

*Sandymount Explorers 2024***THE LETTER TO THE GALATIANS***Kieran J. O'Mahony OSA**www.tarsus.ie | www.tarsusscriptureschool.ie***Session 1**

1. Welcome
2. Layout of the Letter
3. On Galatia
4. Reading the Letter
5. Reactions, questions, observations

**2. Layout of the Letter**

Verses	Letter (Epistolary)	Speech (Rhetoric)
1:1-5	Letter opening	
1:6-10	Body of the letter (no thanksgiving)	Introduction
1:11-12		Main topic
1:13-2:21		Argument 1
3:1-4:7		Argument 2
4:8-5:12		Argument 3
5:13-6:10		Argument 4
6:11-17		Conclusion
6:18	Letter closing	



### 3. On Galatia

A region in north central Asia Minor (modern Turkey) named after Gallic/Celtic invaders. Later the name designated a Roman province.

The Gauls migrated to the region in the mid-3rd century B.C.E. and made their military presence felt. King Nicomedes I of Bithynia enlisted their support in his civil war. During the century, the Gauls fought with such powers as the Seleucid Antiochus I (281-61) and Attalus I of Pergamum (ca. 240-230). While being contained geographically, the Gauls maintained their independence. Their territory centered around the city of Ancyra (modern Ankara), in the northern half of central Asia Minor. In 64 B.C.E., the Gallic tribes became a client state of Rome, ruled however by one of their own. Upon the death of their last king, Amyntas, in 25 B.C.E., the region became a Roman province, which gradually extended south, almost to the Mediterranean Sea. Such cities as Derbe, Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch were now a part of "Galatia."

This is significant, for it has a bearing on how one understands the recipients and date of Paul's letter to the churches of Galatia. One can argue that Paul uses "Galatia" to designate the ethnic region in northern Asia Minor (Gal. 1:2), explaining his use of the ethnic term Galatians (3:1) in the letter. It could also correspond with Acts 16:6; 18:23, which say that Paul visited the region (not the province) of Galatia after the council meeting of Acts 15 (= Gal. 2:1-10?), requiring a date for the letter after the meeting of Acts 15. However, if Paul is using "Galatia" to denote the Roman province, the Galatian letter may be addressed to churches in the southern part of the province, churches which Paul visited early in his missionary career (cf. Acts 14:1-20), allowing one to date the letter earlier in Paul's career, before the meeting of Acts 15 (perhaps making Gal. 2 = Acts 11:27-30). The issue is controversial, for it affects many issues in Pauline studies: chronology, development of Paul's thought, and agreements/disagreements between Acts and Pauline letters.

## THE LETTER OF ST PAUL TO THE GALATIANS

### LETTER OPENING

**Galatians 1:1** From Paul, an apostle (not from men, nor by human agency, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father who raised him from the dead) **2** and all the brothers with me, to the churches of Galatia. **3** Grace and peace to you from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ, **4** who gave himself for our sins to rescue us from this present evil age according to the will of our God and Father, **5** to whom be glory forever and ever! Amen.

### INTRODUCTION

**Galatians 1:6** I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ and are following a different gospel— **7** not that there really is another gospel, but there are some who are disturbing you and wanting to distort the gospel of Christ. **8** But even if we (or an angel from heaven) should preach a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be condemned to hell! **9** As we have said before, and now I say again, if any one is preaching to you a gospel contrary to what you received, let him be condemned to hell! **10** Am I now trying to gain the approval of people, or of God? Or am I trying to please people? If I were still trying to please people, I would not be a slave of Christ!

### MAIN TOPIC

**Galatians 1:11** Now I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that the gospel I preached is not of human origin. **12** For I did not receive it or learn it from any human source; instead I received it by a revelation of Jesus Christ.

### ARGUMENT 1 (1:13-2:21)

**Galatians 1:13** For you have heard of my former way of life in Judaism, how I was savagely persecuting the church of God and trying to destroy it. **14** I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries in my nation, and was extremely zealous for the traditions of my ancestors. **15** But when the one who set me apart from birth and called me by his grace was pleased **16** to reveal his Son in me so that I could preach him among the Gentiles, I did not go to ask advice from any human being, **17** nor did I go up to Jerusalem to see those who were apostles before me, but right away I departed to Arabia, and then returned to Damascus.

**Galatians 1:18** Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to visit Cephas and get information from him, and I stayed with him fifteen days. **19** But I saw none of the other apostles except James the Lord's brother. **20** I assure you that, before God, I am not lying about what I am writing to you! **21** Afterward I went to the regions of Syria and Cilicia. **22** But I was personally unknown to the churches of Judea that are in Christ. **23** They were only hearing, "The one who once persecuted us is now proclaiming the good news of the faith he once tried to destroy." **24** So they glorified God because of me.

*Confirmation from the Jerusalem Apostles*

**Galatians 2:1** Then after fourteen years I went up to Jerusalem again with Barnabas, taking Titus along too. **2** I went there because of a revelation and presented to them the gospel that I preach among the Gentiles. But I did so only in a private meeting with the influential people, to make sure that I was not running—or had not run—in vain. **3** Yet not even Titus, who was with me, was compelled to be circumcised, although he was a Greek. **4** Now this matter arose because of the false brothers with false pretences who slipped in unnoticed to spy on our freedom that we have in Christ Jesus, to make us slaves. **5** But we did not surrender to them even for a moment, in order that the truth of the gospel would remain with you.

**Galatians 2:6** But from those who were influential (whatever they were makes no difference to me; God shows no favouritism between people)—those influential leaders added nothing to my message. **7** On the contrary, when they saw that I was entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised just as Peter was entrusted with the gospel to the circumcised **8** (for he who empowered Peter for his apostleship to the circumcised also empowered me for my apostleship to the Gentiles) **9** and when James, Cephas, and John, who had a reputation as pillars, recognised the grace that had been given to me, they gave to Barnabas and me the right hand of fellowship, agreeing that we would go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised. **10** They requested only that we remember the poor, the very thing I also was eager to do.

*Paul Rebukes Peter*

**Galatians 2:11** But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he had clearly done wrong. **12** Until certain people came from James, he had been eating with the Gentiles. But when they arrived, he stopped doing this and separated himself because he was afraid of those who were pro-circumcision. **13** And the rest of the Jews also joined with him in this hypocrisy, so that even Barnabas was led astray with them by their hypocrisy. **14** But when I saw that they were not behaving consistently with the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas in front of them all, “If you, although you are a Jew, live like a Gentile and not like a Jew, how can you try to force the Gentiles to live like Jews?”

*The Justification of Jews and Gentiles*

**Galatians 2:15** We are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners, **16** yet we know that no one is justified by the works of the law but by the faithfulness of Jesus Christ. And we have come to believe in Christ Jesus, so that we may be justified by the faithfulness of Christ and not by the works of the law, because by the works of the law no one will be justified. **17** But if while seeking to be justified in Christ we ourselves have also been found to be sinners, is Christ then one who encourages sin? Absolutely not! **18** But if I build up again those things I once destroyed, I demonstrate that I am one who breaks God’s law. **19** For through the law I died to the law so that I may live to God. **20** I have been crucified with Christ, and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. So the life I now live in the body, I live because of the faithfulness of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. **21** I do not set aside God’s grace, because if righteousness could come through the law, then Christ died for nothing!

**ARGUMENT 2 (3:1-4:7)***Justification by Law or by Faith?*

**Galatians 3:1** You foolish Galatians! Who has cast a spell on you? Before your eyes Jesus Christ was vividly portrayed as crucified! **2** The only thing I want to learn from you is this: Did you receive the Spirit by doing the works of the law or by believing what you heard? **3** Are you so foolish? Although you began with the Spirit, are you now trying to finish by human effort? **4** Have you suffered so many things for nothing?—if indeed it was for nothing. **5** Does God then give you the Spirit and work miracles among you by your doing the works of the law or by your believing what you heard?

