

In our study of Galatians Paul has taken us through events that took place over a long period of time. We can easily be confused by the timeline because the letter jumps from the present to past events. Allow me to lay it out for you.

Paul was a persecutor of Christians shortly after Jesus ascended, around AD 33 to 35. On his way to Damascus the resurrected and glorified Jesus met him and called him to be an apostle to the Gentiles. He spent three years getting a correct perspective on the Scriptures. He then met for a couple weeks with Peter and James in Jerusalem and then traveled north to Cilicia where he had grown up. Barnabas sought him out and brought him to Antioch where a church of Jews and Gentiles was rapidly growing. The Jews and Gentiles ate together, something Jews never would have done before. It was forbidden by rabbinical teaching. But now, realizing the life of Christ in them made them one, they could share the same loaf at the same table (1 Corinthians 10:17<sup>i</sup>). They had communion this way which further illustrated they were all one in Christ.

Paul and Barnabas were sent out by the church in Antioch to start new churches. Some of the churches they planted were in Galatia which were in what is southern Turkey today. Not long after they returned to Antioch.

Then some people from the Jerusalem church came to Antioch and told the Gentile believers that they needed to be circumcised. This implied the Gentiles were not saved. So, Paul and Barnabas went to meet with the Jerusalem leaders Peter, John, and Jesus' brother James to discuss the problem and bring them a gift for the poor. They also brought the Gentile Titus with them. The Apostles agreed with Paul that salvation was by grace alone and that Titus did not need to be circumcised.

Even after this meeting, Peter, Barnabas, and the Jewish Christians were influenced by these people Paul calls "false teachers," to not eat with the Gentile believers. Paul called out Peter on his hypocrisy. Paul heard that those same trouble making Jews had visited the churches of Galatia and told them they had to be circumcised and the Galatians believed them. Paul is recounting all this history to try to help the Galatians understand the truth of salvation by grace alone.

*<sup>15</sup> We ourselves are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners; <sup>16</sup> yet we know that a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, so we also have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law, because by works of the law no one will be justified.* Galatians 2:15,16 To Jews, "Gentile sinners" meant those who worship idols (Matthew 26:45<sup>ii</sup>). Jesus was a friend of "sinners" meaning Jews who were non-observant (Matthew 11:19<sup>iii</sup>). Jesus ate with them which was one reason the Pharisees attacked Him (Luke 15:2<sup>iv</sup>). By sharing a meal with non-observant Jews, Jesus was showing the kingdom of God had come for the new covenant would replace the old one. Jesus explained that it was not what went into the mouth and is expelled that defiles us but rather the condition of the heart that matters. The Law was fulfilled in Jesus (Matthew 5:17<sup>v</sup>). Now grace had brought the kingdom of God to all who placed their faith in Jesus (Luke 17:20,21<sup>vi</sup>).

Every Messianic Jew should have known they could not keep the whole Law. They knew it was faith in Jesus Christ that made them righteous in God's eyes. A core doctrine of the Christian belief is that we are justified (to be made right with God/ counted righteous) through faith in Jesus who was the only person who fully kept the law and who

offers to trade His righteousness for our sins (2 Corinthians 5:21<sup>vii</sup>). The Psalmist told us *there is none righteous no not one* (Psalm 14:3<sup>viii</sup>). Even James who is said to have continued to observe most Jewish customs explained that if we wanted to keep the Law *to be right with God*, we would have to keep it all (James 2:10<sup>ix</sup>). If we fail in one point, we fall short. Only Jesus could keep all the law because He had no sin nature. As He is the Word made flesh, He was tempted in every way we are but never succumbed to temptation (Hebrews 4:15<sup>x</sup>). He did for us what we could not do for ourselves.

This is wonderful news! That is why it is called the gospel (good news). We all fail, and we know it. Only the most pridefully arrogant claim to keep all the laws of God and never sin. Jesus is the only way to be right with God.

