriment of everyone else
 - We will bite each other in the sense of injuring each other
 - And we will consume one another in the sense that all fellowship will be destroyed and the body of Christ will fall apart at the seams
 - We won't be able to stand being around one another
- So Paul has explained that living under the Law is wrong and living without the Law is wrong, so how are we to live?
 - The answer, as we can already see, is to live by faith through the Spirit's work in us

Gal. 5:16 But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh.

Gal. 5:17 For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please.

Gal. 5:18 But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law.

- Paul's words in this passage are a very short version of his teaching in Romans 7-8
- He uses the metaphor of "walking" in the Spirit in the same way John does in his letters...living under the control of the Spirit
- As long as we live in this sinful body, we will know and experience the draw of our flesh into sinful behaviors
- But at the same time, we have the Spirit living in us telling us those desires are wrong and calling us to better choices
- Every Christian knows both of these driving forces
 - Countless times a day we experience the flesh tempting us to do something that isn't in keeping with love
 - From the simplest things like our laziness of throwing litter on the ground, leaving the toilet seat up, or failing to yield to another driver

- To more significant things like breaking laws, cheating customers, lying to coworkers, or gossiping and slandering others
- To the serious sins of sexual immorality, violence and idolatry in various forms
- But at the same time, we know the voice of the Shepherd, who calls us by His Spirit to move away from these things even as we experience the draw of the flesh
 - When we first contemplate dropping that piece of litter or breaking that law or spreading that false word, it is then we also encountered an alternative thought
 - We felt an uneasiness and perhaps hesitated to think about our course of action in the moment
 - That's the moment when you are hearing from the Spirit
 - We can't say we don't hear the Lord talking to us, because we all know that moment
- Paul says the Spirit and flesh are always opposed to one another
 - Which means those split second moments of indecision or contemplation are the evidence of two forces pulling us in different directions (Romans 7)
 - The sinful plan of action formed in your flesh, and it wants to move forward
 - But then immediately a different thought came to mind
 - And in that moment, you're making a decision about who to listen to
 - Example: As you leave the dish on the counter, you remember that it would be better to put it in the dishwasher
 - Either you go with the first thought or you move with the Spirit's influence
 - One way shows love for yourself and the other shows love for God and others
 - One is sin, one is righteousness
 - We've all been there, but depending on how you've chosen to respond in the past, you may find one voice growing more persuasive over time while the other fades
 - If you have made a habit of listening to the flesh, then you will begin to deaden your sensitivity to the Spirit
 - So that when you face one of those split second decision moments, your hesitation will be even shorter
 - Your decision won't seem as difficult
 - Your past pattern of giving in to the flesh will make your choice almost reflexive
 - Without any thought, you go with the familiar choice
 - Making sin a lifestyle
 - The Spirit never goes silent, but we can become practiced at ignoring Him – to our own destruction
 - On the other hand, we can become practiced at listening to the Spirit and disciplining the flesh
 - We take every opportunity to say yes to the Spirit and deny our flesh its desires
 - At the first sign of conflict between these two voices, we move quickly and with

determination to follow the Spirit

- Billy Graham told a story to illustrate the competition between the flesh and Spirit

"An Eskimo fisherman came to town every Saturday afternoon. He always brought his two dogs with him. One was white and the other was black. He had taught them to fight on command. Every Saturday afternoon in the town square the people would gather and these two dogs would fight and the fisherman would take bets. On one Saturday, the black dog would win; another Saturday the white dog would win – but the fisherman always won! His friends began to ask him how he did it. He said, "I starve one and feed the other. The one I feed always wins because he is stronger."

- Our final lesson in Galatians covers the end of Chapter 5 and all of Chapter 6
 - And it brings together everything Paul has taught in this letter – and in a sense, it is a fitting conclusion to all four books of the New Testament in this series (*1&2 John, Jude, Galatians*)
 - In his final section of the letter, Paul emphasizes walking in faith, not by works of flesh
 - He stresses the freedom we have to follow Christ, yet to do so in keeping with the commandments of Christ
 - He emphasizes discernment among believers, to know that those who do disobey these truths are not to be trusted
 - He counsels on the rewards that await those who are diligent
 - Many of these themes appeared in John's letters and in Jude's letter
 - We've already heard teaching on being wary of false teachers
 - Not falling for teaching that appeals to the flesh through unnecessary constraints or excess liberties
 - Concerning ourselves with our reward, so that we will not lose it in the day of our judgment
- So we'll start tonight as Paul ended last week, reiterating the important point that makes all that follows possible

Gal. 5:18 But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law.

