

Galatians

Committed to Freedom in Christ



Stand firm, resolute, determinedly unshakable in the true freedom won for us in Christ, with the purpose to never be ensnared and controlled again by a “yoke of slavery” to a life bound to self and self’s necessary achievements so as to have a life of purpose and worth. Instead, live life with the liberty to be who we truly are in Christ and the eternal, glorious, fulfilling purpose and true successes all to its fullest because of Christ. This all sounds appealing, so how is it so many are pulled away to stray from such an offering and opportunity? This is a major part of what Paul is aiming at in this letter.

This is at the core of the underlying, motivating purpose of this epistle to the churches that were in the area of Galatia. This letter has been viewed by many as strictly a theological diatribe, while missing the underlying drive in Paul to see these Christians working from the victory that was already completely won for us, versus the life pursuit of a variety of forms of self-righteousness and the odd lure it has to us in pride and even security (tangible things we can do (works, achievements) in an attempt to avoid actual living by faith in the work of Christ for us and in us). “... liberty consists not in the ability to disobey God with impunity, but in the ability to obey Him spontaneously without effective hindrance.” Merrill Tenney. We are not freed to obey our will, for such would (actually) still be enslavement to sin.

Paul wrote this letter to several churches in the area of Galatia (though we are not certain which churches these were) but we do see where Paul went to this area in Acts 13:13-14:23, and we see there were many who enthusiastically received the Gospel, yet was followed by religious opposition. We’ll see in this study Paul making a solid case for his apostolic authority (since there would be those who would look to disqualify his message by disqualifying him personally). Some posit the idea that there were some in the Galatian churches that were making their case by claiming an association with the Church at Jerusalem, so Paul will need to remind them of his testimony and even his confrontation of Peter when Peter was intimidated by the Jews against the Gentile believers. There will be a strong emphasis on faith and how it is actually lived-out and it being equated with true righteousness. All this is essential in getting them to the realization of their being adopted and so sons (not working for son-ship, but living in it). Toward the end, Paul will make a clear distinction between living for “the flesh” versus “the Spirit” and the indicators of either, followed by how they are to handle those who are “in sin” and the goal of restoration. In the end, Paul encourages them to not grow weary in doing what is right with the understanding the what one “sows” they will “reap”. So, do good!

I. Rescued From This Present Age - 1:1-5

A. An Apostle, not of any person’s doing - vs. 1

1. Already at this time false teachers and false apostles were working hard to influence the true Church, sometimes envious of the crowds the Gospel was attracting, and others who were just in error, supposing the Law of Moses still must be required for salvation (obtaining it and keeping/securing it)

The word “apostle” was used of someone sent out to deliver the message/decisions from higher authorities, so the top quality of such a messenger was to get the message right

- a. Whether they were sincere or not (malicious, proud or well-intended) did not matter - even the best of intentions can be used in a detrimental/destructive way
- b. As we still see in our day, there was a stressed emphasis on credentials, and not that credentials weren’t of value, but that there was a focus on the wrong types of credentials

2. Paul appeals for his credentials to the very top, Jesus Christ and God the Father

This is important for us to grasp so as to completely obligate us to give heed to what is said and not only comply, but work to fully agree

- a. Paul was not appointed to this position by any person(s), not by means of any person(s) but by the authority and agency of God - there is no “in-between” here; either he was absolutely blasphemous or he was telling the truth (and so must be heard, even if the hearers did not like or agree with what they were hearing/reading)
- b. Knowing the true source of a true Apostle should reasonably drive us to work to inwardly agree with what is said since we are dealing with knowledge, insight and instruction/ direction from the one who is omnipotent and omniscient
- c. In considering the source of His authority and message, Paul, when describing God the Father stresses that He was the one that raised Jesus from the dead - this raising was the most profound of all considering that all other resurrections still ended in death later, but Jesus’ resurrection is one of eternal life, and He then being the “first fruits” (I Cor. 15:20-23) for all to later follow in this one of a kind resurrection
- d. Paul was sent out by the Church in Jerusalem, but he does not appeal to this as his source of Apostleship - he was going to need to take the argument out of any human authority

Those who had and would oppose his message would only need to cause doubt, question him or redirect the focus from the main points (priorities and true foundations) which they attempted

B. Delivered from the present age - vs. 2-5

1. Paul often included references to others who were standing with him in what he was writing to the churches and he does so here, yet only referencing them as “brothers who are with me” - vs. 2

- a. Though Scriptural Truth is most often not found in majorities (big numbers), there was still a benefit in having others (of solid, unquestionable character) standing with the giving out of Scripture, acknowledging its authority, and so obligation to heed and obey
- b. Paul addresses it to “the Churches of Galatia” and offers no praise or special titles (such as “Saints”) in contrast to epistles such as those to the Philippians, Thessalonians and even to the Corinthians

Paul does immediately point to the significance of the grace given them and its relationship to deliverance from sins and the glory then being only to God

2. Grace and peace provided in Christ and the deliverance it brings - vs. 3-5

- a. “Grace” (Χάρις) is a word describing favor (special treatment) given to one that does not (and could not) deserve it, which to the proud is repulsive and unacceptable - “...the more wise, righteous, and holy that men are without Christ, so much the more hurt they do to the gospel.” Luther - self-righteousness in all its forms is the enemy of grace!
- b. Note the detailed, careful wording in this greeting - it is “grace to you” and the byproduct (result) is “peace from God” - grace from God is the only means of peace with God
- c. Still focused on the details, we see this grace (kindness to the undeserving) and the peace (calmness/quietness of spirit) that comes as a result of knowing of this grace freely, completely received is from God “our Father”, solidifying the reason for our peace, having not just a restored relationship with God, but one of a familial relationship
- d. Jesus’ position as equal with the Father in all of this is also clearly stated in the full title “Lord Jesus Christ”, He not only our Savior, the perfect man, but the God-man, one with the Father, and why all of this is absolute (assured), for there is none higher than the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ!
- e. The act of grace is seen in verse 4 with this same one, with such authority and glory, He “gave Himself for our sins” - what a concept to grasp! He sacrificed Himself, not necessarily for love’s sake alone, but “for our sins” in particular, to “rescue us from this present evil age” all the result of God’s love for us
- f. In Scripture we see two “ages” and since Christ, the “new age” has come and the present age (this “evil age”, an age marked by and dominated by all things related to sin) is passing away (I Jn 2:17) “... and all its desires (lusts)”
- g. This “age” needs to be seen for what it truly is (evil), else its priorities, its philosophies and never ending invitations to join its causes (though all is temporal) will entice those who are to have the next age (without sin) as their main focus (and so priority) always - one of the ideologies Paul will have to confront right away is that of the pursuit of popularity (vs. 10)
- h. All of this (the Gospel, saving from sin’s condemnation, and rescue from this evil (immoral, toilsome, fatiguing/draining and so disappointing)) age, is by means of “the will of our God and Father”, and this point being important to make to this group who were being drawn into a pseudo “gospel” that would “make it” by means (at least partially) by their will also
- i. One of the greatest dangers of the inclusion of the will of man into this “mix” of what the pure Gospel is, is the directed attention and dependence (and so even faith) to the work of man (self), which naturally leads either to bouts of doubts or self-righteousness
- j. And this is particularly wrong/bad because (as in verse 5) all glory is to God “forever and ever” (not just eternity future, but eternity past, and so never ending, it was what everything has always “been about” and will always “be about”) - this magnifies the evil of Rom. 1:25

The common greeting for the Jews was “shalom” (peace) yet Paul prefixes the idea with the needed grace that gives a reason for peace rather than just a well-wished for peace upon others

Note Jesus’ use of this idea (now being new) to Mary Magdalene in John 20:17

Compare this also to Heb. 13:20-21

All of this is to set the stage in how alarming it was that these Galatian churches would stray from such a Gospel

The lusts of this age/world passing away (happening now) can be seen in the inability of “the world” to be fully content in the achieving of its lusts

“Strikes the keynote of the epistle. The gospel is a rescue, an emancipation from a state of bondage” J. B. Lightfoot

Verse 5 ends with “ἀμήν” as in an exclamation saying “truth!” or even like when we would say “absolutely” after something we completely agree with without doubt

II. There Is No Other Gospel Or Any Variant Of It - 1:6-10

A. Paul’s astonishment at the Galatian Churches deserting to a “different gospel” - vs. 6-9

1. Having just provided a synopsis of the true Gospel, Paul expresses shock at not only their defecting from such a Gospel to another, but that they did so quickly - vs. 6

- a. What will be intriguing to look into is that what the Galatian Christians were succumbing to, when reworded and described in today’s lingo, might not seem too severe and would fall into categories that many in our time would think of as “secondary issues”
- b. We will need to be very careful to be strict in all things related to the true Gospel and all that relates to it (its message and how God designed it to be given and understood)

It is becoming common for opponents to the true, unadulterated Gospel and its components to say they are just looking to stay with “the main thing”

The deserting was horrible in itself, but Paul was amazed that they would do so in such little time - for how could any other idea compete with the Gospel?

Clearly it wasn't a "done deal" since Paul was writing them to pull them back

Another word that describes what was taking place would be "renegade" (changing allegiance, switching sides)

In reality, to live to keep the Law to be saved (or maintain salvation) is the true sense of falling from grace

see Mat. 22:1-14 where those coming to the wedding feast not properly attired are cast out

This is the result (intended or not) of false teachers like this - those affecting these Galatians were coming after Paul to add to what had been already taught (seeking to add circumcision and the keeping of the Law of Moses for salvation (the necessary righteousness to complete it or maintain it))

What Paul addresses here also demonstrates that there is the tendency in us to see the Gospel as somewhat subject to our belief and approval - it is sadly common for us to posture ourselves in such a way that we act as though our disapproval/rejection of a point in the Gospel (as presented in Scripture) somehow makes it not a "truth to me" and so must be thrown into the mix of acceptable variants - our belief does not validate the Gospel, the Gospel validates genuine faith

- c. Paul is "θαυμάζω" (shocked, surprised in utter amazement) that they would "desert" God (the Father) and so then Jesus Christ and His giving of Himself (sacrificed for us out of true love) to rescue us from the "present evil age" - they weren't just following after a variant of the Truth (the Gospel), they were deserting Christ (μετατιθεσθε - transpose (replace one with another), to act as a "turncoat" and so to betray) - this variation was a big deal!
- d. Another detail that is particularly condemning is the middle voice in the Greek used of this betrayal/defection - "A.V. misses the sense of the middle voice, *removing* or *transferring yourselves*, and also the force of the continuous present, are *removing* or *going over*, indicating an apostasy not consummated but in progress." Vincent's Word Studies
- e. These weren't just leaving a philosophy (a "faith"), but they were leaving a person / relationship - as is true in all areas of life, it is not possible to just change a life philosophy without it affecting practice and so ongoing experience
- f. It will be discussed in more detail later, but in 5:4 Paul uses the phrase, "... you have fallen from grace" which has evolved in some cases to carry the idea of falling into sin and so to be seen as a sinner (and to have fallen then out of a good reputation), but Paul's usage of it is one of abandoning actual grace to live in a realm of self-merit (self-achievement)
- g. The wording used here in verse 6 is also key when understanding how certain words are used in the whole realm of Soteriology and why - Paul describes these Galatians as having been "called" (and that into grace) and yet turning away from it (at least in the apparent process) - we learned through Jesus that "many are called but few are chosen" in His parable of the wedding feast - this epistle provides an example of the human side of the struggle to protect/preserve those that have professed and evidenced a "coming to Christ"
- h. They turn from the true Gospel (solely of grace) to another (ἕτερος - another of a different kind because there is no other "gospel" of the same kind (ἄλλος))

2. There is no other gospel to turn to - to believe in possible variants is to be grossly and dangerously deceived - vs. 7

- a. Note the precise, careful wording and explanation at the start of verse 7 - "ὁ οὐκ ἔστιν ἄλλο" *which is not another* (of the same kind) for that is not possible - you cannot mix Law and Grace to achieve true salvation (rescue)
- b. Even though there is no other Gospel, there were those that came in among them and were "disturbing" you (ταράσσοντες - agitating, stirring-up (what should be left settled)) and we know their message had something to do with the true source/means of saving righteousness - "... if righteousness were through the law, then Christ died for no purpose." 2:21
- c. This is because they are willing (they "want to") distort (μεταστρέφω - pervert, twist, turn about) Gospel of Christ - they are willing to compromise the message Paul passed on from Christ Himself for what they believe is a better way - such is the case with so many religious throughout history who believe, based on their own will/desire, that the Gospel, as given, is not enough and are compelled (believing this the moral route) to add variants of law-keeping
- d. As we will see, part of their strategy was to seek to disqualify Paul's authority as an Apostle

3. "Let him be accursed" whoever preaches a gospel contrary to what was already preached to them and received by them - vs. 8-9

- a. Paul gives two scenarios in which someone(s) is/are to be "accursed" (ἀνάθεμα - which traditionally referred to something "devoted" (set aside for a purpose) and came to be used to refer to those set for destruction, so cursed/doomed)
- b. Some question the literalness of this since it strikes them as too harsh - it should be understood that these are to be looked upon as currently in this state/standing before God (let them be recognized as such) though God could still turn them around - yet sympathies ought not be sought for these, considering the severity of what they do
- c. This does remind us of the tendencies to alter the details of the Gospel to suit a feeling, scenario or some situation where we see a supposed, immediate benefit if we compromise aspects of it - after all (for instance), what harm can it be to not oppose those who feel more secure to see the keeping of the Law as lending to their being "saved"? - yet the Gospel was never meant to accommodate our pride or even personal (must be seen, touched and experienced) ideas of a "faith" that makes sense to us

A variance in the Gospel is quite easy to produce, for one need only add a little, subtract a little to poison it- if Jesus' work is combined with personal effort (even in the least) for salvation, it is wrong - the Gospel message must be carefully presented and preserved in its purity

There may be some aspects of the understanding of Scripture that will change in our lives, but justification by faith (for salvation) alone will not (must not) be one of them! Yet there are (sadly) so many differing handlings of the Gospel in "Christianity" that are deemed acceptable differences

B. The incompatibility of pleasing people with (or over) pleasing God - vs. 10

1. Seeking favor /approval of man or the approval of God - which is true?

The word used for "favor" or "approval" is *πειθω* which typically means to "persuade" and is translated as it is because it is difficult to apply an acceptable version of "persuading" God - it is likely it should be translated as it is in our versions, but it is also possible to consider the use of the idea of an attempt (futile) to persuade God of another way (as so many self-righteous appear to attempt), and this would fit with the next idea of "pleasing" man in contrast to what he had just stated

- d. Paul begins this section with an emphasis on the message over the messenger by insisting (without exception) that if "Paul" and his team, or even if an angel from heaven would come and preach a "gospel" that was "contrary" (*παρ'* from *παρά*, picturing another message that comes along side of, so not necessarily to usurp, but to be treated with the same authority) and was truly contradicting by what it was adding (or actually reimposing), should be rejected
- e. The standard/rule had already been given in complete detail and the churches of Galatia would need to know it in detail so as to be able to identify a counterfeit "gospel" - if anyone does present such an altered/deficient message they are to be deemed as one who is "accused" - this does not say we are to "curse" them (for we do not have such authority), but we are to consider them as we would those outside of Christ that currently are standing under the curse of sin (and so they are not to be trusted with the Gospel) - see I Cor. 16:22
- f. Paul repeats himself - apparently he had stated this command before and has just written it again and now reiterates it - this was not emotional outburst on Paul's part, but a responsible instruction to leave no "gray area" when it comes to any who would, in any way, tinker with the Gospel (as it had already been given)
- g. If any person presents a gospel in opposition (in any way) to the gospel "you have received" - this is the second scenario (the first the Gospel as Paul presented and second, the Gospel that they had received, pointing them back to their own active responsibility in this - professions of faith must be taken seriously (such as the one made during baptism, though many will treat it with contempt/disregard later, it does not lessen its actual seriousness)

- a. Paul approaches this with a questioning form - first, he asks, "Am I, at this moment [having just said what he said, and that in such a forceful, uncompromising way] seeking the favor of man?" Is this how someone characterized as such would communicate?
- b. Apparently he was being accused of this - likely in a way we would not have expected, for it looks as though he was accused of seeking to be a "people-pleaser" by stressing a gospel without the requirement of keeping the Law (as if he was making more palatable/acceptable to the Gentiles... making it "easier")
- c. So, Paul asks if it could be possible that he is attempting to seek the favor of God or man (or, again both) - his speaking the truth plainly is part of his argument/proof that he is not altering the true Gospel, inferring that those that actually are altering the true Gospel are motivated by the favor/approval of people - this is intriguing in our time since it would seem the best way to please people (mostly) is to lessen requirements, but it is still true in our day that most (religiously), even though they take away from the Gospel and even insist the keeping of the Law is unnecessary, still come up with personal, social, popular, or political "works" to be added as if gospel-truth
- d. If trends are more conservative or liberal, neither trend must be allowed to impact the Gospel in any way, for the Gospel, in its purest form, has never been popular

2. If Paul was, as he had been, motivated/driven to please people, he could not be the "δοῦλος" (slave) of Christ - a slave finds purpose in pleasing the master

And this is the sobering point, for though many see themselves as servants of Christ, the cannot be in reality since they do what they do to impress, appease or be accepted of people (and might see themselves as ministers of Christ by means of the flattery of the people they seek to please)

- a. As obvious as the above statement should be, there are still many who would make a case for pleasing people in the way Paul is describing, as actually a part of the ministry for Christ
- b. Paul plainly states the fact - if he was still trying to please people (as he had been doing in his Jewish zealotry), he would not be (could not be) the Lord's slave, and if not the Lord's slave, then he must be a slave to someone/something else
- c. "The man whose master-principle is a wish to please men, cannot be a consistent servant of Christ... The man, whom fear of human resentment or desire of human favor can induce to keep back any part of the truth, or pervert any part of the truth, is altogether unworthy of the name of a minister of Christ. There are truths which ought to be told, and which cannot be told without displeasing some men; but then they cannot be concealed without displeasing Christ..." John Brown
- d. This is important, not just in seeking criteria of being a true slave of Christ in our service, but of also the discerning others we would seek guidance from

We do not want to deceive ourselves when answering the question of really why we do what we do

III. The Gospel, Not According to Man, But Received From Jesus Christ Firsthand - 1:11-24

A. Paul was declaring/preaching what was directly given to him from Christ - vs. 11-17

1. Paul begins his case by appealing to the utmost authority, and so also making it clear he had no option or flexibility to change, alter or add to it - thus "I would have you know"

This entire line of thinking is crucial, for it points to not only the source of the Gospel, but its authority - if seen as truly from the Lord, who would dare reject or alter it!?