**Galatians 3:6** Just as Abraham *believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness*, **7** so then, understand that those who believe are the sons of Abraham. **8** And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, proclaimed the gospel to Abraham ahead of time, saying, “*All the nations will be blessed in you.*” **9** So then those who believe are blessed along with Abraham the believer. **10** For all who rely on doing the works of the law are under a curse, because it is written, “*Cursed is everyone who does not keep on doing everything written in the book of the law.*” **11** Now it is clear no one is justified before God by the law, because *the righteous one will live by faith*. **12** But the law is not based on faith, but *the one who does* the works of the law *will live by them*. **13** Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us (because it is written, “*Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree*”) **14** in order that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham would come to the Gentiles, so that we could receive the promise of the Spirit by faith.

*Inheritance Comes from Promises and not Law*

**Galatians 3:15** Brothers and sisters, I offer an example from everyday life: When a covenant has been ratified, even though it is only a human contract, no one can set it aside or add anything to it. **16** Now the promises were spoken to Abraham and to his descendant. Scripture does not say, “and to the descendants,” referring to many, but “*and to your descendant*,” referring to one, who is Christ. **17** What I am saying is this: The law that came 430 years later does not cancel a covenant previously ratified by God, so as to invalidate the promise. **18** For if the inheritance is based on the law, it is no longer based on the promise, but God graciously gave it to Abraham through the promise.

**Galatians 3:19** Why then was the law given? It was added because of transgressions, until the arrival of the descendant to whom the promise had been made. It was administered through angels by an intermediary. **20** Now an intermediary is not for one party alone, but God is one. **21** Is the law therefore opposed to the promises of God? Absolutely not! For if a law had been given that was able to give life, then righteousness would certainly have come by the law. **22** But the scripture imprisoned everything under sin so that the promise could be given—because of the faithfulness of Jesus Christ—to those who believe.

*Children of God Are Heirs of Promise*

**Galatians 3:23** Now before faith came we were held in custody under the law, being kept as prisoners until the coming faith would be revealed. **24** Thus the law had become

our guardian until Christ, so that we could be declared righteous by faith. **25** But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian. **26** For in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God through faith. **27** For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. **28** There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female—for all of you are one in Christ Jesus. **29** And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s descendants, heirs according to the promise.

**Galatians 4:1** Now I mean that the heir, as long as he is a minor, is no different from a slave, though he is the owner of everything. **2** But he is under guardians and managers until the date set by his father. **3** So also we, when we were minors, were enslaved under the basic forces of the world. **4** But when the appropriate time had come, God sent out his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, **5** to redeem those who were under the law, so that we may be adopted as sons with full rights. **6** And because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, who calls “*Abba!* Father!” **7** So you are no longer a slave but a son, and if you are a son, then you are also an heir through God.

### ARGUMENT 3 (4:8-5:12)

#### *Heirs of Promise Are Not to Return to Law*

**Galatians 4:8** Formerly when you did not know God, you were enslaved to beings that by nature are not gods at all. **9** But now that you have come to know God (or rather to be known by God), how can you turn back again to the weak and worthless basic forces? Do you want to be enslaved to them all over again? **10** You are observing religious days and months and seasons and years. **11** I fear for you that my work for you may have been in vain. **12** I beg you, brothers and sisters, become like me, because I have become like you. You have done me no wrong!

#### *Personal Appeal of Paul*

**Galatians 4:13** But you know it was because of a physical illness that I first proclaimed the gospel to you, **14** and though my physical condition put you to the test, you did not despise or reject me. Instead, you welcomed me as though I were an angel of God, as though I were Christ Jesus himself! **15** Where then is your sense of happiness now? For I testify about you that if it were possible, you would have pulled out your eyes and given them to me! **16** So then, have I become your enemy by telling you the truth?

**Galatians 4:17** They court you eagerly, but for no good purpose; they want to exclude you, so that you would seek them eagerly. **18** However, it is good to be sought eagerly for a good purpose at all times, and not only when I am present with you. **19** My children—I am again undergoing birth pains until Christ is formed in you! **20** I wish I could be with you now and change my tone of voice, because I am perplexed about you.

#### *An Appeal from Allegory*

**Galatians 4:21** Tell me, you who want to be under the law, do you not understand the law? **22** For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by the slave woman and the other by the free woman. **23** But one, the son by the slave woman, was born by natural

descent, while the other, the son by the free woman, was born through the promise. **24** These things may be treated as an allegory, for these women represent two covenants. One is from Mount Sinai bearing children for slavery; this is Hagar. **25** Now Hagar represents Mount Sinai in Arabia and corresponds to the present Jerusalem, for she is in slavery with her children. **26** But the Jerusalem above is free, and she is our mother. **27** For it is written:

*“Rejoice, O barren woman who does not bear children;  
break forth and shout, you who have no birth pains,  
because the children of the desolate woman are more numerous  
than those of the woman who has a husband.”*

**Galatians 4:28** But you, brothers and sisters, are children of the promise like Isaac. **29** But just as at that time the one born by natural descent persecuted the one born according to the Spirit, so it is now. **30** But what does the scripture say? *“Throw out the slave woman and her son, for the son of the slave woman will not share the inheritance with the son”* of the free woman. **31** Therefore, brothers and sisters, we are not children of the slave woman but of the free woman.

#### *Freedom of the Believer*

**Galatians 5:1** For freedom Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not be subject again to the yoke of slavery. **2** Listen! I, Paul, tell you that if you let yourselves be circumcised, Christ will be of no benefit to you at all! **3** And I testify again to every man who lets himself be circumcised that he is obligated to obey the whole law. **4** You who are trying to be declared righteous by the law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace! **5** For through the Spirit, by faith, we wait expectantly for the hope of righteousness. **6** For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision carries any weight—the only thing that matters is faith working through love.

**Galatians 5:7** You were running well; who prevented you from obeying the truth? **8** This persuasion does not come from the one who calls you! **9** A little yeast makes the whole batch of dough rise! **10** I am confident in the Lord that you will accept no other view. But the one who is confusing you will pay the penalty, whoever he may be. **11** Now, brothers and sisters, if I am still preaching circumcision, why am I still being persecuted? In that case the offense of the cross has been removed. **12** I wish those agitators would go so far as to castrate themselves!

#### **ARGUMENT 4 (5:13-6:10)**

##### *Practice Love*

**Galatians 5:13** For you were called to freedom, brothers and sisters; only do not use your freedom as an opportunity to indulge your flesh, but through love serve one another. **14** For the whole law can be summed up in a single commandment, namely, *“You must love your neighbor as yourself.”* **15** However, if you continually bite and devour one another, beware that you are not consumed by one another. **16** But I say, live by the Spirit and you will not carry out the desires of the flesh. **17** For the flesh has desires that are opposed to the Spirit, and the Spirit has desires that are opposed to the flesh, for these are in opposition to each other, so that you cannot do what you want. **18** But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. **19** Now the works of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity, depravity, **20** idolatry, sorcery, hostilities,

strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish rivalries, dissensions, factions, **21** envying, murder, drunkenness, carousing, and similar things. I am warning you, as I had warned you before: Those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God!

**Galatians 5:22** But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, **23** gentleness, and self-control. Against such things there is no law. **24** Now those who belong to Christ have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. **25** If we live by the Spirit, let us also behave in accordance with the Spirit. **26** Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, being jealous of one another.