- The human experience exists as a dichotomy
 - Either we are led by the Spirit, or we are led by the flesh
 - Believers are led by Spirit, while unbelievers are led by their flesh
 - Believers are not under Law, that is it has no jurisdiction over us
 - While unbelievers stand condemned by Law
- Therefore, Christians have positional righteousness because of our faith in Christ
 - We are righteous by faith, in that we have been promised to receive the righteousness of Christ
 - We received the Spirit as a down payment on that promise of righteousness
 - And one day we will receive a body that is righteous
 - As Paul said the true Christian is one who hopes for righteousness based on God's promise
- So Paul reiterates the truth of our current position before the Lord
 - We are led (or we could say carried) by the Spirit
 - Though our English Bible may say "if" you are led but the Greek word carries a meaning of "since" you are led...

- Every Christian is led by the Spirit
- That leading comes in place of Law
 - The Law no longer guides our life because we have the very Author of that Law living in us
- So our faith has already granted us positional righteousness
- And now the Spirit lives in us to lead us into experiential righteousness
- With this statement, Paul launches into his final section of the letter
 - He's going to make application from all the doctrine he's provided in the past chapters
 - That's the natural and proper thing to do
 - We learn doctrine to better understand Christ and ourselves
 - And then we work to apply what we learn so that we can become less like ourselves and more like Christ
 - Paul turns to helping us apply the truths he has taught
 - Equally importantly, we'll notice Paul continuing to drive a wedge between the Judaizers and the Galatian church
 - He's going to expose their motives
 - And he's going to remind them once again of his sincerity and authority

Gal. 5:19 Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality,

Gal. 5:20 idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions,

Gal. 5:21 envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

Gal. 5:22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,

Gal. 5:23 gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

Gal. 5:24 Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

Gal. 5:25 If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit.

Gal. 5:26 Let us not become boastful, challenging one another, envying one another.

- To properly understand and interpret this passage, we need to remain focused on the contrast Paul is painting
 - For example, the list begins with a mention of the deeds of the flesh
 - That reference is contrasted with the fruit of the Spirit in v.22

- When the word “flesh” and the word Spirit are contrasted, they become labels for two kinds of people
 - Flesh stands for unbelievers
 - While spirit stands for believers
- Notice also in v.21 Paul says that those who practice deeds of the flesh will not inherit the kingdom
 - This would confirm that the first group are representative of unbelievers
 - While the second group are described in v.24 as those who belong to Christ, confirming they are believers
- So immediately, we see that these two lists are a contrast between the behaviors that characterize unbelievers living according to their flesh and believers living in the Spirit
 - And when we try to interpret Paul’s point, we must take note of three points concerning these two lists
 - First, it’s clear these lists are not intended to be all inclusive
 - The characteristics that identify the unbeliever include 15 distinct behaviors
 - But certainly there are more than 15 ways unbelievers demonstrate their fleshly nature
 - Where is murder, theft, etc?
 - So we must conclude Paul’s list was merely representative of this group’s nature
 - Secondly, when we look at the list of nine “fruits” of the Spirit, we cannot conclude that is an all-inclusive list either
 - There are other ways the Spirit manifests Himself in our lives
 - Where is charity, self-sacrifice, wisdom, etc?
 - So the second list represents behaviors that characterize the life of a believer living under the influence of the Spirit
 - Finally, these lists are not mutually exclusive either
 - A believer can exhibit behaviors more typical of the flesh
 - Believers get angry, jealous, drunk and the like
 - And an unbeliever can exhibit a behavior typical of a believer
 - They can show patience, kindness and the like
 - That’s why in v.21 Paul uses the word “practice” in describing these traits
 - Taken together, the flesh produces a lifestyle of these behaviors
 - And since the unbeliever only has the flesh, then these behaviors will be the norm
- So then what is the point of this list?
 - Paul’s first point is that over time a Spirit-led life should produce in us a degree of experiential righteousness