There was no input from mankind at all in its formulation - God did not seek out input from any person(s) and Paul is about to make the case that he delivered it to the Galatians as it was delivered to him

Variations of Christianity through the years have demonstrated a seemingly endless line of those revealing their ideas (and themselves) using Jesus and the Gospel as a means to promote themselves

- a. They needed to understand (come to truly know) that what he had preached "by me" was not, in any way "of me" - if what He was declaring was one of many possible options to be considered, then he could be possibly (rightfully) rejected - this is a case common to preaching the Word, where the Truth declared is not seen in light of its actual origin
- b. This Gospel that he preached consisted of the contents of verse 4 (Jesus giving Himself for our sins) and that God would "save" by means of faith (trust) that Jesus' sacrifice pays for sins, in full, and such faith (believing God as in 3:6-9) credits all the full "righteousness" required by God into our account - the Gospel covers not only how sins are dealt with but how full righteousness (perfection/holiness) is acquired
- c. None of this Gospel, the Gospel was "κατὰ ἄνθρωπον" (according to, after man (all of mankind or any individual))
- d. Paul received it through "revelation of Jesus Christ" - this is a profound claim! Paul puts forward that what he had passed onto them was by means of "ἀποκαλύψεως" (revelation/revealing/uncovering what could not have normally been known) of Jesus Christ - this is the essence of I Cor. 2:6-13 ("... for to us God revealed [same Greek word] them...")
- e. The wording of this in verse 12 can include not just that Jesus revealed the Gospel, but also that the true revealing of Jesus Christ Himself (who He was, why He came, what He accomplished and why) is the Gospel

2. Paul clarifies his testimony (conversion), making it clear he had a clean break from "Judaism", and when commissioned/called of the Lord, he did not consult with people - vs. 13-17

It seems likely he is again including the negative influence that his Judaism had on him, and more than a hint that the Judaistic influences affecting them now are not good influences

This is what the Judaizer influence was trying to steer these churches back to a form of (while trying to incorporate some of the true Gospel... though adding works as a necessary requirement for salvation would poison it)

This is still the goal of the enemy, to lay waste and topple churches even by use of extremes (and extreme measures) - note Acts 9:10-22

Hopefully our traditions are firmly grounded in truth, but we must never equate traditions as truth itself - this causes undue loyalties to the wrong causes and so leads to wrong action and priorities

- a. Part of what Paul is doing here is, to some degree, similar to what is called tracking a "chain of custody", the purpose of which is to demonstrate that something that has been passed on through different people and locations has not been tampered with
- b. Paul doesn't just go back and reference just his conversion and then special training directly from the Lord, but begins by reiterating his aggressive persecution of the Church while driven in his passionate zeal for his "former life in Judaism"
- c. Regarding the form of Judaism that Paul grew up in, Kenneth Wuest described it as, "...apostate. He knew nothing before his conversion, of the supernatural Judaism in which the Levitical sacrifices were the outward expression of an inward faith in a coming substitutionary atonement for sin. Judaism in Paul's time was a mere ethical cult basing salvation on good works, and observing the sacrifices as a mere form."
- d. Paul, under this driving influence/belief, "used to persecute the church of God beyond measure" with zeal - he was excitedly sincere in it as are so many to this day, that see adding works in some capacity to obtaining and maintaining salvation as a must - part of the danger of Paul/Saul at that time was his sincerity/genuineness - he was not practicing a conscious hypocrisy (but was zealous for what he thought was truth), though dreadfully wrong
- e. This resulted in his going beyond what would normally be expected in seeking to destroy "the church of God" - his objective was "πορθέω" (to wreak havoc/chaos so as to overthrow it)
- f. As far as Judaism, he was excelling above many his own age (he was "top in his class" at being what was considered a true Jew at the time where their religious credentials could be earned, compared, and used to elevate publicly) - he not only knew their doctrines and traditions, he lived them and fervently sought to defend them - note Php. 3:1-11
- g. He described himself as "... more extremely zealous for my ancestral traditions" - he was motivated more by tradition (as popularly accepted at that time) and not so much the actual truth
- h. What changed such a dedicated, focused, determined man to Christ? Paul clearly identifies it as grace, given him as God was "pleased" to do and so called him, and that because God had set him apart (selected him for this purpose) even before birth - see II Tim. 1:8-12
- i. Paul has now pointed to (again) God's grace and now His foreordination, both of which stand in opposition to any notion of a works-based salvation, for we become one in Christ by not only His sacrificial work, but by means of His sovereign grace!

Paul's call to preach the Gospel was not because of his works, his education or his character but because of God's grace - God's grace called and prepared him

Paul doesn't say "people" he says "flesh and blood" keeping the focus on a truly spiritual answer of God and not in any way of man - the true Gospel will seem unintelligent to the "natural man" - I Cor. 2:14

They had an apparent growing preference for Judaistic ways and the Apostles in Jerusalem

Since no further detail is provided regarding his time in Arabia, we can safely assume such detail is not needed

- j. Note that the change in Paul's life pivoted on "when God was pleased" and His "good pleasure" as in Eph. 1:5 (translated "kind intention") - it was not only God's good will to call and convert Paul, but the timing was also part of His perfect goodness
- k. This goodness of God was pleased "to reveal His Son in me" - some translated this "to me" (which has some authority), but the plain handling is "in me" which stresses more the internal reality above just the externals - this expression "in me" is a good picture of what true faith really is... it is an inward trust/confidence and belief, so it is who/what I am and am becoming because of it - compare to II Cor. 4:5-6
- l. This commission was to preach the Gospel to the Gentiles (the nations), and as Paul words it here in verse 16, this Gospel is to "preach Him among the Gentiles"
- m. Now Paul reaches the other reason for sharing this, and continuing to drive home the point that what He preached was not "according to man", Paul makes it clear, that upon his conversion he did not immediately consult with people
- n. The normal thought would have been for Paul to have immediately gone to the Apostles (in Jerusalem), but God had equipped Paul a different way, which lent well to his argument against what the Galatians were pursuing (and why)
- o. Paul does not elaborate on his time in Arabia and we are not certain why he went and all that took place there - it seems reasonable to suppose that this is where Paul received "the revelation of Jesus Christ" - Luke does not mention the time in Arabia at all in his account of Paul's conversion in Acts 9 - the point of verse 17 and 18 is to show that he did not go to Jerusalem or meet with the Apostles until three years later

B. Many glorify God because of the conversion of Paul - vs. 18-24

1. There's nothing wrong with the Apostles and their authority and influence and there was nothing wrong with the church in Jerusalem; both were being profoundly used of God

This issue had to do with their wrongful focus and perception of these things - they were all God's tools, but were being wrongly emphasized above Paul

God was clearly at work for the Gospel message to be so unified yet from differing "fronts"

This looks to also be the same time when Paul disputed with the Hellenist/Grecians (Greek Jews) who then sought to kill him - Acts 9:29

- a. The issue was how these solid tools/resources of God were being used by some in the Galatian churches to counteract Paul's teaching and authority - it is likely the "super apostles" and Judaizers were using the Apostles and the Jerusalem church to disqualify what Paul was preaching by means of an "upper-class v. lower class" type of distinction
- b. Paul uses careful wording in verse 18 to describe his purpose in going to Jerusalem to see Cephas (Peter) - we know he went to Jerusalem after 3 years, and after already preaching in Damascus (demonstrating a presentation of the Gospel separate from that of Jerusalem, yet we see no opposition to what Paul was preaching in the book of Acts account)
- c. Paul was only in Jerusalem with Peter for 15 days, so not long enough to be taught enough to be established in all things related to Christ and His Gospel (again demonstrating that Paul already had it) - these churches just weren't seeing/remembering it
- d. It would have seemed that there would have been an expectation that Paul would have desired to meet with as many of the Apostles and Church leaders as possible, but he did not (except James, "the Lord's brother" either Jesus actual brother from Mary/Joseph, or a relation/kinsman) - Paul was not, at this point, under any church hierarchy

2. Paul's conversion and his education would have been hard to believe/accepted by others, and he must stress again that all he is declaring (in detail) is an accurate portrayal - vs. 20-24

But Paul appeals to a much higher authority for his credibility - he did not appeal to Peter or James, but to the Lord Himself for the honesty of all he was writing

The overriding goal of the evangelist/preacher/teacher is to point to the reliance upon the grace of God alone, His work in Christ alone all focused in faith

- a. Paul essentially vows before God (God as witness) that all he has been sharing is true - there was apparently skepticism that he had received what he had from the Lord Himself - this whole line of reasoning is interesting because it could have seemed (to some) more productive for Paul to directly tie himself with the Apostles for credibility
- b. Paul was working to get the focus off of the human elements and back to the source and accurate content of the Gospel - it's too easy to argue sources and theological pedigree while missing the actual saving Gospel itself! It is possible to conceive of the idea that some were making definitive theological connections/associations as necessary for salvation
- c. Paul even points to his lack of recognition among the churches in Judea - he appeals to his anonymity rather than popularity to bring the focus of authority back to the Lord's revealed Gospel as from the Lord and not of any person(s)
- d. He does stress that there was a response regarding what he used to be and his former work to destroy "the faith" that he was now preaching

It is best when the focus of God's working and the validation of it is solely focused on God, His working and His grace and not, to any major degree, the significance of the messenger/slave

- e. All those in Jerusalem (of the Church) knew was his past of persecuting the church and now his preaching "the faith" (τὴν πίστιν) that he had previously been trying to wipe out - their response was to glorify God because of this, for Paul was not one any would have considered to not only become a convert to Christ, but to then go on to be a proclaimer of His Gospel
- f. Paul's pointing away from himself, away from Jerusalem connections, and then pointing to his horrid reputation before his conversion seems to be taking special care to leave only one direction left to see and give "glory" - all glory to God

IV. That the Truth of the Gospel Might Continue - 2:1-14

A. Confirmation that Paul had not and was not "running in vain" - vs. 1-2

1. Paul, "by revelation" returns to Jerusalem 14 years later

It was essential that the Gospel be seen as singular, exclusive (in message/content) and not seen as either one of many variations or as untrue - this was a top priority struggle!

- a. Paul is continuing to make his case to the Galatian churches that the Gospel he gave them was truly from the Lord and was, without doubt, the "true Gospel" being the "truth of the Gospel" as Paul uses twice (in verse 5 and 14) - it was the truth not a truth!
- b. Paul was accompanied by Barnabas and Titus, and Titus looks to have a strategic purpose in this visit (he being Gentile) - the core reason for this visit was the open agreement with the Apostles in Jerusalem regarding salvation being justification by faith in Jesus Christ (vs. 16)
- c. This all-important point/focus was being opposed by many and Paul was looking to demonstrate unanimity with the Apostles in Jerusalem, and all of this with his not having received it from these other Apostles but from the Lord Himself - we need to know that traditions, law-keeping and the like are not wrong, but when added as "merit" needed for salvation, it becomes deadly
- d. Paul is not "going up" to Jerusalem to be taught or even to be made confident that what he was preaching was truth (he was certain of it already, having been given it directly from the Lord) but was, first, because he was told to do so (by revelation, a revealing of what to do)
- e. Paul "set before them" (ἀνεθέμην - laid it out) to review what he had been declaring among the Gentiles (all other peoples other than the Jews)

The reality of being "crucified with Christ" (vs. 20) is key not just in salvation, but in how we then expect to conduct our lives from there on out

Paul had been preaching this Gospel (the truth) for more than 14 year now

2. Confirming he was not and had not "run in vain" - vs. 2

Again, circumcision was not a bad thing, but to make it a requirement for salvation was why Paul and Barnabas had "great debate" with them

- a. This visit to Jerusalem has more detail in Acts 15:1-21 - one of the practical reasons that necessitated a visit to Jerusalem was the arrival of "some men from Judea" teaching that without circumcision, there could not be salvation
- b. Paul met with those "who were of reputation" (NASB) (from the word "δοκέω") which basically means to have an opinion, and indicates those whose opinions/thoughts mattered most, rather than just putting it "out there" for any and all to critique and offer their opinions (for, in reality, there are many uninformed, "authoritative" opinions not desired)
- c. But why say that this was done that "for fear I might be running, or had run, in vain"? - was Paul unsure of what he was teaching and feared it would be found fundamentally flawed by these "esteemed" individuals in the church in Jerusalem? - clearly the answer must be "No!" seeing, as mentioned, he had already been preaching this for 14+ years
- d. The overriding reason was to validate that none of it (this Gospel as preached) was vain - Paul used this same wording in I Thes. 3:5 when he feared the faith of the Thessalonians may have faltered because of their possible reaction to the suffering he and his team were facing - they, of course, had been strong and his work proved genuine with/in them
- e. There is the presence of such possible dread in the life of those genuinely serving the Lord, realizing the true success of any of it is outside ourselves - we are dependent (in faith)

There is no word for "fear" in the underlying Greek in verse 2 - there is also a sense that, if the Apostles disagreed it would have (practically) made things "without substance, hollow, vain" for then these Judaizers would have been vindicated

B. Dealing with the "spies" who had sneaked-in to ensnare - vs. 3-6

1. The encouragement of what was not stressed by the leaders in Jerusalem - vs. 3

This does not mean that there was no disagreement or push-back seeing what Paul says in the next verse - it shows us that those opposing this particular point were "false brothers"

- a. Paul now singles out Titus, being a Greek, not being urged, encouraged or forced to be circumcised - surely this would have been stressed and insisted upon if it was necessary - when it comes to the Gospel, "politics" do not (must not) dictate what is said and done
- b. The way this verse begins "ἀλλ' οὐδὲ Τίτος" (but not even Titus) indicates that no one was compelled to be circumcised - it was not stressed (it, being the covenant sign since Abraham, a core tenant of the Law of Moses, and yet now was not equated as needed for salvation) - this was a major evidence!

2. Spies in the church - vs. 4-5

There are still these types of people who will come into a church with very religious motives and will "spy out the situation" and then seek to challenge the Truth/Gospel itself in varying ways

It is, in this context, actually a true statement to say they get to do right, because they are saved by Christ's work, not having to do right to be saved (or continue to keep their salvation)

"The compound verb indicates object subjection." Vincent's Word Studies

Paul was not promoting a lawless system, but more a law fulfilling answer/solution

There ought to be a tremendous concern that so many Christian denominations have added in many ways to the requirements for salvation beyond faith in the work of Christ, God's grace alone for them taken/received in faith, not of any works!

