

Galatians

1

Summary: *Galatians 1 opens with Paul's apostolic greeting, immediately asserting that his commission comes from Jesus Christ and God the Father, not from any human authority. After a brief doxology, Paul expresses astonishment that the Galatian churches are so quickly abandoning the gospel he preached to them in favor of a distorted version. He pronounces a double curse on anyone — even an angel from heaven — who preaches a different gospel. Paul then defends his apostolic authority by narrating his personal history: his former life as a persecutor of the church, his dramatic call through divine revelation, his years in Arabia and Damascus, and his eventual brief visit to Jerusalem where he met only Peter and James.*

What Makes This Remarkable: *The letter lacks Paul's customary thanksgiving section — he moves directly from greeting to rebuke, signaling the urgency of the crisis. The double anathema formula (vv. 8-9) is the strongest language Paul uses in any letter. His autobiographical defense establishes a pattern that dominates the first two chapters: the gospel he preaches was not received from humans but through a direct revelation of Jesus Christ. The Greek apokalypsis ('revelation, unveiling') in verse 12 is the same word used for apocalyptic disclosure — Paul's encounter with Christ was not instruction but unveiling.*

Translation Friction: *The identity of the 'agitators' promoting a different gospel is debated — they likely advocated circumcision and Torah observance for Gentile believers (as clarified in later chapters). Paul's claim to have received his gospel independently of the Jerusalem apostles creates tension with Acts' account of his conversion and early ministry. We render the Greek as given without harmonizing. The phrase 'the churches of Galatia' leaves unresolved whether these are in north or south Galatia — the so-called North Galatian and South Galatian hypotheses.*

Connections: *Paul's call narrative echoes the prophetic call patterns of Jeremiah 1:5 ('before I formed you in the womb') and Isaiah 49:1 ('called me from my mother's womb'). The curse formula connects to Deuteronomy 27:15-26. The revelation of the Son 'in me' (en emoi, v. 16) connects to Paul's 'Christ in me' theology developed fully in 2:20.*

¹Paul, an apostle — not sent from human authority nor commissioned by any human being, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father who raised him from the dead — ²All the brothers and sisters which are with me, to the churches of Galatia: ³Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, ⁴Who offered himself for our wrongdoings, that he may deliver us from this present wicked age, according to the will of God and our Father: ⁵To him be glory through all the

ages. Amen. ⁶I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ and turning to a different gospel — ⁷Not that there really is another gospel — it is simply that certain people are troubling you and trying to distort the good news about Christ. ⁸But even if we or an angel from heaven should proclaim to you a gospel contrary to what we proclaimed to you, let that one be cursed. ⁹As we have said before, so now I say again: if anyone is proclaiming to you a gospel contrary to what you received, let that one be cursed. ¹⁰Am I now seeking human approval, or God's? Am I trying to please people? If I were still trying to please people, I would not be a servant of Christ. ¹¹For I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that the gospel I proclaimed is not of human origin. ¹²For I did not receive it from any human source, nor was I taught it, but it came through a revelation of Jesus Christ. ¹³For you have heard about my former way of life in Judaism — how I persecuted the church of God violently and tried to destroy it. ¹⁴I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries among my people, being far more zealous for the traditions of my ancestors. ¹⁵But when God, who set me apart from my mother's womb and called me through his grace, was pleased ¹⁶To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him in the midst of the heathen. Immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood: ¹⁷Neither traveled I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles prior to me. But I traveled into Arabia, and returned again to Damascus. ¹⁸Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to get acquainted with Cephas and stayed with him fifteen days. ¹⁹I did not see any other of the apostles except James, the Lord's brother. ²⁰Now regarding what I am writing to you — before God, I am not lying. ²¹Then I went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia. ²²I was still personally unknown to the churches of Judea that are in Christ. ²³They only kept hearing, "The one who once persecuted us is now proclaiming the faith he once tried to destroy." ²⁴And they glorified God because of me.

TRANSLATOR NOTES

1. Paul's double negation (ouk ap' anthropon oude di' anthropou) distinguishes both the source and the agent of his apostleship. The preposition apo ('from') denies human origin; dia ('through') denies human mediation. This opening salvo establishes the letter's central argument: Paul's gospel and authority derive directly from God, not from Jerusalem or any human chain of authorization.
1. The participial clause 'who raised him from the dead' (tou egeirantos auton ek nekron) is not incidental — it anchors Paul's apostleship in the resurrection, the same event that commissioned him on the Damascus road.
2. The Greek adelphoi is grammatically masculine plural but functioned as an inclusive term for the community of believers. We render 'brothers and sisters' to reflect the inclusive reference. The plural 'churches' (ekklisiai) indicates this is a circular letter addressed to multiple congregations in the region of Galatia.
3. Paul's standard greeting combines the Greek charis ('grace') with the Hebrew-rooted eirēnē ('peace,' translating shalom). The single preposition apo ('from') governs both 'God our Father' and 'the Lord Jesus Christ,' placing them in a coordinate relationship as the joint source of grace and peace.
4. The Greek aionos tou enestotos ponerou ('the present evil age') reflects Jewish apocalyptic theology that divides history into 'this age' and 'the age to come.' Paul's word is aiōn ('age'), not kosmos ('world') — the emphasis is temporal, not spatial. The rescue is from a corrupt era, not escape from the physical world.
4. The verb exelētai ('rescue, deliver') is in the middle voice, suggesting Christ's active, personal involvement in the deliverance. The phrase 'according to the will of God' grounds the entire saving act in divine initiative.
5. The doxology eis tous aiōnas tōn aiōnōn ('unto the ages of the ages') is a Hebraism intensifying the concept of eternity — literally 'to the ages of ages.' This formula is standard in Pauline doxologies but unusual this early in a letter. Paul typically places his doxology later; its early placement here may reflect the gravity of the situation — he pauses to anchor his rebuke in worship before proceeding.
6. The verb metatitheske ('you are turning, deserting') is present tense, indicating the defection is in progress, not yet complete. The same verb was used for political or military defection — switching allegiance. Paul frames the Galatians' shift not as a theological adjustment but as treason against the one who called them.
6. The absence of a thanksgiving section (standard in Paul's other letters) is itself a rhetorical statement — Paul is too alarmed for pleasantries.
7. Paul plays on two Greek words for 'other': heteron ('different in kind,' v. 6) and allo ('another of the same kind,' v. 7). The so-called 'other gospel' is not actually a gospel at all — it is a distortion (metastrepsai, 'to turn around, reverse, pervert'). The verb tarassontes ('disturbing, agitating') was used for stirring up sedition; these unnamed opponents are creating upheaval in the community.
8. The Greek anathema ('cursed, devoted to destruction') corresponds to the Hebrew cherem — something placed under a ban, devoted to God for destruction. This is not mere disapproval but a solemn invocation of divine judgment. Paul includes himself ('we') in the hypothetical, establishing that the gospel's authority transcends even apostolic persons. The conditional ean with the subjunctive presents this as a real possibility, not an absurd hypothetical.

9. The repetition transforms the conditional warning into a direct verdict. The shift from 'we' to 'I' (legō) makes the pronouncement personal and authoritative. The verb *parelabete* ('you received') is a technical term for receiving tradition — the Galatians received a specific, defined gospel, and deviation from it is not progress but apostasy.
10. The rhetorical questions respond to an apparent accusation that Paul was a people-pleaser who tailored his message to gain approval. The word *doulos* ('servant, slave') carries its full force — Paul is Christ's slave, not a freelance diplomat. The adverb *eti* ('still') implies Paul once did seek human approval (in his former life as a Pharisee, perhaps), but that era is over.
11. The phrase *kata anthrōpon* ('according to a human standard') denies that Paul's gospel conforms to any human pattern or was generated by human reasoning. This verse introduces the autobiographical defense that runs through 2:14 — Paul will demonstrate the divine origin of his gospel by tracing his own story.
12. The genitive *Iēsou Christou* ('of Jesus Christ') is ambiguous — it could be objective ('a revelation about Jesus Christ') or subjective ('a revelation given by Jesus Christ'). Both senses may be intended: Christ was both the content and the agent of the revelation. The Greek *apokalypsis* ('unveiling, disclosure') denotes a direct divine disclosure, not gradual learning or instruction.
13. The Greek *anastrophē* ('way of life, conduct') is rendered 'conversation' in the KJV using the word's older English meaning. The phrase *kath' hyperbolēn* ('beyond measure, to an extraordinary degree') intensifies the verb — Paul's persecution was not casual but extreme. The imperfect tenses (*ediōkon*, *eporthoun*) indicate sustained, repeated action: 'I kept persecuting... I kept trying to destroy.'
14. The verb *proekopton* ('was advancing, making progress') was used for cutting a path forward — Paul was outpacing his peers. The word *zēlōtēs* ('zealot, one burning with zeal') echoes the Maccabean tradition of violent zeal for the Torah. Paul's pre-conversion identity was defined by aggressive devotion to ancestral tradition (*patrikōn paradoseōn*), which he now reinterprets through the lens of divine call.
15. The language directly echoes prophetic call narratives: 'set apart from my mother's womb' parallels Jeremiah 1:5 ('Before I formed you in the womb I knew you') and Isaiah 49:1 ('The LORD called me from the womb'). Paul interprets his entire life — including the persecution years — as part of a divine plan that predated his birth. The verb *aphorisas* ('having set apart') is related to *Pharisaios* ('Pharisee,' meaning 'separated one'), creating an ironic wordplay: God's separation of Paul preceded and superseded his self-separation as a Pharisee.
15. [TCR Cross-Reference] This verse quotes Jeremiah 1:5 — see the TCR rendering of that passage for the Hebrew source text and translation decisions.
15. [TCR Cross-Reference] This verse quotes Isaiah 49:1 — see the TCR rendering of that passage for the Hebrew source text and translation decisions.
16. The phrase *en emoi* ('in me') rather than the expected 'to me' (*moi*) is striking — the revelation was not merely informational but internal and transformative. The Greek *ethnesin* ('nations, Gentiles') indicates that Paul's commission to the Gentiles was simultaneous with his call, not a later development. The idiom *sarki kai haimati* ('flesh and blood') means mortal humans — Paul did not seek human validation of his divine encounter.
17. The verb *anēlthon* ('went up') reflects Jerusalem's geographic and theological elevation — one always 'goes up' to Jerusalem. Paul's point is that he deliberately avoided the apostolic headquarters. 'Arabia' likely refers to the Nabatean kingdom east of Damascus, not necessarily the Arabian Peninsula. Paul's time in Arabia is unrecorded in Acts and its purpose is debated — possibly for reflection, possibly for early mission work.
18. The verb *historēsai* is significant — it means 'to inquire of, to get to know, to visit for the purpose of learning about someone.' It implies a purposeful visit to learn from Peter, but not to receive authorization. Paul uses the Aramaic name *Kēphas* (Cephas) rather than the Greek *Petros* (Peter), possibly reflecting the name's original use in the Jerusalem community. The fifteen-day visit is too brief for systematic instruction — Paul is arguing for independence, not dependence.
19. James (*Iakōbos*) is identified as 'the brother of the Lord' (*ton adelphon tou kyriou*), distinguishing him from James the son of Zebedee. Whether *adelphos* here means full brother, half-brother, or kinsman is debated across Christian traditions. Paul's limited contact — only Peter and James — reinforces his independence from the Jerusalem leadership. The phrase may also imply that James held apostolic status, though he was not one of the Twelve.
20. The solemn oath formula *enōpion tou theou* ('before God') invokes God as witness. That Paul feels compelled to swear he is telling the truth suggests the Galatians have heard a conflicting account of his early history — perhaps from the agitators who claimed Paul was dependent on Jerusalem and was now teaching a watered-down version of their gospel.
21. Syria and Cilicia were the provinces surrounding Paul's hometown of Tarsus (in Cilicia) and the base church of Antioch (in Syria). Paul's point is geographic distance from Jerusalem — he was active in ministry far from the apostolic center, further demonstrating his independence.
22. The phrase *agnoumenos tō prosōpō* ('unknown by face') means the Judean believers had not met Paul in person. The participle reinforces that Paul had no extended contact with the broader Jerusalem-area church. The phrase *en Christō* ('in Christ') marks these as specifically Christian assemblies, distinguished from the synagogues.
23. The article *ho diōkōn* ('the one persecuting') functions almost as a title — Paul was known as 'the Persecutor.' The irony is powerful: the faith (*tēn pistin*) he tried to destroy (*eporthēi*, the same verb as 1:13) is now the message he proclaims. Paul's conversion is framed as the most compelling evidence for the gospel's divine power.
24. The phrase *en emoi* ('in me' or 'because of me') echoes the same phrase in verse 16 where God revealed his Son 'in me.' The chapter closes with a striking reversal: the Judean churches — who never met Paul — praised God for the very transformation that his Galatian opponents now question. Paul's former enemies became his unwitting character witnesses.

