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Galatians (Overview) - Part 1



Bible Book Overviews - Steve Gregg

This overview of the book of Galatians by Steve Gregg explores the theme of Jewish law, specifically circumcision, and its relevance to Christians. Gregg emphasizes that Gentile believers are not required to be circumcised in order to follow God's righteousness. He also addresses the issue of false teachers who were trying to persuade the Galatians to embrace circumcision. Overall, the lecture provides a comprehensive understanding of the historical context and key teachings of Galatians.

Transcript

Alright, today we are going to be looking at the book of Galatians. Galatians is a great book. It's a lot like Romans.

Obviously, most Christians really like the book of Romans. Galatians is like a shorter version of Romans. Some people have likened it to a rough draft of Romans.

The similarities between Galatians and Romans are numerous, although there are some striking differences between them too, besides their length. The principle doctrine that underlies the arguments of Galatians and Romans would be justification by faith, especially apart from the works of the law. Paul in both books cites Genesis 15-6, and Abraham believed God and it was counted in for righteousness.

This is in Romans 4-3 and in Galatians 3-6. Paul quotes that verse, one of his favorite verses. He in both places indicates that the Jewish law, particularly circumcision, is essentially irrelevant for the Christian.

Something that was a very controversial thing to say in Paul's day, especially among the Jews. The Jews for many centuries had distinguished themselves from all other nations by the fact that they were circumcised. Everyone who was uncircumcised was not Jewish and was a lesser breed without the law.

They were unclean. In fact, the word uncircumcised became almost a synonym for unclean. Even Moses said when he would complain to God about being sent to Pharaoh, he said, why would Pharaoh listen to me? I'm a man of uncircumcised lips, which

apparently means unacceptable.

Uncircumcised almost becomes a synonym for not acceptable. That was ingrained in the Jewish mind for centuries. Now Paul comes along and says, you know, circumcision really has almost nothing at all to do with a relationship with God.

In Romans he argues in chapter 2 especially that the Jews who were circumcised often did not keep the law and that he said the Gentile believers who do keep the righteousness of the law and obey God, but they're not circumcised. He said, they'll condemn you who with your circumcision don't keep the law. And that's where Paul said, of course, he is not a Jew who's went outwardly, but he's a Jew who's went inwardly and circumcision is not outward of the flesh, but of the heart.

Now that's what he says in Romans. In Galatians twice Paul says in Christ, neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything. In one place he says, but what does avail is a faith that works through love.

In another place he says what does avail is a new creation. But the point is that Paul is arguing against the Jewish prejudice that would say that if a person is uncircumcised, namely if a person is a Gentile, they are lesser even as Christians. Now this is something that was discussed in discussed at the Jerusalem council in Acts chapter 15, because it was a controversy when Paul began to evangelize Gentiles and the Galatians were the first among those that he evangelized.

If I identify the audience correctly, which we'll talk about in a moment, but when Gentiles began to be converted, Paul was challenged by Jewish Christians because all Christians prior to that were Jewish. And that means that all Christians prior to circumcised, not after the conversion, but at the eighth day of their life, which means when there were only Jewish Christians, the question ever had to come up. Should we be circumcised now that we're Christians? They were circumcised before they were Christians.

You don't have to be circumcised twice. So kind of a once in a lifetime deal. And that happened when they were eight days old.

So as long as only Jewish people were in the church, which was true for, I don't know, perhaps as much as a decade after Pentecost. We don't know how long before Gentiles began to come in. Well, then the issue of circumcision as a necessity just never came to be discussed.

It was just understood. Jesus is the Jewish Messiah. All the people who embrace him are Jews.

They're, you know, they're continuing on in the promises of Abraham, who was circumcised. And so even in the Old Testament, a Gentile could be circumcised and become a Jew. But if they did become circumcised, and Paul brings this out in Galatians,

a Jew, a Gentile becomes circumcised, is basically taking on all the responsibilities of the Jewish law.

The 613 laws in the Torah. It's more than just a matter of, you know, doing one little operation here and, you know, and the Jews will accept you. Now, if you get circumcised, you are seen as becoming a proselyte to Judaism.

You are now under the laws about the holy days, about the sacrifices, because the temple is still standing in those days. You have to offer sacrifices, have to keep a kosher diet and avoid all uncleanness and do all those things that Jews had to do. 613 laws.