Their significance was in God's usage and not in the persons themselves- true authority is from God, not from us

compare with I Pet. 1:13-21

- a. Paul had only faced conflict/opposition because of "false brothers"; those who claimed to be in Christ (as believers) but were not and who came in with ulterior motives - these were not ones considered pagans or atheists, but very devoted religious people and who gained access by being brought in "secretly" (their true selves and agenda being concealed) - as with II Pet. 2:1; Jude 1:4
- b. It could be also (based on the wording) that these were brought in by others who may have not seen themselves as expert enough to rise and opposition
- c. These "ψευδαδέλφους" (pretend brothers) had a specific agenda and that was to "spy out" (κατασκοπέω - look at, scrutinize closely) what Paul identified (rightly) as their liberty (freedom from bondage) in Christ Jesus - as will continue to be detailed, this is a precise way of wording this state of true believers - they are freed to do what is righteous and not bound to do it for the saving of their souls
- d. The goal of these imposters (who could not be their true selves at first) was to, in the end, "bring us into bondage" (from καταδουλόω meaning to enslave) - what's interesting to consider is that when we are in Christ we are His slaves, but He is a benevolent Master/Savior versus the legalistic, self-righteous enslavement that comes when salvation is based upon the Law and not strictly upon grace - note Rom. 6:17-23
- e. Jesus Christ meets all the moral laws (imputed righteousness), fulfills the sacrificial, ceremonial laws by becoming the sin sacrifice on our behalf, so there could be nothing left to save us - Jesus was, in full, the "righteousness of God" - II Cor. 5:21
- f. Paul, Barnabas and Titus did not yield to them in the slightest, not even for a moment - there was absolutely no room for the slightest compromise in this area (literally they did not "ἐἴξαμεν τῇ ὑποταγῇ" (yield the subjection) as in not treating these spies as authorities)
- g. The reason was not one of pride or a simple power struggle, but for the purpose that the truth of the Gospel might be preserved for these Galatians churches and all others - this is a clear indicator that to have yielded in adding circumcision and the Laws of Moses as necessary to salvation would have made it all untruth (a lie, false)

3. Those considered important in the Church (by people) added nothing more to Paul's message - vs. 6

- a. Paul, in clarifying that he was given nothing further from the leaders in Jerusalem (as regards the Gospel), also makes it clear that God is in no way partial in His preference like mankind is (for God shows no partiality (literally, "God does not accept the person/face of man")) - those whom we esteem as important are no so esteemed by God - God "honors" (respects/prefers) Himself (His work), His grace at work in us, not us personally
- b. Paul genuinely was not affected by the esteemed value/rank given by others to certain people for his focus was singular; the Lord is above all, all is about Him and His service, so all others are merely participants in some way in the outworking of His will
- c. When Paul writes, "...those who were of reputation contributed nothing to me." he isn't being critical (as in indicating they were of no value or of no help), just that they had nothing to add, another way of verifying that what he had was complete and accurate

C. The "right hand of fellowship" - vs. 7-10

1. The phrase "right hand of fellowship" refers to a symbolic act that openly acknowledged friendship and, in particular, co-laborers in the work
 - a. A key point to note is what united them - they first needed to ensure their handling of the Gospel was in perfect harmony (though the recipients would be in differing cultures)
 - b. Paul begins this sentence (verse 7) with "on the contrary" in continuing with the reality that those "pillars" of the church had added nothing to him (his message) and ends in verse 9
2. There was the same message (Gospel) with two major areas "entrusted" - vs. 7-8

Though both had the same Gospel, there would be some differences in how it was approached with each grouping - the Gentiles would not have, for instance, the leanings toward the Law of Moses

- a. It became apparent to those that Paul met with that he had clearly been entrusted with the Gospel to be given to the "uncircumcised" (all non-Jews, primarily), just as Peter was clearly given the focus of the same with the Jews (primarily)
- b. It must be stressed that each was "πεπίστευμαι" (a trusting with, entrusted) the Gospel so it was never to be looked upon as something of their own possession and that each knew they had a responsibility with it - this was another, not so subtle, hint to any of those influenced by the Judaizers that Paul was not allowed to "tweak" it to accommodate their views

Locations, cultures and circumstances may all differ, but the source is the same making it clear that the message will be the same and that the authority is in the sender not the messenger

There have been numerous cases of those being self-called or not claiming an endorsed call at all, that seek to take on official roles within ministry which has led to error and unnecessary division

For there have been many who have been "esteemed" as authorities in churches who are not truly called of God

Note Paul's own description of his particular calling to the ministry in Eph. 3:1-13

There is always one interpretation (the Truth) yet with several applications- without the message being true, the application cannot be right

Meeting practical needs is one key way to bring unity between people (like Jew and Gentile) - much of what Paul raised for funds to help those in Judea came from Gentiles

Our actions do not dictate or validate truth, for the Truth is truth always - but our actions that are inconsistent with the Truth (we say we support to stand with/by) may be used to hinder the message

see II Pet. 3:15-16 where Peter, toward the end of his life spoke well of Paul

There may have been fears that the food was not ritually clean, or that the meat may have had a questionable origin - clearly Peter was afraid of the visual association

- c. The source of getting the truth of the Gospel out was the same for both Peter and Paul, for it was God Who was working in them (from ἐνεργέω as in energizing them) - some translations include the word "effectual" before "worked" to seek to lend clarity to the idea of this "working" being effective (successful to it purpose)
3. The recognition/acknowledgment of grace given for the calling - vs. 9-10
 - a. James, Cephas and John, having known (recognized, seeing firsthand), not the natural talent or even the fervor and determination but the "grace" (undeserved ability and so special enablement) for the calling to the Gospel ministry
 - b. We ought to take note that though not required in this case, it was still beneficial to receive the open agreement (and so endorsement) from these "pillars" of the Church in Jerusalem - it is texts like these where we find some of our practices in ordaining/commissioning men to ministry - we ought to seek out (we not being directly commissioned of God) proven authorities in the Gospel ministry for official backing
 - c. Paul does, though, take care in how he words this statement when he refers to these men as "esteemed/reputed to be pillars" ("esteemed" from the same word as in verse 6 describing an opinion (general consensus)) - the careful wording making it clear that the true authority was with the Lord and not with them
 - d. These "pillars" gave to Paul the "right hand of fellowship" openly making it clear they were united in doctrine, calling and so purpose (all under the same authority... openly answerable/accountable to the Lord) - there has been a type of this practice in our churches where new members/attenders are publicly welcomed into the ministry of the Church after having demonstrated the same faith, and authority and so now the same calling with a group of believers
 - e. The distinction would not be in message but in their primary focus; Peter to the Jews and Paul to the Gentiles - there is to always be unity in faith/doctrine yet with the understanding a differing approach (location, to some degree application) will occur
 - f. One request - there was such unanimity in the details of the Gospel, the only recommendation from these Church leaders was to "remember the poor" - this was a key item realizing how many Christians were suffering because of many types of persecutions, losing homes, jobs, having possessions taken, losing freedoms - This was no issue since Paul was already preset for this and was "eager" (a word indicating he would be "swift" to do it, it being a priority)
- D. Confronting Peter for not being "in step" with the "truth of the Gospel" - vs. 11-14
 - a. The word Paul uses in verse 14 as a description of how Peter was erring, was the word "ὀρθοποδοῦσιν" (simply meaning "to walk straight") - Peter's "walk" (actions, behavior) were not in keeping with the support (in harmony) with the truth of the Gospel
 - b. There has been push-back throughout Church history as to the authenticity of this since some have found it impossible to believe that Peter was in error in the Faith - but this account does not question the accuracy of Peter's handling of the Gospel, just of his failure to act and behave in light of its truth (and the changes it brought about in the view of keeping the Law)
 - c. Paul does not use this example to discredit Peter, but to deal with an apparent over-emphasis on the significance of Peter (as is still seen today in Roman Catholicism) - also, when Paul's usage of "to his face", that, in English sounds confrontational and insulting, though it describes confronting him personally and not speaking of/about him behind his back
 - d. The harshest word is "condemned," but the underlying word is from "καταγινώσκω" describing someone seen (firsthand) doing something wrong - here Paul is doing two general things in giving this account; first he is demonstrating his authority (as another Apostle) to confront Peter, and second, he is illustrating the wrongness of holding to the separation aspects of the Law that are no longer to be enforced
 - e. Peter would freely eat with his Gentile brothers in Christ before a group "from James" (from Jerusalem) - these were in all likelihood true believers - yet Peter slowly withdrew eating with the Gentile believers when this group arrived and "hold himself aloof" (ἀφώριζεν - separating, making as it were boundaries/space to distance from them)
 - f. Peter's fear was of "the circumcision" (not necessarily a part of James' group from Jerusalem)

It is not unheard of to have some willingly risk a relationship with a true brother and justify it in their mind as a means to ministry - yet we are not instructed to do so

Fear of loss or pain (and even shame/embarrassment) can often be a contributor to one hiding their true beliefs (fear usurping faith)

"No man [Peter] loved the Saviour more sincerely than he did, yet his constitutional timidity and irresoluteness of character often led him to courses of life suited deeply to wound his cause." Barnes

So often we get caught up in seeking to make others honor our customs or traditions that we lose sight of honoring/respecting others above ourselves, or that we come across as though they must do as we do lest they be in some type of sin

- g. It may have been some like "the spies" Paul referenced earlier in verse 4, or just may have been the fear that sooner or later some of these "party of the circumcision" might see him - his motives may have seemed right to some (possibly justifying such an act so that the Jews he (Peter) was sent to, might be offended and so then unreachable)
- h. The issue was compounded when the "rest of the Jews" and even Barnabas followed Peter's lead in no longer eating with their Gentile brethren - there may have been motivation in this also in fearing the possible future loss of their earthly identity/culture as Jews (which, if so, puts the earthly identity above the eternal one)
 - i. There may have been (highly likely) a fear of these critics because of the influence they carried and so could have them beaten or even killed
 - j. Paul uses a key word in describing this behavior when he calls it "hypocrisy" (twice in verse 13), the core word being "ὑπόκρισις" describing one acting under a mask (disguising their true self), yet here it is a hiding of their true belief by disassociating with these Gentile brethren - their playacting was caused by conflicting priorities
 - k. Normally we think of hypocrisy as acting more "spiritual" (or righteous) than we are, yet here their rightness of thought/conviction was hid in fear of what would be done or thought of them (if their right thinking/belief was seen in action)
- l. Consistency of action with faith is to be seen as a priority, because our contradictory behavior to our professed belief not only influences others, but can even confuse ourselves
- m. So it is because of this Paul calls what he saw as "not in step with the truth of the Gospel" (ESV) since the Gospel did not require such action, and that he, being a Jew (by birth), who just days been before was living "like the Gentiles and not like the Jews" would now act/ behave as though these ceremonial practices ought to be kept/observed by the Gentiles also - the word for "compel" carries the idea of a moral obligation

V. Crucified With Christ - 2:15-21

A. Justified by faith in Christ alone and not by works of the law - vs. 15-16

1. The first use of "justified" (δικαιώω, shown as righteous, declared guiltless) in this epistle

The justification that comes only through Christ is not in any sense against the Law of God, but a fulfillment of it in which the person on whom it is applied is declared/made righteous before God, as if never having done wrong and as if always having done right

Those missing these clarifications either believe in some form of absolute perfection in their thoughts/actions, or they believe justification to be a type of ruse

Justification by faith in Jesus Christ's work on our behalf describes for us total dependence/reliance upon Him and His work and trust that it is, as declared in the Gospel, fully satisfactory before the final judgment - note I John 2:1-3 where Jesus is the "propitiation" (expiation, atonement for wrong doing) and this followed by "keeping commandments"

- a. Justification is a term/idea foreign to the Law and John Brown wrote of this, "The law will not acquit him; it holds him guilty; it condemns him. No *argument* which he can use will show that he is right, and that God is wrong. No *works* that he can perform will be any compensation for what he has already done... In a legal sense, he cannot be justified; and justification, if it ever exist at all, must be in a mode that is a departure from the regular operation of the law.... It must be by system which is distinct from the law..."
- b. Jesus was the fulfillment of all the demands of the Law, not just in fulfilling all its requirements for complete righteousness, but even it meeting its demands for the guilt of actual sin that was done (note Gal. 3:13 and Php. 3:8-9) - It is not that we practically (in practice) never sin, but that "in Christ" and by Him we are justified before God - it is not that we are declared "innocent" in the sense of ourselves as we are here, but as such in Christ (for God does not lie or pretend) - note also Rom. 3:21-26
- c. "Sanctification" is our position/standing before God (and evidences itself as we grow/mature in Christ ("progressive sanctification")), "forgiveness" being the result of God's grace applied to/on us in Christ (our sins "let go" though only by means of their payment by our Lord), "redemption" is the purchasing us (acquiring us back to Himself) out of sins' mastery and accompanying condemnation - none of this possible apart from justification!
- d. And as will be clarified, all this "by faith in Jesus Christ" and not by "works"
- e. Paul, transitioning from the incident in Antioch into the absolute reality of justification by faith clearly states that even those "Jews by birth" having been born under the Law, set apart by birth to God, having the Word of God given to them and so were not "Gentile sinners", yet even they could not be "justified by works"
- f. Yet even such ones (Jews) "... we also have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law..." - their trust (faith) must only be in Christ Jesus (who He was/is, what He did and it being the means to the "Gospel" (the good news in answering our helpless state in sin, being vividly clarified/demonstrated as such by the Law)

Compare this to Peter's opening description in II Peter 1:1 - we should also note I John 2:1-6 where John, acknowledging total confidence (faith) in Jesus Christ "the righteous" also makes it clear that those in Him are by no means commandment breakers (as what would characterize them)

g. This "faith in Jesus Christ" as the means to justification, points to trust/faith in what He did to deal with sin and fulfill all the Law - we received His righteousness, He took on our sin and faced its rightful judgment - we must remember also that any use, future, present and looking backward (past) of "justification" is a reminder that something had to be done with our sin to have such a word applied to each of us

2. A very detailed point to consider is how this last phrase is worded in verse 16 where it reads, "... ὅτι ἐξ ἔργων νόμου οὐ δικαιοθήσεται πᾶσα σὰρξ" (for/because/since by works of law no/not will be justified any flesh) as in no mortal could ever be justified by keeping the works of the Law, yet Jesus, who accomplished this for us was then no mere mortal!

B. Can Christ be a "minister of sin?" - vs. 17-18

1. There are generally two ways these verses are taken - first, some see it dealing with what would normally be a reasonable objection to justification by faith, because it would open up such people to a sense of freedom to sin - this is something dealt with at length in Romans 6, and in the verses just referenced in I John 2 - second (more likely) these two verses are dealing with the confident assumption by the Judaizers that one justified by faith only in Jesus Christ must still be a "sinner" since they do not keep the Law as a means to justification

The purpose of the Law was never to save but to point to the undeniable reality of sin, and therefore a need for a Savior - the Law is only wrong when it is looked to (in the fulfilling of it) for salvation

For, one might ask, "If we are saved/justified apart from the Law, why are our leaders intimidated by those that believe the Law must be kept to be saved?"