### *Support One Another*

**Galatians 6:1** Brothers and sisters, if a person is discovered in some sin, you who are spiritual restore such a person in a spirit of gentleness. Pay close attention to yourselves, so that you are not tempted too. **2** Carry one another's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ. **3** For if anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself. **4** Let each one examine his own work. Then he can take pride in himself and not compare himself with someone else. **5** For each one will carry his own load.

**Galatians 6:6** Now the one who receives instruction in the word must share all good things with the one who teaches it. **7** Do not be deceived. God will not be made a fool. For a person will reap what he sows, **8** because the person who sows to his own flesh will reap corruption from the flesh, but the one who sows to the Spirit will reap eternal life from the Spirit. **9** So we must not grow weary in doing good, for in due time we will reap, if we do not give up. **10** So then, whenever we have an opportunity, let us do good to all people, and especially to those who belong to the family of faith.

### CONCLUSION (6:11-17)

#### *Final Instructions and Benediction*

**Galatians 6:11** See what big letters I make as I write to you with my own hand!

**Galatians 6:12** Those who want to make a good showing in external matters are trying to force you to be circumcised. They do so only to avoid being persecuted for the cross of Christ. **13** For those who are circumcised do not obey the law themselves, but they want you to be circumcised so that they can boast about your flesh. **14** But may I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. **15** For neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything; the only thing that matters is a new creation! **16** And all who will behave in accordance with this rule, peace and mercy be on them, and on the Israel of God.

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

### LETTER CLOSING (6:18)

**Galatians 6:18** The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brothers and sisters. Amen.



## SESSION 2: commentary verse by verse

**Galatians 1:11** Now I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that the gospel (*euaggelion*) I preached (*euaggelisthen*) is not of human origin. **12** For I (*egō*) did not receive it or learn it from any human source; instead *I received it* (absent in Greek) by a revelation (*apokalypseōs*) of Jesus Christ.

1:11

- Gospel, i.e., the good news *about* Jesus Christ.
- True of all who proclaim Christ, of course: the Gospel comes from God.

1:12

- Paul expands and explains (receive or learn); contrasting a human source (perhaps the apostles) and a divine revelation (from God directly).
- The use of *egō* is emphatically in contrast with the Judaizers, depending on a received tradition.
- Content of the revelation is Jesus Christ. Revelation = *apokalupsis*.
- For Paul, “conversion” and apostleship coincide.

**Galatians 1:13** For you have heard of my former way of life in Judaism, how I was savagely persecuting the church of God and trying to destroy it. **14** I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries in my nation, and was extremely zealous for the traditions of my ancestors. **15** But when the one who set me apart from birth and called me by his grace was pleased **16** to reveal his Son in me so that I could preach him among the Gentiles, I did not go to ask advice from any human being, **17** nor did I go up to Jerusalem to see those who were apostles before me, but right away I departed to Arabia, and then returned to Damascus.

1:13

- Paul begins to tell his own story – no doubt already familiar to the Galatians. Notice the frequent first person singular, in the imperfect tense (repeated action).
- Strong words: persecute and destroy, underling the contrast with the later Paul.
- Cf. 1 Cor 15:9; Phil 3:5-6.
- Church = *ekklesia*. At this stage, it always means a local assembly.
- No clue as to why he persecuted. We can speculate: (a) Paul knows the disciples are proclaiming “Jesus is Lord”; (b) false teaching about God; (c) 1 Macc 2:23-28; (d) God-fearers – competition!; (e) growing and so really dangerous.

1:14

- A thumbnail sketch of the young Paul.
- Key terms: zealous, traditions and ancestors (lit. fathers), signs of the Pharisee. Compare Phil 3:6. For a dramatic illustration of “zealous”: 1 Macc 2:23-28.
- A strong contrast to the later Christ believing Paul.

1:15

- NB: the description of the key encounter is in a *subordinate temporal clause*, consistent with Paul’s unwillingness to disclose spiritual details. The main clause is in 16b!
- The “one” is, of course, God, who took the initiative. The Greek has a different sequence: “when it pleased the one”, placing the divine pleasure or will (inscrutable) in the place of emphasis. The verb is in the aorist tense.

- Set me apart from birth – cf. prophetic callings such as LXX Is 49:1-6 and LXX Jer 1:5.

**LXX Isaiah 49:1** Hear me, O islands; pay attention, O nations! After a long time it shall stand, says the Lord. From *my mother's womb he called* my name **2** and made my mouth like a sharp dagger, and under the shelter of his hand he hid me; he made me like a chosen arrow, and in his quiver he sheltered me. **3** And he said to me, “You are my slave, Israel, and *in you* I will be glorified.” **4** But I said, “I have laboured vainly, and I have given my strength in vain and for nothing; therefore my judgment is with the Lord, and my toil before my God.”

**LXX Isaiah 49:5** And now thus says the Lord, who formed me from the womb to be his own slave, to gather Iakob and Israel to him; I will be gathered and glorified before the Lord, and my God shall become my strength. **6** And he said to me, “It is a great thing for you to be called my servant so that you may set up the tribes of Iakob and turn back the dispersion of Israel. See, I have made you a *light of nations* (*ethnē*), that you may be for salvation to the end of the earth.”

- NB “grace”: all is really gift, from God, the inscrutable giver of all gifts. Paul never uses the word “conversion”. Instead, “setting apart,” “called” and “grace.” Later, he will describe is as a “co-crucifixion” with Christ, as we shall see.

1:16a

- Reveal: *apokalypsai*. So, the calibre of the event is actually apocalyptic, i.e. to do with God's ultimate justice for all humanity at the end of time.
- NB: to reveal his Son *in me*, according to the Greek. It includes “to me.” Cf. 1 Cor 15:8. Various interpretations of “in me”: (i) to me; (ii) through me; (iii) within me; (iv) in my former way of life. Not mutually exclusive. The later Paul is able to say (frequently) imitate me as I imitate Christ.
- This revelation has a purpose: the preaching among the Gentiles.

1:16b-17

- Underlining the direct “revelation” to Paul himself.
- NB: the double *not*.
- Arabia: in Roman times independent kingdoms arose like that of the Nabataeans south of Damascus, which could be called simply Arabia. Paul went to, therefore, to Gentile territory.
- *Returned* to Damascus – although this is the first mention of Damascus in Paul's account.
- It concurs with mentions in the Acts of the Apostles. NB: no mention of Ananias etc. from the Acts.

**Galatians 1:18** Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to visit Cephas and get information from him, and I stayed with him fifteen days. **19** But I saw none of the other apostles except James the Lord's brother. **20** I assure you that, before God, I am not lying about what I am writing to you! **21** Afterward I went to the regions of Syria and Cilicia. **22** But I was personally unknown to the churches of Judea that are in Christ. **23** They were only hearing, “The one who once persecuted us is now proclaiming the good news of the faith he once tried to destroy.” **24** So they glorified God because of me (*en emoi* again).

1:18

- Both *space* (Arabia / Damascus) and *time* (three years) continue to underline the independence of Paul's Gospel.
- The NRSVue is more accurate: Then after three years I did go up to Jerusalem to visit Cephas and stayed with him fifteen days, (Galatians 1:18)
- Although often translated "to get acquainted with Cephas," this could give the impression of merely a social call. Louw and Nida 34.52 has "to visit, with the purpose of obtaining information" for the meaning of ἱστορέω (historeō), particularly in this verse. It may be implied – it was hardly just a social call! On the other hand, it was hardly to be instructed much less to be authorised by Peter.
- NB Peter's original, Jewish name is being used.