But the Jews who had become Christians in Jerusalem were already doing those things. They were doing those things before they were Christians, and they kept doing it. Why not? They were in Jerusalem.

The temple was there. They just kept the same lifestyle after they were Christians. Not in every respect.

Their lives improved. They shared their goods with the poor better than they had before and some other things. But as far as keeping the ritual laws, that was just a way of life.

They'd always lived and didn't see any reason to quit. It was when Gentiles began to get saved that the question arose, well, these people were not circumcised. These people are not Jewish.

Now, according to Moses, Gentiles like this could become circumcised and could become Jewish. They have to become what they call proselytes. And then they're joining the Jewish faith.

Now, Paul was arguing that Christianity is not the same faith as the Jewish faith. Many people today like to talk about the Jewish roots of the Christian life. And the only Jewish roots we have are really historically.

There are obviously the church came from Jesus and he came from the Jewish, the tribe of Judah and so forth. In that sense, we have historical roots, but not spiritual roots, because the law, Paul says, is an entirely different religion than what we have embraced. And therefore, he opposed Gentiles who became Christians now becoming Jews.

He saw no reason for them to become Jews since that was a different religion than what he preached. And so I get to see you guys again. So this was the controversy when the Gentiles began to get saved.

Previous to that, only Jews had become Christians and they didn't have to decide, should they get circumcised or not, since they were already circumcised as Jews before. So now

this becomes a controversy. Now, Paul understood before the Jerusalem apostles did that this was a new movement.

This was not just another branch of Judaism. There were already various branches of Judaism. There were Pharisees, the Sadducees, there were the Essenes, there were the Zealots.

These were different denominations, almost we would say, of Judaism. And then, of course, many of the early Jewish Christians and even Jewish pagans thought Christianity was just another denomination of Judaism. The Nazarenes, they called it.

It was like the Nazarene branch of Judaism as opposed to the Pharisee or the Sadducee branch. But that was until it became clear that Christianity is not another branch of Judaism. It doesn't have Jewish roots.

It has Christ as its roots. And Jesus, though he was Jewish, I mean, he had to be some race, have to be Jewish as a fulfillment of Jewish prophecy. But once once Jesus was born, he was a man for all nations.

He was a savior of the world, not just the savior of Israel. He didn't come to simply perpetuate the Jewish religion to a new group of people that included Gentiles. But he came to be the savior of the world and the Lord who would be followed quite independently of 613 Jewish laws in the Torah.

Now, this was something that was slow in dawning on the early church and the Jerusalem church didn't get it as quickly as Paul did. And there's a good reason for that. Paul was out among the Gentiles.

He had to think about this right from the very beginning. His ministry is the Gentiles. He had to think this through.

It's very probable that Paul had thought it through even before he went to the Gentiles because he spent those years in seclusion before he went into ministry. It may be that during those years is when he got this awareness. Wait a minute.

God's Jesus died for everyone. It's not just for Jews. And so when he began to work among Gentiles, he already had perhaps that mindset.

We don't know when Paul fully understood that. But we know he did before the guys in Jerusalem did. Peter and James and John and those guys, they didn't have to think about all their converts were Jews already.

They had the temple right there. They've been going to the temple almost every day before they became Christians. They kept going after it's very little changed in that respect.

And it was not something that was forced upon them to rethink. Sometimes circumstances make us rethink things. I had somebody tell me that he thought I was overly sympathetic toward the universal reconciliation view of that hell is not eternal torment, but it's actually a place where people can be rehabbed.

Now, I don't teach that and I don't necessarily believe that, but it's it's one of the several views of hell out there. And it's there's more than one that make a little sense to me to have a good scriptural case. And so sometimes I speak with a measure of sympathy toward one of these other views, including that one.

And a listener who didn't like that fact that I did that would say, you know, I think the reason that you have become sympathetic toward the universal reconciliation view of hell is that you have unbelieving children. And the truth is, I do have unbelieving children and no doubt that would make me more sympathetic toward it. I wouldn't deny that.

But I would say this before I had any children at all. And before I had any idea that I'd ever have an unbelieving child. I remember when my babies were born that I realized something about God I had not thought about before.

Everyone who ever I know who's a Christian who gets has their first child to say, I never understood how much God loves us until I had a child of my own. And I realized how father loves a child. And by having a child, I came to understand the love of God for humanity.