They fear the possibility of sin after justification being unexplainable and therefore unbelievable - one core issue with this is the limiting of justification to a point in time, and sins after that time are then considered out from under "justification" and the person must have then lost it

- a. Paul presents the scenario in such a way so as to demonstrate the seriousness of the hypocrisy that was demonstrated by Peter and other Jews in Antioch - these would certainly claim to be those seeking to be justified in Christ and yet are then "found [as] sinners", as what seemed to be what was implied by Peter's fearful response to being seen eating with Gentiles
- b. If focused only on Christ's righteous work for us ends up to be discovered to not truly justify the person then they are shown to still be sinners - if this is the case, then, in light of the Gospel of Christ which points to His work and righteousness alone for salvation (which requires justification), would that not make Christ a "minister of sin"?
- c. Paul is not addressing this to unbelievers but to believers - the Pharisees would have not hesitated to agree that Jesus was a "minister of sin," but to these believers, this was where their behavior was leading - this is a sobering reminder of how not only our theology can lead astray, but our actions/behavior against the Gospel can also communicate dangerous error!
- d. Paul, of course, responds with "May it never be!" (absolutely not!) - but if justification by faith/trust alone in the works of Christ is not true, then would that not then make Christ one of many that have put forward a teaching/faith that kept sinners in their sin? - this (justification in Christ alone) is strictly a matter of faith (and since faith is how one is saved, it is a must it not be compromised) - even well-intended Christians get this wrong
- e. The fear of the reality of dealing with sin after salvation must be accurately dealt with by, primarily, understanding how one is saved (true and complete justification)- once this is understood, then the "sin after salvation" issue is handled differently (not in an excusing way, but in a more "identity" way) and with a trust in the continuing work of the Holy Spirit

2. To back-down from complete justification by faith would be a sin (transgression) itself - vs. 18

It is difficult for any of us to keep our eyes of faith solely on the work of Christ for the saving of our souls - there is, in the remnants of the old man, an inclination to sense the need to place our trust in something we do. This is often brought on when we sin, living/acting in contradiction to what we truly are in Christ, but this does not merit a reverting back to any form of self-righteousness to obtain a sense of security

- a. Paul's argument is simple and indisputable - if he (by action and in word) rebuilds what he had once "destroyed" (deconstructed), he would then be proving himself to have been a "transgressor" (παραβάτης, a violator) in having gone against (as it were) the Law (for gaining salvation/justification by it) - if he returns to it, is it not admission of guilt?
- b. It is treated (rightfully so) as a very serious thing to identify with salvation through Christ alone and then to act/live as though it is not enough
- c. "...this distinction between law and grace, let every Christian mark diligently, so that when he heareth that good works ought to be done, and that the example of Christ is to be followed, he may be able to judge rightly, and say All these things will I gladly do. What followeth? Salvation and everlasting life obtained? Nay, not so, for though I do all these things which are good, yet am I not thereby justified, neither do I obtain salvation, but through faith only in Christ." - Luther

C. Dead to the Law through Christ, alive to an actual new life in Christ - vs. 19-21

1. Died to law through law to live - vs. 19

a. So far removed is Paul from reestablishing the Law in his life (as a means to salvation) he plainly states its (the Law) ultimate purpose in salvation

The Law was never meant to save... just to point to the need of saving and so a Savior. As Paul demonstrates in chapter 4, it was designed to bring us to Christ

Many have cast off the Law of God, sensing (rightfully) its condemnation while missing what it was pointing to in its sacrificial system - its morality is right and the contrasting wrongs in us it clearly identifies - so the diagnosis is made by it but the cure can only be by the work of Christ alone

Through this death there comes new (altogether new) life - it is not a refurbished old life, but one of another kind

If "life" is seen more for being my body's life and consciousness with the world, then feelings, pains, fears and the pursuits of comforts will be priorities (and so our guides)

Read Romans 6:1-14 for a thorough overview of being dead (crucified) with Christ and what the newness of life actually is

Note the contrasting life as described in Romans 8:2-12, contrasting the flesh with the Spirit (and so "spirit")

This verse is not an "ideal," it is a fact - one who is either a legalist (earning their way to some degree) or a presumptionist (presuming on God's grace to a life of sinfulness) has not been crucified with Christ, and the life they live is by faith in their own "read" and feelings

Our lives are not to be seen as "ours" to live - He loved and gave... we are His

This does not mean we do not see or deal with sin in each other, but our approach is dictated by this focus

- b. "Through the Law" (by means of the Law) Paul died to Law - this phrasing seems (at first glance) to be disrespectful of the Law of Moses, and yet it is in keeping with its purpose - the Law of Moses demanded complete obedience, and when it was not done, had a provision in dealing with the sin by the sacrifice of an animal
- c. Note that in the Greek there is no proper article before the two uses of "law" which looks to indicate more than just the Law of Moses - everyone has some sense of a law that condemns - the Law was given to make sin clear for what it actually is... sin (failures, active (transgressions) and passive (irresponsibility))... being less than perfect) - Rom. 5:20
- d. There was still death in the world (because of sin) even before the Law, yet when the Law was revealed then sin was formally "reckoned" to each account as sin (Rom. 5:13-14) - "The law then exercises a double power over those subject to it; it makes them sinners, and it punishes them for being so, What can they do to escape? They have no choice but to throw off the bondage of the law, for the law itself has driven them to this. They find the deliverance, which they seek, in Christ." J. B. Lightfoot
- e. Read Romans 7:7-13 where Paul details how the Law was used in his life, revealing sin for what it is (even when he saw himself (initially) as "alive" (apart from the Law)) - once he came to know the Law, it was as if sin then took advantage of him (took "an opportunity through the commandment" (not to covet)), deceived him and "killed me" - as Paul put it directly, through law he died to law (it pointing away from itself as salvation)
- f. The purpose was "that I might live to God" - life is now to (where it is headed and where it focuses) and for (its new purpose/reason for living) Him, a new life after having truly died (in the spiritual sense) - **what is this talking about?**

2. A life by faith - vs. 20

- a. How is it that Paul could say he dies to the law by the law lives? Clearly this death and life are more than the physical life we have naturally, which, though many would think is unnecessary to clarify, is very important in determining what life/living actually is and which sense of "life" we identify with (and so actually live with)
- b. Paul describes his life now as being first by means of being "crucified with Christ," and this being personal/individual (thus "I have"), and because of this, what was his "self" has been made new for, he clarifies, "...it is no longer I who live..." - his life is now "Christ lives in me" - The "I" has changed and has merged into Christ
- c. How does this contradict his aliveness as he is in his body ("the flesh")? It doesn't... he is still alive as he used to be but his life is now revolutionized - all others are still "alive" to themselves in a variety of capacities (some religious, philosophical, impulsive/sensual and others without direction and hope) - yet without Christ, this life ends in eternal death
- d. This life lived "by faith in the Son of God" is not a conceptual idea superimposed on life, but is living in the reality of what life now truly is - I, in Christ, Christ in me, and as will soon be covered, the indwelling Holy Spirit (His influence and empowering, discussed more in chapter 5) - it is a life focused on what Christ has done, He "loved me" and as a result "gave Himself for me," all something the Law could have never done (just as we cannot give ourselves for ourselves)
- e. The reason for the change in life is made clear - one does not strive for the characteristics of Christ living inwardly, but expects them (personally (primarily)) - this is in the strongest contrast to the actual legalist who would live by the Law/law for the sake of being saved (or staying "saved" or even for the sake of "looking saved") versus the trusted, inevitable change/growth as a result of the indwelling Christ/Spirit
- f. This verse alone ought to dictate how we look at life (in faith) - those characterized as seeking a life of their own, self-discovery and personal significance, have no concept of the life described by Paul, because they have not died (to self, sin and so to the Law)

3. Paul, on his part, does not "nullify" the grace of God by what he believes, says or does - vs. 21

- a. To "nullify" is to (ἀθετέω, set aside, replace) the grace of God for anything - he genuinely trusted this grace even against the likely criticisms of the Judaizers, who would look more for the sin than depend on the grace at work in another's life
- b. It must be by grace alone, for if "righteousness were through the Law" then the death of the Lord was without purpose - this would be unacceptable to consider!

Legalism focuses (ultimately) on the goodness of man over the goodness of God

- c. Paul is on the offensive here - it is not a casual stance to include the Law and it being “kept” to earn (to any degree) saving righteousness - such a stance (and its variants) “nullifies” the vicarious death of Christ
- d. “...if anybody insists that justification is by works, and that he can earn his salvation by his own efforts, he is undermining the foundations of the Christian religion. He is nullifying the grace of God... in effect it is to deny both the nature of God and the mission of Christ. It is to refuse to let God be gracious.” Stott

VI. The Righteous Will Live By Faith in Jesus Christ Crucified - 3:1-29

A. The absurdity of looking to the Law for justification or even to “perfect” it by works of the Law - vs. 1-5

1. The shock of the reality that the Galatian Christians were reconsidering justification by faith alone on Christ’s work is emotionally and bluntly expressed in verse 1 in the form of a question - vs. 1

Paul begins this sentence with “O” clearly indication an exclamation, stressing the intensity of his shock that they could have seriously considered such a thought

- a. J. B. Philips’ translation of verse one begins with, “O you dear idiots of Galatia, who saw Jesus Christ the crucified so plainly, who has been casting a spell over you?”
- b. The word translated as “foolish” is “ἀνόητοι” describing thoughtlessness, as if not having actually thought through a decision or conclusion made
- c. In expressing his astonishment Paul also uses the word “bewitched” (βασκαίνω, deceit through enchantment, trickery) as if the only way Paul could imagine they had strayed from the Truth was by means of some sort of sorcery, for they had (before) their eyes, so clearly Jesus Christ crucified - this was obvious to them and undeniable, yet what purpose then could it really have had if it was not fully the answer?
- d. There is a sense in how error (even blatant error) wins converts or at least serious consideration by a type of mesmerizing, transfixing its victims on other seemingly “viable” considerations, that when compared to the basics of the Gospel they appeal more to emotional and fantastic areas of our lives (such as our pride, emotions, excitement)
- e. After all, Christ was “publicly portrayed” as in this is known by all who have heard the Gospel and know it as an obvious point (it cannot be casually overlooked or deemphasized)
- f. The idea/concept of self-determinism is on the rise again and has an allurements to many since it is one of many aides in the attempt to not trust (believe) the grace of God alone

As Paul will go on to clarify, it did not logically/reasonably fit with what they had clearly learned, truly believed and even experienced

So, how could you, in the face of a Crucified Christ lay claim to any “good” work to lend to your own salvation?

2. Is it by the Spirit or the flesh (or a combination of both) that one is “perfected”? - vs. 2-3

This is supposed to have a clear answer, yet to this day there are many who point to the Gospel for salvation and in experience, and in their teaching point to keeping the works of the Law to receive (and keep) the Spirit

- a. Paul now in verse 2 asks a source question, one that should have an obvious answer (and so be rhetorical) to illustrate the absurdity - Paul puts it as if he now needs to learn something from them since he is confused - their receiving the Spirit (the Holy Spirit), was this by means of the “works of the Law” (by their consistency in keeping the Law) or was it from simply (singularly) “hearing with faith”?
- b. Note Paul’s distinct contrast between the “works of the Law” and “the hearing with/from faith” - one has intentional effort and the other is a result outside one’s self - the wording is “ἡ ἐξ ἀκοῆς πίστεως” (or from/by hearing of faith) with the distinction being “of faith” - it was more than just hearing, it was hearing with belief - there was something to the Gospel that produced faith/trust and the result being the receiving of the Spirit
- c. Paul, continuing in a questioning mode, asks (as with incredulity), as to whether they could truly be so thoughtless, mindless and ignorant as to think or allow the idea that, what was “begun by the Spirit” could somehow then be “perfected” (ἐπιτελέω brought to completion, finish) by means of the flesh (the “flesh” being the means of reaching the destination) - yet, is this ideology not at the heart of so many “Christian” institutions that place the “finishing” of salvation (in varying levels) on our efforts in and for righteousness? - see I Thes. 2:13
- d. Practical experience of handling this wrong demonstrates the futility of such an idea - there have been countless that have striven to remain righteous (enough) to be saved and stay saved, yet have been led either to a degree of self-righteousness, a mutual blindness to the remaining weaknesses of the flesh, and/or an overwhelming struggle with doubt because they seek righteous growth and sin’s lessening hold on them (by means of their efforts) and cannot actually trust that God is/will do this
- e. “The law never bringeth the Holy Ghost, but only teacheth what we ought to do: therefore it justifieth not. But the Gospel bringeth the Holy Ghost because it teacheth what we ought to receive... To put righteousness in the law is nothing else but to fight against the Gospel.”

Hearing the Gospel (with understanding) is key - note Rom. 10:5-17 - there is hearing, the heart believes the result being “righteousness”

Paul uses what is to be an obvious indicator of their standing before God by the receiving of the Spirit and His “powerful works” (“miracles” in verse 5)

A belief that I can work to a degree of righteousness of my own efforts not only produces a wrong object of faith, but oddly increases sin’s power (practically) over us - see Rom. 7:7-11

Luther

3. Has all that God worked in and among you turned out to be useless? - vs. 4-5

Our actions and apparent/ outward responses can indicate either the insincere belief on a point or that the point itself was one of error

It is very saddening to see when this happens to an individual or a group who become more swayed by their experiences, their pursuit of temporal safety and comfort than they are the plain facts of the Gospel

Compare this with Titus 3:3-9 - note also Rom. 11:1-7

- a. When reconsidering this point of justification by faith (consciously or unconsciously), they would need to consider all that they had been brought through as to whether it was without purpose/meaning and even that it might have been unsuccessful
- b. For instance, had they experienced and endured so much, “so many things” in vain (εἰκῆ without a cause (legitimate) and without genuine success, and so futile)? - the magnitude of what they were considering was more substantial than they likely calculated
- c. They had apparently suffered much and that likely because of the religious opposition that was now seeking to turn them away from the actual Gospel - Paul still is holding out hope seen in his response “if indeed it was in vain”
- d. They had seen the powerful working of the Spirit among them and within them (even the miraculous) - considering this, was it “provided” by means of their keeping the Law of Moses or did it all come as a result of simply “hearing with faith”? - God gave them the Spirit (the external signs and the internal witness) by means of Paul, and did Paul teach them to keep the Law or just to trust the work of Christ?
- e. The powerful working of God’s Spirit did not come about because of the good works and law-keeping they were doing, but because they had their trust in God’s work not theirs - the same still holds true, for we do not seek “miracles” by means of our good deeds but by trusting (having heard/listened to His work with ears/minds/hearts of faith)

B. Those who are “of faith” are the “sons of Abraham... the believer” and are the ones “blessed” - vs. 6-14

1. Faith/belief is the true righteousness and is the means to being “blessed” - vs. 6-9

This was a common threat to not only the Gospel message being adulterated, but, seeing the Galatians’ struggle, is also a threat to ongoing focus, which if distracted or blinded, poses falling hazards

This references Gen 15:6, and such a “righteousness” was that of being right with God - it is often noted it was not so much the act of believing as it was the object of his faith that was credited as righteousness - everyone believes something, just a few believe God

Just as now we, as the Galatians, are to believe God regarding the saving, redemptive work of Christ, justifying us by it because of His grace... and that alone - to trust another is to adulterate

Paul details this in Rom. 4:1-25 - his credited righteousness was before circumcision (before the Law)

- a. More than just a means to salvation, faith (trusting God in what He said, revealed in His Word) is to be our core (main) focus throughout life - we are to always be trusting and so entrusting all to Him and so actively obedient - this is a good summation of our life and purpose - the opposite (religiously) of this is what the Galatians were struggling with, because there is a natural inclination to self-trust founded mostly in a “self-read” of our own perception, feelings and rationale of what is what and how things ought to be
- b. Abraham is a prime example (and evidence) of this - when told the promise from God, and that part of this fulfillment would involve all the nations of the world being “blessed” Abraham believed Him (took Him at His word and did what he was told to do and went where he was told to go) - and the result of this was “reckoned righteousness”
- c. This “reckoned righteousness” is an accounting term which calculates the actual value of something, and in this case it was true righteousness before God, more than anything else that could be done - this was the emphasized point of Abraham’s life - we must realize that his faith was more than just a one time event; it characterized his life and was evidenced in his ongoing submissive posture in obedience, regardless the circumstances
- d. How did Abraham “get right” with God? He believed Him and this was “ἐλογίσθη” (accounted to him not as if just ceremonially but actually) and this was how Abraham was justified (made righteous before God)
- e. Paul then, using an imperative, tells them to “know” (realize, understand) what true sonship is before God - it is more than blood and DNA (as we also saw in Rom. 11), but is more based on the characteristic (the presence) of faith, true faith - this would be a profound blow to those who put their faith in their physical relationship to Abraham and to Jacob/Israel
- f. The key to understand is the emphasis on being sons of the Promise, which Abraham was focused on - Abraham was justified by faith and not by works and so then also are his “sons” (spiritual offspring) - all other “faiths” focused on works for righteousness are of a different “father” (including Judaism)
- g. To be a “son” (child) is to be like the father (parent), taking after the natural traits and characteristics of their parent(s) - Abraham was a believer, taking God at His word and trusting Him, and so are his true children (spiritual) - either natural Jew or Gentile can be a true child of Abraham in this sense (the fullest sense)
- h. The “Scripture” is personified here as one foreseeing (realizing ahead of time and so focused on this purpose/path) that even the Gentiles would be justified and that by faith - the “good news” was proclaimed to Abraham back then when he was promised that in him all nations would be blessed

Gen. 12:3, 18:18, 22:18

Literally, the last words of verse 9 are “τῶ πιστῶ Ἀβραάμ” (the believing Abraham)

Some would argue that Paul is showing a merciless response to the Law when there were the sacrificial laws to deal with sins - but these forget what those sacrifices pointed to (represented) - Jesus taking the curse for us and the faith that this would remove the curse - the sacrifices themselves demonstrated there could be no justification by keeping the Law, and in the sacrificial system, it pointed to Christ

As being our means to true life/living, the Lord defines our priorities and purpose

As to salvation, we look to what Jesus did and accomplished (once for all) and from then on, are motivated (by the new life/nature applied) to live by faith - the Law being more a part of our heart, a result of the inner change in our nature

This word for redeemed was used to describe of purchasing something from another owner at the marketplace - it could be used of purchasing a slave out from under one master/owner to another - see also Gal. 4:5

See also in Rom. 10:1-11 the progression of thought with how Israel mistook/misused the Law as a means to righteousness and yet the only means is by faith, and that of the heart (the actual person) which results in the confession of such out of the mouth

Note that this was the “promise of the Spirit” tying it back to 3:2

Every aspect of God’s holy Law was met and kept in Christ and the promise received in faith/trust in this on our behalf - we now work from this not for this!