- We already have positional righteousness based on our confession of faith
- But we've also been given the means for pursuing experiential righteousness by following the leading of the Spirit
- And following the Spirit will produce fruitful evidence of the Spirit's work in our life
 - That evidence can't be measured in discrete terms
 - It is measured on balance and over time
 - Just as the unrighteous "practice" unrighteousness, the believer will come to demonstrate more and more evidence of righteousness
- When we follow the Spirit, we'll find that more and more our thoughts and behaviors will align with the Lord's desires
 - And the evidence of that change will be patience when before we had outbursts of anger
 - Faithful reliance on the Lord where before we engaged in idolatry or sorcery
 - Strife and disputes fade and in their place we find peace and joy
 - Immorality and impurity and drunkenness are replaced by self-control
 - Hatred and selfishness is replaced by sacrificial love
- But if we resist the leading of the Spirit, then we will largely remain where we started
 - Since our flesh continues to dominate us, then the behaviors we exhibit will continue to mirror those of unbelievers
 - That's why Paul says in v.25 that since we live by the Spirit, let us walk in that same manner
- Paul's second point emphasizes that this transformation is reserved for the believer, because it depends on the Spirit
 - In v.21 Paul reminds the church how he taught earlier that the unbelievers will not have the power to make this transition
 - It cannot happen for those who lack the Spirit
 - We can tell this list was a veiled reference to the Judaizers
 - Notice Paul included such behaviors as disputes, dissensions, and factions
 - Those were the sins of the Judaizers in splitting the church
 - These men were unbelievers, and so their lives testified to the absence of the Spirit
 - And Paul wanted the church to understand who they truly were
 - But it's equally important for a Christian to remember that living under the Law of Moses is also powerless to produce the fruit of righteousness
 - Notice at the end of v.23 Paul says that the fruits of the Spirit are not "against" the law

- The Greek word translated against is *kata*, which can also mean “according to”
 - So we should translate the phrase “there is no law according to such things”
 - There are no laws that produce these positive outcomes
- The Law merely prohibited certain behaviors and mandated other behaviors
- Love, patience, joy and the like never entered into equation
- So while many teachers like to dwell on the two lists of fruit and passions, I think the real value is found in stepping back and considering Paul’s argument overall
 - Paul’s concern is whether we are taking advantage of our freedom to experience righteousness
 - Will we follow the Spirit and enjoy a taste of righteousness now
 - For it’s a sweet thing to act in righteous ways
 - It is a taste of heaven that only the believer can experience
 - Or will we remain living in our flesh, satisfying our fleshly desires?
 - Or even worse...will we get sidetracked in pursuing a dead and useless law in an attempt to produce self-righteousness?
 - Neither will bring us the fruit of the Spirit
 - And what a shame to waste our time in such things
 - So that’s why Paul ends in v.26 saying let’s not become boastful and competing with one another
 - He’s referring to competition of the flesh that results from attempts to follow the Law
 - We call it legalism
 - When we try to pursue self-righteousness, we immediately begin to compare our performance with others, always looking for a standard we can beat
 - It’s fleshly, selfish and counter to true sanctification
 - That’s what the Judaizers were encouraging, in the tradition of the Pharisees
- So leaving Chapter 5, Paul insists that Christians put aside the Law and thoughts of self-righteousness and pursue living by the Spirit, seeking to experience a measure of righteousness
 - But we all know that no Christian will follow the Spirit perfectly
 - Sin is still an ever-present reality this side of Heaven
 - So now Paul develops further what Spirit-led living looks like given the reality of a church made up of sinful people

Gal. 6:1 Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; each one looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted.

Gal. 6:2 Bear one another's burdens, and thereby fulfill the law of Christ.

Gal. 6:3 For if anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself.

Gal. 6:4 But each one must examine his own work, and then he will have reason for boasting in regard to himself alone, and not in regard to another.

Gal. 6:5 For each one will bear his own load.

