

PAUL'S LETTER TO THE GALATIANS

THE GOOD NEWS ACCORDING TO PAUL: CHRIST HAS DIED – CHRIST IS RISEN

1:1 Paul an apostle—sent neither by human commission nor from human authorities, but through Jesus Christ and **God the Father**, who **raised him from the dead**— . . . 3 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the **Lord Jesus Christ**, 4 who **gave himself for our sins to set us free** from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father.

PAUL'S AUTHORITY: IMMEDIATE EXPERIENCE OF THE RISEN CHRIST

11 **The gospel that was proclaimed by me is not of human origin**; 12 for I did not receive it from a human source, nor was I taught it, but **I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ**.

What are the strengths and weaknesses of Paul's claim?

GENTILES VS. JEWS: THE PROBLEM OF CIRCUMCISION

2:9 [James and Cephas and John, the “pillars” of the Jerusalem Church] agree[ed] that [Barnabas and I] should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised. . . . 11 But when Cephas came to Antioch . . . he stood self-condemned; 12 for until certain people came from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles. But after they came, he drew back and kept himself separate for fear of the circumcision faction. . . . 14 But when I saw that they were not acting consistently with the truth of the gospel,¹ I said to Cephas before them all, “If you, though a Jew, live like a Gentile and not like a Jew, how can you compel the Gentiles to live like Jews?”

Why is circumcision such a big deal?

JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH

15 We ourselves are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners;² 16 yet we know that **a person is justified not by the works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ.**³ And we have come to believe in Christ Jesus, so that we might be justified by faith in Christ, and not by doing the works of the law, because **no one will be justified by the works of the law. . . .** 18 But if I build up again the very things that I once tore down, then I demonstrate that I am a transgressor. 19 For **through the law I died to the law, so that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ;** 20 and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me.

The Curse of the Law: Inevitable Failure - Inexpiable Sin

Salvation is not gained by the works of the law, which people cannot obey perfectly, but by FAITH.

What does FAITH mean?

**Faith in Christ – Loving Christ/God/Each Other
Frees Us from the Consequences of Failure—
NOT from the Discipline of the Law,
but from an external slavery to Sin and Death.**

3:23 Now before faith came, we were imprisoned and guarded under the law until faith would be revealed.

24 Therefore the law was our disciplinarian until Christ came, so that we might be justified by faith. 25 But now that faith has come, we are no longer subject to a disciplinarian, 26 for in Christ Jesus **you are all children of God through faith.**

How would you describe the difference between works of law and works of faith?

In other words, believers become their own disciplinarians. They obey out of love, not fear.

**THOSE WHO BELIEVE/LOVE
ARE ALL ONE IN CHRIST**

28 **There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.**

THOSE WHO BELIEVE/LOVE ARE NOW CHILDREN OF GOD

4:1 My point is this: heirs, as long as they are minors, are no better than slaves, though they are the owners of all the property; 2 but they remain under guardians and trustees until the date set by the father. 3 So with us; while we were minors, we were enslaved to the elemental spirits of the world. 4 **But when the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, 5 in order to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as children.** 6 And because you are children, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, “Abba! Father!” 7 So you are no longer a slave but a child.

FAITH WORKS THROUGH LOVE

5:6 In Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything; **the only thing that counts is faith working through love.**⁴ . . . 13 For you were called to freedom, brothers and sisters; only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for self-indulgence, but through love become slaves to one another. 14 For the whole law is summed up in a single commandment, “**You shall love your neighbor as yourself.**”⁵

“Crucify” the Flesh to Liberate the Spirit

16 Live by the Spirit, I say, and **do not gratify the desires of the flesh**. 17 For what the flesh desires is opposed to the Spirit, and what the Spirit desires is opposed to the flesh; for these are opposed to each other, to prevent you from doing what you want.⁶ 18 **But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not subject to the [curse of the] law. . . .** 22 The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against such things. 24 **And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh** with its passions and desires. 25 **Live by the Spirit.**

What does “Crucify” the Flesh mean?

What does Live by the Spirit mean?

6:2 Bear one another’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.⁷ . . . 6 Those who are taught the word must share in all good things. . . . 10 So then, whenever we have an opportunity, let us **work for the good of all.**

NOTES

1. **The truth of the Gospel:** There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus. . . . In Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything. (3:28; 5:6)

2. **Gentile sinners:** The Gentiles are sinners by definition, but we Jews are *also* sinners *in fact*, because *no one* can really obey the law. Justification by Faith in the Risen Christ is Paul's central affirmation. His conviction that we are all hopeless sinners is his central negation: "all who rely on the works of the law are under a curse" (3:10). Those who *rely* on works are cursed, not by their (necessarily imperfect) obedience to the law but by their reliance on it; since no one can really fulfill the law, only those who live by faith in the spirit are blessed.

3. **Justified not by . . . works . . . but through faith:** A half-truth. James (the brother of Jesus, or one of his disciples) observes: "What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith but do not have works? Can faith save you? . . . Faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead" (James 2:16-17).

4. **Faith working through love:** Compare I Corinthians 13:

If I speak in the tongues of mortals and of angels,
but do not have love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.
And if I have prophetic powers,
and understand all mysteries and all knowledge,
and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains,
but do not have love, I am nothing. . . .
And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three;
and the greatest of these is love.

5. **Love your neighbor as yourself:** Compare Mark 12:29-30:

Jesus [said], "The first [commandment] is, 'Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one; you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.' The second is this, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these."

6. **doing what you want:** "I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. . . . For I know that nothing good dwells within me, that is, in my flesh. I can will what is right, but I cannot do it. For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do" (Romans 7:15, 18-19).

7. **fulfill the law of Christ:** Romans 13:8-10: "Love one another; for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. The commandments, 'You shall not commit adultery; You shall not murder; You shall not steal; You shall not covet'; and any other commandment, are summed up in this word, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law."