- i. This blessing is synonymous with justification here in this context; as with Abraham, people from all nations would believe and would be justified in that belief (along with Abraham) - this was reiterated in texts such as Acts 15:14-18 - the qualifier is not ethnicity, nor is it consistency in keeping the Law or any set of religious standards, but “those who are of faith”
2. The contrast of those “of the works of the Law” versus those redeemed in/by Christ by faith - vs. 10-14
 - a. This may seem like a drastic and even odd way to begin this next concept/comparison, but Paul is dealing with cause, means and results as it relates to actual justification - the first grouping are those under a curse, which is rarely where one goes when first considering the Law of Moses, but when it is seen in its part in salvation, this is where it must lead (as a result) for it was never intended to justify, but to present the incriminating standard
 - b. Paul references part of Deut. 27:26 (quoting from the LXX) where laws are declared and the curses pronounced for not abiding by them “to perform them” - to avoid being cursed is to do them... all... all the time (which none but Jesus did)
 - c. The failures to keep the Laws were constant reminders of their need for a resolution which was intended to keep them focused on sins being paid for, because sins were continuous as the Law kept pointing out - the Law constantly reminding them of their sin
 - d. So, Paul explains that no one is (or can be) justified by the Law, is “δῆλος” (fully clear, so is certain) - because of what was identified in Habakkuk 2:4, that the “righteous will live by faith” and this “living” is true living, ongoing and how such life is to be had - the “righteous” (justified) do not live by means of the Law, but as Paul made clear in 2:20, it is lived by faith in the Son of God - so it is not “lawless” in the sense of no standard, for the Lord is the means and standard of life - which is why we live by and for Him
 - e. It is an overriding concept/fact that those truly “righteous” live by faith - the antithesis (religious) is to live by some form or degree of effort, claiming faith yet a “faith” that is conceptual not actual - no doubt many claim to trust the work of Christ yet believe they must incorporate the Law (or parts of it) to be justified (their part in it)
 - f. Plainly stated, “...the Law is not of faith...” (vs. 12) - the Law is focused on performance and not reliance (on another for performance of it) - “It promises no forgiveness to believing, but requires obedience. It is not, What do you believe? but, What have you done?” Adam Clark
 - g. Quoting Lev. 18:5, Paul stresses that those he who “practices them” (having done them, as in this was the route followed to righteousness) will live by them (also in the sense, they must live by them, all of them, all the time)
 - h. So then, what is to be done, realizing no one can truly, fully, always keep the Law and so will be held accountable to be cursed (since such sought this path to justification over dependence/trust in the promise)? How? “Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law...” - the word for “redeemed” is such a powerful word! It is “ἐξαγοράζω” describing the payment of a ransom, to buy someone out from under the power of another, and here out from under the rightful condemnation (curse) of the Law
 - i. How was such a purchase made? How was the necessary, rightful curse of the Law paid? It required death as the result of Laws broken and Laws not kept - Jesus Himself became “a curse for us”, taking on Himself our sin, and so our penalty, paying it in full - at His crucifixion He was hanged on a tree (as one who was cursed, seen in Deut. 21:23) - It was prophesied as such in Isa. 53:5-6 and in the sacrificial system overall - Paul stressed the same point in a different way in II Cor. 5:21
 - j. Again, it must be stressed that we must not ever look upon any aspect of our righteousness in keeping God’s Law as lending anything to our salvation! It is ALL on Christ and His redemptive work, which will then result in righteous living
 - k. Tying it all back to the promise to Abraham again (vs. 14), the promised blessing to Abraham, that all the nations would be blessed through him (and that not just his physical progeny leading to Christ, but by his example of righteousness through faith, his spiritual progeny), Paul states it clearly that it was all accomplished “in Christ”
 - l. The purpose was the result then being our receiving of this promise, not by accomplishing/keeping the Law, but through faith - Jesus not only taking on the curse for us (the negative), but gives to our account His righteousness (keeping of the Law) (the positive)

C. Why the Law then? - vs. 15-22

1. It would seem likely, that by this point in Paul's arguments that some would ask the obvious question as to why then did God give the Law... what was its purpose? - vs. 15-18

There may be circumstances where covenants/wills/agreements/promises between people are changed, but this was used to demonstrate as best as possible a covenant that was set in stone, unalterable

"Seed" can refer to multiple offspring yet Paul here is narrowing it down to Christ which is the purpose of this seemingly odd wording

The most narrow point of the "seed" would be Christ for He was the fulfillment of how the promise of blessing for all nations would be (not just the Jews or not even just any of the physical descendants of Abraham) and as has already been pointed out, there was to be a spiritual progeny... of faith and so imputed righteousness

Realizing that our eternal souls depend on the answer, we should desire to see these details worked out so the conclusions are not speculative

So many struggle with the actual Gospel and the actual answer of justification by faith/grace in Christ alone because it seems too simplistic (as though adding complexity and personal participation is somehow necessary to be believable)

All parties being bound to keeping a covenant would pass between the sacrificed pieces of the animals and here God is pictured as going between them Himself, alone

Simply put, we are "saved" by trusting the Lord, His word, His work, His promise - this has been and always will be the case

The case against justification by the Law is only growing and these upcoming verses will help see past the self-righteous blinders we often construct for ourselves

- a. Paul begins this section by pointing out that he was about to use a human relationship (formal agreement) illustration to help make the point - similar to what the writer of Heb. 9:15-17 did (using a will as an example and playing off of a death occurring as well as blood being used in ratifying it), here Paul uses a "covenant" (also a will, a formal (legal) agreement that has been finalized and activated)
- b. Such a legal, binding document cannot be changed or "set aside" - this is the picture that Paul will build upon in illustrating the differences/purposes in the Promise and Law
- c. The order of the two (Promise and Law) then plays an important role in understanding each
- d. The promises were "spoken" to Abraham and to his "seed" - Paul begins to take the illustration to the next stage; naming the benefactors - yet the "seed" here was more narrow than just all the descendants of Abraham for it was only through Isaac (see Rom. 9:7-8), Isaac being the line of promise specifically - this lends clarity to why Paul points out the singular "seed" versus "seeds" even though there are numerous complaints as to the legitimacy of such a usage in several commentaries and other resources
- e. Abraham was unique from most and can explain the possible reference to "seeds," because there were definite distinctions between his children (seed) (in particular between Isaac and Ishmael) and only one line would contain/produce the fulfillment of this promise in Christ
- f. So we already have a necessary distinction being pointed out that the "seed" of Abraham had a narrower perspective than would have normally been considered and needs to be defined to as to know who these actual benefactors of the promise are
- g. So now that we have the promise spelled out and the beneficiaries, how does the covenant of the Law fit into all of this? One thing is for certain (Paul, "Here's what I'm saying), the Law came 430 years after this promise (the activated, formalized covenant), so there is no way the Law can be looked upon as "invalidating" (ἀκυρώ - annul, make something of no authority and so not binding) the promise (the covenant previously "ratified by God") - this is a profound and necessary point to "box-in" the discussion needed to understand then the purpose of the Law - note also Heb. 6:13-20
- h. This is another significant text indicating salvation by faith before the Law, and so salvation by faith (alone) always (not just under a time considered "grace", for it was always by God's grace also) - the confusion on these points and the actual purpose of the Law has caused conflicting perspectives and beliefs regarding salvation, all being treated as if equal because of the reasonings put behind it (and not simple faith/trust in the promise itself)
- i. So, in making a case of what the Law was not, Paul makes it clear that there cannot be a combination of the Law and Grace, for if the inheritance (obtaining it) is by means of the Law, then it cannot be by means of the promise - this is clearly stated in Rom. 4:13-25 - we must also notice the significant visual in the Genesis 15:1-17 account of the promise reiterated, especially when Abraham sees "a smoking fire pot and a flaming torch passed between these pieces" demonstrating a covenant to be fulfilled by God's doing alone
- j. The purpose for these few verses leading up to the question, "Why the Law then?" is to settle that what was fulfilled in Christ was the ultimate fulfillment of the blessing in Abraham and that was by means of a promise without a Law for Abraham to keep to get it (and his descendants) - see also I Cor. 2:12-13 which lets us know such an understanding is by means of God's Spirit

2. The Scripture (by means of the Law) boxed us all in under sin, pointing to faith in the promise - vs. 19-22

- a. The question as to the purpose of the Law is a good and understandable question and now is ready to be handled, reverently and accurately - as he asks (as if for an objector to this whole line of thought in verse 21), does it not then mean the Law is contrary (against, opposed to or even contradictory to) the promise?
- b. The Law was given "because of transgressions" (παράβασις, as crossing of a line/standard, so active law-breaking) - it was brought in 430 years after the promise to show the sinfulness of sin, and is so doing point away from itself to the promise in Christ

Paul also stressed that if not for the Law he would not have truly know sin (especially that of lust/covetousness)

So no human or angelic go-between is needed and no one is needed to negotiate terms/conditions - it is a promise, not a contract

The Law was not an addendum to the promise, but had a very separate role in showing sinners as sinners - it was to be seen as absurd that the Law was intended to save/justify

The "promise" would be fulfilled in Jesus Christ and God was in Him doing this - see II Cor. 5:17-19 (new life, real life, "new creations")

The Law did not create sin but it identified it for what it is/was - the knowledge of it stirred up the sin in the hearers, not wanting (instinctively) to be imprisoned/boxed-in

As we're about to discuss, we become "sons" and sons are no longer under the teacher, though the conclusion to this is not that they are now "free" to do wrong, but responsible to be sons

Though "custody" and "imprisoned" are not usually positive terms, here they are as in protective shielding from the outside world

The role of this guardian was to prepare the boy for maturity, to be grown-up and to handle the responsibilities with it - they were to guide them to be responsible, moral, disciplined men

The goal of such a guide of the youth was to result, not in an independent adult now free from restrictions of life, but now freed from childhood restrictions to take on the adult responsibilities of life

- c. Paul taught the same point also in Rom. 5:20-21 where he wrote to clarify that the Law was brought "...so that the transgression would increase..." (that it would be magnified to show sin (literally "side slips") for what they (sin) really is) leading to eternal life in Christ
- d. It would fulfill this role, ever pointing to the solution to all these identified sins (of commission and omission) until "the seed would come" regarding this promise (fulfilling it), that being the Messiah, the Christ
- e. Paul also points out another distinction between the Law and the Promise - the law came to them by means of intermediaries (angels, Moses, the people of Israel (to do their part)), yet there is no mediator/intermediary of the Promise, because the promise rests solely on God performing/fulfilling it all - it is God's "agreement" within Himself
- f. It is helpful to look back to the time when the Law was first given, the people's first response and then their final response after seeing/hearing the Law so powerfully given - we see in Exodus 24:1-18 and then Deut. 5:22-27, at first they could "see" God's glory and presence and hear Him, both terrifying them (for fear of their lives), so they requested Moses be the mediator - this was quite a contrast to the setting of the promise to Abraham
- g. So, should one then reach the conclusion that the Law is "contrary" to the Promise (was it "against" the promises?) - the answer, "μη γένοιτο" (no, never come into being, never let it happen), for it serves many purposes, but, as he goes on to point out, the purpose of making one righteous was not (never) one of them - if any of these laws was able to "impart life" then, yes, righteousness (which is the means to life) would have been by the Law
- h. One of the core purposes of the Law was to imprison (confine us/shut us all in) and so corner us in our sin (leaving us no possible excuse or deniability (as if any would/could claim as being uninformed) - again, the sacrificial laws existed as if another finger pointing to their ongoing failures/guilt and the need for it to be dealt with by innocent blood
- i. Having no option left for being saved, the Law is used to direct to Jesus Christ in faith (versus works) so that the promise might be given to those believing - so the Law was not/is not contrary to the Promise... it is complementary in how it destroys all other options

D. The Law, a teacher/tutor leading to Christ, resulting in sonship, and then true descendants of Abraham - vs. 23-29

1. Paul now illustrates the place of the Law, not as a savior, but a guide/schoolmaster - vs. 23-24

- a. What we've just covered and are about to focus on should make it so clear (even simply clear) that the Law of Moses has no part in saving us - it ought to be obeyed (the morals, defined rights/wrongs) but these never seen as saving us (as if our obedience or lack of transgressions/disobediences leading to saving us or keeping us saved)
- b. "Before the faith came", (the faith in Christ and so justified (made righteous)), Paul describes their state as being "kept in custody under the Law" - this is not a condemning "custody" but more in line with a protective custody, keeping them distinct from all other peoples/nations and so from all other "faiths" - they were "shut up to the faith" until the faith was manifested/revealed (shown for what the full object of the faith was in Christ and all He accomplished) - this righteousness (by faith) was "witnessed/testified to by the Law and the prophets" (Rom. 3:21), but not "revealed" until Christ
- c. So the Law was designed not to "save" (justify), but to keep them (the Jews) aware of sin and their sin, and the need for it to be dealt with in the sacrificial system, which included in itself an indicator (a pointer) to the promise fulfilled (and that being Christ)
- d. Not only did Paul compare the Law to a guard, but he goes on to liken it (as it was used) to a guardian (παιδαγωγός- literally a "leader of boys" not necessarily just to train, but to make sure they were schooled and directed in their behavior, protected from bad influences) - in this capacity, it was to lead them to Christ, with the purpose to be justified in Him - those seeking justification by the Law were clinging to this guide/guardian as the answer, versus the answer the guardian was leading them to
- e. It would be easy to interpret these verses as the personal experience of all who come to Christ, but this is not its intent - Paul is describing how the Jews were brought to this point, and specifically the faith itself - so, one need not be "under the Law" first to then come to Christ by it, though the sense of sin/guilt are part of the practical process used in awakening us to a need for a savior

2. Now “sons of God” through the faith - the “guardian” has finished - vs. 25-26

These truths of what it means to be a child/son of God ought to inspire us in our freedom as one mature in Him (versus the immature, constantly needing the ever-present oversight to keep us in line)

So, as Paul continues to build upon, these (and we) are not to seek out what was meant to bring Israel to the fulfilled promise in Christ as though it is still the means/answer over **the** answer Himself

Paul uses baptism also in Rom. 6:1-11 when dealing with why someone in Christ does not continue in sin - there and in our text here, it pictures our new identity

It was common to wait to see some of these evidences of true baptism into Christ before water baptism was performed

From God’s standpoint we are made “in Christ” and from ours we have “put Him on” as if a new uniform of identity - my life is Christ in me, I am His, I am here for His purposes not mine (or my purpose is now the learning of and pursuit of His)

There is then no reason any of us should shun any responsibility of/from Him, for to do so is not of faith (trusting a temporal evaluation of a work versus its eternal significance in/for Christ)

Such distinctions may seem unnecessary, but we hold to them because of a literal/normal handling of all the promises to the nation of Israel, and in seeking to avoid a spiritualization of texts not interpreted elsewhere in Scripture as such

- a. There is a very true sense in which there are those who remain under the Law, and are truly imprisoned by it, and will ultimately be condemned by it for failure to meet all its demands - this is why it so very important for these Galatians to truly come to the faith, in faith and so be in Christ versus under/in the Law
- b. With the coming of the faith (the article is in the Greek), we (now including the Gentiles also) are no longer under the strict disciplinarian
- c. For, Paul declares, “you are all sons of God” and this “sons” being very deliberate (versus the words that could have been used for children/infants or servants/slaves), and this made-so “through faith” (in the Promise versus the works of the Law) so as to be “in Christ Jesus” - as “sons” are now in the family with its privileges, honors, securities and responsibilities (to live as what/who we truly/actually are now)

3. Because of faith, we are who and what we are predominately as “in Christ” - vs. 27-29

- a. “All of you” that were “baptized in Christ” - this “baptism” is more than water baptism, since no one is saved by being baptized (for many who have been baptized are not in Christ) - water baptism is meant to picture outwardly of what has taken place inwardly
- b. Paul also uses the reality of being “in Christ” in Php. 3:7-11, and there as having thrown away his former spiritual credentials to be “found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law” and the result being a “knowing Him”
- c. In faith, by faith one is made to be in Christ, and here it is described as putting Him on, He being our identity before God (for no one could ever be “in the Law” in such a way as to be pure, perfect and justified) - compare to Col. 3:1-14 and Eph. 2:8-10
- d. “To put on Christ” is to become, as it were, one person with Christ. They are invested, as it were, with his merits and rights. They are treated as if they had done what he did, and had deserved what he deserved. They are clothed with his righteousness, and in consequence of this they are animated by his spirit - the mind that was in him is in them. To use the apostle’s own language, they do not so properly “live,” as “Christ lives in them.” John Brown
- e. In Christ, another result being the lack of earthly, temporal distinctions - we are all equal in Him (none above another in any way) - this does not mean that we are no longer male/female, Jew/Greek and so on, for these distinctions remain, but in Christ, these earthly distinctions lend nothing to our justification - note I Cor. 12:12-13
- f. Ranking or privilege are no longer a part of our identity and work - no matter what our earthly calling, we are all one in Christ, so there need not ever be a type of “jockeying for position” amongst us, for each of us is equal in Him, and our callings/responsibilities are important/significant in that truth, not in earthly comparisons or distinctions
- g. Pulling this section all together, he shows the significance of the connection now with verses 7 & 16 - if we “belong to Christ” and we are in Him, since He is the promised “seed” we then are also the “seed of Abraham” even if a Gentile - see also Rom. 4:13-18
- h. This “promise” is focused on the justification by faith (faith counted as righteousness), and so receiving the fulfillment in Christ - this is not a text to use to say all believers will inherit the land of Israel specifically, for those promises were to ethnic Israel, fulfilling God’s earthly promises to them - the promise we seek is justification (made righteous)
- i. So why would these Galatians seek to go backward? In light of the truth, what could possibly be the appeal of returning to the Law for salvation/justification, unless the issue was a lack of faith, leading to the default of religions being a works-based “salvation”
- j. Looking to balance these ideas practically, John Stott wrote, “We cannot come to Christ to be justified until we have first been to Moses to be condemned. But once we have gone to Moses, and acknowledged our sin, guilt and condemnation we must not stay there. We must let Moses send us to Christ.”