- To the church, Paul says when one is caught in any trespass, we are to restore such a person, not condemn them
 - First, let's notice Paul describes someone caught in a trespass
 - But Paul doesn't mean we catch the person sinning
 - Paul is describing someone who is entangled or falls into sin
 - In other words, these instructions apply to someone who has a bad moment, or bad day, and they succumb to temptation
 - They were caught by their flesh and now they need restoration from that sin
 - Perhaps they fell into gossip, or lying
 - Perhaps it was more serious, like sexual infidelity
 - But Paul says "any" trespass so long as it was the product of a weak moment of the flesh
 - But this description would preclude someone who sins repeatedly and unrepentantly
 - Christians who sin in that way are placed outside fellowship, as we learned before
 - Restoration is for those who want to be better
 - And restoration refers to restoring fellowship in the body of Christ
 - The person is already forgiven by faith alone
 - But they want and need the benefit of a body to support them in their walk of faith
 - And that fellowship depends on a common walk in the Spirit
 - So they are to be restored
- Then next we notice that the responsibility for the restoration belongs to you who are spiritual
 - The term spiritual describes a person walking in the Spirit and not giving in to the flesh
 - We can presume Paul is describing the leaders in the church
 - Those who have been entrusted with leadership precisely because they show fruit of the Spirit in a consistent way are the ones to restore a weak brother or sister

- This is so unlike the way the Law regulated conduct
 - If we were to live according to the Law, then when one of our group sinned, we would be forced by the Law to exact a price from that person as a condition of restoration
 - But under grace, we don't exact anything except a repentant heart
 - Instead of judgment and condemnation, Paul says give a spirit of gentleness
- Finally, Paul warns those who guard the flock and act to restore fellowship that they not become haughty like the Pharisees did
 - They cannot forget they are also sinners who are caught in trespasses from time to time
 - No one is free from such stumbles, so we must maintain a healthy self image
 - Paul says keep looking at yourself, meaning continually examine your own heart
 - So you will not be tempted to think yourself better than you are, and thereby fall into even greater sin
 - The effect of this grace oriented approach to sin in the body is that we bear one another's burdens
 - When you sin, you come to me and confess and I restore you based on grace
 - And when I sin, I come to you and you grant me restoration as well
 - In the course of that exchange, we are encouraging and exhorting each other to do better
 - In that way, we bear other's burdens
 - What a wonderful difference from a church living under the condemnation of Law...but we're not without law
- Paul says that when we live this way, we are fulfilling the Law of Christ
 - The Law of the Christ is the law written on our hearts that Jeremiah promised would come with the New Covenant
 - This Law replaces the Law of Moses
 - This is why we say that Christians still live by rules and standards
 - But those standards aren't found in reading the Ten Commandments or any other part of the Law of Moses
 - They are found on our heart and directed by the Holy Spirit
 - That's why I can't give you a list of the Laws of Christ
 - Our flesh loves to see things written in black and white
 - But in His wisdom, God chose to right His Law in blood on our hearts where we can't see it
 - Instead, we can only follow Him in spirit and truth – if we follow Him at all
 - The Law of Christ can be summarized though, because Jesus did it for us

Luke 10:26 And He said to him, “What is written in the Law? How does it read to you?”

Luke 10:27 And he answered, “YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR STRENGTH, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND; AND YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.”

Luke 10:28 And He said to him, “You have answered correctly; DO THIS AND YOU WILL LIVE.”

- So Paul says that when we bear each other’s burdens and restore one another without judgment, we are fulfilling the Law of Christ
- We are to love our neighbor as we love ourself
- And we are doing these things because of our love for God
- When we live by a legalistic code of rules, we begin to deceive ourselves Paul says
 - We come to think ourselves better than we truly are simply because we begin to meet some standard
 - But we forget that for every standard we do meet there are a thousand we don’t
 - So we deceive ourself through selective rule keeping
 - Moreover, we grow into life inspectors
 - We will soon begin to evaluate everyone else to decide if they are measuring up to our rules as well
 - When we do this, we find it easier to boast about ourselves in relationship to others
 - All this energy is wasted and worthless
 - Paul says we should focus on examining our own lives, not others’ lives
 - And we will have reason to boast concerning ourselves in the future
 - The future Paul is thinking about is our judgment day when we stand before the Lord
 - So he says in v.4 that our judgment won’t come in relationship to other men...it comes in relationship to the Lord’s desires
 - And in that sense, each man will bear his own load
 - On our judgment day, we will bear personal responsibility for what we have done
 - And in that moment, comparisons we made between ourselves and others won’t matter
- Now Paul brings his argument to a conclusion

Gal. 6:6 The one who is taught the word is to share all good things with the one who teaches him.

Gal. 6:7 Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he

will also reap.

Gal. 6:8 For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life.

Gal. 6:9 Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary.

Gal. 6:10 So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith.