*<sup>17</sup> But if, in our endeavor to be justified in Christ, we too were found to be sinners, is Christ then a servant of sin? Certainly not!* Galatians 2:17 Paul has set forward his conviction and that of the church in general, which is that we are saved by grace alone and not by anything we have done. That made Jew and Gentile one. But those who were opposed to Paul's gospel of grace were suggesting that by eating with Gentiles, Paul was using their oneness in Christ to sin. Even though those Gentiles were born-again believers, the Judaizers still considered them "sinners" unless they became circumcised. They thought it was a sin to eat with them unless they became Jews outwardly. That makes the work of Christ for our salvation just one step to be followed by circumcision and then what other laws? Where did that leave women converts? The whole thought is ridiculous and inconsistent with the new covenant Jesus introduced!

The revelation given to Peter in Acts 10 was that God is no respecter of persons (Acts 10:34,35<sup>xi</sup>). If God poured out His Spirit on the Gentiles in the home of Cornelius, how can it be a sin to share a meal with them? Why would we not have fellowship if we both have the same Spirit of God within our hearts? The Spirit is not given because we obey laws or are really good people. He is given to us because we are sanctified by Jesus' sacrifice for us. His grace gave us the faith to trade our sins for His righteousness. That is what the Judaizers were missing.

*<sup>18</sup> For if I rebuild what I tore down, I prove myself to be a transgressor.* Galatians 2:18 If Peter previously realized he was under the new covenant and no longer under the old and so entered Cornelius' home at the leading of the Holy Spirit, and ate with Gentiles who had just become filled with the Spirit. How is it that he is now back under the law eating at a separate Jews only table? Didn't Paul say in the previous verses that prior to this Peter had approved the gospel of grace alone for salvation? One way or the other he proves to be a transgressor, either because earlier he forsook the old covenant or because now at the "Jews only" table he has forsaken the new covenant. Paul is not speaking in the accusative form though. That means he is referring to the temptation he experienced when Peter and Barnabas separated themselves from the Gentiles. This verse is the reasoning Paul employed to keep himself from giving in to the same fear to which Peter yielded. It is a fear we too can experience when we fellowship with people of other denominations who are looked down on by our own. It is humbling to recognize that Jesus is our all in all. His grace supplies all we need. Don't be tempted to add anything else or to practice things that others think make us righteous just to fit in. That is what Peter was doing, and that is acting hypocritically. Stand with Jesus!

*<sup>19</sup> For through the law I died to the law, so that I might live to God. <sup>20a</sup> I have been crucified with Christ.* Galatians 2:19,20a He died to the Law when he was crucified

with Jesus so that He could live by the Spirit. The Law (*Tenach* specifically the Prophets) predicted the coming of the One who would bear our transgressions (Isaiah 53:4-6<sup>xii</sup>) and bring us into a new covenant (Jeremiah 31:31-33<sup>xiii</sup>). The Torah tells us we can only be justified by blood (Leviticus 17:11<sup>xiv</sup>). The Psalms tell us the blood of bulls and goats only foreshadows something greater (Psalm 51:16,17<sup>xv</sup>; Hebrews 10:4<sup>xvi</sup>). Paul also refers to dying to self, sin, and the world, meaning that those things no longer dominate him (Romans 6:6,7<sup>xvii</sup>; Galatians 6:14<sup>xviii</sup>). They don't reign over his life like a master. That is how he is referring to dying to the law, meaning the Mosaic covenant commands. **Once he lived to keep the minutia of its details. Now he has a new master, the Holy Spirit,** which the prophets predicted would replace the old covenant.

Through the Spirit he lives to God. The first sentence in verse 20 completes the thought. He died to the law to live to God having been crucified with Christ. Dying with Christ is to die to the law that condemns us. Raised with Him means we have new Holy Spirit imbued life everlasting. We don't stop before we make a move to see if we are breaking a law. We let the life of the risen Lord direct our steps (Jeremiah 10:23<sup>xix</sup>; Isaiah 30:21<sup>xx</sup>). He would never go against the Spirit behind the laws. <sup>14</sup> *For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."* Galatians 5:14

<sup>20b</sup> *It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. 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.*

Galatians 2:20b Paul died to the law and to his pride in keeping the law, and to the condemnation of the law when he associated himself with the cross of Christ. That is how sin was dealt with once and for all. All the prescribed sacrifices foreshadowed what the ultimate sacrifice fulfilled. Why go back and try to obey it as if it did not?