VII. Redeemed Out From The Law Receiving the “Adoption of Sons” - 4:1-20

- A. Paul continues to build on these pictures to make the point clearer regarding the relationship to the Law - vs. 1-3
 1. Being an heir to everything, yet being an infant supervised until an appointed time - vs. 1-2
 - a. Paul compares being under the guardianship of the Law to an heir waiting for and being prepared for full ownership

As mentioned already, these teachers and managers were there to prepare and protect the heir - the heir was actually above them in rank/importance but these were in service to the Father

We may sense the childlike tendency still present to act irresponsibly, but we do not look to counter it with a clinging more to Law than to Grace

Those that have reached adulthood and yet must be confronted by the law (of man) demonstrate an immaturity and a deficiency in their upbringing

If we, as adults, still only seek out the basics, we will not progress/grow/mature

Compare to Col. 2:6-23

The key, as it is throughout this epistle, is the focus on God's work for us in Christ and not the self-effort of using the Law for what it was never intended to do - it's the difference between the faith of a son versus that of a "slave"

God knowing that all that was required to demonstrate the sinfulness and inability of man had been accomplished, set in motion the work of salvation by grace

This was the carefully/perfectly planned work of the Godhead demanding we take great care/caution in following it and trusting it precisely also

The term "adoption" here also carries with the actuality of all the rights to sonship being conferred

- b. Paul does not belittle the Law of God here, but is simply comparing what once was (under the Law) to what is had now - being under the Law as they were, was so because they were to be heirs of the greatest possible inheritance, yet they were severely restricted until the time appointed by the Father (the all-knowing father)
- c. The general point in this illustration is that the Law had its purpose under the guidance of the Father to bring "us" to a point to receive, having been prepared, the inheritance - so why would there be an inclination to return to it as though it was still "over" us?
- d. Some would object to this description as though it would then be irresponsible to not see ourselves as under the authority of the Law, but this discounts (in a lack of faith) the actual effectiveness of God (the Father) having actually prepared us for this time in Christ (as explained in verse 4)

2. We WERE once infants/children under the strict authoritative control of "elemental things" - vs. 3

- a. It has always been generally true that we all must be strictly guided through our childhood to reach adulthood, which then brings with it a freedom (though with responsibility)
- b. The word for "elemental" is "στοιχεία" describing the "basics" to life (as in learning the "ABCs" to learn to read and communicate) - this is true to "the world" (τοῦ κόσμου- "of the world/order) - Paul references these again in verse 9 as "weak and worthless" - they were not so when we were children but now, as adults, these cannot bring us success and are without value if we see ourselves as still in need of the governance of our childhood lessons/rules to rule over us still - we are now to have been freed to live as grow-ups!

B. Living as a "son" (an heir of God's (the Father) inheritance) not as a "slave" - vs. 4-7

1. Live in light of the reality of your actual standing/position in/by Christ - vs. 4-6

- a. Paul is still making the case for the absurdity of living as if under the Law, which then disregards/downplays what was purchased (and why) in the work of Christ - it might be that some (as in natural life) are afraid to face the responsibilities that come with adulthood and want to remain as children, finding security and even pride in how well they see themselves as performing within the framework intended for the immature
- b. In response to Paul's reference in verse 2 to the "date set by the father," he clarifies that "the fullness of the time came" - how was this transition accomplished? It was not like the "elemental things of the world" in that God accomplished all the Law, fulfilling all the maturing requirements in Christ on our behalf by being "born of a woman" and that "under the Law" - Paul, also playing off the word "bondage" (slavery) in verse 3, uses the word "redeem"
- c. The time needed was fulfilled (as known by God, omniscient) and so God sent the Son - there could be endless speculation in trying to determine why this was the precise time for the coming of Christ into the world to fulfill this redemptive work, but even this is accepted in faith - see Rom. 5:6 in God's response to "when we were still helpless/weak"
- d. We must note the precise wording and the theological significance of these words - God (the Father) sent "His Son" (making it clear, as the Son of God, He had the same nature of His Father (even as/though a man also)) so He was truly "God incarnate" (fully God, fully man, so neither "nature" compromised in this work) - He was "born of a woman" pointing also to the miraculous birth (as the "seed of the woman in Gen. 3:15 and so born of a virgin)
- e. His being born/made of a woman after His being sent reiterates His preexistence - His being "the Word" of John 1, and at the beginning (creation) He already "was"
- f. He was also born/made "under the Law" (as one subject to the same Law being discussed here in Galatians) - in all this, His being sent from God, born into humanity as a man and that under the Law in order to redeem those (people) under the same Law
- g. This "redeeming" (purchasing as a ransom, paying the price of a penalty to free someone) was accomplished by Jesus' sacrificial work (Gal. 3:13) - yet it was even more than just a ransom/rescue from rightful judgment/punishment, it was also to win for us the "adoption as sons" - Jesus was a "natural" son, winning for us this adoption
- h. Note the use of the word "receive" versus "earn" - He did not come to do His part while we do ours, He came to do it all, to win it all for us and the result being we "receive" (here it is "ἀπολαμβάνω" describing receiving what is due, only in this context it is we receiving what was due because of Christ)

The uses of two words for "Father" here aren't to give us two titles/names for God as much as they represent that whether we be Jew or Gentile, we call Him our Father because of Christ and we now having full rights as a son

It is to be as personal a relationship as it was for Jesus

Compare this to Rom. 8:12-30 where the same concepts are used and expounded upon further

At least the Jews/Israel followed the Law and observances of the true God, all to lead them to the answer (the seed of the promise in Christ)

There is a lure to a formalism, religiosity and ceremonialism in all faiths- Christianity apparently did not have enough of these "elements of the world" for many desiring more the symbolism over substance

There is no person alive that is not a slave to something- the Godless are slaves to ideas, passions, addictions, organizations and philosophies and are bound to live by them

The only connection fictional "gods" had with reality was the person(s) who made them up (who were themselves subject to their own limited, finite nature)

see Eph. 4:17-25

The word for "know" in verse 8 is "εἰδότεç" describing more an awareness of something but not actually knowing, personally - there is an inner/instinctive awareness of God though - Rom. 1:19 - though in Romans this is the relational "know" so they know someone internally and seek to suppress it

- i. The benefits keep coming! Because of the fullness of time and God sending His son, born/made of (out of) a woman (so now the God-Man), come to represent us under the Law perfectly/completely and in doing so, redeems us (buys us out/purchases for us) full sonship just as He has, and the same Spirit (the "Spirit of His Son" the Holy Spirit) is sent into our hearts (into the core of our being (who/what we now truly are) crying out within us "Abba! Father!") - we now, as He calls the Father, can call Him "Father" (firsthand)
 - j. This is the most important relationship we have! This ought to tower in importance above all other relationships, and when known for what it truly is, no other relationship can compete
2. Therefore, because of all of this, such are no longer as slaves (versus sons) - vs. 7
- a. As full-grown heirs (having "come of age" in/by Christ in faith) we do not approach the inheritance as something to work for but to work with - we are not in any way earning the inheritance but, now, utilizing/using it - note I Cor. 3:18-23
 - b. As now "a son" we take on the family name, reputation, work and honor and live based on it- an adopted son seeks to take on the characteristics of the father/family
 - c. We should also be careful to remember the inheritance is from/of the father and is to be treated as such (it comes with responsibility/obligation to be handled maturely)

C. Why return to "weak and worthless" things and slavery? - vs. 8-11

1. A summary of what is about to be covered will help keep the distinctions and similarities with what has just been dealt with is needed:

- a. The Jews had been as slaves (children of the inheritance waiting to full sonship) - the Galatians, the majority likely Gentile were truly slaves to their "gods" though these were false, so there was no future hope for any elevation in status (or hope)
- b. The religious rituals of the heathen were varied, but nonetheless were rituals/observances even as we still see in our day with the ever-increasing "holiday" additions of humanistic celebrations of Godless people, ideas and practices
- c. Paul now confronts them with the reality of what they were considering returning to - having left heathenism and coming to grace in Christ, would they now leave it to return to a religious order (ceremonies and various practices again) that had run its rightful course?

2. What they were - vs. 8

- a. In contrast to God's path to maturity of Israel, these Gentiles in the Galatian churches previously were slaves to "τοῖς φύσει μὴ οὖσιν θεοῖς" (those by nature not being gods) - this was before they would "know God" (the God, the Lord)
- b. We must understand that just because something is called "freedom" does not make it freedom (in the sense it is often presented) - we are all worshipful creatures and will be unable to "free" ourselves from that core aspect of our nature
- c. Any other so-called "gods" are "by nature" (the reality of what they are made-up of) "no gods" - they are not deities, creators, nor existing of themselves - it does not mean these were not real, but they were not and could not, because of their nature, truly be "gods" - and there were other "gods" that had no reality to them at all and (fictional/mythology) that had only the power of the belief in them by so many
- d. To these the Galatians once were slaves - "slaves" may seem an extreme word until we observe so many resisting the true God (for all other options), claiming they are looking for what they "want" (even more interesting when we consider the noun form of the word indicating a need (they are enslaved to temporal "needs" and must obey whatever seemed to best meet them at the time))

3. Why "turn back!?" - vs. 9-11

- a. In strongest contrast to the "no-gods" Paul presses the point of their having to come to "know" God (the God), and this knowing being relational (as with persons coming to know another individual, not of a person with a thing)
- b. This is reinforced with the use of "γινώσκω" (to know experientially) used again relationally, only here with the revealing why they came to "know" God... because it was the direct response of "being known" by God (He being the cause of the knowing/relationship)
- c. Paul, as if exasperated, asks in light of coming to know the true God of the universe, that they could even begin to consider turning back to what is "weak and worthless"

See John 4:21-24 where Jesus makes it clear what true worship consists of - it is not bound to the physical, to locations and practices

Yet many spend much of their lives changing just to change

This is often what is meant when distinguishing between faith and "religion." Religion is to be the outworking of faith, but if the faith is non-existent or illegitimate, it is just weak and poverty-stricken works

Even in what is called "worship" (singing) these days is to be one of mutual ministry- Eph. 5:19, Col. 3:16

It's not so much the religious practices as much as it is the reason - there will be differences in our practices as believers, but none of our practices are to ever be looked upon as saving us or lending to our salvation... ever!

Paul was motivated by seeking to ensure his working was not "in vain" as in Gal. 2:2, Php. 2:12-16, I Thes. 3:5

- d. These were "weak and worthless" (without sufficient strength and beggarly (poverty stricken)) principles of the world (either under the Law or as in the practice of heathenism, though neither is the focus as much as the tangible, visible practices that are tied to them... and so "tie" (bind) their followers) - they are unable to meet the real need
- e. They were about to trade their old "στοιχείον" (ABCs, and so fundamentals upon which the rest is built) of paganism for those of Judaism- to move away from one error or ineffective solution to another error or ineffective solution is nonsensical
- f. This would be an enslavement all over again - the observance of "days, months, seasons and years" had a legitimate place under the Law before Christ, but now that He has come and fulfilled the Promise, these are old and abrogated (repealed/abolished) - they are unable to bring the justification that is found only in Christ
- g. The observing of days and special seasons is not wrong, but their reason for doing it (religiously) was the core issue - if a "sabbath" is observed, it should be asked "why?" - we "observe" the "Lord's Day" out of respect and honor (and even to some degree, tradition), but we do not do it to be "saved" - it is primarily a day of teaching and admonishing along with encouragement in our walk of faith with each other
- h. "...for believing Gentiles, who never had been subject to the law, to engage in these services, had a very suspicious aspect indeed, and certainly seemed to say that they wanted something more than was to be found in Christ and in Christianity." John Brown
- i. These points are not slight differences in scruples, but so major Paul writes that he fears for them since it looks possible that his labors (toilsome work on their behalf, for them) was useless (in vain) - if they were so quickly led out of their liberty and "won for them" position in Christ to a set of rituals/observances, then they are looking elsewhere for justification, missing the major point of salvation in Christ (His work on their behalf)
- j. Paul's "fear" (dread of a possibility) is warranted as one that truly cares for another - there is far too much concern for others' feelings than there is for their actual well being! Paul is about to appeal to them graciously (even emotionally) in the next verses, so this is not presented as being harsh, but more so one of greatest concern for the eternal souls of others
- k. So much of what Paul would be looking on as "success" in his work was focused on their living in (and so living by) faith - there is still to be this type of fear when we see those who seem to start "in the Spirit" and then seek to end "in the flesh" (Gal. 3:3)
- l. "Worse than never having had salvation with its liberation from these "elements" is to have had it and then to give it up and to turn back to such "elements." Lenski

D. "Have I become your enemy by telling you the truth?" - vs. 12-20

- 1. In some ways (though not specified), their relationship was suffering and had changed because of his message and the application it demanded - the Galatians had been swayed to a works-based approach to the Gospel, and Paul was pointing out the incompatibility of such a notion with the truth - vs. 12

"An apostle's authority does not cease when he begins to teach unpopular truths... We cannot, when we like what an apostle teaches, defer to him as an angel, and when we do not like what he teaches, hate him and reject him as an enemy. No, the apostles of Jesus Christ have authority in everything they teach, whether we happen to like it or not." Stott

- a. He was now being seen (or even treated) as an enemy - Paul and the message had not changed; all that differed was a new approach to the Gospel that had been introduced and widely accepted, which brought with it an admiration of their new teachers/influencers, and now a form of disregard/disrespect (and possibly rejection) of Paul (and the clarifications he was stressing that contradicted the new belief/practice they were now embracing)
- b. Paul expresses here a deep desire (as in pleading from personal need) that they "become as I am" in what he is now in contrast to what he once was - throughout this epistle Paul has been very direct and theological and now becomes personal - Paul was not just an authority stoically fulfilling duty - he was genuinely concerned for them (as all of us ought to be)
- c. He pleads with them to be as he was in his complete trust in the work of Christ and in so doing be as he "is" - he had become as they were (he a Jew becoming as a Gentile which would have been more difficult than a Gentile letting go of Jewish practices of the Law)
- d. It was particularly painful to see them being entrapped into the very thing he was freed from
- e. He lets them know that his dealings with them were not retaliatory in any way, acknowledging that they had not wronged him - even in this, it was not a personal affront to him as much as it was his genuine care for them that they not be duped
- f. This should also then not be a point of their dignity being attacked either

Many take active differences (openly expressed) as personal attacks (which some may be), but this situation was one of dangerous divergence and merited urgency

2. Paul reminds the Galatians of their original response to him personally - vs. 13-15

Paul uses this reminder to point them back to their own display of exceptional faith and character in receiving the Gospel and Paul - they had accepted him (as he was) in exceptional faith yet now, because of different teaching, were not seeing him the same way anymore

Compare this to Mt. 10:40 where Jesus declared that whoever received those that He sent were receiving Him also - seeing past messengers to the true source is important (with those of Christ and those not)

Again, this appreciation of him (to the point of sacrifice) was because of the Gospel - something had changed... not Paul and not the Gospel.