2

Summary: *Galatians 2 continues Paul's autobiographical defense of his apostolic authority and gospel. He recounts his visit to Jerusalem fourteen years later, where he presented his gospel to the recognized leaders — James, Cephas, and John — who added nothing to his message and affirmed his mission to the Gentiles. Paul then narrates his public confrontation with Peter at Antioch, where Peter's withdrawal from table fellowship with Gentile believers exposed a contradiction between gospel truth and social pressure. The chapter culminates in Paul's most concentrated statement of justification theology: a person is made right with God not through works of the law but through the faithfulness of Jesus Christ. The chapter closes with the iconic declaration that Paul has been crucified with Christ and now lives by faith in the Son of God.*

What Makes This Remarkable: *This chapter contains one of the most theologically dense passages in all of Paul's writings (vv. 15-21). The Antioch incident (vv. 11-14) reveals that even Peter could compromise gospel integrity under social pressure. The phrase 'crucified with Christ' (v. 20) introduces participatory atonement language — believers do not merely benefit from Christ's death but are incorporated into it. The pistis Christou debate (v. 16) — whether the Greek means 'faith in Christ' or 'the faithfulness of Christ' — is one of the most consequential translation decisions in Pauline studies.*

Translation Friction: *The relationship between Paul's Jerusalem visits in Galatians 2 and Acts 15 (the Jerusalem Council) is debated — they may describe the same event or different ones. The pistis Iēsou Christou construction in verse 16 is grammatically ambiguous (objective or subjective genitive), and we note both options. Paul's rebuke of Peter raises questions about early church unity that the text does not resolve.*

Connections: *The 'right hand of fellowship' (v. 9) echoes covenant-making gestures in the Old Testament. Paul's 'crucified with Christ' language connects to Romans 6:1-11 (baptismal death with Christ). The justification-by-faith argument is the compressed version of what Paul expands in Romans 3-4. The Antioch incident foreshadows the broader Jew-Gentile tension addressed in Ephesians 2.*

¹Then after fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus along as well. ²I went up because of a revelation, and I laid before them the gospel that I proclaim among the Gentiles — but privately to those who were recognized as leaders — to make sure I was not running or had not run in vain. ³But not even Titus, who was with me, was compelled to be circumcised, though he was a Greek. ⁴Now this matter arose because of false brothers secretly brought in, who slipped in to spy on the freedom we have in Christ Jesus, so that they might enslave us. ⁵To them we did not yield in submission even for a moment, so that the truth of the gospel might be preserved for you. ⁶And from those recognized as important — whatever they once were makes no difference to me; God shows no favoritism — those leaders added nothing to my message. ⁷On the contrary, when they saw that I had been entrusted with the gospel for the uncircumcised, just as Peter had been entrusted with the gospel for the circumcised — ⁸For the same God who worked through Peter as an apostle to the Jewish people also worked powerfully through me as an apostle to the Gentiles. ⁹When James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given to me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship. That we should go to the heathen, and they to the circumcision. ¹⁰They asked only that we remember the poor — the very thing I was eager to do. ¹¹But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned. ¹²For before certain people came from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles. But when they arrived, he began to draw back and separate himself, fearing those of the circumcision party. ¹³And the rest of the Jewish believers joined him in this hypocrisy, so that even Barnabas was led astray by their hypocrisy. ¹⁴But when I saw that they were not walking in line with the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas in front of everyone: "If you, though a Jew, live like a Gentile and not like a Jew, how can you compel the Gentiles to live like Jews?" ¹⁵We ourselves are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners, ¹⁶Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law — for by the works of the law will no flesh be justified. ¹⁷But if, in seeking to be justified in Christ, we ourselves have also been found to be sinners, does that make Christ an agent of sin? Absolutely not! ¹⁸For if I rebuild what I tore down, I demonstrate that I am a lawbreaker. ¹⁹For through the law I died to the

law, so that I might live for God. ²⁰I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. And the life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. ²¹I do not set aside the grace of God, for if righteousness could be gained through the law, then Christ died for nothing.

TRANSLATOR NOTES

1. Whether the fourteen years are counted from Paul's conversion or from the previous Jerusalem visit (1:18) is debated. Titus, a Gentile believer, serves as a living test case for the circumcision question — his presence in Jerusalem is itself an argument. Barnabas's inclusion signals that Paul is not a lone actor but represents the Antioch church.
2. The phrase kata apokalypsin ('according to a revelation') indicates divine direction, not human summons — Paul went because God sent him, not because Jerusalem called him. The verb anethemēn ('laid before, set forth') means to present for consideration, not to submit for approval. The athletic metaphor trechō ('run') pictures ministry as a race that could be wasted if the Jerusalem leaders rejected Paul's gospel. The phrase tois dokousin ('those who seemed, those of reputation') carries a slight edge — Paul uses this somewhat ironic phrase three times in this passage.
3. The Titus test case is Paul's strongest evidence: in the very heart of Jerusalem, with the apostolic leadership present, an uncircumcised Greek believer was accepted without being required to undergo circumcision. The passive ēnagkasthē ('was compelled') leaves open whether there was pressure to circumcise him — only that the pressure did not succeed.
4. The vocabulary is militant: pareisaktos ('smuggled in'), pareisēlthon ('infiltrated'), kataskopēsai ('to spy out, reconnoiter' — a military intelligence term), katadoulōsousin ('to enslave completely'). Paul portrays the false brothers as enemy agents conducting covert operations against the community's freedom. The kata- prefix on katadoulōsousin intensifies the enslavement — they aimed to reduce believers to total bondage under the law.
5. The phrase pros hōran ('for an hour') is idiomatic for 'even momentarily.' Paul's resistance was absolute and immediate. The purpose clause hina hē alētheia tou euangeliou diamenē ('so that the truth of the gospel might remain') frames the confrontation not as personal stubbornness but as gospel preservation. The Galatians' freedom is at stake in Paul's past decision.
6. Paul's parenthetical interruption is characteristically abrupt. The phrase prosōpon ou lambanei ('does not receive face') is a Hebraism (Hebrew: nasa panim, 'lift the face') meaning God does not show partiality based on status. The verb prosanethento ('added to, contributed to') means the Jerusalem leaders had nothing to supplement or correct in Paul's gospel — their authority did not enhance or alter it.
7. The passive pepisteumai ('I have been entrusted') indicates divine commissioning — God entrusted Paul with this work. The gospel itself is one; it is the audiences that differ. 'The uncircumcision' (akrobystia) and 'the circumcision' (peritomē) are metonyms for Gentiles and Jews respectively. Paul uses 'Peter' (Petros) here rather than 'Cephas' as in surrounding verses — possibly because Peter was the more widely recognized form.
8. The verb energeō ('to work in, to empower, to be active in') attributes the effectiveness of both apostolates to God's power working through each apostle. The parallel structure (ho energēsas Petrō... enērgēsen kai emoi) places Paul's commission on precisely the same divine footing as Peter's — the same God, the same empowerment, different audiences.
9. James is listed first, suggesting his prominence in the Jerusalem church by this time. The 'pillars' (styloi) metaphor likely draws on the temple imagery — these leaders are foundational supports of the community. The 'right hand of fellowship' (dexias koinōnias) is a formal covenant gesture recognizing mutual partnership. The agreement is geographic and ethnic, not doctrinal — one gospel, two mission fields.
10. The 'poor' (ptōchōn) likely refers specifically to the Jerusalem church, which faced economic hardship. Paul's collection for Jerusalem (Romans 15:25-27; 1 Corinthians 16:1-4; 2 Corinthians 8-9) fulfills this request. The verb espoudasa ('I was eager, I made haste') indicates Paul's wholehearted agreement — care for the poor was not an imposed obligation but a shared commitment.
11. The shift from the Jerusalem accord to the Antioch confrontation is abrupt and dramatic. The phrase kata prosōpon ('to the face') means publicly, openly — not behind his back. The perfect participle kategnōsmenos ('having been condemned, standing condemned') indicates that Peter's actions had already self-evidently condemned him before Paul spoke. Paul's willingness to publicly confront the leading apostle demonstrates that gospel truth outranks apostolic hierarchy.
12. The imperfect synēsthien ('he was eating, he used to eat') indicates habitual practice — Peter had been regularly sharing meals with Gentile believers. The imperfections hypestellen ('was drawing back') and aphōrizen ('was separating') picture a gradual withdrawal, not a single dramatic exit. Table fellowship in the ancient world implied full social and religious acceptance; Peter's withdrawal communicated that Gentile believers were second-class. The 'certain people from James' may or may not have represented James's actual position.
13. The compound verb synpekrithēsan ('acted hypocritically together with') uses the theatrical term hypokrisis ('playing a role, wearing a mask'). Paul's charge is devastating: Peter and the others were not acting according to their actual convictions but performing for an audience. The word 'even' (kai) before Barnabas registers Paul's shock — his own ministry partner was swept up in the pretense. The verb synapēchthē ('was carried away, swept along') suggests Barnabas was pulled by the current rather than acting deliberately.
14. The verb orthopodousin ('walk straight, walk uprightly') occurs only here in the New Testament — literally 'to walk with straight feet.' Paul's accusation is that Peter's conduct is crooked relative to the gospel's straight line. The logic of Paul's rebuke is devastating: Peter himself had been living like a Gentile (eating non-kosher food with Gentile believers), which proves he knew the law's food restrictions were not binding. His

withdrawal now implicitly demands that Gentiles adopt Jewish practices — a requirement Peter himself had abandoned. The verb *ioudaizein* ('to judaize, to live as a Jew') appears only here in the New Testament.