- How can a church be successful in this pursuit of experiential righteousness?
- In light of our common struggle against sin and the universal call to follow the Spirit and considering our coming judgment before Christ, how can we help each other be successful in that moment?
 - First, Paul says the teaching and receiving of the word is our first priority
 - There will be those teaching good things to the body of Christ in the hope of stimulating the body into greater obedience to the Spirit
 - The teacher is bearing the burdens of the church in the sense of the work, diligence and sacrifice that is required to become knowledgeable of the word of God
 - Speaking from experience, there is no more difficult task
 - The Lord simply doesn't reveal His word to those who approach Him without sincerity, commitment and diligence
 - So the teacher has lifted that weight off our shoulders and assumed it upon their own
 - Meanwhile, those who receive the benefit of such teaching are then expected to share good things with the teacher
 - Sharing good things means material support so that the teacher might be able to do even more teaching
 - This is a tangible means of bearing another's burdens
 - There is real financial sacrifice required to pay another's way
 - But in eternal terms, it's a bargain
 - There is also a time commitment on the part of the student to sit and listen patiently, and that is a burden they bear as well
- Secondly, Paul says the church can't expect to mock God and get away with it
 - Paul is referring to a Christian who chooses to live in the flesh without regard for the consequences
 - Repeatedly giving in to the flesh and living without regard for the consequences for sin is mocking God
 - We mock His tolerance and patience
 - We mock His role as Judge

- Imagine walking into a court room and telling a judge you plan to keep speeding as much as you want
 - What would that judge do to put you in your place?
 - So imagine what God will do with us when we live that way?
- Paul says we will reap what we sow
 - The agricultural metaphor is easy enough to understand
 - When you plant corn seed, you get corn stalks
 - When you plant wheat grain, you get wheat stalks
 - So when you sow sin, you will receive discipline
 - And it is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God
- Likewise, Paul says in v.8 that how we invest our time will be reflected in how the Lord rewards us
 - If we live a life in the flesh, then we will reap corruption in many forms
 - The corruption begins here and now, but it doesn't end here
 - We will also corrupt our eternal inheritance, our reward
 - But if we sow obedience to the Spirit, then we reap eternal life
 - Paul doesn't mean salvation, since obviously we do nothing to earn salvation
 - He means we will receive our reward in eternity
 - As well as experiencing a taste of righteousness now
 - I should also note in passing that this verse is saying nothing about money or personal riches
 - Unscrupulous men and false teachers have twisted this verse and others like it to suggest that we can manipulate the Lord for profit
 - That if we give (sow) money to a ministry, then we will receive (reap) financial reward
 - We can see clearly in this context that Paul is not teaching a principle about money or giving
 - So to use this verse in that context is a complete misuse of scripture
- Finally, the road of walking with the Spirit is a long journey, and the reward only comes at the end
 - So Paul says to the church we must not lose heart in doing good
 - Doing good doesn't merely refer to acts of charity
 - Paul means in the sense of living in the Spirit, following His leading and living to please the Lord
 - There is no such thing as retirement from a Spirit-led life
 - We walk with the Lord for a lifetime and then eternally thereafter
 - Paul says there is a reward to be found for those who do not grow weary

- Weariness in a Christian walk can appear in various forms
- Christians who flame out in a blaze of sin and corruption, destroying their witness and perhaps their life as well
- Christians who let life's distractions pull them away over time, slowly losing interest in the things of God
- Christians who stumble in a moment of sin and never seek restoration, too proud and vain to humble themselves
- Or Christians who sour to the message and its call to obedience, preferring the pleasure of sin
- Instead, let us persevere in doing good, especially to those in the household of God
 - There is a priority for where to bring our acts of charity and our gifts of the Spirit
 - And that priority is to serve other Christians
 - While generally charity to the world is never a bad thing, we must be careful to ensure we never neglect the needs of the church
- Finally, we end the letter with parting comments on the Judaizers and on Paul's authority

Gal. 6:11 See with what large letters I am writing to you with my own hand.

Gal. 6:12 Those who desire to make a good showing in the flesh try to compel you to be circumcised, simply so that they will not be persecuted for the cross of Christ.

Gal. 6:13 For those who are circumcised do not even keep the Law themselves, but they desire to have you circumcised so that they may boast in your flesh.

Gal. 6:14 But may it never be that I would boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.