Once focus is directed to (or back to) some form of righteousness by works/efforts, it becomes a downward spiral out of control as far as a life by faith in the work of Christ alone on our behalf - these struggle to see "good works" (righteous works) as a result and not the means True friends tell the truth (here, the truth of the Gospel) even if hated because of it - true friends love to love not to be loved

The motive of any teacher/pastor/minister should not be to win people to themselves - their objective is to always be focused on their students' conformity to Christ and so Christlikeness

see II Cor. 11:1-15 and II Pet. 2:1-19

False teachers seek a dominating control, fearing the result of being replaced by Christ - a truth teacher will direct to Christ and His word over themselves, wanting His control in their lives

- a. The first time Paul came to them was apparently because of a "bodily illness" - this is not described in the book of Acts, but Paul reminds them that when he first came to them he was quite ill and apparently with an illness that made him difficult to look at or be around
- b. He apparently had not been planning to come to their area, but his illness necessitated him going there - some speculate this was a result of malaria (not uncommon in the areas he had been) - God had used this to bring him there
- c. Note he uses "Gospel" for it was received as the good news that it was (even in spite of the messenger not being appealing (possibly somewhat repulsive physically)) - Paul describes it as a "trial" (πειρασμός a test/trial to be faced) to them (his physical condition) - it would have been natural to reject him and even despise him on these grounds - it was common to look upon someone with physical issues as being under God's judgment/rejection
- d. Paul used two words to describe how they might have responded to his condition - they could have despised him or loathed/rejected him (the word here is ἐκπτύω which means to "spit out") - yet, in an exceptional response, they received him as if an angel of God or as Jesus Christ Himself (because it was His (Christ's) message, they saw past the messenger)
- e. Where, he asks, did that sense of joy/happiness regarding him go? They were so sincere and "all-in" with him they would have even sacrificed their own eyes to help him - this could have been because whatever he had affected his eyes or that Paul is using this as an example of the degree of love/appreciation they had for him (to give their eyesight).

3. Was it the telling of truth that made the difference? - vs. 16

- a. Is the sudden change in how he is viewed by them because he is telling them the truth? They once so highly admired and appreciated him because he brought them the truth (the Gospel), but now he is considered an "enemy" (ἐχθρός- someone looked upon as being hostile so now is to be treated with hostility, hatred)
- b. As has been seen in the study through Galatians, it is often seen where those who receive the Gospel in faith come to then struggle with living in faith from that point on (to still trust the Gospel throughout life)
- c. For a variety of reasons (e.g. pride, trust, confusion, peer pressure) those who succumb to any form of a "works salvation" (works to get or keep it) then come to direct their suspicions toward those promoting the simple truth (the heart of the Gospel) and that all throughout life we are justified by grace alone, and so live because of it not to obtain it

4. "Making much of you" so as to have loyal followers, admirers - vs. 17-18

- a. In these two verses Paul deals with the approach and intent of these Judaizing teachers/influencers - the NASB translates the first phrase as "They eagerly seek you" and the underlying word is used of zeal or more so here of a form of jealousy
- b. To be very interested in others and their well-being is a good thing, but here Paul reveals their motive as being one "οὐ καλῶς" (not right/good/commendable/noble) - they were not truly out for the best for their potential followers as much as they were out for their own personal well-being and agenda - far too many "ministers" are motivated by their pursuit of their idea of "success" and some type of personal legacy - we are all to seek the pleasing of God over the pleasing of self and/or others
- c. Paul is perplexed (as in verse 20) with them, but he is also demonstrating that it is not just "on them" (as far as blame) since these others are strategically working to "shut you out" from the true Gospel with the purpose that they would "seek them" (literally be zealous of them)
- d. They wanted to "shut them out" (as in keeping them away from anything that would draw them back to the true Gospel of justification by faith in Christ alone, for that would redirect their focus and dependence back on Christ and not on these false teachers)
- e. None of us wants full (top priority) loyalty to ourselves for none of us is a worthy recipient of such loyalty - we seek and hope to be outdone by Christ in their lives (affections, focus, zeal and so loyalties) - if we are jealous of another's attention/affections to Christ, we demonstrate a fundamental flaw in our focus, motivation and overall purpose
- f. Paul clarifies that it is always good to be zealously pursued if it is in a commendable manner/reason (as he himself did), and is commendable even when he wasn't present with them

This is a common tactic with false teachers - they flatter and feign care and enthusiasm to win others to their cause or viewpoint - but it is not sincere/genuine care founded on truth

His pains were personal, stemming from a loving relationship and not finding their source in anger or the frustration of inconvenience - a mother travails for the life of her child (sacrificially) which is why this is such a strong picture of Paul's care

He, as a mother in labor, is committed to see it through, considering there is no other choice to be had

The false teachers were seeking to dominate/control these Galatians who had come to see freedom in trusting completely the work of Christ, while Paul sought them to be molded into Christlikeness

Paul wished to be gentle with them, but some situations necessitate urgent forcefulness to stress the seriousness and the need to see no other option

- g. These false teacher fervently/excitedly pursued them to win them to their ideology/theology, but these should not be so won over to something just because they were pursued (wanted) - Paul also wanted them to eagerly pursue what was right even when he was not present with them - if one is "won" more so by being "eagerly sought", they will be headed for danger
- h. Note Php. 2:12 and how Paul stresses their need to "obey" when he's not with them and in so doing "work out your own salvation" (not being always reliant on others... just the Lord)

5. The ultimate objective - till "Christ has been formed in you" - vs. 19-20

- a. Paul uses very dramatic wording in these verses to express not only his deep emotion and commitment, but the desired end (with which he will realize their secured maturity)
- b. He uses the word "ὠδίνω" which describes the pains of childbirth, though he includes the very unnatural combination of "birth pangs **again**" - he is not describing another spiritual birth, but using the pains associated with the birthing process to describe the painful labor he was currently facing in the face of their quick change of focus to a works-based idea of salvation/justification
- c. He addresses them as "my little children" and not in a demeaning way (for they truly were still new in the faith), but more in an affectionate way - he had a motherly love and care for them (in contrast to the self-serving motives of the false teachers)
- d. The "labor" here is to be endured till Christ is "formed" in them (the word being "μορφώω" describing a total conformity/change from one thing into another) - it is along the same idea as that of Rom. 8:29 where, after stating that everything works for the good of those in Christ, that it is all designed (predetermined) to "conform" us to the image of Christ - this is a morphing from within to the outward - legalism promotes the externals over the internals
- e. Paul realized the security he would have in their well being when this would be evident, knowing they would no longer be susceptible to such shenanigans
- f. The frustration of being apart from them with such an urgent issue occurring is evidenced in Paul's expressed desire to be with them in person to adjust his tone as needed - if they were receptive and repentant, he could be mild/gentle, or if they were resistant he would be more forceful - he was urgently protective!
- g. He was literally "at a loss" (as if not sure what direction to take) being so shocked that they had been so quickly and easily persuaded away from complete trust in Christ to the very system he himself had left (been freed from) - he was in pain over this (focused, purposeful)

VIII. The Difference Between the Sons of Abraham, the Mothers and Jerusalems - Slave (Law) or Free (Promise) - 4:21-31

A. Paul does not fully introduce this next section - he simply puts forward an accusing question and illustrates it with use of typology - vs. 21

- 1. This has often been referred to as one of the most difficult passages to exegete/interpret since it uses "allegory" (the Greek word in verse 24 is "ἀλληγορέω") though we might use the word "typology" in English since what Paul is about to use to illustrate his points are historical realities and not just pictures
- 2. Paul, in using this typological approach, looks to be meeting these Judaisers on their own "turf" - they used much allegory and typology to complexly delve into Scripture to make many of their points and, in a sense, demonstrate their worthiness to be a part of the more scholarly and even "spiritual" groupings within Judaism
 - a. Paul confronts those "wishing" to be under the Law by asking if they actually listen to it
 - b. This looks to be an example of those hearing the Law, reading and studying it, but not actually understanding/comprehending what it is actually saying
 - c. It seems contradictory and yet it is sadly true that it is possible to study Scripture to a scholarly level and yet not understand what it truly means - they don't "get it"

This is similar to what Jesus said in John 5:45-47

B. The two sons of Abraham, their mothers and their differing standing/state - vs. 22-31

- 1. Just because one could trace their line back to Abraham did not mean they were justified - vs. 22-23
 - a. It is written (in the Law, here in Genesis) that Abraham had two sons but they differed greatly because of how each was conceived/born
 - b. Ishmael was born to a "slave woman" (Hagar) and Isaac was born to a free woman (Sarah)
 - c. The one born to the "slave woman" was born "according to the flesh" carrying two ideas - one that it was a natural process and second, it was brought about in a "fleshly" manner

These will mark the distinctions that were had (and still would be possible typologically)

When Hagar conceived, she despised Sarah for now it was clear the issue of barrenness was with Sarah and not Abraham

Much of the typology that was being used in Paul's time was far from a responsible use of Scripture (as we still see today), yet this type fits uniformly around the two uses of the "promise" (that Isaac would be given and that Abraham's trust in the promise would result in justification).

"I deny that its fertility consists in the various meanings which any man, at his pleasure, may assign. Let us know, then, that the true meaning of Scripture is the natural and obvious meaning; and let us embrace and abide by it resolutely. Let us not only neglect as doubtful, but boldly set aside as deadly corruptions, those pretended expositions, which lead us away from the natural meaning." Calvin

Paul is going into great detail to demonstrate he's not just name calling or unfairly associating them

Jerusalem would have been considered the headquarters of these Judaisers and would then have typically been used to lend them some authority

The reason for obedience and "standards" is important to define and explain else they slip back into a Sinai-istic draw (and so enslavement)

Any "I wills" will be because of what He has done for us and what we are now being in Him and never doing to become such

Again, in contrast with the earthly Jerusalem (of and by the Law) and in opposition to grace (of "the Promise")

This is setting up the discussion about to come regarding the "persecution" of those "of the flesh" against those of "the Spirit" - even though the legalistic will mock/taunt and even persecute those 'of grace' they will not ultimately prosper

- d. Note Genesis 16:1-6 for the account of the birth of Ishmael and what led up to it - it was Sarah's suggestion in her attempt to provide Abraham with the promised son, though it would be by the "works of the flesh" (their own efforts and thinking to bring about the promise, not fully trusting the Promise Giver) - possibly because of Mt. 13:18-21
 - e. The child born of "the free woman" (Sarah) was by means of the promise (it was directly the result of the promise of God, supernaturally working in both Abraham and Sarah to conceive a child) - God had this occur at such a time, demonstrating it was by the promise and Paul is now using this to distinguish between those under the Law versus those under Grace (also by means of the promise to Abraham) - see Heb. 11:11-12
 - f. In harmony with this idea/picture, we are also by means of the promise "born" (so "born again") in and because of Christ and the means of it is by faith (trust in the promise in Christ)
2. Two "covenants" - Mt. Sinai+Hagar/present Jerusalem = slaves versus "Jerusalem above" (of Sarah) = free (all based on an allegory (illustration) associated with Isaiah 54:1) - vs. 24-28
- a. At first glance this might seem like a "stretched" illustration until its connection with Isaiah 54:1 (and that, right after what was stated in Isaiah 53) is referenced
 - b. This and other texts have likely lent to many allegorizing other texts irresponsibly to pull out a meaning never intended - we reach the understanding of this text and its handling of Isaiah 54:1 because of Paul's handling of it
 - c. Hagar and Sarah represent in this illustration/allegorical use of history "two covenants," the one (associated with Hagar) originating from Mount Sinai (where the Law was first given to Israel) and so corresponds (as Paul has been building upon already) to "slaves" (versus "sons" and "free" (because they have been freed in Christ))
 - d. Paul draws one more connection with Hagar and that her association with Sinai historically where he writes, "Now Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia..." of which Lenski notes, "This is not a trivial geographical remark but a significant statement... Hagar went south to Beersheba, and Ishmael dwelt in Paran, the territory near Sinai." - even historically Sinai had other significances and Paul notes the comparison with Hagar
 - e. Now pulling in "Jerusalem" (Zion) he continues to demonstrate a distinction - just because something has an eternal/heavenly association doesn't mean it is (or has been) used as such here on earth (in this present age) - The "present Jerusalem" though a sacred place on earth was now a place of slavery (as under the Law (misusing the Law)), and so any of "her children" (those "of her") would be slaves (not free by the grace-work in Christ) - vs. 25
 - f. Associations like this still exist and are used today in "Christian" circles where one is seen more as authoritative by an earthly association more than the actual Heavenly one - as here in Galatians so today there must not be a drive to appeal to the popular, naturally "religious" and any form of actual self-righteous appeal
 - g. The most stark contrast between Law and Grace is seen in the Law demanding "you will, you shall not" in contrast to God's "I will" of the New Covenant (in grace) - Jer. 31:31-37
 - h. The "Jerusalem above" is contrasted with the one "present" so could either refer to the Jerusalem of the past (such as in the time of Melchizedek) or (more likely) the one in Heaven (the "New Jerusalem") being all that it was ever intended to be and will again come down to earth (Rev. 21:10-27) - it being fully established as "Heavenly" and of which citizenship was purchased by Christ for us (grace) and so those "of it" are free - pulling it all together, Paul makes it clear that this is "our mother" (and so our nature)
 - i. Paul now quotes from Isaiah 54:1 as in relation to all this - this text was one of encouraging rejoicing for Israel but stated in such a way as to be more inclusive (apparently for even Gentiles) and all this right after dealing with the conquering work of the "suffering servant" in chapter 53
 - j. The "barren woman" references Sarah who now not only rejoices at the fulfilled promise of God for her personally, but now because of the looks to be in reference to Hagar who, though having had a time of despising Sarah will be greatly outnumbered in her offspring by Sarah (now including the spiritual offspring who also are justified by faith)
 - k. It is inevitable that the attempts at true righteousness by means of self-effort and personal ingenuity will not compete with the genuine results of faith in God's work will produce

Just because something seems to work (practically) in carrying out the revealed will/ Word of God does not mean it is correct - God had promised a child through Sarah, in the literal sense - and though the practical scheme had a success, it was not of God... just as the Judaizers, though seemingly winning-out, would not produce true (heavenly) offspring

The category of "born according to the flesh" does not just include those like these Judaizers, but includes all else that are not born according to the Spirit." All these still seek to persecute those genuinely in Christ

These persecutors seek what is natural and not of faith (they seek to earn not receive) and work to stop the true message of grace

Many persecutors will not actually know why they are persecuting

Theoretically it might be conceivable that Ishmael could have been an heir but with the coming of the supernaturally, promised son, the son of a slave, not of the promise, could not be - the principle outranked the practical

Meeting these opponents on their own terms and line of reasonings (with their illustrations), Paul disarms their argument

1. Though, by means "of the flesh" Ishmael was born, and at the time looked to be a successful way to carry out what God had promised, ended up being the opposite - once Sarah had Isaac, she was no longer barren and her offspring (and that of the "Jerusalem" above), were more than those "who had the husband" - this last statement is in reference to Hagar 'having" Abraham for a moment and then despising Sarah when she (Hagar) was pregnant
- m. Paul pulls it all together in making it clear that these Galatians who were in Christ (by Christ's work alone) were "like Isaac"... made so by the promise and not by works - this is a strong (very pointed) illustration to use for the legalists who would resent being compared to Hagar and to being slaves in general - their focus was more on the Mosaic Law and not the promise to Abraham that preceded it