15. It is debated where Paul's direct speech to Peter ends and his reflection for the Galatians begins — the transition may be gradual. The phrase 'Gentile sinners' (ex ethnōn hamartōloi) reflects standard Jewish categorization of Gentiles as outside the law and therefore sinners by definition. Paul adopts this language only to subvert it in the following verses.
16. This is the most theologically concentrated verse in Galatians. The phrase *pistis Iēsou Christou* (and *pistis Christou*) is the center of a major scholarly debate. The genitive can be objective ('faith in Jesus Christ') or subjective ('the faithfulness of Jesus Christ'). The subjective reading sees Christ's own faithfulness — his covenant loyalty unto death — as the ground of justification, with human faith as the response. The objective reading sees human faith directed toward Christ as the means of justification. The threefold denial of works of the law (ex ergōn nomou) echoes Psalm 143:2 LXX.
16. The verb *dikaioutai* ('is justified, is declared righteous') carries both forensic (legal declaration) and relational (right relationship) dimensions. Paul does not separate these.
16. [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Psalm 143:2. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
17. Paul anticipates an objection: if Jewish believers abandon the law to be justified in Christ and are then found to be 'sinners' (by the law's standard), does that mean Christ promotes sin? The emphatic *mē genoito* ('may it never be!' — rendered 'absolutely not!') is Paul's strongest formula of denial, appearing fifteen times in his letters. The word *diakonos* ('servant, agent, minister') applied to Christ sarcastically — would Christ serve sin's interests? The very idea is absurd.
18. The building metaphor (*katalyō*, 'tear down'; *oikodomeō*, 'build up') pictures the law as a wall that Paul demolished. Rebuilding it — returning to law observance as the basis for acceptance — would prove Paul wrong to have torn it down in the first place. The word *parabatēs* ('transgressor, lawbreaker') turns the accusation around: the real transgression is not abandoning the law but returning to it after receiving grace.
19. The paradox is sharp: the law itself brought about Paul's death to the law. How the law accomplished this is debated — possibly through the law's curse that fell on Christ (3:13), or through the law's inability to produce life (3:21), which drove Paul to the end of himself. The purpose clause 'so that I might live for God' (*hina theō zēsō*) reframes death as liberation: death to the law is the prerequisite for life with God.
20. The perfect tense *synestaurōmai* ('I have been crucified with') indicates a past event with ongoing results — the crucifixion with Christ happened and remains in effect. This is Paul's most concentrated statement of participatory soteriology: the believer's identity is relocated from the old self to Christ. The phrase *en pistei zō tē tou huiou tou theou* could be rendered 'by the faithfulness of the Son of God' (subjective genitive) — maintaining consistency with verse 16. However, the deeply personal tone of this verse ('who loved me and gave himself for me') suits the objective genitive reading ('by faith in the Son of God') — the believer's personal trust responding to Christ's personal love. We render as objective genitive here while noting the ambiguity.
20. The verb *paradontos* ('having given over, having handed over') is the same verb used for Judas's betrayal — Christ's self-giving transforms the language of betrayal into the language of salvation.
21. The verb *atheteō* ('to set aside, to nullify, to treat as invalid') was used for annulling a treaty or breaking a covenant. To return to the law for justification would be to declare God's grace null and void. The final statement is devastating in its simplicity: *dōrean apethanen* ('he died gratuitously, for nothing, without cause'). If the law could produce righteousness, the cross was pointless — the most wasteful death in history. Paul leaves the Galatians with this stark either/or: grace or law, not both.

3

Summary: *Galatians 3 shifts from autobiography to theological argument. Paul begins with a sharp rebuke — 'You foolish Galatians!' — and asks whether they received the Spirit through law-keeping or through believing the gospel. He then builds a sustained case from Scripture that Abraham was justified by faith, that the law brings a curse from which Christ redeemed humanity by becoming a curse himself, that the Abrahamic promise operates through faith rather than law, and that the law served as a temporary guardian until Christ came. The chapter culminates in the declaration that in Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female — all are Abraham's offspring and heirs according to the promise.*

What Makes This Remarkable: *Paul's argument moves through five distinct scriptural proofs: Abraham's faith (Genesis 15:6), the blessing of the nations (Genesis 12:3), the curse of the law (Deuteronomy 27:26), justification by faith (Habakkuk 2:4), and redemption from the curse (Deuteronomy 21:23). The 'seed' argument in verse 16 turns on the singular form of the Greek *sperma* — a striking piece of exegesis. The law as *paidagogos* (vv. 24-25) draws on the Greco-Roman institution of the slave-tutor who supervised a child until maturity. Verse 28 is one of the most radical equality*

statements in ancient literature.

Translation Friction: *Paul's claim that the law was given 'through angels by a mediator' (v. 19) draws on Jewish tradition not explicit in the Torah itself. His singular 'seed' argument (v. 16) has been criticized as grammatically forced, since collective nouns are regularly singular in both Hebrew and Greek. We render the text faithfully and note the exegetical complexity. The phrase 'baptized into Christ' (v. 27) raises questions about the relationship between faith and baptism that Paul does not resolve here.*

Connections: *Abraham's justification by faith (v. 6) is the same text Paul expounds in Romans 4. The 'curse of the law' argument (vv. 10-14) builds on Deuteronomy 27-28. The law as guardian until Christ anticipates the fuller development in Galatians 4:1-7. The baptismal formula of verse 28 likely reflects an early Christian confession used at baptism. The 'clothing' metaphor (v. 27) connects to the new-creation imagery Paul develops elsewhere (2 Corinthians 5:17; Colossians 3:9-10).*

¹You foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? Before your very eyes Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified! ²I want to learn only one thing from you: Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law, or by hearing with faith? ³Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now trying to reach completion by the flesh? ⁴Did you experience so much for nothing? — if indeed it was for nothing. ⁵So then, does God supply the Spirit to you and work miracles among you because of works of the law, or because of hearing with faith? ⁶Just as Abraham "believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness." ⁷Understand, then, that those who are of faith — these are the children of Abraham. ⁸And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, proclaimed the gospel in advance to Abraham: "In you all the nations will be blessed." ⁹So then, those who are of faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith. ¹⁰For all who rely on works of the law are under a curse. For it is written: "Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all the things written in the book of the law, to do them." ¹¹Now it is clear that no one is justified before God by the law, because "The righteous one will live by faith." ¹²But the law is not based on faith; rather, "The one who does them will live by them." ¹³Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us — for it is written: "Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree" — ¹⁴That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles by way of Jesus Christ. That we might accept the promise of the Spirit by way of faith. ¹⁵Brothers and sisters, I speak in human terms: even a human covenant, once it has been ratified, no one annuls or adds conditions to it. ¹⁶Now the promises were spoken to Abraham and to his offspring. It does not say, "And to offsprings," as referring to many, but as referring to one: "And to your offspring," who is Christ. ¹⁷This is what I am saying: the law, which came four hundred and thirty years later, does not invalidate a covenant previously ratified by God, so as to nullify the promise. ¹⁸For if the inheritance comes from the law, it no longer comes from the promise. But God granted it to Abraham through a promise. ¹⁹Why then the law? It was added because of transgressions, until the offspring should come to whom the promise had been made, and it was arranged through angels by the hand of a mediator. ²⁰Now a mediator implies more than one party, but God is one. ²¹Is the law then opposed to the promises of God? Absolutely not! For if a law had been given that could give life, then righteousness would indeed have come through the law. ²²But the Scripture imprisoned everything under sin, so that the promise might be given through the faithfulness of Jesus Christ to those who believe. ²³Now before faith came, we were held in custody under the law, confined until the coming faith would be revealed. ²⁴So then, the law was our guardian until Christ came, so that we might be justified by faith. ²⁵But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian. ²⁶For you are all children of God through faith in Christ Jesus. ²⁷For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. ²⁸There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female — for you are all one in Christ Jesus. ²⁹And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to the promise.

TRANSLATOR NOTES

1. The Greek *anoētoi* ('foolish, senseless, unthinking') is not an insult to intelligence but a charge of irrationality — they are failing to think through the implications of what they already know. The verb *ebaskanen* ('bewitched') evokes the 'evil eye' of ancient Mediterranean culture — someone has cast a spell over them. The verb *prographē* ('was publicly displayed, was placarded') was used for official public notices or proclamations posted in the marketplace. Paul's preaching was so vivid that it was as if Christ crucified had been posted on a billboard before their eyes.