Gal. 6:15 For neither is circumcision anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation.

Gal. 6:16 And those who will walk by this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God.

Gal. 6:17 From now on let no one cause trouble for me, for I bear on my body the brand-marks of Jesus.

Gal. 6:18 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brethren. Amen.

- As Paul begins the closing of the letter, he takes a second to note that he was writing the words at this point
 - Paul usually relied on a scribe to write his letters
 - He would dictate his thoughts in some way, while the scribe wrote them down
 - I would have loved to see the process
 - Did these words just flow off Paul's tongue under the inspiration of the Holy

Spirit?

- Or did Paul suffer writer's block once in a while, revising his letter many times, crossing things out, etc.
- In any case, here Paul must have taken the pen from the scribe and written out the last few lines of the text in his own hand
 - So he calls attention to the fact that he was the one writing the note at this point
 - He says look at the large letters I'm writing
 - This is another place some cite to argue Paul suffered from poor eyesight
 - His poor eyes required he write in large letters
 - It's not unusual for an author to write the conclusion himself
 - Paul did the same thing in numerous letters
 - His reason was to authenticate the letter and to draw attention to his conclusion
- Looking at what Paul wrote, he begins to speak about the motives of the Judaizers
 - First, Paul highlights their egos
 - He says those who are disturbing the church with teaching on circumcision and the Law are simply looking for a way to show off their flesh
 - He means that these men sought to use legalism to prop up their own egos, just as Paul described earlier
 - They ride into town, teach that the law and circumcision was required for Christians, and then show off their own piety under the Law
 - In effect, they create their own game where the rules are rigged to favor them and their fleshly pursuits
 - Secondly, in the latter half of v.12 Paul says they are motivated by fear of persecution
 - If they were to preach Christ and grace in the proper way, they would face the same persecution that Paul received
 - This was persecution at the hands of the Jews, who hated to hear a message that invalidated their law
 - So to avoid persecution, they changed the message of the cross
 - They added back Law and circumcision, which appeased the Jews
 - And now Paul was exposing them for the cowards they were
 - Thirdly, Paul points out their hypocrisy in v.13
 - These men do not even keep the Law themselves
 - Paul is referring to their selective use of the Law
 - They kept the parts they liked and ignored the parts they didn't like
 - Never mind the fact that no man can keep the Law perfectly anyway

- These guys weren't even trying
 - They were hypocrites
 - They only wanted to brag about their ability to convince others to their way of thinking
- Finally, Paul contrasts himself with these evil men
 - In v.14 Paul says he only boasts in the work of Christ, never in his own work
 - By the work of Christ, Paul says the word was crucified to Paul
 - He means that anything the world might offer to attract Paul died with Christ on the cross
 - And then he says that Paul was crucified to the world
 - Meaning anything in Paul that might have wanted to please the world was also put to death with Christ
 - So by process of elimination, the only thing that remains is Paul living for Christ
 - Being circumcised or not being circumcised is nothing
 - These things represent Jew and Gentile
 - So Paul is saying within the church that being Jew or Gentile is nothing
 - The only thing that matters is being a new creation in Christ, which we all become by faith
 - To those in the church who understand this truth and live according to it, Paul pronounced a blessing
 - Peace and mercy will rest upon us
 - We are at peace with our coming righteousness and with following the Spirit in the meantime
 - We know the mercy of the Lord and show it to others routinely
 - And at the end of v.16, Paul pronounces a special blessing on the Jewish believers in the church
 - The Israel of God are the remnant of Israel
 - The believing Jews who have found Jesus as Messiah
- Paul's ending command to the church is an interesting one
 - He asks the church to defend him in the face of the Judaizers' attacks
 - Paul says let no one cause trouble for me
 - The church had a responsibility to uphold their leaders and their reputation
 - Paul's defense for his request is to remind the church that his own body bore the marks of suffering he received in the name of Christ
 - Those marks demonstrated his courage and sincerity to preach the true Gospel
 - The enemy attacks those who oppose him, and Paul's body bore the marks of that opposition

- If Paul subjected his body to the attacks of Christ's enemies for the sake of the church, then the least they could do is defend him against those same enemies
- The letter ends in customary fashion
 - Paul extends the grace of the Lord to the spirit of every believer in the church
 - And it concludes with an Amen, which we all echo