1:19

- James, the Lord's brother, is mentioned in the second place. He was not one of the Twelve.
- Acts retains a slightly different memory:

**Acts 9:26** When he [Paul] arrived in Jerusalem, he attempted to associate with the disciples, and they were all afraid of him, because they did not believe that he was a disciple. **27** But Barnabas took Saul, brought him to the apostles, and related to them how he had seen the Lord on the road, that the Lord had spoken to him, and how in Damascus he had spoken out boldly in the name of Jesus. **28** So he was staying with them, associating openly with them in Jerusalem, speaking out boldly in the name of the Lord. **29** He was speaking and debating with the Greek-speaking Jews, but they were trying to kill him. **30** When the brothers found out about this, they brought him down to Caesarea and sent him away to Tarsus.

1:20

- This is technically an oath: God is called as witness. Probably, Paul is countering something the new preachers have claimed about him.

1:21

- I.e. the territory around his home town, Tarsus, and Antioch-on-the-Orontes.

1:22-23

- The assemblies (*ekklēsiai*) in Judea had heard of him but did not know him.
- The expression "proclaiming the good news of the faith" is a little unusual. A parallel usage may clarify:

1:16 preaching God's Son

1:23 preaching the faith

2:24

- The citation from verse 23 gives the voice of the Judeans (NB for Galatians), who then praised God (and not Paul!).

### *Dating the revelation to Paul*

**Acts 9:23** After some time had passed, the Jews plotted to kill him, **24** but their plot became known to Saul. They were watching the gates day and night so that they might kill him, **25** but his disciples took him by night and let him down through an opening in the wall, lowering him in a basket.

Acts 9:26 When he had come to Jerusalem, he attempted to join the disciples, and they were all afraid of him, for they did not believe that he was a disciple.

2Corinthians 11:2 In Damascus, the governor under King Aretas guarded the city of Damascus in order to seize me, 33 but I was let down in a basket through a window in the wall and escaped from his hands.

Aretas IV “Philopatris” (ca. 9 BC- AD 39) was a long-lived king who presided over a period of notable prosperity in Nabatea. When Herod Antipas expelled his wife, Aretas’s daughter, in favour of Herodias, Aretas sent a punitive expedition against him and secured a major victory. According to Josephus, the people regarded Herod’s defeat as divine punishment for his execution of John the Baptist (Ant. 18.109-19). In 2 Cor 11:32-33 (see Gal 1:15-17) Paul describes his escape from Damascus when “the governor [*ethnarch*] under King Aretas” sought to capture him. Whether Aretas’s ethnarch actually controlled the city or simply oversaw its resident Nabatean colony remains disputed.

All this gives us a kind of date. The escape occurred during the reign of Aretas, which ended with his death in 39. Subtract the three years mentioned by Paul, telling us the escape occurred some three years before. That would yield dates such as: 39-3 =36; 38-3 = 37 etc. It all depends on when you think Aretas had a representative in Damascus or even ruled Damascus. It is likely that Nabatean control of Damascus began in later 37. So perhaps as follows:

Birth	c. 6 BC	Jerusalem 1st visit	37
Conversion	AD 33	Jerusalem meeting	47
Arabia	34	Jerusalem 2nd visit	51
Damascus	34-37	Corinth	51-52

### Galatians 2:1-14/15-21

There are parallel between chapter 1 and chapter 2, as follows:

Gal 1:11-24	Gal 2:1-21
“the gospel that was preached by me” to the Galatians in particular	“the gospel that was preached by me” to the Galatians in particular
this gospel “is not of human origin”	“the truth of the gospel”
Paul received it “through an apocalyptic revelation of Jesus Christ”	This was made known to the “pillars” in Jerusalem “in accordance with an apocalyptic revelation”
Positive story involving primarily Cephas but also James	Negative story involving primarily Cephas but also James
Paul now preaches “the faith” that he was earlier trying to destroy	Paul preaches “the faith of Christ”

**Galatians 2:1** Then after fourteen years I went up to Jerusalem again with Barnabas, taking Titus along too. **2** I went there because of a revelation and presented to them the gospel that I preach among the Gentiles. But I did so only in a private meeting with the influential people, to make sure that I was not running—or had not run—in vain. **3** Yet not even Titus, who was with me, was compelled to be circumcised,

although he was a Greek. **4** Now this matter arose because of the false brothers with false pretences who slipped in unnoticed to spy on our freedom that we have in Christ Jesus, to make us slaves. **5** But we did not surrender to them even for a moment, in order that the truth of the gospel would remain with you.

2:1

- Implied: 37 and 14, taking us to 51. Barnabas (a Jew) and Titus (a Gentile)

2:2

- The initiative again lay with God, not with any human authority.
- NB a private visit, not for approval but for the sake of communion/fellowship.
- To run, here 5:7 and in 1 Cor 9:24-26; Phil 2:16. To exert oneself for a goal.

2:3

- NB: nobody expected or (worse) forced Titus to be circumcised.

2:4-5

- In other words, Paul faced opposition in Jerusalem from “false brothers” just like the Galatians did later. A considerable struggle is implied.

**Galatians 2:6** But from those who were influential (whatever they were makes no difference to me; God shows no favouritism between people)—those influential leaders added nothing to my message. **7** On the contrary, when they saw that I was entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised just as Peter was entrusted with the gospel to the circumcised **8** (for he who empowered Peter for his apostleship to the circumcised also empowered me for my apostleship to the Gentiles) **9** and when James, Cephas, and John, who had a reputation as pillars, recognised the grace that had been given to me, they gave to Barnabas and me the right hand of fellowship, agreeing that we would go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised. **10** They requested only that we remember the poor, the very thing I also was eager to do.

2:2 “the acknowledged leaders [*hoi dokountes*]”

2:6a “those acknowledged to be something [*hoi dokountes einai ti*]”

2:6b “the acknowledged leaders [*hoi dokountes*]”

2:9 “those acknowledged to be pillars [*hoi dokountes styloi einai*]”

2:6

- Influential people, lit. “those who seem to be something”!
- NB: In Jerusalem itself, nothing was added to Paul’s teaching.

2:7

- Vv. 7-9: a rather convoluted sentence, at least in Greek.
- Two missions, but not in contradiction.
- Vv. 7b-8 contain the kernel of an earlier agreement reached by Peter and Paul on the occasion of Paul’s first visit to Jerusalem (1:18), while 2:9b-c reports that at the time of the meeting that earlier agreement was also adopted (and adapted) by James and John, representing the Jerusalem church with Peter, and by Barnabas as one of the Antioch representatives. Peter and Paul had thus reached a rudimentary and informal understanding of the parallel missions to Jews and Gentiles, one that would be formally confirmed at the Jerusalem conference by the representatives of the two churches.

- The issue in 47 was the food laws; the issue in 51 is circumcision.
- Peter is portrayed as the leading missionary of the Jerusalem church.
- NB the passive voice indicated God's agency, in the New Testament.

2:8

- The calls of the various apostles are all equal, in Paul's view.

But the Lord said to him, "Go, because this man is my chosen instrument to carry my name before Gentiles and kings and the people of Israel." (Acts 9:15)

*Contrast:* After there had been much debate, Peter stood up and said to them, "My brothers, you know that in the early days God made a choice among you, that I should be the one through whom the gentiles would hear the message of the good news and become believers." (Acts 15:7)

2:9

- Notice the new sequence: James, Cephas and John, *in that order*.
- The hand gesture signals full communion.

**2 Eusebius 23:4** "James, the brother of the Lord, succeeded to the government of the Church in conjunction with the apostles. He has been called the Just by all from the time of our Saviour to the present day; for there were many that bore the name of James. **5** He was holy from his mother's womb; and he drank no wine nor strong drink, nor did he eat flesh. No razor came upon his head; he did not anoint himself with oil, and he did not use the bath. **6** He alone was permitted to enter into the holy place; for he wore not woolen but linen garments.