2. Paul appeals to the Galatians' own experience as evidence. The phrase *ex akoēs pisteōs* ('from hearing of faith') is ambiguous: it could mean 'by hearing the message that calls for faith,' 'by hearing that comes from faith,' or 'by a faithful hearing.' The contrast with 'works of the law' suggests the emphasis is on receptive trust versus active effort. The Galatians' reception of the Spirit — presumably visible in charismatic experience — occurred without any law observance.
3. The contrast between *pneumatī* ('by the Spirit') and *sarki* ('by the flesh') is not spirit versus body but divine power versus human effort. The verb *epiteleisthe* ('being completed, being perfected') in the middle voice suggests the Galatians are attempting to complete by their own effort what God started by his Spirit. The irony is sharp: moving from Spirit to flesh is not progress but regression.
4. The verb *epathete* can mean either 'suffered' or 'experienced' — both senses may be in play. The Galatians may have faced persecution as a result of their faith. The trailing phrase *ei ge kai eikē* ('if indeed even for nothing') leaves a sliver of hope — Paul has not yet given up on them.
5. The present participles *epichorēgōn* ('supplying, lavishly providing') and *energōn* ('working, being active in') indicate ongoing divine activity, not a one-time event. God is currently supplying the Spirit and currently working miracles — and this is happening without law observance. The verb *epichorēgeō* was used for a wealthy patron generously underwriting a public performance — God supplies abundantly, not grudgingly.
6. Paul quotes Genesis 15:6 (LXX), the foundational text for his justification theology (cf. Romans 4). The verb *elogisthē* ('was credited, was reckoned, was counted') is an accounting term — righteousness was deposited to Abraham's account on the basis of his trust, not his performance. This precedes the institution of circumcision (Genesis 17) by at least fourteen years, which becomes Paul's key chronological argument.
6. [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Genesis 15:6. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
6. [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Genesis 17. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
7. The imperative *ginōskete* ('know, understand, recognize') could also be indicative ('you know'). The phrase *hoi ek pisteōs* ('those out of faith, those whose identity is defined by faith') establishes faith, not ethnicity or law observance, as the marker of Abrahamic descent. This is the theological foundation for Gentile inclusion: Abraham's real children are identified by sharing Abraham's faith.
8. Paul personifies Scripture (*hē graphē*) as an agent that 'foresaw' and 'proclaimed the gospel in advance' (*proeuēngelisato* — a remarkable compound verb meaning 'pre-evangelized'). The quotation combines Genesis 12:3 and 18:18. Paul reads the Abrahamic promise to bless 'all nations' (*panta ta ethnē*) as a prophetic announcement of Gentile justification by faith — the gospel was already embedded in the Abrahamic covenant.
8. [TCR Cross-Reference] References Genesis 12:3 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.
9. The adjective *pistō* ('faithful, believing') applied to Abraham emphasizes his defining characteristic: trust in God's promise. The preposition *syn* ('together with') establishes solidarity — those who share Abraham's faith share Abraham's blessing. Paul has redrawn the boundaries of the Abrahamic family: faith, not circumcision, is the membership marker.
10. Paul quotes Deuteronomy 27:26 to argue that the law's own terms condemn those who depend on it — since the law demands total, unbroken obedience (*pasin tois gegrammenois*, 'all the things written'), any failure brings the covenant curse. The word *katara* ('curse') is the opposite of *eulogia* ('blessing') from verse 9. Paul's logic: law-reliance leads to curse; faith leads to blessing. The assumption is that no one achieves perfect obedience.
10. [TCR Cross-Reference] This verse quotes Deuteronomy 27:26 — see the TCR rendering of that passage for the Hebrew source text and translation decisions.
11. Paul quotes Habakkuk 2:4, a text also central to Romans 1:17. The Hebrew of Habakkuk reads *be'emunato* ('by his faithfulness/faith'), and the ambiguity of *ek pisteōs* ('by faith/faithfulness') carries over into the Greek. The quotation establishes that the life of the righteous person is grounded in faith, not in law — and since this is Scripture's own testimony, the law itself witnesses against law-righteousness.
11. [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Habakkuk 2:4. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
12. Paul quotes Leviticus 18:5, which promises life through doing the commandments. His point is that law and faith operate on fundamentally different principles: law demands doing, faith demands trusting. The two systems are incompatible as bases for justification. This does not mean the law is evil (Paul addresses that in 3:19-22), but that its operating principle differs from faith's.
12. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Leviticus 18:5. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
13. The verb *exēgorasen* ('redeemed, bought out of') is a marketplace term for purchasing a slave's freedom. Christ's redemption is presented as a commercial transaction: he paid the price to buy believers out of the law's curse. The mechanism is substitutionary: *genomenos hyper hēmōn katara* ('having become a curse on our behalf'). Paul quotes Deuteronomy 21:23, which pronounces a curse on anyone hung on a tree (*xylon*). The crucifixion fulfills this: Christ on the cross bore the covenant curse that rested on law-breakers.

13. The word *xylon* means 'wood, tree, stake' — Paul uses it rather than *stauros* ('cross') to align with the Deuteronomy text. The early church read this passage as a divine explanation of why the Messiah had to die by crucifixion specifically.
13. [TCR Cross-Reference] References Deuteronomy 21:23 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.
14. Two purpose clauses (*hina... hina...*) spell out the twin results of Christ's redemptive act: (1) the Abrahamic blessing extends to the Gentiles, and (2) the promised Spirit is received through faith. The 'promise of the Spirit' (*tēn epangelian tou pneumatos*) links the Abrahamic promise to the Pentecost experience — the Spirit is the concrete fulfillment of what God promised to Abraham. The 'in Christ Jesus' (*en Christō Iēsou*) is the instrument through which the ancient promise reaches its intended recipients.
15. Paul uses an everyday legal analogy (*kata anthrōpon legō*, 'I speak in human terms'). The word *diathēkē* means both 'covenant' and 'will/testament' in Greek — the legal force of the analogy depends on the irrevocability of a ratified agreement. The verb *kekyrōmenēn* ('having been ratified, confirmed') is a legal term for a document that has been officially validated. The verbs *athetei* ('annuls') and *epidiatassetai* ('adds additional stipulations') describe two ways a ratified covenant cannot be altered.
16. Paul's argument turns on the singular *sperma* ('seed, offspring') versus the hypothetical plural *spermasin* ('seeds'). Grammatically, *sperma* is a collective noun regularly used in the singular for a group of descendants, so Paul's argument has been debated since antiquity. However, Paul may be making a typological rather than strictly grammatical point: the singular 'seed' finds its ultimate fulfillment in one person, Christ, through whom all the other 'seeds' (believers) are incorporated. The quotation draws from Genesis 13:15, 17:8, and 22:18.
16. [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Genesis 12:7. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
16. [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Genesis 13:15. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
17. The 430-year figure comes from Exodus 12:40 (LXX). Paul's argument is chronological: the Abrahamic covenant was established and ratified by God centuries before Sinai. A later addition (the law) cannot override an earlier divine covenant (the promise). The verb *akyroi* ('invalidate, make void') is the legal term for overturning a valid agreement — the law simply does not have that power over God's prior commitment.
17. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Exodus 12:40. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
18. The verb *kecharistai* ('has graciously given') is from *charizomai*, related to *charis* ('grace'). The inheritance was a gift of grace through promise, not a wage earned through law-keeping. Paul presents law and promise as mutually exclusive bases for inheritance — if one applies, the other is voided. Since God chose promise, law cannot be the operating principle.
19. Paul anticipates the obvious question: if the law cannot justify, what purpose does it serve? His answer: it was 'added' (*prosetethē*) — supplementary, not foundational — 'because of transgressions' (*tōn parabaseōn charin*). This phrase is ambiguous: the law was added to define transgressions, to restrain them, or to provoke them (cf. Romans 5:20). The temporal limit 'until the offspring should come' makes the law a temporary measure, not a permanent arrangement. The reference to angelic mediation draws on Jewish tradition (cf. Acts 7:53; Hebrews 2:2) and Deuteronomy 33:2 LXX. The 'mediator' is Moses.
19. [TCR Cross-Reference] Echoes Deuteronomy 33:2. See the TCR's OT rendering for the Hebrew behind this passage and the translation rationale.
20. This is one of the most cryptic verses in Paul's letters, generating hundreds of interpretations. The basic logic appears to be: a mediator (*mesitēs*) requires two parties, meaning the law involved a bilateral arrangement (God and Israel, mediated by Moses). But God's promise to Abraham was unilateral — God alone committed himself (Genesis 15, where only God passes between the animal pieces). The promise is therefore more secure than the law because it rests on God alone, not on two parties' faithfulness.
20. [TCR Cross-Reference] This verse quotes Genesis 15 — see the TCR rendering of that passage for the Hebrew source text and translation decisions.
21. Paul again uses *mē genoito* ('absolutely not!') to reject a false inference. The law is not the enemy of promise — it simply cannot do what promise does. The key verb is *zōpoiēsai* ('to make alive, to give life'). The law can diagnose sin but cannot resurrect; it can define the problem but cannot supply the remedy. The contrary-to-fact conditional (*ei... edothē... an ēn*) makes clear that no such life-giving law exists.
22. The verb *synekleisen* ('shut up together, imprisoned, confined') pictures sin as a prison. Scripture — and by extension the law — functions as a jailer that locks up all humanity (*ta panta*, 'all things, everything') under sin's power. The purpose (*hina*) is redemptive: the imprisonment prepares for the promise's release. The phrase *ek pisteōs Iēsou Christou* again raises the subjective/objective genitive question. We render 'through the faithfulness of Jesus Christ' consistently with 2:16, while noting that *tois pisteuousin* ('to those who believe') again distinguishes Christ's faithfulness from the believers' response of faith.
23. The verb *ephrourometha* ('we were being guarded, held in custody') is a military term for being under armed guard. The companion participle *synkleiomenoi* ('being confined, locked up') reinforces the imprisonment metaphor from verse 22. Paul speaks of 'faith' (*tēn pistin*) with the article — not faith as a general concept but the specific faith-era inaugurated by Christ. Before Christ, the law served as a holding cell; with Christ's coming, the cell doors opened.

24. The Greek *paidagōgos* is not a 'schoolmaster' (KJV) but a household slave who supervised a child's daily conduct — walking the child to school, enforcing discipline, and overseeing behavior until the child reached maturity. The *paidagōgos* was neither the father nor the teacher but a temporary custodian whose authority ended when the child came of age. Paul's analogy: the law supervised Israel during its minority, but its supervisory role terminated when Christ (the age of maturity) arrived. The phrase *eis Christon* ('until Christ' or 'toward Christ') indicates both temporal limit and directional purpose.
25. The genitive absolute *elthousēs tēs pisteōs* ('faith having come') treats faith as a historical event, not merely a personal experience. The coming of Christ inaugurated the age of faith. The adverb *ouketi* ('no longer') is emphatic: the guardian's role is finished. Returning to the law's supervision after Christ has come would be like a grown adult returning to the care of a childhood custodian.
26. The shift from 'we' to 'you' (*este*, second person plural) directly addresses the Galatian believers. The term *huiōi theou* ('sons of God') in its cultural context designated full legal heirs with the rights of mature adults, as opposed to minors under a guardian. We render 'children' to capture the inclusive sense, though the legal-heir implication is important: the Galatians are no longer minors under the law's custody but full heirs of God.
27. The clothing metaphor (*enedysasthe*, 'you clothed yourselves with, you put on') may reflect the early Christian practice of new clothing at baptism, but the theological meaning goes deeper: to 'put on Christ' is to take on his identity. The phrase *eis Christon* ('into Christ') indicates that baptism effects a transfer of identity — the baptized person is now 'in Christ,' bearing Christ's identity rather than their former social markers. This prepares for the radical equality statement of verse 28.
28. This verse likely preserves an early baptismal confession. The three pairs dismantle the three fundamental divisions of the ancient world: ethnic (Jew/Greek), social (slave/free), and gender (male/female). The shift from *oude* ('nor') to *kai* ('and') in the third pair echoes Genesis 1:27 LXX ('male and female he created them'), suggesting that in Christ even the creation-order distinction is transcended in terms of covenant status. The word *heis* ('one') is masculine singular — the Galatians are not merely united but constitute one entity in Christ. Paul's immediate context is covenant membership (who belongs to Abraham's family), though the implications extend further.
28. [TCR Cross-Reference] References Genesis 1:27 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.
29. Paul's argument comes full circle: Christ is Abraham's singular 'seed' (v. 16); those who are 'in Christ' (v. 28) share his identity; therefore those in Christ are Abraham's seed and heirs of the Abrahamic promise. The chain is Abraham promise Christ believers. Circumcision, Torah observance, and ethnic identity play no role in this chain of inheritance. The word *klēronomoi* ('heirs') carries full legal weight — these are not honorary members but rightful inheritors of everything God promised Abraham.