3. Those "of the flesh" persecute those born "of the Spirit" - vs. 29-31

- a. These next verses reference Genesis 21:8-10 where Abraham held a feast for Isaac when he was weaned and Ishmael laughed/mockd during it, and here in 4:29 Paul uses the word "διώκω" (persecuted, harassed) - Paul described Isaac as being "born according to the Spirit" and that the same response as it was then is so now - those "born according to the flesh" seek to persecute those who truly trust the justifying work of Christ alone
- b. Ishmael would have naturally considered himself to rightfully be the main heir of Abraham since he was the firstborn, and was so by Abraham and Sarah's deliberate actions - Ishmael would have been about 13 years or more at the time of Isaac's celebration - his resentment of Isaac and what was taking place was humanly understandable, but was not in keeping with what God had laid out and promised - note I Thes. 2:13-16
- c. "So it is now" - it was still the case in Paul's day and continues to this day - it, to some degree, must be instinctive seeing that many "of the flesh" will just do this (since we are not told they will react to what is necessarily done or said)
- d. Paul quotes Sarah's response (Gen. 21:10) to the mocking/persecuting of Ishmael as being Scripture, though some may see her response as being uncharitable, it had greater ramifications than she even knew - F.F. Bruce wrote of this, "... legal bondage and spiritual freedom cannot coexist... If it was Paul's opponents who compelled him to take up the story of Ishmael and Isaac, they unintentionally provided him with a wonderful text to undergird the argument of this whole letter."
- e. Concluding this allegory/typology, Paul makes it clear that "we" (those in Christ) are not children of a slave, and so obligated to follow rules/regulations to remain associated with the family, but are full heirs being true children of the "free woman" because we are in Christ (and so rightfully (legally) calling God, "Father" (4:6))

IX. Falling From Grace - 5:1-12

A. Keep "standing firm" in the freedom in Christ - vs. 1

1. Plainly put, Christ set us free to be free - it would be senseless to consider a scenario where we were set free and yet still under actual obligation (versus grace)

We who are in Christ are freed from worrisome distractions of losing this relationship - our focus is now on living as His followers, in His work and the privileges that come with such an association

Sin demands obedience to it and control over us - sin does not lose us our salvation, but it does seek to control and redirect us from our freedom in Christ and His work

- a. The phrase in Greek is "Τῇ ἐλευθερίᾳ ἡμᾶς Χριστὸς ἠλευθέρωσεν" (in freedom we/us Christ freed us (set us free) - any other use of freedom (liberty) would be irresponsible considering the price at which our freedom was purchase
 - b. Again this "freedom" (liberty) is being completely and finally/fully released from obligations necessary for getting and keeping salvation - as with an heir, and with one born into freedom, they were not obligated to do anything to earn their situation - they used their situation to work from (to live from/for)
 - c. Even paganism and secularism carry with them obligations/demands even in, oddly enough, the demanded exercise of their defined "freedoms" (for instance, their various demands to live in opposition to God's ways/norms) - if one tries to contradict the demanded "freedoms" of society, they will face resistance and rejection
2. Stand firm and do not endure (put up with) any "yoke of slavery"
 - a. "στήκετε" is the verb describing a resolved position (stationary, dug-in) - the alternative would be to be "yoked" in slavery and in that, ensnared/entangled - this is a good, picturesque way of describing a legalistic religion

- b. Though sin is not the yoking master in focus here, it also acts in the same way (as an extreme opposite of what it is (enslaving) outwardly, and legalism has a show or morality and even godliness) yet both are founded in a lack of faith in the truth
- c. These had been enslaved before (in paganism) so Paul commands them no dig in their heels as it were to not be drawn back (lured) into another controlling/directing yoke
- d. It was and still is common for believers to be drawn into sects of Christianity that ensnare its followers into a strict structure of works, traditions and measurable output

Note Acts 15:10, Mt. 23:1-11

B. The warning of falling from grace in a pursuit to be “justified by law” - vs. 2-6

1. “Circumcision” as an end goal steals away the actual advantage of Christ - vs. 2-3

The translations of “receive” or “accept” circumcision is accurate and demonstrate the voluntary act - it is done on purpose to meet a legal standard... one which has overriding consequences

“Christ will provide unlimited help to those who place their undivided trust in him, but no help at all to those who bypass his saving work and think to become acceptable to God by circumcision or other legal observances.” Bruce

- a. Paul states this in a very formal way, making this a serious declaration of a line of demarcation (a line that if crossed makes a distinct difference) - to realize that what this is dealing with makes Christ “of no benefit” should be enough to stress the seriousness of this line
- b. Circumcision was still being treated as the covenant sign in this situation and then carried with the act itself an entire system to be followed (as it did with the Jews before, though even then circumcision and the rest of the laws did not save)
- c. The way Paul states this “I Paul, say to you...” makes this also very personal, demonstrating his genuine, loving concern for them in what they are considering, for to do this would be to make Christ “useless” to them, because this would be a definitive step obligating them “to keep the whole Law” - some object to this statement making the point that no one before Christ kept the whole Law either - yet they fail to consider that the Law included the sacrificial system for these failures, and now that Christ has come, there remains no other sacrifice for sin - see Heb. 10:26
- d. Some may also reference that Paul had Timothy circumcised (Acts 16:3), but this was more cultural since Timothy’s mother was a Jew - these Gentile believers had no reason at all to be circumcised

2. A “worksless” justification and a (true) faith that works “through love” - vs. 4-6

For those seeking justification by works appear to be very active, yet such works, seen for what they truly are, are as if idle in any usefulness - true faith/trust unavoidably results in works of love (of God and others)

The actuality of the scenario is possible amongst them and us as seen in Hebrews 6, those to “fall from grace” is not equivalent to losing salvation for one actually under grace cannot lose what they did not earn - plus, to lose salvation here and in Heb. 6 would be to never get it back

The word for “wait” here is ἀπεκδέχομαι which is more than a casual/normal waiting since it includes the idea of a waiting with anticipation (expectation) based in faith in the Gospel - we do not dread this day, we are eager for it!

- a. Grace (by which we are saved) requires no works (accepts no works) in relation to justification which is wholly through/by Christ, so any/all pursuing to “be justified by law” (any law, and so any work(s) whether many, few, great or small) - this then completely necessitates being “severed” (from καταργέω which describes something totally inactive, inoperative being here, separated from any source for true activity)
- b. Those who have known (know of) true grace (Christ’s righteousness applied at His expense) resulting in actual justification (being actually righteous before God, we being in Christ), if such could turn to any justification by works/working, would truly “fall from grace” (leap/separate as it were from something) - Paul is describing a scenario (“you who”) so here not necessarily the actuality of it with the Galatians (at least yet)
- c. “But the Galatians, while not pretending to be so bound, imagined there was an efficacy in them to merit a higher degree of perfection (Gal_3:3). This accounts for Paul not referring to the decree at all. He took much higher ground...The natural mind loves outward fetters, and is apt to forge them for itself, to stand in lieu of holiness of heart.” JFB - the “higher ground” here being all or nothing, and so no possibility of a works and grace “economy”
- d. What then is the “hope” of those trusting the work of Christ alone? The wording here in verse 5 is very precise - it is “for we” Πνεύματι ἐκ πίστεως ἐλπίδα δικαιοσύνης ἀπεκδεχόμεθα (through Spirit by faith, hope of righteousness are eagerly [because of certainty] waiting)- those seeking justification by law do so to “see” (on their own terms) their notion of righteousness, not in faith as we, who fully expect on the day of judgment to be just before God because our expectation is solely on the righteousness of Christ and nothing of our own
- e. Those whose faith is in their works (at all) cannot truly be eager for the day of judgment, for since some of their faith is in themselves, self always (unavoidably) carries with it doubt
- f. What actually is of any account (what actually then means anything) in our Christian lives? It makes no difference whether one is circumcised or not (literally neither has “power” (ἰσχύω)), and power here indicating usefulness/effectiveness - what really means anything now is faith at work in us, and this a working out actual love (of God primarily and of others) - literally faith is working through love (and so not out of obligation)

Tyndale translated the last phrase in verse 6 as "... faith, which by love is mighty in operation." It is an active faith versus just orthodoxy

g. Since this outworking of our being justified is "through the Spirit" it is our full expectation of the outworking then of true righteousness (positionally and practically) - this answers the fears of those believing that such faith could lead to a life of sin... such discounts the indwelling work of the Spirit

C. Hindered from "obeying the truth" - vs. 7-12

1. The dangerous "leaven" of legalism and its fast acting, overtaking/infiltrating influence - vs. 7-9

- a. Paul uses a reference/illustration he's used in other texts, that of running a race (not necessarily one of speed, but more like that of a marathon where ongoing progress/endurance is the objective till the finish line is crossed)
- b. They had been running well (by means of and a focus on the grace of God in Christ's work for them alone) yet now look to have been "hindered" (ἐγκόπτω- to impede or cut off by blocking or distracting someone's way)
- c. These were impeded resulting in a failure to "obey the truth" - dealing with this phrase, John Stott wrote, "...applying belief to behaviour. Only he who obeys the truth is an integrated Christian. What he believes and how he behaves are all of a piece. His creed is expressed in his conduct; his conduct is derived from his creed."
- d. This obedience, in its underlying word (πειθω) is literally being persuaded to trust and so then to act on it - many associate with the truth but don't truly believe it and so do not obey it - this context for obedience is particularly interesting since it is their taking on aspects of the Law that are disobedient (what they are doing is wrong, for they should not be "doing" as relates to their salvation, but truly trusting/believing versus working)
- e. This may not have seemed like a big deal to them at the time (as is the case in our day) and yet Paul's passion regarding its very real danger and its nature (error's) to consume its possessor would be made clear - sometimes faith is practiced in trusting that something that seems harmless is actually more dangerous than we can anticipate
- f. Though such error seems so small at the start, it like sin, spreads, overtakes and seeks to dominate (as is its nature) just like leaven (yeast) - see also I Cor. 5:1-8
- g. John Brown, stressing its endgame wrote, "It leads directly to the denial of the two grand principles of the Christian system: The necessity and sufficiency of Christ's obedience to death as the only ground, and of faith in the gospel as the only means, of the sinner's justification." - So many predominate, heretical beliefs began with seeming slight differences
- h. As Paul directly stated, this "persuasion" (to obedience to law for justification) did not come from "Him who calls you" (God) - there is no middle ground... it is not of God!

And in this context it would be an impedance of a road-block or a detour (or both)- there was an attempted redirect to a hybrid gospel of grace and works/self-merit

This idea can again be summed up as the difference between those who do what they do for salvation while others do what they do from it - how we encourage others to obey and why it needs to be carefully communicated/worded

In not obeying the truth they are not obeying reality (truth) - truth is the reality of what everything is even if the majority have their own view of a reality of their own making (or made by others)

Seeming "gracious" inclusivity of individual opinions in churches has led to many anti-biblical, anti-faith beliefs

2. Paul's confidence (in those in the Lord) that they will settle/land correctly - vs. 10-12

- a. Paul's persuasion was not necessarily based on them, that they would adopt the right conclusion in the end, since he makes it clear his confidence in them is in the Lord - this is a beautiful way to word such an expectation, for it was not mindless positivity without a solid basis - Paul fully expected because of the Lord, to properly redirect any that were His to the correct conclusion
- b. As with Paul, so also should our focused confidence be... the Lord's work in others and ourselves, though, as with Paul, we also continue to reiterate the truth always
- c. Paul's confidence in the Lord also extended to the coming judgment of the one that was "disturbing" them (agitating/disrupting them) - this judgment is more than just an ecclesiastical censure: it is the judgment of God which will be horrific (in eternity)
- d. Paul uses the singular reference in "he" so it is commonly believed that this was one man, adding to and distorting the teaching Paul had provided - many disagreements in the church will look like they are merely one person versus another, yet we must seriously consider if the differences aren't actually between error/distortion and God Himself
- e. It appears as though there was some insinuation that Paul was also teaching "circumcision" (as an essential in salvation), yet, Paul states if this was true, why was he still being persecuted? As referenced earlier, there may have been some pointing to the fact that Paul had Timothy circumcised, but this was nowhere near teaching it as a part of salvation - opponents to the truth will often seize on what they make out to be blatant inconsistencies to bolster their positions - if this example was part of the accusation, it needed context!

It is the same as in Php. 1:6 and II Thes. 3:1-5 - the Lord is the one at work and He cannot fail - we do not flatter others to obedience, we direct ourselves and them to the Lord's work in them and trust it

This is a sobering example of the seriousness of many false teachings and those that promote them

It should be noted that Paul handed one over to the "destruction of the flesh" that was given to open, sexual immorality in the church (in I Cor 5), that their soul could ultimately be saved, but here, with soteriological untruth, such promoting it are slated for eternal judgment

Theological opponents are often guilty of misrepresenting the opposition's position- Paul was pointing out what should have been the obvious contradicting evidence

It may have been Paul stressing that if these opponents of himself were out to pull these Galatians from him, then if he is still teaching circumcision the way to outdo him is to castrate themselves (and become eunuchs) - if they treated it as if a competition with Paul

We can win arguments and still be wrong in what we argue for

- f. Paul was hated and persecuted because of, what he calls here, “the stumbling block of the cross”, essentially that the cross was the sole payment for sins and purchaser of justification - if Paul still preached the necessity of circumcision, then this “offense” would be removed... so why would persecution/resistance continue? - Note also that the cross is the obstacle to them, as it still is, being the aspect of the Gospel that drives people away (not just Jesus dying on the cross, but what it represents (trusting fully in His sacrifice for sin and His applied righteousness... alone))
- g. Paul’s passionate desire (expressing his response in the urgency of this evil influence) that those “troubling you” (upsetting, causing to be unstable/unsure) would “mutilate themselves” (ESV, “emasculate themselves”) - there is more a modern debate in accepting the translation this way, believing it inappropriate for an Apostle to say such a thing - this would be true if it were a mere, vulgar reaction, but it is in keeping with their own emphasis- if circumcision is so profound now, then take it further (to the ultimate degree)
- h. Too many look on theological differences as if a competition... that all that is needed is to win-out against the opponent (pulling followers from their opponents to themselves), yet it truly is supposed to be a pursuit of the actual truth - note Titus 3:9-11

X. The Spirit Versus The Flesh - 5:13-26

A. Having dealt with those opposing the liberty that is in Christ, Paul now moves on to address the tendency that is a common response to this liberty... when liberty becomes license - vs. 13-15

1. This freedom/liberty is freedom from not only religious rites/observances but also freedom from the slavery of sin (which truly enslaves, restraining the freedoms to live out who we are in Christ (to live like He did) - vs. 13

This can include sensual, lustful inclinations, but the context would seem to lean more to “the flesh” promoting itself over others, seeing itself “free” to do so - after all, it concludes, “it’s my right to do so”

Selfishness is enslaving while a love that serves is freeing (freed from self and its self-focused demands for the temporal over the eternal)

- a. These are those defining this “liberty” as a freedom to live as self-authorities, obliging our “fleshly” tendencies (as though we were still subject to them) - the “opportunity for the flesh” deals with the natural nature of ourselves in response to the idea of “freedom”
- b. The flesh, with the remnants of the old man still within, looks upon freedom as the absence of all restraining obligations, which then quickly translates into a variety of priorities defined by their appeal to the natural (the flesh) self - see Jude 1:10-16
- c. So, yes (absolutely) we have been “called to freedom” but not a freedom of opportunity (ἀφορμή- a starting point, a base of operations) for the natural, sinful inclinations - instead (in contrast), “through love” (selflessness, freed from such), exercise your liberty in service - its motivation is genuine care for the other over self - the flesh will take opportunity to misuse/mis- define “freedom” to yield to the bonds of “feelgoodism” (sensuality)

2. The reasonable/sensible side to this love of others - vs. 14-15

We’ve been freed to do what is right rather than have to obey sin in the flesh (which is demanding, controlling and merciless when disobeyed) - self would normally not have permitted such loving service!

Clearly, “biting” (nipping), cutting words/behavior and devouring (eating away at something till it’s gone) are the opposite of love - to love “as self” here is to be considerate of others by remembering how being bit and devoured by others feels/hurts

Many have fought so diligently for theological/religious purity that they have left off the love and grace included in it in their approach

- a. “The whole law” is fulfilled (simply) in this one statement, “You will love your neighbor as yourself” (with the presupposition that this is out of love for God first) - this love serves others which, though contradictory to most definitions, is true freedom at work
- b. This describes a genuine love, evidenced as such that the other (person) is not looked down upon resulting in loving (selfless) service - this apparently was needed (to be clarified) likely because the self-righteousness of these infiltrators leads to elitism (which seeks to be served over serving, being a rights-demander versus a rights-yielder)
- c. The contrast to loving the other (the “neighbor” which as Jesus taught was one near you in need) is to “bite and devour” each other, a description of acting like wild animals instinctively attacking each other for their own inclination of survival - CBN added that these words, “... denote attacks made under the influence of evil passions, and especially through the rancor of party spirit.”
- d. This bickering, if not stopped, causes injury and relational, mortal wounding and a mutual destruction of a group - there will assuredly be issues/disagreements to be worked through but must be done as loving (considerate) of each other as possible - see James 3:14-18
- e. Those who had been standing for the Law of Moses and its priority should not be less considerate of the overriding laws of our interactions with each other - it is possible to become so obsessive over a concept/theology/ideology that our actions and behavior end up contradicting the concept stood for