2:10

- This became a major project of Paul's. Cf. 1 Cor 16; 2 Cor 8-9; Rom 15. It means more than money: the mutual support was building block of communion.

**Galatians 2:11** But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he had clearly done wrong. **12** Until certain people came from James, he had been eating with the Gentiles. But when they arrived, he stopped doing this and separated himself because he was afraid of those who were pro-circumcision. **13** And the rest of the Jews also joined with him in this hypocrisy, so that even Barnabas was led astray with them by their hypocrisy. **14** But when I saw that they were not behaving consistently with the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas in front of them all, "If you, although you are a Jew, live like a Gentile and not like a Jew, how can you try to force the Gentiles to live like Jews?"

2:11-13

- The "Antioch Incident". Clearly, the discernment of the Jerusalem meeting and the letter send (Acts 15) had *not* been effective.
- Peter is caught in flagrant contradiction of himself! Paul "excuses" him through fear – though Peter's real motive must remain impenetrable.
- The disappointment with Barnabas is quite sharp.

2:14

- The logic of Paul is unassailable. Cf. *Those guilty of sin must be rebuked before all, as a warning to the rest.* (1Timothy 5:20)

## SESSION 3: A close reading of Galatians 2:15-21

New English Translation	English Standard Version
<b>Galatians 2:15</b> We are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners,	<b>Galatians 2:15</b> We ourselves are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners;
<p><b>16</b> yet we know that no one is justified by the works of the law</p> <p>but by the faithfulness of Jesus Christ.</p> <p>And we have come to believe in Christ Jesus, so that we may be justified by the faithfulness of Christ and not by the works of the law,</p> <p>because by the works of the law no one will be justified.</p>	<p><b>16</b> yet we know that a person is not justified by works of the law</p> <p>but through faith in Jesus Christ,</p> <p>so we also have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law,</p> <p>because by works of the law no one will be justified.</p>
<p><b>17</b> But if while seeking to be justified in Christ we ourselves have also been found to be sinners,</p> <p>is Christ then one who encourages sin? Absolutely not!</p>	<p><b>17</b> But if, in our endeavour to be justified in Christ, we too were found to be sinners,</p> <p>is Christ then a servant of sin? Certainly not!</p>
<p><b>18</b> But if I build up again those things I once destroyed,</p> <p>I demonstrate that I am one who breaks God's law.</p>	<p><b>18</b> For if I rebuild what I tore down,</p> <p>I prove myself to be a transgressor.</p>
<p><b>19</b> For through the law I died to the law so that I may live to God.</p>	<p><b>19</b> For through the law I died to the law, so that I might live to God.</p>
<p><b>20</b> I have been crucified with Christ, and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me.</p> <p>So the life I now live in the body, I live because of the faithfulness of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.</p>	<p><b>20</b> I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me.</p> <p>And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.</p>
<p><b>21</b> I do not set aside God's grace, because if righteousness could come through the law,</p> <p>then Christ died for nothing!</p>	<p><b>21</b> I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness were through the law,</p> <p>then Christ died for no purpose.</p>

**Activity:** spot the differences and ask questions.

**Key terms:**

justified; works of the law; faithfulness; believe; grace.

Galatians 2:15-21 is one of Paul's more intricate passage (comparable to Romans 3:21-26, see below). A few approaches may help.

**1. What happened?**

Paul was en route to Asia Minor or Greece. While in Galatia, he fell ill but nevertheless preached the Gospel successfully to some Gentiles. The Gentile Christ-believers did not practice the dietary laws, circumcision and Sabbath observance. Paul, as usual, moved on. Travelling evangelists arrived from Jerusalem and they "completed" Paul's work by insisting on the full practice of the ritual Law as in Jerusalem. Disconcerted, the community evidently sent to Paul to inform him and ask his opinion.

**2. Audience?**

So far in the letter, Paul has been speaking to the whole community directly. In these verses, he seems to talk over the heads of the Gentile believers to address his fellow Christ-believing Jews. Our verses, very compressed, give us the core of the Pauline teaching.

**3. Overlapping stories**

- The story of ancient Israel and its relationship with God
- The story of Jesus' death and resurrection
- The story of Paul's "conversion" experience
- The story of the mission to the Galatians and their coming to faith
- The story of the "intruders" from Jerusalem

**4. The New Perspective on Paul**

Key 1 It was not part of Jewish teaching at the time that keeping the law was a way of *earning* God's grace. Even the ritual Law (as here) was a *response* of grace to grace, not a way of putting oneself in credit with God.

Key 2 The 16th century Reformers assumed a match between the practices of late medieval Catholicism and those of first century Judaism. Jews have never recognised themselves in this projection.

Key 3 The real issue is not good works to earn grace but ritual practices to distinguish the Jewish people from the rest of humanity.

Key 4 Paul's objection that the putting back such practices is a failure to realise God's project in Jesus: the extension of election grace to all humanity *without distinction*. The imposition of the ritual Law threatens the entire Pauline proclamation and mission.

**5. Pistis Christou**

- *Dia pistis Christou* can be rendered either as an objective genitive ("though faith in Jesus Christ") or as a subjective genitive ("through the faith[fulness] of Jesus Christ").
- Literally the Greek translates "the faith of Jesus Christ."
- In Greek "pistis Christou" occurs 7 times in the undisputed letters: Rom 3:22; Gal 2:16 (x2); 2:20; 3:22; Phil 3:9. In Philippians and Romans, the sense seems most likely to be the faith that Christ had, the faith which he exhibited.
- Being justified "in Christ" and Christ "in me" suggests a transfer to the sphere of Jesus, and hence into the faith which Jesus himself had.



- Notice: What then? If some were unfaithful, their unfaithfulness will not nullify *God's faithfulness*, will it? (Romans 3:3). See Romans 3:3 What if some were unfaithful? Will their faithlessness nullify the faithfulness of God (tēn pistin tou theou)?

## 6. Romans 3:21-26

New English Translation	English Standard Version
<b>Romans 3:21</b> But now apart from the law the righteousness of God (although it is attested by the law and the prophets) has been disclosed—	<b>Romans 3:21</b> But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it—
<b>22</b> namely, the righteousness of God through the faithfulness of Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction,	<b>22</b> the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction:
<b>23</b> for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.	<b>23</b> for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,
<b>24</b> But they are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.	<b>24</b> and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,
<b>25</b> God publicly displayed him at his death as the mercy seat accessible through faith. This was to demonstrate his righteousness, because God in his forbearance had passed over the sins previously committed.	<b>25</b> whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins.
<b>26</b> This was also to demonstrate his righteousness in the present time, so that he would be just and the justifier of the one who lives because of Jesus' faithfulness.	<b>26</b> It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

- NB: disclosed (v.22); publicly displayed (v.25); demonstrate (v.25); demonstrate (v.26).
- Translation of "hilastērion" / "ἱλαστήριον": NET "mercy seat"; ESV "a propitiation by his blood" NRSV and NRSVue "sacrifice of atonement by his blood" or "place of atonement"; REB "the means of expiating sin" RNJB "a reconciliation in his blood".
- In summary: *God disclosed his faithfulness to broken humanity through the faithful of Jesus himself.*

## 7. Common ground with the Intruders

*NB: the intruders are, of course, fellow Christ-believing Jews.*

Knowing that a person is not	<i>justified</i>	by <i>works of the Law</i>
	but	through (the) faith(fulness) of Jesus Christ
even we have believed	in	Jesus Christ
in order that we might be	<i>justified</i>	by (the) faith(fulness) of Christ
	and not	by <i>works of the Law</i>
	because	by <i>works of the Law</i>
no one will be	<i>justified</i>	

Implied: *otherwise, why believe in Jesus at all?*

## 8. Works of the Law (Qumran)

1QS 5:21 [they] shall investigate his spiritual qualities as a community, each member taking part. They shall investigate his understanding and *works vis à vis the Law*, guided both by the Sons of Aaron, who have jointly volunteered to uphold

1QS 6:18 When he has passed a full year in the Yahad, the general membership shall inquire into the details of his understanding and *works of the Law*.