4

Summary: *Galatians 4 develops the heir/guardian analogy from chapter 3, arguing that before Christ came, God's people were like minor children under guardianship, subject to the 'elemental principles' of the world. But when the fullness of time arrived, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law and grant them adoption as children. Paul then appeals personally to the Galatians, reminding them of their initial warm reception of him despite his physical ailment. He warns that the agitators' attention is self-serving. The chapter culminates in an allegorical reading of Abraham's two sons — Ishmael (born of the slave Hagar, representing the Sinai covenant) and Isaac (born of the free woman Sarah, representing the promise) — concluding that believers are children of the free woman.*

What Makes This Remarkable: *The 'fullness of time' passage (vv. 4-7) is one of the most important christological and soteriological texts in the New Testament, compressed into four verses. The Abba cry (v. 6) preserves the Aramaic word Jesus himself used in prayer (Mark 14:36). The Hagar-Sarah allegory (vv. 21-31) is Paul's most sustained use of allegorical interpretation and has been enormously influential — and controversial — in Jewish-Christian relations. Paul's identification of 'the present Jerusalem' with Hagar/slavery and 'the Jerusalem above' with Sarah/freedom inverts the expected categories.*

Translation Friction: *Paul's use of *stoicheia tou kosmou* ('elemental principles of the world,' vv. 3, 9) is debated — it could refer to basic religious principles, cosmic spiritual powers, or the physical elements. The Hagar-Sarah allegory (vv. 21-31) has been criticized for anti-Jewish implications, though Paul's target is not Judaism per se but the specific demand that Gentile believers submit to circumcision. The textual tradition varies between 'God sent the Spirit of his Son' and 'God sent the Spirit of the Son' in verse 6.*

Connections: The adoption (huiothesia) language connects to Romans 8:14-17, 23. The 'Abba, Father' cry appears also in Romans 8:15 and Mark 14:36. The Hagar-Sarah typology draws on Genesis 16-21 and anticipates the 'Jerusalem above' concept developed in Hebrews 12:22 and Revelation 21. The 'born of a woman' phrase (v. 4) echoes Job 14:1 and the 'born under the law' connects to the circumcision of Jesus (Luke 2:21).

¹What I am saying is this: as long as the heir is a minor, he is no different from a slave, even though he is owner of everything. ²Instead, he is under guardians and trustees until the date set by the father. ³In the same way, when we were minors, we were enslaved under the elemental principles of the world. ⁴But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, ⁵Indeed, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might accept the adoption of sons. ⁶And because you are children, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!" ⁷So you are no longer a slave but a child, and if a child, then an heir through God. ⁸Formerly, when you did not know God, you were enslaved to things that by nature are not gods. ⁹But 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 elemental principles? Do you want to be enslaved to them all over again? ¹⁰You are observing special days and months and seasons and years! ¹¹I am afraid for you, that perhaps I have labored over you in vain. ¹²I beg you, brothers and sisters, become as I am, for I also became as you are. You have done me no wrong. ¹³You know that it was because of a physical ailment that I first proclaimed the gospel to you. ¹⁴And though my physical condition was a trial to you, you did not despise or scorn me. Instead, you received me as an angel of God, as Christ Jesus himself. ¹⁵What then has become of your joy? For I testify that, if possible, you would have torn out your own eyes and given them to me. ¹⁶So have I become your enemy by telling you the truth? ¹⁷Those people are zealous to win you over, but not with good intentions. They want to shut you out so that you will be zealous for them. ¹⁸It is always good to be courted for a good purpose, and not only when I am present with you. ¹⁹My children, for whom I am again in the anguish of childbirth until Christ is formed in you! ²⁰I wish I could be present with you now and change my tone, because I am perplexed about you. ²¹Tell me, you who want to be under the law: do you not listen to the law? ²²For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by the slave woman and one by the free woman. ²³But the son of the slave woman was born according to the flesh, while the son of the free woman was born through the promise. ²⁴Now these things are to be understood allegorically: the women represent two covenants. One is from Mount Sinai, bearing children into slavery — this is Hagar. ²⁵Now Hagar stands for Mount Sinai in Arabia, and she corresponds to the present Jerusalem, for she is in slavery with her children. ²⁶But the Jerusalem above is free, and she is our mother. ²⁷For it is written: "Rejoice, barren woman who does not bear! Break forth and shout, you who are not in labor! For the children of the desolate woman are more than those of the woman who has a husband." ²⁸Now you, brothers and sisters, like Isaac, are children of the promise. ²⁹But just as at that time the one born according to the flesh persecuted the one born according to the Spirit, so also it is now. ³⁰But what does the Scripture say? "Drive out the slave woman and her son, for the son of the slave woman will certainly not inherit with the son of the free woman." ³¹Therefore, brothers and sisters, we are not children of the slave woman but of the free woman.

TRANSLATOR NOTES

1. Paul extends the guardian analogy from 3:23-25 into Roman inheritance law. The Greek *nēpios* ('infant, minor, one who cannot yet speak for himself') describes a legal minor who possesses the title of heir but cannot exercise any rights. The paradox is striking: the heir owns everything (*kyrios pantōn*) yet experiences the life of a slave (*doulos*). This is Paul's picture of Israel under the law — rightful heirs living under restriction.
2. The *epitropoi* ('guardians') and *oikonomoi* ('trustees, estate managers') are legal terms from Roman law for those who managed a minor's person and property respectively. The *prothesmia* ('appointed date, deadline') is a specific legal term for the date fixed by the father's will when the child would come into his inheritance. Paul's point: the period of law-supervision had a divinely predetermined expiration date.
3. The phrase *stoicheia tou kosmou* ('elements/principles of the world') is one of the most debated expressions in Paul. *Stoicheia* can mean: (1) the physical elements (earth, water, air, fire); (2) basic or elementary principles (the ABCs); (3) cosmic or spiritual powers (astral deities or angelic forces); (4) the basic regulatory principles of pre-Christian religion (both Jewish and pagan). Paul may intend a deliberate overlap between these senses — any system of religious obligation that enslaves, whether Jewish Torah or pagan worship, functions as *stoicheia*. The perfect participle *dedoulōmenoi* ('having been enslaved') emphasizes the completed state of bondage.

4. The phrase to plērōma tou chronou ('the fullness of time') means the moment when God's appointed time reached its completion — the prothemia of verse 2 arrived. The verb exapesteilen ('sent forth') implies prior existence: God sent the Son from his own presence. Two participial phrases define the Son's entry into human existence: genomenon ek gynaikos ('born of a woman') affirms full humanity, and genomenon hypo nomon ('born under the law') places him within the system he came to dismantle. The Son submitted to the very bondage he came to end.
5. Two purpose clauses (hina... hina...) state the double goal of the incarnation: (1) redemption (exagorasē, the same marketplace term from 3:13) of those enslaved under the law, and (2) adoption (huiiothesian) as children. The word huiiothesia ('adoption, placement as sons') is a Roman legal term for the formal adoption of an heir — the adopted child received all the rights, privileges, and inheritance of a natural-born son. Paul's theology: believers are not merely forgiven slaves but adopted heirs.
6. The structure parallels verse 4: God 'sent forth' (exapesteilen) the Son (v. 4) and 'sent forth' the Spirit of the Son (v. 6). The Spirit's cry is not the believer's prayer but the Spirit praying through the believer — the Spirit himself cries (krazon, a strong verb suggesting an involuntary shout). The Aramaic Abba is the intimate family address for 'father' — the same word Jesus used in Gethsemane (Mark 14:36). Its preservation in a Greek letter to Gentile believers suggests it was a recognized liturgical formula. The shift from 'you are sons' (este huiioi) to 'our hearts' (hēmōn) unites Paul with the Galatians in shared experience.
7. Paul shifts to the singular 'you' (ei, second person singular), making the declaration personal to each believer. The progression is slave child heir. The phrase dia theou ('through God') is unusual — most manuscripts and translations expect 'through Christ' or 'of God,' but the SBLGNT reading attributes the entire transaction to God's agency. Some manuscripts read 'heir of God through Christ' (klēronomos theou dia Christou), but we follow the SBLGNT text.
8. Paul addresses the Galatians' pre-conversion pagan past. The phrase tois physei mē ousin theois ('to those which by nature are not gods') echoes Old Testament polemic against idols (Isaiah 37:19; Jeremiah 2:11). The dative tois... theois could indicate service to or slavery under these false gods. Paul will argue in verse 9 that returning to Torah observance would be equivalent to returning to this pagan servitude — a provocative equation.
8. [TCR Cross-Reference] References Isaiah 37:19 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.
8. [TCR Cross-Reference] References Jeremiah 2:11 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.
9. Paul's self-correction is theologically significant: 'you have come to know God — or rather, to be known by God.' Divine initiative precedes human knowledge. The adjectives asthenē ('weak, powerless') and ptōcha ('poor, destitute, beggarly') are devastating descriptors for either the Torah or pagan religion — both are impoverished systems compared to the riches of knowing God. Paul's equation of Torah observance with stoicheia places it in the same category as the Galatians' former paganism — a shocking rhetorical move.
10. The calendar observances likely include Sabbaths (days), new moons (months), Jewish festivals (seasons/kairos), and sabbatical or jubilee years. Paul views these calendar regulations as part of the stoicheia system. The present tense paratēreisthe ('you are observing') indicates this practice has already begun among the Galatians — the defection is not hypothetical.
11. The verb phohoumai ('I fear') with mē pōs ('lest perhaps') expresses anxious concern. The perfect kekopiaka ('I have labored') indicates sustained effort with ongoing results now threatened. Paul's missionary labor may be wasted if the Galatians complete their defection to law observance.
12. Paul shifts from theological argument to personal appeal. 'Become as I am' (ginesthe hōs egō) — Paul, a Jew, lives free from the law; the Galatians, Gentiles, should not take up the law's yoke. 'I also became as you are' (kagō hōs hymeis) — when Paul came to them, he lived as a Gentile among Gentiles (cf. 1 Corinthians 9:21). The assurance 'you have done me no wrong' prepares for the warm reminiscence that follows.
13. The phrase di' astheneian tēs sarkos ('because of a weakness of the flesh') indicates that Paul's initial visit to Galatia was occasioned or prolonged by some physical condition — illness, injury, or chronic ailment. The nature of this ailment is unknown; proposals include malaria, eye disease (suggested by v. 15), or epilepsy. The phrase to proteron ('the first time, formerly') may imply more than one visit.
14. The verb exeptysate ('you did not spit out, you did not scorn') is vivid — spitting was an ancient gesture of contempt and also a magical act to ward off evil or disease. Paul's condition could have provoked revulsion, but the Galatians received him with extraordinary honor. The ascending comparison — 'as an angel of God, as Christ Jesus' — recalls 1:8, where even an angel's gospel could be false. Here the Galatians treated Paul as bearing divine authority.
15. The word makarismos ('blessing, happiness, congratulating oneself') recalls their initial joy at receiving the gospel. The reference to tearing out eyes (tous ophthalmous hymōn exoryxantes) has fueled speculation that Paul suffered from an eye condition. Whether literal or proverbial (an expression of extreme devotion), it highlights the dramatic contrast between their former warmth and their current coolness.
16. The participial phrase alētheuōn hymin ('telling you the truth, being truthful with you') contrasts with the flattery of the agitators (v. 17). Paul's truth-telling has earned him suspicion, while the agitators' flattery has gained them admiration. The irony is bitter: the one who speaks plainly is treated as an enemy.
17. The verb zēlousin ('they are zealous for, they court') describes the agitators' energetic pursuit of the Galatians' loyalty. The verb ekkleisai ('to shut out, to exclude') reveals the agitators' strategy: by making circumcision a requirement, they create a new boundary that excludes the Galatians unless they comply — generating dependence on the agitators as gatekeepers.