I remember having that experience. I think most Christian guys who have children do. And that's because a new experience in life that puts you more in the position that God is in often gives you occasion to think through and get revelations about God that you wouldn't have otherwise had.

And then, of course, once you have unsaved children, you're very much in the position God's in because God has a lot of unsaved people that he loves, prodigal sons that he would like to see be found and saved. And so, you know, obviously, once once you have children who are unsaved, you can think, well, how would I if I were in God's position? Because he is in a similar position. He's got people he loves.

His children are lost that he wants to see saved like I do with my children. What would his attitude be toward the lost? What's my attitude toward my kids? Do I want to burn them? Do I want to torture them? You know what I mean? What would I if I could do if I was in God's position to do anything I wanted? What would I do toward my rebellious children? Well, I'd certainly give them as many chances as possible, obviously. And if possible, I'd give them infinite chances until they finally came around.

Now, I don't know that God does that, but I could imagine God wanting to do that. And, you know, those and that's where the the doctrine of universal reconciliation begins to

make a little more sense than you'd otherwise think. But because that would seem to fit what the purpose and character of God, that whether it's true or not, I think the man's criticism of me was correct.

I probably did become more open to that view once I was in a position more like the position God is actually in having rebellious children, knowing how a father feels toward a rebellious children. If life experiences don't teach you anything about God, then you're not a good learner. And, you know, it's like the Jews and the Christians in Jerusalem, their life experiences didn't make them think through issues about whether people had to be circumcised or not.

Until Paul, his life experience were different than theirs. He's out ministering among the Gentiles. He realizes before they do, these people don't have to become Jews.

They don't have to become circumcised. They just have to follow Jesus like like we Jews do. And this was controversial, obviously.

And so controversy was addressed in Jerusalem in Acts chapter 15 and what they called the Jerusalem Council. The apostles were there, the elders of Jerusalem. I don't know how many days this went on, but there were a lot of people giving testimony, including Paul and Barnabas and and Peter and others.

And finally, James, the leader of the church in Jerusalem, announced that the church that they had concluded the Holy Spirit, he said, had concluded that the Gentiles don't have to become Jews. They don't have to be circumcised, which is wonderful for us because they decided that way instead of the other way. And that solved the problem.

Now, what's interesting is that Galatians is written as if that problem has not been resolved in Jerusalem yet. Paul doesn't mention specifically the Jerusalem Council, but he's arguing with his readers for the conclusions that the council actually later reached. Paul already had the position before the council reached it.

And he's arguing for that position. You don't need to be circumcised. You Gentiles, you don't have to keep the law.

You're saved by grace through faith. And, you know, this was Paul's understanding before it was understood by the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem. The fact that he doesn't mention the Jerusalem Council is a pretty good, strong evidence that it hadn't happened yet, because if it had, he wouldn't have to write the letter at all.

He wouldn't have to argue every which way for his point, as he does to prove his point. If he could just say, oh, by the way, guys, this has been settled by the officially settled at the Jerusalem Council, all the apostles agree. You know, you don't have to circumcise.

But when he wrote this, it's clear that that council had not happened yet. That's my

conviction. I don't see any way around that.

There is a question as to when it was written, and there are some who hold a different view, which I'll look at in a moment. But these ideas are in Romans and they're in Galatians. And some of the ways that Paul illustrates them, some of the directions he goes in talking about the Christian life are the same.

For example, we're famously Romans seven. Paul talks about, you know, I do the things I hate and I hate, you know, and I think I choose to. I don't do it.

Wretched man that I am over. He says the same thing in Galatians five, 17, the flesh lusts against the spirit, the spirit against the flesh. And these two are contrary to each other.

So you don't do what you want to do. This is only mentioned in these two books. But it's clear that some of the same thought processes were in Paul's mind when he wrote Galatians as when he wrote Romans.

And so some have thought Galatians is almost an inadvertent first draft of Romans. Well, I say inadvertent is because when Paul wrote Galatians, he had no idea he'd write Romans. But as it turned out, having written Galatians, provides sort of an outline of some of these ideas that later became developed in the book of Romans.

Both both Romans and Galatians, and I think only Romans and Galatians really point this out, that the normative Christian life is to walk in the spirit. In Romans eight, after Paul is talking about the frustration of wanting to do right, but doing the wrong thing, and he can't, you know, season stuff in bondage to flesh, he says, but he says, the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death in Romans eight, two. And then he says in verse four, so that the righteous requirements of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the spirit that is walking in the spirit is the means by which the righteous requirements of law are fulfilled in our lives.