## 9. Being “in Christ”: participative salvation

Rom 3:24; 6:11, 23; 8:1-2, 39-9:1; 12:5; 15:17; 16:3, 7, 9-10; 1 Cor 1:2, 4, 30; 3:1; 4:10, 15, 17; 15:18-19, 31; 16:24; 2 Cor 2:17; 3:14; 5:17, 19; 12:2, 19; Gal 1:22; 2:4, 17; 3:14, 26, 28; Phil 1:1, 13, 26; 2:1, 5; 3:3, 14; 4:7, 19, 21; 1 Thess 2:14; 4:16; 5:18; Phlm 1:8, 20, 23

### *Examples from Galatians itself*

Galatians 1:22 But I was personally unknown to the churches of Judea that are **in Christ**.

Galatians 3:14 in order that **in Christ Jesus** the blessing of Abraham would come to the Gentiles, so that we could receive the promise of the Spirit by faith.

Galatians 2:4 Now this matter arose because of the false brothers with false pretences who slipped in unnoticed to spy on our freedom that we have **in Christ Jesus**, to make us slaves.

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

Galatians 2:17 But if while seeking to be justified **in Christ** we ourselves have also been found to be sinners, is Christ then one who encourages sin? Absolutely not!

Galatians 3:28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female –for all of you are one **in Christ Jesus**.

## 10. And so, back to the text of Galatians 2:15-21

**Galatians 2:15** We are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners,

- Story of the Jews in the past (“we”)
- Paul is, so to speak, taking over the heads of the Galatians, to his fellow Jews.

**Galatians 2:16** yet we know that no one is justified by the works of the law but by the faithfulness of Jesus Christ. And we have come to believe in Christ Jesus, so that we may be justified by the faithfulness of Christ and not by the works of the law, because by the works of the law no one will be justified.

- This is the shared experience of Jews who have come to believe in Jesus. The “works of the law” were important, of course.
- Accepting Jesus means going beyond the “Identity markers” of Judaism to the faithfulness of Jesus himself.
- Justified means “to be put in right relationship”.
- So far, the intruders and Paul are in agreement.

**Galatians 2:17** But if while seeking to be justified in Christ we ourselves have also been found to be sinners, is Christ then one who encourages sin? Absolutely not!

- The intruders seems to have made an accusation against Paul: he is using Jesus as an excuse to make you sin by not keeping or breaking the law.
- Paul is writings very compactly.
- Spelled out fully: if faith in Jesus is causing us to abandon the Law and to abandon the Law is to sin, do that mean that Jesus is encouraging sin?
- Paul rejects this accusation absolutely.

**Galatians 2:18** But if I build up again those things I once destroyed, I demonstrate that I am one who breaks God’s law.

- Still on the same point: Paul did stop keeping the Law.
- If he were now to go back to keeping it, that would be a clear demonstration that not keeping the Law had been a sin.
- This is also rejected vehemently.

**Galatians 2:19** For through the law I died to the law so that I may live to God.

- This is certainly obscure.
- The best approach is to think of the stories of both Jesus and Paul.
- Jesus was condemned to death because of the Law (he stood accused to making himself God’s Son)
- Paul persecuted the disciples on account of Deuteronomy 21:22-23: whoever hangs on a tree is under God’s curse.
- The revelation of Jesus (Paul’s “conversion”) meant that the disciples were right after all: Jesus is risen, the Messiah and Lord.
- But what about Deuteronomy: who ever hangs on a tree is under God’s curse?
- Under God’s curse means to be *outside the Law, outside the covenant*.
- Therefore, by going “outside the Law”, Jesus was extending his covenant grace to everyone without distinction.
- First of all, Christ died to the Law, moving outside it, and now lives “to God”.

- Paul then realised that something in him “had to die”, had to cease to be and that “something” was his attachment to the ritual Law.
- Participating in Christ, Paul also died to the law to share Christ’s “living to God”.
- Several “narratives” are intricately combined, even obscurely.

**Galatians 2:20** I have been crucified with Christ, and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. So the life I now live in the body, I live because of the faithfulness of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

- The story of Paul’s conversion experience and the consequences.
- Crucifixion = the disclosure of God’s covenant faithfulness to all humanity.
- Crucifixion = Paul’s participation in Jesus’ own faithfulness.
- Participation in Christ: a kind of “Christ-mysticism”.
- Who love me and gave himself for me: i.e. on the cross.

**Galatians 2:21** I do not set aside God’s grace, because if righteousness could come through the law, then Christ died for nothing!

- Simply: there’s no going back.
- Paul: If I were to go back to the keeping the ritual law (circumcision, kosher laws and Sabbath observance), this would prove I had simply not grasped God’s project in Jesus.
- That “project” is to extend the grace of the covenant to all humanity without distinction.

## SESSION 4: Galatians 3:1-4:7

### Steps

- Read the full section and ask questions
- Outline of 3:1-4:7
- Jumping in!
- Final reflections

### ARGUMENT 2 (3:1-4:7)

#### *Justification by Law or by Faith?*

**Galatians 3:1** You foolish Galatians! Who has cast a spell on you? Before your eyes Jesus Christ was vividly portrayed as crucified! **2** The only thing I want to learn from you is this: Did you receive the Spirit by doing the works of the law or by believing what you heard? **3** Are you so foolish? Although you began with the Spirit, are you now trying to finish by human effort? **4** Have you suffered so many things for nothing?—if indeed it was for nothing. **5** Does God then give you the Spirit and work miracles among you by your doing the works of the law or by your believing what you heard?

**Galatians 3:6** Just as Abraham *believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness*, **7** so then, understand that those who believe are the sons of Abraham. **8** And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, proclaimed the gospel to Abraham ahead of time, saying, “*All the nations will be blessed in you.*” **9** So then those who believe are blessed along with Abraham the believer. **10** For all who rely on doing the works of the law are under a curse, because it is written, “*Cursed is everyone who does not keep on doing everything written in the book of the law.*” **11** Now it is clear no one is justified before God by the law, because *the righteous one will live by faith*. **12** But the law is not based on faith, but *the one who does* the works of the law *will live by them*. **13** Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us (because it is written, “*Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree*”) **14** in order that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham would come to the Gentiles, so that we could receive the promise of the Spirit by faith.

#### *Inheritance Comes from Promises and not Law*

**Galatians 3:15** Brothers and sisters, I offer an example from everyday life: When a covenant has been ratified, even though it is only a human contract, no one can set it aside or add anything to it. **16** Now the promises were spoken to Abraham and to his descendant. Scripture does not say, “and to the descendants,” referring to many, but “*and to your descendant*,” referring to one, who is Christ. **17** What I am saying is this: The law that came 430 years later does not cancel a covenant previously ratified by God, so as to invalidate the promise. **18** For if the inheritance is based on the law, it is no longer based on the promise, but God graciously gave it to Abraham through the promise.

**Galatians 3:19** Why then was the law given? It was added because of transgressions, until the arrival of the descendant to whom the promise had been made. It was administered through angels by an intermediary. **20** Now an intermediary is not for one party alone, but God is one. **21** Is the law therefore opposed to the promises of God? Absolutely not! For if a law had been given that was able to give life, then righteousness

would certainly have come by the law. **22** But the scripture imprisoned everything under sin so that the promise could be given—because of the faithfulness of Jesus Christ—to those who believe.