18. Paul acknowledges that zeal and attention are not inherently wrong — what matters is the motive (en kalō, 'in a good thing, for a good purpose'). The phrase 'not only when I am present' gently chides the Galatians for their fickleness: they were devoted when Paul was there but wavered when the agitators arrived.
19. Paul adopts maternal imagery: he is a mother in labor (ōdinō, 'to suffer birth pangs'). The word palin ('again') is striking — Paul already labored to birth them once; their defection has thrown him back into labor pains. The goal is morphōthē Christos en hymin ('Christ be formed in you') — not mere belief about Christ but Christ's character taking shape within them. The verb morphoō ('to form, to shape') suggests an organic, developmental process.
20. The verb aporoumai ('I am perplexed, I am at a loss') expresses genuine bewilderment — Paul cannot understand how the Galatians could abandon the gospel. The desire to 'change my tone' (allaxai tēn phōnēn mou) may mean he wishes he could speak more gently in person, or that he wants to adapt his approach to their specific situation. A letter is a blunt instrument; Paul would prefer the nuance of face-to-face conversation.
21. Paul's rhetorical question is pointed: the Galatians want to submit to the Torah, but have they actually read it? The verb akouete ('hear, listen to') implies not just hearing but understanding. Paul will now show that the Torah itself, properly read, argues against law-submission for Gentile believers. He uses the law against the law — a brilliant forensic strategy.
22. Paul draws on Genesis 16 and 21. The paidiskē ('slave girl, female servant') is Hagar, the Egyptian slave. The eleuthera ('free woman') is Sarah, though Paul does not name her until verse 31. The legal status of the mothers — slave versus free — determines the legal status of the children, which becomes the foundation for Paul's allegory.
22. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Genesis 16. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
23. The contrast is between kata sarka ('according to the flesh' — natural human effort) and di' epangelias ('through a promise' — divine intervention). Ishmael was conceived through normal means when Abraham and Sarah tried to fulfill God's promise by their own strategy (Genesis 16). Isaac was conceived through divine promise when both parents were beyond natural capacity for childbearing (Genesis 18:11-14; 21:1-2). The pattern maps onto law (human effort) versus grace (divine promise).
23. [TCR Cross-Reference] References Genesis 16 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.
23. [TCR Cross-Reference] References Genesis 18:11-14 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.
24. The verb allēgoroumena ('being allegorized, being spoken allegorically') is the only use of this term in the New Testament. Paul signals he is reading the Genesis narrative typologically — the historical events carry a deeper, prophetic meaning. His identification of Hagar with the Sinai covenant is startling: the law given at Sinai produces slavery, just as Hagar's children are born into her slave status. The word diathēkai ('covenants') here distinguishes two divine arrangements — the Sinai covenant of law and the Abrahamic covenant of promise.
25. The verb systoichei ('corresponds to, stands in the same column as') is a mathematical term for items in the same column — Hagar, Sinai, and the present Jerusalem all line up on the 'slavery' side. Paul's identification of present-day Jerusalem with Hagar/slavery would have been deeply provocative — the holy city, the temple, the center of Jewish identity, aligned with the slave woman. Paul's target is not Jerusalem itself but the Jerusalem-based insistence on law observance for Gentile believers.
26. The 'Jerusalem above' (hē anō Ierousalēm) draws on Jewish apocalyptic tradition of a heavenly Jerusalem that exists as the archetype of the earthly city (cf. Hebrews 12:22; Revelation 21:2). This heavenly city corresponds to Sarah/freedom/promise on the allegory's other column. Paul's 'our mother' includes all believers — both Jewish and Gentile Christians are children of the free woman, citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem.
27. Paul quotes Isaiah 54:1, a promise of restoration after exile. In its original context, the 'barren woman' is Zion, temporarily desolate but destined for abundant offspring. Paul applies it to Sarah — barren, then miraculously fruitful — and by extension to the free woman's covenant community. The promise-children (Gentile believers born through faith) now outnumber the law-children. The connection between Paul's labor pains (v. 19) and this text about labor is not coincidental.
27. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Isaiah 54:1. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
28. Paul draws the application: the Galatian believers correspond to Isaac, not Ishmael. They are children kata Isaak ('according to the pattern of Isaac') — born through divine promise, not human effort. This identification carries immense implications: the Galatians, as Gentiles, occupy the position of the promised heir, while those insisting on law observance occupy the position of the slave woman's child.
29. Paul refers to the conflict between Ishmael and Isaac (Genesis 21:9, where Ishmael 'laughed' or 'mocked' — the Hebrew tsachaq is ambiguous). Paul reads this as persecution and applies it to the present: the agitators' pressure on Gentile believers mirrors Ishmael's harassment of Isaac. The pattern is structural: flesh persecutes Spirit, law-children harass promise-children.
29. [TCR Cross-Reference] Echoes Genesis 21:9. See the TCR's OT rendering for the Hebrew behind this passage and the translation rationale.
30. Paul quotes Genesis 21:10, originally Sarah's demand to Abraham. By attributing it to 'Scripture' rather than Sarah, Paul elevates it to divine command. The double negative ou mē ('certainly not, by no means') with the future klēronomēsei makes the exclusion emphatic and final. The

implied application is that the agitators and their law-based system must be expelled from the community — the slave-woman covenant has no share in the inheritance.

30. [TCR Cross-Reference] This verse quotes Genesis 21:10 — see the TCR rendering of that passage for the Hebrew source text and translation decisions.
31. The chapter's conclusion reaffirms the believers' identity: they belong to Sarah's line, not Hagar's — to promise, not law; to freedom, not slavery. The word *dio* ('therefore, for this reason') draws the final inference from the allegory. This declaration sets up the exhortation to freedom that opens chapter 5.

5

Summary: *Galatians 5 transitions from theological argument to ethical exhortation. Paul begins with a ringing declaration of Christian freedom and warns that accepting circumcision obligates one to the entire law, separating them from Christ and grace. He contrasts the law-based approach with faith working through love. After warning about the agitators' corrupting influence, Paul describes the life of freedom: not as license for the flesh, but as love-driven service to one another. He then presents his famous contrast between the works of the flesh and the fruit of the Spirit — a catalog of vices followed by a ninefold list of virtues produced by the Spirit's transforming work.*

What Makes This Remarkable: *The fruit of the Spirit (vv. 22-23) is one of the most memorized and beloved passages in Paul's letters. Notably, 'fruit' is singular (karpos), not plural — the nine qualities form a unified whole, not a menu of options. The declaration 'against such things there is no law' (v. 23) is both a legal observation and a profound theological statement: the Spirit produces what the law demanded but could never generate. Paul's ethics are pneumatological — moral transformation comes not from rule-keeping but from the Spirit's presence.*

Translation Friction: *The 'works of the flesh' catalog (vv. 19-21) reflects first-century moral categories. The Greek term *pharmakeia* (v. 20) is rendered 'sorcery' — its connection to modern 'pharmacy' is etymological, not semantic. The phrase 'will not inherit the kingdom of God' (v. 21) raises questions about the security of believers that Paul does not resolve here. The relationship between human effort ('walk by the Spirit,' v. 16) and divine agency ('the Spirit produces fruit,' v. 22) is held in tension.*

Connections: *The freedom declaration (v. 1) echoes the allegory conclusion of 4:31. The law fulfilled in love (v. 14) connects to Romans 13:8-10 and Jesus's teaching in Matthew 22:39. The flesh/Spirit contrast parallels Romans 8:5-13. The fruit of the Spirit echoes the qualities of love in 1 Corinthians 13. The 'crucified the flesh' language (v. 24) connects to 2:20 and 6:14.*

¹For freedom Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery. ²Look — I, Paul, tell you that if you let yourselves be circumcised, Christ will be of no benefit to you at all. ³I testify again to every person who lets himself be circumcised that he is obligated to keep the entire law. ⁴You who are trying to be justified by the law have been severed from Christ; you have fallen away from grace. ⁵For through the Spirit, by faith, we eagerly await the hope of righteousness. ⁶For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, but only faith working through love. ⁷You were running well. Who cut in on you and kept you from obeying the truth? ⁸This persuasion is not from the one who calls you. ⁹A little yeast leavens the whole batch of dough. ¹⁰I am confident in the Lord that you will take no other view. But the one who is disturbing you will bear the judgment, whoever he is. ¹¹But 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. ¹²I wish those who are unsettling you would go all the way and castrate themselves! ¹³For you were called to freedom, brothers and sisters. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh; rather, serve one another through love. ¹⁴For the entire law is fulfilled in a single statement: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." ¹⁵But if you bite and devour one another, watch out that you are not consumed by one another. ¹⁶But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desire of the flesh. ¹⁷For the flesh desires what is opposed to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is opposed to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do whatever you want. ¹⁸But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. ¹⁹Now the works of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, ²⁰Idol worship, sorcery, hostility, quarreling,

jealousy, outbursts of anger, rivalry, division, false teaching. ²¹Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like — of the which I tell you prior to, as I have also informed you in time past, that they which do such things will not inherit God's kingdom. ²²But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³Meekness, temperance — opposed to such there is no law. ²⁴And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. ²⁵If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit. ²⁶Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.