Paul's life became the resurrected life of Christ in Him. His body (and soul and spirit) life operated by faith in the Son. The love of God was manifested in Jesus. The revelation was complete. Now we rise with Him and receive the Spirit and live in newness of life as new creations (2 Corinthians 5:17<sup>xxi</sup>). That is why there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus (Romans 8:1<sup>xxii</sup>). That is why we should overflow with joy and live confidently trusting in the fact that we are Almighty God's children (John 1:12<sup>xxiii</sup>), kept by His power, destined for eternity in His presence. That is why every day should be filled with expectation and adventure knowing God loves us and will work through us.

Whether you grew up in church or just got out of jail for some horrible crime or just put down the drugs that were killing you, **the old you that was living for self and your momentary desires must join Jesus on the cross and die there. It must be buried with His corpse. Say goodbye to the old you with its motivations and desires and welcome the life of Christ in you!** The reason the Apostle's taught baptisms should be done in running water was that it represented the old you washing away down the stream.

The new person rises with Jesus from the grave by God's power of resurrection. He gives us a new heart that longs to be of service to our Savior, with new desires like feeding on the Word of God and sharing God's love. That new heart is the heart of Christ that longs to glorify God and do His will, not our own. It is the heart of Jesus in us. We are literally a new creation (Revelation 21:5<sup>xxiv</sup>).

This new life in the same body is dependent on Christ, His strength, His guidance, His very life in us. We trust Him to get us through the battles, and to keep our old self from reigning again in our heart and mind. **The battles come every day, but we have the**

greatest spiritual warrior to ever live in us, the Almighty (Exodus 15:3<sup>xxv</sup>). He alone is the victory. We live trusting in Him because He loved us while we were His enemies (Romans 5:8<sup>xxvi</sup>). He even gave His life so we could live this new life in Him. If He loves us that much, there is no good thing He will keep back from us (Romans 8:32<sup>xxvii</sup>).

Notice that he says the life he lives *in the flesh*, for though Christ lives in us we are still living in our fallen bodies. Paul is not telling us he is perfect or never gets sick or is free of trials. He makes it clear in his letters that the flesh will always be at war with our spirit (Galatians 5:17<sup>xxviii</sup>). He writes of pressing toward the prize and not quite reaching it yet (Philippians 3:14,15<sup>xxix</sup>). While we live in these fallen bodies in this fallen world, we will be something less than the perfect expression of Christ. But the difference between the old life and the new is that we can, by the power of Christ, refuse to yield to sin. It no longer enslaves us. The Spirit prompts us, and we can obey.

Later in this letter, he writes that he is in the travail of giving birth until Christ is formed in them (Galatians 4:19<sup>xxx</sup>). In other words, he feels like a mother giving birth as he labors in prayer for those new believers to become more like Christ. They were born-again but had not matured into their new life. Oswald Chambers writes, *God expects my personal life to be a 'Bethlehem.'* *Am I allowing my natural life to be slowly transfigured by the indwelling life of the Son of God? God's ultimate purpose is that His Son might be manifested in my mortal flesh.*<sup>xxxi</sup> Our goal is to be like Christ in all that we do, whatever our job or activity in the world happens to be, people need to see how Jesus would do it. The world needs to see the love and life of Jesus in us. **They don't care how much you know until they know how much you care.**

We help speed up this process of transfiguration by living with the constant awareness of His presence and communing with Him, by beholding our Lord in prayer, and hearing Him in His word. Paul told the Corinthians that when we look at His glory we are changed from glory to glory. It is one of my favorite verses. <sup>18</sup> *And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.* 2 Corinthians 3:18. What a picture of prayer and reading God's word, *beholding the glory of the Lord*. But we can also behold His glory in the amazing details of life and in the transformation of our brothers and sisters.

<sup>21</sup> *I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness were through the law, then Christ died for no purpose.* Galatians 2:21 Salvation is ours either by obedience to the law or else it is by grace. If it is law, then Jesus didn't need to die. If I try to keep the law to please God, then I'm saying Jesus didn't need to die and I don't need grace. But the new covenant came to free us from the law so that we can live by the Spirit, by His life in us! When you go home today, read Romans chapter 8 in which Paul elaborates on us how.

Paul brought up this confrontation with Peter to help the Galatians see that the Judaizers were missing the reality of the new covenant and the point of Jesus' death and resurrection. If they trusted in keeping the law, then they would miss these wonderful truths.