*Children of God Are Heirs of Promise*

**Galatians 3:23** Now before faith came we were held in custody under the law, being kept as prisoners until the coming faith would be revealed. **24** Thus the law had become our guardian until Christ, so that we could be declared righteous by faith. **25** But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian. **26** For in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God through faith. **27** For all of you who were baptised into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. **28** There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female—for all of you are one in Christ Jesus. **29** And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s descendants, heirs according to the promise.

**Galatians 4:1** Now I mean that the heir, as long as he is a minor, is no different from a slave, though he is the owner of everything. **2** But he is under guardians and managers until the date set by his father. **3** So also we, when we were minors, were enslaved under the basic forces of the world. **4** But when the appropriate time had come, God sent out his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, **5** to redeem those who were under the law, so that we may be adopted as sons with full rights. **6** And because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, who calls “*Abba!* Father!” **7** So you are no longer a slave but a son, and if you are a son, then you are also an heir through God.

**Outline of 3:1-4:7**

- |                             |         |
|-----------------------------|---------|
| 1. Introduction             | 3:1-5   |
| 2. Midrash                  | 3:6-14  |
| 3. First juridical example  | 3:15-18 |
| 4. First diatribe question  | 3:19-20 |
| 5. Second diatribe question | 3:21-22 |
| 6. Second juridical example | 3:23-29 |
| 7. Conclusion               | 4:1-7   |

NB: Most of 3:1-4:7 is fairly clear; the difficult passage is 3:6-14.

Jumping in!

**1. Introduction**

**Galatians 3:1** You foolish (*anoētoi*) Galatians! *Who has cast a spell on you?* Before your eyes Jesus Christ was vividly portrayed as crucified! **2** The only thing I want to learn from you is this: *Did you receive the Spirit by doing the works of the law or by believing what you heard?* **3** *Are you so foolish (anoētoi)? Although you began with the Spirit, are you now trying to finish by human effort (lit. flesh)?* **4** *Have you suffered so many things for nothing?—if indeed it was for nothing.* **5** *Does God then give you the Spirit and work miracles among you by your doing the works of the law or by your believing what you heard?*

- Ancient Greek used no punctuation (full stops, commas, colons, exclamation marks or question marks).
- Insult = a way of getting people's attention. It does work but you lose goodwill!
- Repetition of foolish = *anoētoi*, literally "no mind (nous)" or mindless.
- Notice the high number of questions (in italics)
- Rhetorical questions to which the answer must be obvious.
- Clearly, they had experienced the Spirit and miracles long before the intruders imposed the full ritual law. Implied: so what is added by the ritual law? Nothing.

## 2. Midrash

**Galatians 3:6** Just as Abraham *believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness*, **7** so then, understand that those who believe are the sons of Abraham. **8** And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, proclaimed the gospel to Abraham ahead of time, saying, "*All the nations will be blessed in you.*" **9** So then those who believe are blessed along with Abraham the believer. **10** For all who rely on doing the works of the law are under a curse, because it is written, "*Cursed is everyone who does not keep on doing everything written in the book of the law.*" **11** Now it is clear no one is justified before God by the law, because *the righteous one will live by faith*. **12** But the law is not based on faith, but *the one who does* the works of the law *will live by them*. **13** Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us (because it is written, "*Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree*") **14** in order that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham would come to the Gentiles, so that we could receive the promise of the Spirit by faith.

### *Midrashic "style"*

They quote freely verses of scripture as proof texts, introduced by standard citation formulae such as "as it is said / written".

They are fond of stringing together long series of biblical verses. By introducing other verses the darshanim demonstrate the fundamental principle of the unity of scripture.

### *Midrashic arguments*

Qal va-homer

(inference from a less important case to a more important)

Examples

**Exodus 6:12** But Moses replied to the LORD, "If the Israelites did not listen to me, then how will Pharaoh listen to me, since I speak with difficulty?"

**Matthew 6:30** And if this is how God clothes the wild grass, which is here today and tomorrow is tossed into the fire to heat the oven, won't he clothe you even more, you people of little faith?

**Galatians 2:14** But when I saw that they were not behaving consistently with the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas in front of them all, "If you, although you are a Jew, live like a Gentile and not like a Jew, how can you try to force the Gentiles to live like Jews?"

Gezerah shavah

(inference based on the presence in two different laws of a common term).

**Acts 2:22** “Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man clearly attested to you by God with powerful deeds, wonders, and miraculous signs that God performed among you through him, just as you yourselves know— **23** this man, who was handed over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you executed by nailing him to a cross at the hands of Gentiles. **24** But God raised him up, having released him from the pains of death, because it was not possible for him to be held in its power. **25** For David says about him,

*‘I saw the Lord always in front of me,  
for he is at my right hand so that I will not be shaken.*

**26** *Therefore my heart was glad and my tongue rejoiced;  
my body also will live in hope,*

**27** *because you will not leave my soul in Hades,  
nor permit your Holy One to experience decay.*

**28** *You have made known to me the paths of life;  
you will make me full of joy with your presence.’*

**Acts 2:29** “Brothers, I can speak confidently to you about our forefather David, that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. **30** So then, because he was a prophet and knew that God *had sworn to him with an oath to seat one of his descendants on his throne*, (Psalm 132) **31** David by foreseeing this spoke about the resurrection of the Christ, that *he was neither abandoned to Hades*, nor did his body *experience decay*. **32** This Jesus God raised up, and we are all witnesses of it. **33** So then, exalted to the right hand of God, and having received the promise of the Holy Spirit from the Father, he has poured out what you both see and hear. **34** For David did not ascend into heaven, but he himself says,

*‘The Lord said to my lord,  
“Sit at my right hand*

**35** *until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.’”*

**Acts 2:36** Therefore let all the house of Israel know beyond a doubt that God has made this Jesus whom you crucified both Lord and Christ.”

- Peter brings two passages to bear on the resurrection of Jesus.
- The first is from Psalm 16:8-10 and the second is from Psalm 110:1.
- David is the presumed author of the Psalms and the shared term in both Psalms is “sit at my right hand”.
- There is likewise an allusion to Ps 132:11 / 2 Sam 7:12-13, the promise in the Davidic covenant.
- The shared idea there is “enthronement”.
- David can’t be talking about himself because he is dead and buried.



**Key texts in this midrashic argument** (ESV translation, which is more literal)

In a manner similar to Acts 2:22-36, Paul brings to bear several key texts from the Hebrew Bible.

**Genesis 15:6** And he **believed** the LORD, and he counted it to him as **righteousness**.

**Genesis 12:3** I will **bless** those who bless you, and him who dishonours you I will **curse**, and in you all the **families** of the earth shall be **blessed**.”

**Deuteronomy 27:26** “‘**Cursed** be anyone who does not confirm the words of this **law** by doing them.’ And all the people shall say, ‘Amen.’

**Habakkuk 2:4** “Behold, his soul is puffed up; it is not upright within him, but the **righteous** shall live by his **faith**.”

**Leviticus 18:5** You shall therefore keep my statutes and my rules; if a person does them, **he shall live by them**: I am the LORD.

**Deuteronomy 21:22** “And if a man has committed a crime punishable by death and he is put to death, and you hang him on a tree, **23** his body shall not remain all night on the tree, but you shall bury him the same day, **for anyone hanged on a tree under God’s curse**. You shall not defile your land that the LORD your God is giving you for an inheritance. (ESV adapted)

**Line of argument**

- v.7 The Gentiles are Abraham’s descendants because they are those from faith.
- V.8 God promised Abraham that all the Gentiles would be blessed in him.
- V.9 Therefore, the Gentiles are blessed with Abraham because they are from faith.