TRANSLATOR NOTES

1. The dative *tē eleutheria* ('for freedom') is emphatic by position — freedom is both the means and the goal of Christ's liberation. The verb *ēleutherōsen* ('set free') is aorist, pointing to a definitive past act (the cross). The imperative *stēkete* ('stand firm') demands active resistance: freedom must be maintained, not passively enjoyed. The 'yoke of slavery' (*zygō douleias*) pictures the law as an animal yoke — the very metaphor used for Torah in Acts 15:10 and by the rabbis themselves, though they viewed it positively ('the yoke of the kingdom of heaven').
2. Paul speaks with full apostolic weight: 'I, Paul' (*egō Paulos*) puts his personal authority behind the warning. The conditional *ean peritemnēsthe* ('if you are circumcised') uses the present subjunctive, indicating a real and imminent possibility. The verb *ōphelēsei* ('will benefit, will profit') with *ouden* ('nothing') makes the stakes absolute: accepting circumcision as a requirement for covenant membership empties Christ of all saving value. Paul is not opposing circumcision as a cultural practice but as a soteriological requirement.
3. The verb *martyromai* ('I solemnly testify, I declare under oath') is a legal term. Paul's logic: circumcision is not a standalone act but an entry point into the entire Torah system. You cannot adopt one requirement in isolation — accepting circumcision means accepting the whole package (*holon ton nomon*, 'the whole law'). The word *opheiletēs* ('debtor, one under obligation') frames law-keeping as a debt that can never be fully paid.
4. The verb *katērgēthēte* ('you have been severed, you have been cut off, you have been rendered ineffective') is devastatingly ironic — those who seek circumcision (cutting) end up being cut off from Christ. The verb *exepesate* ('you have fallen out of') gives us the theological concept of 'falling from grace' — not losing salvation through moral failure, but abandoning the grace principle in favor of the law principle. The two systems are mutually exclusive: grace or law, not both.
5. Paul contrasts the law-based approach (v. 4) with the Spirit-faith approach. The verb *apekdechometha* ('we eagerly await, we look forward to') indicates patient, expectant hope. The 'hope of righteousness' (*elpida dikaiosynēs*) looks forward to final vindication — the full realization of right standing with God. Paul's ethics are eschatological: believers live between the 'already' of justification and the 'not yet' of final righteousness.
6. This verse is the hinge of Galatians' theology. The phrase *pistis di' agapēs energoumenē* ('faith working through love') prevents faith from becoming mere intellectual assent. Faith is not passive but active — and its activity is love. The verb *energoumenē* can be middle ('expressing itself, working') or passive ('being energized, being activated'). If middle: faith naturally expresses itself through love. If passive: faith is activated by love, or by the Spirit's power. Either way, faith and love are inseparable. This verse has been central to Protestant-Catholic dialogue on faith and works.
7. The athletic metaphor returns (cf. 2:2). The verb *enekopsen* ('cut in on, hindered, impeded') was used for cutting into a road to block an army's advance or for breaking into a runner's lane. The question is rhetorical — Paul knows who the agitators are — but the athletic imagery emphasizes that the Galatians were making progress until someone illegally interfered.
8. The word *peismonē* ('persuasion') occurs only here in the New Testament. The 'one who calls' (*tou kalountos*) is God (cf. 1:6, 15). Whatever arguments the agitators are using, they do not originate from God. The verse is terse and devastating — a one-sentence verdict on the agitators' theology.
9. A proverbial saying Paul also uses in 1 Corinthians 5:6. Yeast (*zymē*) works invisibly but transforms everything it touches. The agitators' teaching — even a 'small' requirement like circumcision — will eventually corrupt the entire gospel. The metaphor warns against compromising on what seems minor: in theology, small concessions produce total transformation.
10. Paul expresses confidence (*pepoitha*, 'I have come to trust') qualified by 'in the Lord' — his confidence is in God's work in them, not in their character. The singular *ho tarassōn* ('the one disturbing') may point to a specific ringleader among the agitators. The phrase *hostis ean ē* ('whoever he may be') suggests the person has some status or authority — Paul dismisses it as irrelevant before divine judgment (*krima*).
11. Paul apparently faced the accusation that he still preached circumcision (perhaps based on his circumcision of Timothy, Acts 16:3). His response: if he were preaching circumcision, no one would persecute him — the persecution itself proves he is not. The word *skandalon* ('stumbling block, offense, trap') applied to the cross: a crucified Messiah is inherently offensive because it eliminates human achievement as the basis for standing with God. Adding circumcision would remove this offense — and gut the gospel.
12. The verb *apokopsontai* ('cut off, mutilate') is a shocking escalation of the circumcision vocabulary. Paul's caustic wit: if cutting a little flesh is so beneficial, why not cut off the whole thing? The reference to castration also connects to pagan practices — the priests of Cybele, a goddess worshipped in Galatia, practiced ritual castration. Paul suggests the agitators' obsession with genital cutting has more in common with paganism than with the gospel. The verb *anastatountes* ('unsettling, stirring up, disturbing') is stronger than *tarassontes* (1:7) — these people are turning the community upside down.

13. Paul pivots from defending freedom to defining it. Freedom is not autonomy (doing whatever the flesh desires) but is redirected into voluntary service (*doûeute*, 'serve as slaves' — deliberately using the slavery vocabulary). The paradox of Christian freedom: truly free people choose to serve. The word *aphormē* ('base of operations, launching point, opportunity') is a military term — the flesh looks for any foothold to exploit. Freedom from the law does not mean freedom from love's obligations.
14. Paul quotes Leviticus 19:18. The verb *peplērōtai* ('has been fulfilled, has been brought to completion') is perfect passive — the law finds its full expression in love, not through rule-by-rule obedience but through the love that animates every genuine command. This does not abolish the law but reveals its true purpose. The same argument appears in Romans 13:8-10. Paul the opponent of law-righteousness affirms that love accomplishes what the law intended.
14. [TCR Cross-Reference] Echoes Leviticus 19:18. See the TCR's OT rendering for the Hebrew behind this passage and the translation rationale.
15. The verbs escalate: *daknete* ('bite'), *katethiete* ('devour, eat up'), *analōthēte* ('be consumed, be destroyed'). The imagery is of animals tearing each other apart. This suggests the circumcision controversy has already caused serious community conflict in Galatia. Paul's warning: the agitators' teaching is not only theologically wrong but practically destructive — it is tearing the community apart.
16. The imperative *peripateite* ('walk') is Paul's standard term for daily conduct — the ongoing pattern of life, not a single decision. Walking 'by the Spirit' (*pneumati*, dative of means or sphere) means allowing the Spirit to direct one's steps. The double negative *ou mē* with the aorist subjunctive *telesēte* is the strongest negation in Greek: 'you will certainly not, you will by no means.' The promise is emphatic: Spirit-directed living is genuinely effective against the flesh's desires.
17. The verb *epithumei* ('desires, longs for') is used for both flesh and Spirit — both exert active desire. The preposition *kata* ('against') indicates direct opposition. The verb *antikeitai* ('stands opposed, is set against') describes a permanent state of war. The purpose clause *hina mē... poiēte* ('so that you may not do') can be read two ways: (1) the flesh prevents you from doing what the Spirit wants, or (2) the Spirit prevents you from doing what the flesh wants. Paul may intend both — the believer lives in the tension of conflicting desires.
18. The passive *agesthe* ('you are being led') indicates the Spirit's active guidance — believers follow, the Spirit leads. Being Spirit-led and being under law are mutually exclusive conditions. This verse answers the practical question: if not the law, then what guides behavior? Answer: the Spirit. The law was the guardian for minors (3:24-25); the Spirit is the guide for mature heirs.
19. The adjective *phanera* ('visible, obvious, evident') contrasts with the hidden work of the Spirit (v. 22, 'fruit'). The flesh produces visible, identifiable behaviors. The first cluster is sexual: *porneia* ('sexual immorality' — a broad term covering all sexual conduct outside marriage), *akatharsia* ('impurity' — ritual and moral uncleanness), *aselgeia* ('sensuality, debauchery, lack of self-restraint'). Note: the SBLGNT does not include 'adultery' (*moicheia*), which appears in some later manuscripts.
20. The second cluster covers religious deviance: *eidōlōlatria* ('idolatry') and *pharmakeia* ('sorcery, the use of drugs/potions in magical arts'). The third and largest cluster addresses social-communal sins: *echthra* ('hostilities, enmity'), *eris* ('strife, contention'), *zēlos* ('jealousy, envious rivalry'), *thymoi* ('outbursts of rage'), *eritheiai* ('selfish ambition, political manipulation' — originally meant 'working for hire'), *dichostasiai* ('dissensions, divisions'), *haireseis* ('factions, sects' — later 'heresies'). Many of these social sins were likely manifesting in the Galatian congregations as a direct result of the circumcision controversy.
21. The final cluster: *phthonoi* ('envy'), *methai* ('episodes of drunkenness'), *kōmoi* ('carousing, drinking parties'). The phrase *kai ta homoia toutois* ('and things similar to these') makes the list representative, not exhaustive. The verb *prassontes* ('practicing, habitually doing') is present participle indicating a lifestyle pattern, not isolated incidents. The verb *prolegō* ('I warn in advance') with the aorist *proiepon* ('I already warned') indicates Paul gave this warning during his original visit — this is not new teaching. The warning about not inheriting the kingdom (*basileian theou ou klēronomēsousin*) is the most severe: the inheritance language connects to the heir/adoption theme of chapters 3-4.
22. The singular *karpos* ('fruit') — not 'fruits' — indicates these nine qualities form an organic unity, not a list of separate items. Unlike the 'works' (*erga*) of the flesh, which are produced by human effort, 'fruit' grows naturally from the Spirit's life within the believer. The first triad (love, joy, peace) describes the believer's relationship with God. The second triad (patience, kindness, goodness) describes the believer's posture toward others. The third triad (faithfulness, gentleness, self-control) describes the believer's inner character. *Makrothymia* ('patience, long-suffering') is literally 'long-fused' — slow to anger. *Chrēstotēs* ('kindness') is grace expressed in action. *Agathōsynē* ('goodness') is moral excellence that benefits others.
23. *Prautēs* ('gentleness, meekness') is not weakness but strength under control — the quality Aristotle described as the mean between excessive anger and the inability to be angry at all. *Enkrateia* ('self-control, mastery over one's desires') was a central Greek philosophical virtue. The concluding statement *kata tōn toioutōn ouk estin nomos* ('against such things there is no law') operates on multiple levels: (1) obviously, no law prohibits love, joy, or peace; (2) more profoundly, where the Spirit produces these qualities, the law's regulatory function becomes unnecessary; (3) most pointedly for the Galatian context, the Spirit achieves what the law aimed for but could not produce.
24. The verb *estaurōsan* ('crucified') is aorist active — believers are the agents who crucified the flesh, yet this act is possible only because they participate in Christ's crucifixion (2:20). The flesh is not merely restrained but executed — crucifixion is lethal, not temporary. The 'passions' (*pathēmasin*) and 'desires' (*epithymiais*) are the flesh's driving forces. Paul's ethic requires the decisive death of the flesh's power, not its gradual improvement.
25. Paul uses a different word for 'walk' here: *stoichōmen* ('let us keep in step, let us walk in line, let us march in formation') rather than the general *peripateō* of verse 16. *Stoicheō* means to walk in a line, to keep rank — the military metaphor suggests disciplined, orderly following of the Spirit's lead. The conditional *ei zōmen* ('if we live') is a first-class condition assumed to be true: since we do live by the Spirit, we should therefore walk in

step with the Spirit.

26. The adjective *kenodoxoi* ('vainglorious, conceited, empty of glory') literally means 'having empty glory.' The two participles describe the twin expressions of conceit: *prokalomenoi* ('provoking, challenging' — used for challenging someone to a contest) directed at those perceived as lower, and *phthonountes* ('envying') directed at those perceived as higher. Both attitudes destroy community. This verse likely reflects actual dynamics in the Galatian churches, where the circumcision debate had produced competitive factions.