Well, the other place where Paul says that is Galatians Galatians five, sixteen, where he says, I say, walk in the spirit, you will not fulfill the lust of the flesh. So we see Galatians and Romans has a lot of overlap in sort of its core message. There are different issues they're addressing different problems in the churches.

So they, you know, the epistles go different ways and have a different flavor about them. For example, the Romans epistles much longer. And that may be because Galatians was not written in Paul's leisure, but in more haste, the Galatian epistle makes very clear just by its tone that Paul is, if there's an emergency here, I'm going to suggest that he has just returned from his first missionary journey.

And these are the churches he founded on that journey. He and Barnabas have just got

back to their home church in Antioch, and they get news that Judaizers have followed them to those churches that they've now come home from. And those Judaizers are trying to put these people under the Jewish law and circumcision.

And the Galatians being new converts don't know the difference. And so Paul is very alarmed. He expresses interest, concerned that they might they might have fallen from grace and things like that, as he'll point out.

And he's there's an element or tone of alarm throughout the book of Galatians, as we shall see. Perhaps a few examples I could show you in chapter one, Galatians one, six through nine, he says, I marvel that you are turning away so soon from him who called you in the grace of Christ to a different gospel, which is not another. But there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ.

But even if we are an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached, let him be anathema cursed, as we have said before. So say I now again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than that which you have received, let it be anathema. That's a pretty strong word.

Let it be a curse to hell. Basically, it's what anathema means. Paul is saying you've already departed from the gospel.

How quickly you've done some shock. He says, I'm astonished that you've slipped away immediately after my departure. Also, in chapter three, verses one through three says, oh, foolish Galatians.

That's a little harsh. He doesn't really use the word fool to describe many of his converts and other officials. He says, oh, foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you like like demons have blinded you.

You've been bewitched that you should not obey the truth before whose eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed among you as crucified. This only I want to learn from you. Did you receive the spirit by the works of the law or by the hearing of faith? Are you so foolish? Having begun in the spirit, are you now being made perfect in the flesh? So again, he's been a little a little harsh with him.

He's alarmed. He's a concerned parent. These are his babies that he has just brought to birth.

He actually says that later in chapter four. He says, my little children, verse 19, he says, my little children for whom I labor in birth again until Christ is formed in you. I would like to be present with you now and to change my tone for I have doubts about you.

He admits his tone is a little severe. You're my kids. You're doing things are self-destructive.

Spiritually speaking, I'm concerned about you. I'd love to be able to change this tone because but I have doubts about you. This is a very serious thing.

He says in chapter four, verse 11, he says, I'm afraid for you, lest I have labored for you in vain. Galatians 4:11, like I labored for you. I brought you to Christ, but I think it may be all in vain.

It may come to nothing. That's kind of scary. In chapter five, verses two through four, he says, indeed, I, Paul, say to you that if you become circumcised, Christ will profit you nothing.

And I testify again to every man who becomes circumcised that he is a debtor to keep the whole law. You have become estranged from Christ. You who attempt to be justified by law, you have fallen from grace.

That's the strongest words Paul gives. He doesn't even say those things to the Corinthians who are really messed up. You have fallen from grace.

You're estranged from Christ. You know, he's obviously expressing tremendous alarm in chapter five, verse 12. He says.

I could wish those who trouble you would even cut themselves off. Now, that's a strange statement. One might think he means cut themselves off from fellowship.

But all the commentators agree that what he's saying is he wishes they'd castrate themselves. So these people are trying to do operations on your male parts, namely circumcision. I wish if they're so zealous about that, we should go all the way.

Actually, one translation of the New Jerusalem translation I used to read when I was younger. It said, tell them I wish the knife would slip while they're circumcised. He's basically saying I wish they were castrated.

Now, that doesn't sound very charitable, although he may be saying, I don't want you them reproducing more of their kind. You know, I wish they were fruitless and unable to do that. But of course, he's being a little sarcastic and a little harsh, very harsh.

Chapter six and verse 17, he says, from now on, let no one trouble me for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus. Let no one trouble me indicates that he's been troubled. He's being troubled by those those false teachers.