I.e. those who belong to the community of faith established on the basis of Christ-faith, and so believe in Christ, have received the blessing of Abraham. That line of argument – repeated in Romans – is relatively clear.

**And what about “curse”?**

- Curse and blessing are contrasted.
- Curse does not mean “malediction”.
- Key: citation from Deut 27:26.
- To be cursed means to be deprived of the blessing of the covenant (and the Law).
- Verse 13 can be read two ways.

**13** Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us (because it is written, “**Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree**”)

- **Traditional:** Jesus was cursed, i.e. punished by God for Adam’s sin. This is really influenced by Anselm’s understanding of the cross as the payment of a price.

- **New Perspective on Paul:** Jesus, on the cross, entered the place of curse, thus bringing God's covenant blessing to all those previously excluded from the covenant.
- **Advantage:** Jesus' ministry was marked by his going to the excluded, offering them the compassion and mercy of God. Jesus' death – in this understanding – is consistent with his ministry: in himself he became God's blessing to all the excluded by a total identification with all previously excluded from the covenant blessings.
- Thus: compassionate solidarity.
- After this paragraph, the rest is relatively easy to understand (you will be glad to hear!).

### 3. First juridical example

**Galatians 3:15** Brothers and sisters, I offer an example from everyday life: When a covenant has been ratified, even though it is only a human contract, no one can set it aside or add anything to it. **16** Now the promises were spoken to Abraham and to his descendant. Scripture does not say, "and to the descendants," referring to many, but "*and to your descendant*," referring to one, who is Christ. **17** What I am saying is this: The law that came 430 years later does not cancel a covenant previously ratified by God, so as to invalidate the promise. **18** For if the inheritance is based on the law, it is no longer based on the promise, but God graciously gave it to Abraham through the promise.

- Covenants (or testaments) never lose their validity.
- The earlier covenant with Abraham still stands.
- It is not annulled by the later covenant with Moses.
- The gap of time is 430 years.
- Also: the argument from descendant in the singular.
- Verses 15-16 present a *qal va-homer* argument: if this is true on the ordinary human level, but much more in God's covenant.

### 4. First diatribe question

**Galatians 3:19** **Why then was the law given?** It was added because of transgressions, until the arrival of the descendant to whom the promise had been made. It was administered through angels by an intermediary. **20** Now an intermediary is not for one party alone, but God is one.

- Diatribe: a way of engaging the audience by questions.
- Goal: to underline that the Law was provisional, only for a certain time.
- "Because" of transgressions seems to mean: so that transgressions could now be identified as such.
- There were Jewish traditions at the time which included angels in the giving of the Law through Moses. In other words, it did not come through direct communication with God.
- What comes through an intermediary is inferior to what comes through the one God.
- Behind it: the old Greek contrast between the one and the many.

## 5. Second diatribe question

**Galatians 3:21** Is the law therefore opposed to the promises of God? Absolutely not! For if a law had been given that was able to give life, then righteousness would certainly have come by the law. **22** But the scripture imprisoned everything under sin so that the promise could be given—because of the faithfulness of Jesus Christ—to those who believe.

- A good question. If the Law was provisional and has now been set aside, why was it given in the first place? Was it somehow opposed to God's will?
- Alas, the Law was able only to identify transgression but could not help people overcome the power of sin.
- Only later and precisely "because of the faithfulness of Jesus Christ" were believers at last able to overcome sin and transgression.

## 5. Second juridical example

**Galatians 3:23** Now before faith came we were held in custody under the law, being kept as prisoners until the coming faith would be revealed. **24** Thus the law had become our guardian until Christ, so that we could be declared righteous by faith. **25** But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian. **26** For in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God through faith. **27** For all of you who were baptised into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. **28** There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female—for all of you are one in Christ Jesus. **29** And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendants, heirs according to the promise.

- Prisoners lit. *sygkleiomenoi* i.e. "locked in together". This echoes the preceding verse: **Galatians 3:22** But the scripture imprisoned (*synekleisen*) everything under sin so that the promise could be given—because of the faithfulness of Jesus Christ—to those who believe.
- Faith = the faithfulness of Jesus first of all. Cf. Romans 3:21-26.
- Guardian lit. *paidagōgos*, a technical term for a slave who accompanied a child to school. He was not a teacher as such.
- NB vocabulary of growing up: guardian, sons, heirs.
- The period of guardianship ended with the coming of Christ, meaning again that the Law was a temporary measure, a provisional state of affairs.
- "Sons" keeps the expression Son of God in mind.

**Galatians 2:20** I have been crucified with Christ, and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. So the life I now live in the body, I live because of the faithfulness of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

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

**Galatians 4:6** And because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, who calls "Abba! Father!" **7** So you are no longer a slave but a son, and if you are a son, then you are also an heir through God.

- "Clothed" – but not simply outwardly. In this culture, external clothing is the expression of one's true self. It may reflect early baptism practice.

- All human are equal without distinction: a totally new idea minted by St Paul.
- Heirs of the promise: picking up the earlier argument from Abraham and the promise made to him.
- Frequency of “Christ” in these verses – six occurrences. A good example of the rhetorical figure of *conduplicatio*, insistence through repetition.

## 6. Conclusion

**Galatians 4:1** Now I mean that the heir, as long as he is a minor, is no different from a slave, though he is the owner of everything. **2** But he is under guardians and managers until the date set by his father. **3** So also we, when we were minors, were enslaved under the basic forces of the world. **4** But when the appropriate time had come, God sent out his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, **5** to redeem those who were under the law, so that we may be adopted as sons with full rights. **6** And because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, who calls “*Abba!* Father!” **7** So you are no longer a slave but a son, and if you are a son, then you are also an heir through God.

- Paul draws together all he wanted to say in the preceding, complex arguments.
- Vocabulary: heir, minor, slave, guardian. The word translated guardian here is different in Greek: *epitropos*, meaning a manager or foreman or steward. The word translated as manager is *oikonomos*, meaning the manager of household or estate or a house as such. It can also mean a public treasurer as in Romans 16:23.
- The state of being a minor is temporary. Likewise, once again, the Law was provisional.
- Basic forces of the world: *ta stoicheia tou kosmou*. *Stoicheion* has several meanings: (1) basic components or elements of something, including the cosmos; (2) transcendent powers that are in control over events in this world, elements, elemental spirits. What exactly Paul had in mind here is much disputed.
- The key verses 4 and 5 are quite carefully laid out:

4 But when the appropriate time had come,  
 { God sent out his Son,  
 { born of a woman, born under the law,  
 5 { to redeem those who were under the law,  
 { so that we may be adopted as sons with full rights.

- Appropriate time: lit. *to plērōma tou chronou* i.e. the fullness of time.
- Verse 6 serves two purposes: it draws out a further consequence and also invites corroboration in the experience of the Galatians. That is, already they had the experience of Spirit, already they were praying “*Abba Father*” before the intruders intruded.
- No longer a slave: i.e. they no longer need the services of *paidagōgos* or the Law which kept them as slaves.
- Verse 7: negative (no longer a slave); positive (“son”) and positive again (“heir through God”).
- Heir through God: i.e. once more by God’s doing and not by some humanly imposed traditions or practices. Really through God’s action in Jesus’ death and resurrection.
- Another good example of *conduplicatio* in verses 4-7.

- 6     And because you are sons,  
    {     God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts,  
        who calls “Abba! Father!”
- 7     {     So you are no longer a slave but a son,  
        and if you are a son,  
        then you are also an heir through God.

### Final reflections

Phew!