6

Summary: *Galatians 6 concludes the letter with practical instructions for community life: restoring those caught in sin with gentleness, bearing one another's burdens (thus fulfilling 'the law of Christ'), avoiding self-deception, and the principle of sowing and reaping. Paul then takes the pen himself for a final, emphatic summary — the agitators want circumcision for their own glory, but Paul boasts only in the cross, through which the world has been crucified to him. He closes with a blessing of peace and mercy on 'the Israel of God.'*

What Makes This Remarkable: *The phrase 'the law of Christ' (v. 2) is striking from the apostle who has spent five chapters arguing against the law. Paul distinguishes between the Torah as a system of justification and Christ's own 'law' of love and burden-bearing. The 'large letters' (v. 11) indicate Paul is writing the conclusion in his own hand, possibly due to the eye condition hinted at in 4:15. The 'marks of Jesus' (v. 17) — the stigmata — refers to the physical scars from Paul's persecution, which he contrasts with the circumcision mark the agitators prize. The closing phrase 'the Israel of God' (v. 16) is one of the most debated in the letter.*

Translation Friction: *The phrase 'Israel of God' (v. 16) is debated: does it refer to ethnic Israel, to the church as the new Israel, or specifically to Jewish believers? The grammar (*kai epi*) allows multiple readings. Paul's instruction about supporting teachers financially (v. 6) seems abruptly placed. The 'new creation' language (v. 15) compressed here is developed more fully in 2 Corinthians 5:17.*

Connections: *The 'law of Christ' (v. 2) connects to 1 Corinthians 9:21 and the love command of 5:14. The sowing/reaping principle (vv. 7-8) echoes Proverbs 22:8 and Hosea 8:7. The 'new creation' (v. 15) connects to 2 Corinthians 5:17 and Isaiah 65:17. The 'marks of Jesus' (v. 17) connect to 2 Corinthians 4:10 and 11:23-27. Paul's autograph (v. 11) parallels 1 Corinthians 16:21 and Colossians 4:18.*

¹Brothers and sisters, if anyone is caught in a transgression, you who are spiritual should restore that person in a spirit of gentleness — but watch yourself, so that you too are not tempted. ²Bear one another's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ. ³For if anyone thinks they are something when they are nothing, they deceive themselves. ⁴Let each person examine their own work, and then their reason to boast will be in themselves alone, and not in comparison with someone else. ⁵For each one will carry their own load. ⁶Let the one who is taught the word share all good things with the one who teaches. ⁷Do not be deceived: God is not mocked. Whatever a person sows, that they will also reap. ⁸The one who sows to their own flesh will reap destruction from the flesh, but the one who sows to the Spirit will reap eternal life from the Spirit. ⁹Let us not grow weary of doing good, for at the proper time we will reap, if we do not give up. ¹⁰So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who belong to the household of faith. ¹¹See what large letters I am writing to you with my own hand! ¹²Those who want to make a good impression outwardly are trying to compel you to be circumcised — only so that they will not be persecuted for the cross of Christ. ¹³For not even those who are circumcised keep the law themselves, but they want you to be circumcised so that they may boast in your flesh. ¹⁴But as for me, 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. ¹⁵For neither circumcision counts for anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation. ¹⁶And as for all who will walk by this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God. ¹⁷From now on, let no one cause me trouble, for I bear on my body the marks of Jesus. ¹⁸The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brothers and sisters. Amen.

TRANSLATOR NOTES

1. The verb *prolēmpthē* ('be caught, be overtaken, be surprised by') suggests the person was caught off guard by the sin rather than deliberately pursuing it. The verb *katartizete* ('restore, mend, put in order') was used for setting a broken bone or mending a torn net — the goal is repair, not punishment. The phrase *hoi pneumatikoi* ('you who are spiritual') is not an elite class but describes all who walk by the Spirit (5:25). The shift from plural 'you' to singular 'yourself' (*seauton*) makes the warning intensely personal.
2. The word *barē* ('burdens, heavy loads') includes moral failures (v. 1), suffering, and any weight that crushes a person. The phrase *ton nomon tou Christou* ('the law of Christ') is remarkable — Paul who has argued against the law now speaks of Christ's law. This is not a new legal code but the love command (5:14) embodied in Christ's own life of self-giving (2:20). The verb *anaplērōsete* ('you will fulfill, you will fill up completely') intensifies the simple *plēroō* — the law of Christ is super-abundantly fulfilled through mutual burden-bearing.
3. The verb *phrenapatā* ('deceive one's own mind') is a compound: *phrēn* ('mind') + *apataō* ('deceive'). Self-deception is the flesh's most effective strategy. The phrase *einai ti* ('to be something') echoes Paul's ironic use of *dokountes* ('those who seem to be something') for the Jerusalem leaders in 2:6. Conceit — thinking oneself too important to serve — prevents the burden-bearing of verse 2.
4. The verb *dokimazetō* ('let him examine, let him test') was used for assaying metals — testing for genuineness. Paul redirects the Galatians from comparing themselves with others (which feeds conceit or envy) to honest self-examination. The *kauchēma* ('ground for boasting, reason for pride') when properly directed is not competitive but based on one's own work before God.
5. The word *phortion* ('load, pack') is different from *barē* ('burdens') in verse 2. *Barē* suggests crushing weights that require communal support; *phortion* is a soldier's personal pack or a ship's individual cargo — the normal responsibilities each person must carry. There is no contradiction: we share each other's crushing burdens (v. 2) while each carrying our own personal responsibilities (v. 5).
6. The verb *katēchoumenos* ('being instructed, being catechized') gives us the English word 'catechism.' It implies systematic teaching of the faith. The verb *koinōneitō* ('let him share, let him have fellowship in') indicates material support — the student should share financial resources with the teacher. The phrase *en pasin agathois* ('in all good things') likely means material goods. This instruction about supporting teachers is a practical application of burden-bearing.
7. The verb *myktērizetai* ('is mocked, is treated with contempt') literally means 'to turn up the nose at.' The agricultural metaphor of sowing and reaping is a universal wisdom principle (cf. Proverbs 22:8; Hosea 8:7; Job 4:8). Paul applies it specifically to the flesh/Spirit contrast that follows in verse 8. The warning *mē planasthe* ('do not be deceived, do not wander astray') suggests the Galatians may think they can adopt the flesh's system without consequences.
7. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Proverbs 22:8. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
7. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Hosea 8:7. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
7. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Job 4:8. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
8. The preposition *eis* ('into, toward') with 'sowing' indicates the field in which one invests: sowing into the flesh means investing one's life in the flesh's priorities. The harvest (*therizo*) corresponds to the field: flesh produces *phthora* ('decay, corruption, destruction') and Spirit produces *zōēn aiōnion* ('life of the age to come, eternal life'). In the Galatian context, 'sowing to the flesh' includes the circumcision party's investment in external religious performance.
9. The verb *enkakōmen* ('grow weary, become discouraged, lose heart') acknowledges the real difficulty of persevering in good works when the harvest is delayed. The phrase *kairō idiō* ('at the proper time, in its own season') assures that God's timing, though often frustrating, is precise. The participial condition *mē eklyomenoi* ('not giving up, not becoming exhausted') uses a word that means 'to become slack, to faint' — the image is of a runner whose muscles give out before the finish line.
10. The phrase *hōs kairon echomen* ('as we have opportunity/time') treats the present moment as a limited window for action. The exhortation extends 'to everyone' (*pros pantas*) — not just fellow believers — but prioritizes 'the household of faith' (*tous oikeious tēs pisteōs*). The word *oikeios* ('belonging to the household, family member') pictures the believing community as a family or household. The priority is not exclusion of outsiders but special care for the faith family.
11. The phrase *pēlikois grammasin* ('with what large letters') refers to the size of the handwriting, not the length of the letter. Paul typically dictated his letters to a secretary (*amanuensis*) and added a personal note in his own handwriting at the end (cf. 1 Corinthians 16:21; 2 Thessalonians 3:17). The large letters may indicate Paul's poor eyesight (4:15), his emphasis (writing large for rhetorical effect), or simply unfamiliarity with writing (he was a speaker, not a scribe). From this point to the end of the letter, Paul writes personally.
12. The verb *euprosōpēsai* ('to make a good face, to put on a good appearance') occurs only here in the New Testament. The agitators' motive is exposed: they push circumcision not from theological conviction but to avoid persecution. If they can show Jewish authorities that their Gentile converts are being circumcised, they can present their movement as a Torah-observant sect rather than a law-free community — and escape the hostility that the cross provokes.

- 13.** Paul's charge is hypocrisy: the agitators demand circumcision but do not themselves observe the whole law (cf. 5:3). Their true motive is *kauchēsōntai* ('that they may boast') — they want to collect Gentile foreskins as trophies. The phrase *en tē hymetera sarki* ('in your flesh') is bitterly literal: the circumcised flesh of the Galatians would become the agitators' badge of missionary success.
- 14.** Paul's *mē genoito* ('may it never be!') here is not a response to an objection but a vow. The cross is the only legitimate ground for boasting — the very thing that is an offense (5:11) and foolishness (1 Corinthians 1:23) to the world. The double crucifixion — 'the world to me, and I to the world' — indicates mutual death: Paul is dead to the world's value system, and the world's attractions have lost their power over him. The pronoun *hou* ('through which/whom') is ambiguous — it could refer to the cross or to Christ. The meaning converges either way.
- 15.** The phrase *kainē ktisis* ('new creation') is Paul's most radical category. Circumcision versus uncircumcision — the issue tearing the Galatian churches apart — is rendered utterly irrelevant by the new creation that Christ inaugurates. The word *kainē* means 'new in quality' (not *neos*, 'new in time'). This is not renovation but transformation — a new order of existence. The concept draws on Isaiah 65:17 ('new heavens and new earth') and is developed more fully in 2 Corinthians 5:17.
- 15.** [TCR Cross-Reference] This verse quotes Isaiah 65:17 — see the TCR rendering of that passage for the Hebrew source text and translation decisions.
- 16.** The word *kanōn* ('rule, standard, measuring rod') refers to the new-creation principle of verse 15. The verb *stochēsousin* ('will walk in line with') echoes 5:25. The blessing *eirēnē... kai eleos* ('peace... and mercy') echoes Jewish synagogue blessings. The phrase *kai epi ton Israēl tou theou* ('and upon the Israel of God') is heavily debated: (1) *kai* is exegetical ('that is, the Israel of God'), making 'Israel of God' synonymous with 'all who walk by this rule'; (2) *kai* is additive ('and also upon the Israel of God'), adding a separate blessing on ethnic Israel or on Jewish Christians. The grammar supports both readings. Given Paul's argument throughout Galatians, reading (1) seems contextually stronger, but we preserve the ambiguity.
- 17.** The word *stigmata* ('marks, brands, tattoos') refers to the scars Paul carries from beatings, stonings, and other persecutions (cf. 2 Corinthians 11:23-27). In the ancient world, *stigmata* were brands placed on slaves, soldiers, or devotees of a deity to indicate ownership. Paul's scars are his brand of belonging to Jesus — far more significant than the circumcision mark the agitators promote. The irony: they boast in a mark on others' flesh; Paul boasts in marks on his own flesh, received in service to Christ.
- 18.** Paul closes with grace — the letter that opened with astonishment (1:6) ends with benediction. The word *adelphoi* ('brothers and sisters') — placed at the end for emphasis — is a final act of reconciliation: despite the sharp rebukes, Paul still considers the Galatians family. The phrase *meta tou pneumatou hymōn* ('with your spirit') is more intimate than the standard 'with you' — Paul prays that grace will penetrate to the deepest level of their being.