They're undermining him. So we can see there's this tone of a bit of anger, certainly alarm. It's an emergency.

And that may be why he didn't write a long, thought out treatise like Romans on this occasion. It was he had to write this and send it off to them later. Of course, when he wrote Romans, there was no big crisis in Rome at the time.

He hadn't even been there. He didn't even know a few people in that church, but he planned to go there. So he's writing them a treatise, you know, much more measured.

He had he had a longer time to do it. He's taking ship to to Antioch and he's going to go to Rome and then to Spain was his plan. So he just took the time to write and expand on these ideas.

So the differences between Galatians and Romans are not so much in subject matter, but in tone and perhaps purpose, because he did not see the Romans as slipping away from Christ. He did see the Galatians slipping away from Christ and he was very concerned. He's much more emotional in Galatians.

Actually, Romans is the most reasoned and unemotional letter Paul wrote. Romans is the most impersonal letter he wrote because he he wasn't writing to a church that he had direct connections with. He knew some people in Rome because everybody knew people in Rome.

People traveled throughout the area and some ended in Rome. So at the end of Romans, he greets 20 something people who are his friends, who are now in Rome. He's writing, but the church in Rome as an entity he had never seen.

He'd never been there. So he's writing more academically in Romans. He's much less emotional, much less personal than in any other epistle.

Also, the differences in the in the problems he was addressing in Galatia and Rome should be noted in Galatia. Paul clearly is addressing his concern about false teachers, people who have come preach another gospel, people who are trying to persuade them to get circumcised and he wishes they'd get castrated. Those teachers, there's very nefarious teachers as far as Paul is concerned that need to be thrown out and the church needs to be immunized against their teaching.

Now in Romans, there apparently weren't much in the way of Judaizers, but there was conflict between the Jewish and Gentile Christians. They were settled members of the churches and they were somehow getting along relatively well, but they were still having differences that the Jewish Christians wanted to keep the festivals themselves. The Gentiles did not want to and the Jews kind of looked down on the Gentiles for not keeping the festivals and keeping kosher and the Gentiles kind of looked down on the Jews for being so legalistic.

So Paul, you know, for example, in Romans 14 says, some of you want to eat anything and others want to restrict your diet. Some of you want to keep one day holy, some want to keep every day alike. Clearly differences that the Jews and the Gentiles would have and his statement is, let everyone be fully persuaded as I am.

You who eat everything, don't despise those who don't and those of you who don't eat

everything, don't judge those who do. In other words, there was some judging and bad feelings in Rome, but it wasn't tearing the church apart. They weren't leaving the gospel.

And so Paul did make some of the same points to the Romans they made to the Galatians because it also had to do with what is the role of the law? What is the role of circumcision? What is the role of being Jewish at all for someone who's a Christian? And so we have these similar concerns with differences in concerns also. One of the things we find in Galatians is that Paul repeatedly feels the need to defend his own apostleship against what appear to be some challenges that are coming in against him in the church. We can only deduce what these are from the kinds of things he says.

Apparently, the Judaizers were saying that they had come to the Galatians from Jerusalem and were representing, you know, what the apostles in Jerusalem taught. And if there had, in fact, not yet been a Jerusalem council, that may have been true. It may be that, you know, by default, the apostles in Jerusalem were still essentially assuming that all Christians would keep the law.

They hadn't had the council yet. That's what they had to decide. And so they might have been saying, you know, they came from the apostles.

And they might have been saying that Paul is like a second-tier apostle. He wasn't around when Jesus was on the earth. He got converted later.

And he's kind of dependent on the other apostles for his authority. So, I mean, in a sense, he's one step down in status from the other apostles. So you should listen to us.

We're representing what the other apostles say. Paul, he's obviously in a sense doing his own thing. One thing Paul continually affirms and emphasizes is that he is not an apostle that was appointed by others, but directly by Christ, just like Peter, James and John.

He's a first-tier apostle, not a second-tier apostle. He says it right from the opening verse. Verse 1 of Galatians 1, Paul, an apostle, not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father who raised him from the dead.

Notice, I didn't become an apostle through the instrumentality of Peter or any other apostles. I got it directly from Jesus. And he frequently says things like that.

For example, in chapter 1, verse 11 and 12, he says, but I make known to you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. I didn't get it from people. I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through the revelation of Jesus Christ.