Someone asked if I was sure Jesus' sacrifice was for all sins including the future ones. Did I have a specific verse? That is an important question for us to understand precisely because of the argument Paul has put forth here. What if I sin after I am saved? First of all, know that we will sin and we will be forgiven. John says, *"If we sin we have an advocate with the Father"* (1 John 2:1<sup>xxxii</sup>). We received eternal life - not temporary

life until we sin. But what about the verse that says if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us and cleanse us (1 John 1:9<sup>xxxiii</sup>)? Have we received the righteousness of Christ on a conditional basis or by grace? Hebrews 10:14<sup>xxxiv</sup> tells us that one sacrifice for all time has perfected us even while we are in the process of being sanctified. 1 John 1:9 is telling us our confessions aid in that process of cleansing our daily life from all unrighteousness, NOT saves us again. God does not forsake you and then re-adopt you every time you sin. You don't have eternal life and then not have it. Eternal means forever.

The Heidelberg Catechism asks, *How are thou righteous before God? Answer: Only by a true faith in Jesus Christ; so that though my conscience accuse me, that I have grossly transgressed all the commandments of God, and kept none of them, and am still inclined to all evil; notwithstanding, God, without any merit of mine, but only of mere grace, grants and imputes to me, the perfect satisfaction, righteousness and holiness of Christ; even so, as if I never had had, nor committed any sin: yea, as if I had fully accomplished all that obedience which Christ has accomplished for me; inasmuch as I embrace such benefit with a believing heart.*

Understand that I am not suggesting you can live like you want without consequence (Romans 6:1,2<sup>xxxv</sup>). No! You cannot say a magic prayer and then go on unchanged. That would just reveal you never gave your life to Christ (James 2:26<sup>xxxvi</sup>). You never died to your old life, never nailed it to the cross with Jesus. Then it is still you who lives and not Christ in you. But also understand that if you are in Christ your old nature will still try to take back control of your life. You will be tempted. But you have power to say "No!" to sin. You will fail at times, and you will regret those failures, not revel in them, because you have a new heart. That is how you know the great exchange has taken place, your sin for His righteousness. After all you have done and will do, you are His child, and He will see the work in you is completed (Philippians 1:6<sup>xxxvii</sup>). He promised it! Know that it is His work. Our part in the process of sanctification is just to yield to His life in us and resist the old nature's attempts to regain control by His power.

Paul has given us a powerful declaration, a mindset, that we too should share. It is no longer I who live but Christ who lives in me. We know he meant it because when he faced the possibility of being thrown to the lions in the coliseum he wrote, <sup>20</sup> *as it is my eager expectation and hope that I will not be at all ashamed, but that with full courage now as always Christ will be honored in my body, whether by life or by death.* <sup>21</sup> *For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.* Philippians 1:20,21 Will you make Jesus your Lord so that you too can make this radical declaration? All for the glory of God!

Questions:

- 1 Review Paul's account of his past.
- 2 How did eating with "sinners" declare the kingdom had come?
- 3 What key point had the Judaizers missed?
- 4 What does Paul mean by "dying to the law"?
- 5 Describe the new heart.
6. What is the big difference the life of Christ makes in us?
- 7 How do we help this process of transfiguration along?
- 8 How does works based salvation nullify the cross?
- 9 What is our part in the process of sanctification? 10 Is Christ your life?

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<sup>i</sup> **1 Corinthians 10:17 (ESV)**

<sup>17</sup> Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread.

<sup>ii</sup> **Matthew 26:45 (ESV)**

<sup>45</sup> Then he came to the disciples and said to them, "Sleep and take your rest later on. See, the hour is at hand, and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners.

<sup>iii</sup> **Matthew 11:19 (ESV)**

<sup>19</sup> The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, 'Look at him! A glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!' Yet wisdom is justified by her deeds."

<sup>iv</sup> **Luke 15:2 (ESV)**

<sup>2</sup> And the Pharisees and the scribes grumbled, saying, "This man receives sinners and eats with them."

<sup>v</sup> **Matthew 5:17 (ESV)**

<sup>17</sup> "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.

<sup>vi</sup> **Luke 17:20-21 (ESV)**

<sup>20</sup> Being asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, he answered them, "The kingdom of God is not coming in ways that can be observed,

<sup>21</sup> nor will they say, 'Look, here it is!' or 'There!' for behold, the kingdom of God is in the midst of you."

<sup>vii</sup> **2 Corinthians 5:21 (ESV)**

<sup>21</sup> For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

<sup>viii</sup> **Psalms 14:3 (ESV)**

<sup>3</sup> They have all turned aside; together they have become corrupt; there is none who does good, not even one.

<sup>ix</sup> **James 2:10 (ESV)**

<sup>10</sup> For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become accountable for all of it.

<sup>x</sup> **Hebrews 4:15 (ESV)**

<sup>15</sup> For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.

<sup>xi</sup> **Acts 10:34-35 (ESV)**

<sup>34</sup> So Peter opened his mouth and said: "Truly I understand that God shows no partiality,

<sup>35</sup> but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him.

<sup>xii</sup> **Isaiah 53:4-6 (ESV)**

<sup>4</sup> Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. <sup>5</sup> But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed. <sup>6</sup> All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

<sup>xiii</sup> **Jeremiah 31:31-33 (ESV)**

<sup>31</sup> "Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, <sup>32</sup> not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the LORD. <sup>33</sup> For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

<sup>xiv</sup> **Leviticus 17:11 (ESV)**

<sup>11</sup> For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it for you on the altar to make atonement for your souls,.

<sup>xv</sup> **Psalms 51:16-17 (ESV)**

<sup>16</sup> For you will not delight in sacrifice, or I would give it; you will not be pleased with a burnt offering. <sup>17</sup> The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.

<sup>xvi</sup> **Hebrews 10:4 (ESV)**

<sup>4</sup> For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.

<sup>xvii</sup> **Romans 6:6-7 (ESV)**

<sup>6</sup> We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin.

<sup>7</sup> For one who has died has been set free from sin.

<sup>xviii</sup> **Galatians 6:14 (ESV)**

<sup>14</sup> But far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.

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<sup>xix</sup> **Jeremiah 10:23 (ESV)**

<sup>23</sup> I know, O LORD, that the way of man is not in himself, that it is not in man who walks to direct his steps.

<sup>xx</sup> **Isaiah 30:21 (ESV)**

<sup>21</sup> And your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, "This is the way, walk in it," when you turn to the right or when you turn to the left.

<sup>xxi</sup> **2 Corinthians 5:17 (ESV)**

<sup>17</sup> Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.

<sup>xxii</sup> **Romans 8:1 (ESV)**

<sup>1</sup> There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

<sup>xxiii</sup> **John 1:12 (ESV)**

<sup>12</sup> But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God,

<sup>xxiv</sup> **Revelation 21:5 (ESV)**

<sup>5</sup> And he who was seated on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new." Also he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true."

<sup>xxv</sup> **Exodus 15:3 (ESV)**

<sup>3</sup> The LORD is a man of war; the LORD is his name.

<sup>xxvi</sup> **Romans 5:8 (ESV)**

<sup>8</sup> but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

<sup>xxvii</sup> **Romans 8:32 (ESV)**

<sup>32</sup> He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?

<sup>xxviii</sup> **Galatians 5:17 (ESV)**

<sup>17</sup> For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do.

<sup>xxix</sup> **Philippians 3:13-14 (ESV)**

<sup>13</sup> Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, <sup>14</sup> I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

<sup>xxx</sup> **Galatians 4:19 (ESV)**

<sup>19</sup> my little children, for whom I am again in the anguish of childbirth until Christ is formed in you!

<sup>xxxi</sup> Chambers, O. *My Utmost for His Highest* May 31st

<sup>xxxii</sup> **1 John 2:1 (ESV)**

<sup>1</sup> My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.

<sup>xxxiii</sup> **1 John 1:9 (ESV)**

<sup>9</sup> If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

<sup>xxxiv</sup> **Hebrews 10:14 (ESV)**

<sup>14</sup> For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.

<sup>xxxv</sup> **Romans 6:1-2 (ESV)**

<sup>1</sup> What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? <sup>2</sup> By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it?

<sup>xxxvi</sup> **James 2:26 (ESV)**

<sup>26</sup> For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so also faith apart from works is dead.

<sup>xxxvii</sup> **Philippians 1:6 (ESV)**

<sup>6</sup> And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.