And he says it in verse 15, God separated me from my mother's womb and called me through his grace. So this is not something that kind of was an afterthought that once he became a Christian, the apostles kind of recognized he had some promise, so they kind

of, you know, ordained him or something. No, he says, God picked me from the womb, from my mother's womb, he picked me and called me.

And I didn't get it from any men at all. Then he gives sort of some, in this epistle more than any other, Paul gives some autobiographical story of his earlier ministry life. And one thing he says that when he first got converted, he says in verse 17, I immediately, I did not confer flesh and blood.

I didn't go to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me. He's making very clear. I didn't have any early contact with these guys to get any ideas or authorization from them.

I had independent authorization from Christ just like they had. And he says in verse 19, but when I saw that, what he does talk about visiting Jerusalem for a fortnight and he says, and I saw none of the other apostles, like James, the Lord's brother, he says in verse 22, I was unknown by face to the churches of Judea, which were in Christ. He said, I didn't really have much contact with these people.

How could it be that my ministry, which started before I even went to Jerusalem and, and, and when I did go to Jerusalem, I was for a couple of weeks. I only saw Peter and James and no one else. You know, how could I have had much dependence on them for what I'm saying? So, and this is the kind of thing he argues.

So there must've been people arguing that his whole ministry, his whole validity depends on the approval of the other apostles. They may have, he learned the gospel from them. He may have corrupted it as far as the, you know, the Judaizers concerned, but he's second is down below the other apostles and statuses.

No, I got it the same way they got it directly from Jesus. The difference is I got it from the resurrected glorified Jesus meeting me on the road to Damascus. They got it from Jesus when he was on the earth, but that's the only difference.

It's still Jesus made me an apostle, not them, but that is, they didn't do it. Um, and he, apparently there are some who are hinting that he, even from time to time, uh, changed his message to please his audience. Now, Paul himself said in first Corinthians nine, that when he was among those who were under the law, he behaved as one of the law.

When he was with those who were not under the law, Gentiles, he behaved as one who's not under the law. Now he said, I did that so I can win them. But perhaps that policy caused people to say, Oh, he's doesn't even have a consistent message.

He's just a man pleaser. He just, whatever, whatever, you know, we'll keep him out of trouble. If he's with Jews, he acts like he agrees with them.

When he's with Gentiles, he actually agrees with them. He obviously talks out of both

sides of his mouth. You can't trust him.

He's not really being honest. And yet it very, it makes it very clear that he, uh, he, he is not that way. At one point he says, uh, uh, do I sound like I'm pleasing men now? For example, in chapter one and verse 10, after he's just said, if anyone preaches any other gospel, let him be accursed.

He says in verse 10, for do I now persuade men or God, or do I seek to please men for, if I still please men, I would not be a servant of Christ. Now, what he's saying is apparently someone in your churches thinks that I'm pleasing men. Do I sound like it now? When I say anyone who preaches a different gospel, I preach, they can go to hell.

Is that, does that sound like a crowd pleasing kind of a message to you? And, uh, at one point he says, uh, and I'm not sure if I can real quickly locate the verse where he says it. Uh, he says, uh, for, if I, he says, for, if I still preached circumcision, uh, why am I still persecuted? Uh, we'll find, we'll come across this, we'll go through it. Um, I, the verse number I don't have written down, but essentially what he's saying is apparently some people say that he still preaches circumcision on occasion.

You know, when he's in the right crowds that are amenable to it, he preaches circumcision. Other times not, he says, no, he says, if I'm still preaching circumcision, why am I being persecuted by these Judaizers? So we can see that there's a lot of his side remarks in Galatians that are directed toward opponents who are undermining his apostolic authority, undermining his credibility, his honesty, and he just makes comments about them from time to time. So that's what we're going to find, uh, throughout the book of Galatians.

Now I do want to talk about who the audience is and what it was written. And I already mentioned that I thought it was written before the Jerusalem council. That would make it the earliest book Paul wrote at the time of the Jerusalem council.

There were no, uh, Paul had established no Gentile churches anywhere, except in Galatia. Galatia is not a town. Many of Paul's later epistles are true.

The church in Philippi, the church in Thessalonica, the church in Corinth towns. Galatia was not a town. Galatia was a province, a Roman province with many towns.

And on his first missionary journey, Paul had gone to several of those towns, Pasidian, Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, Derby. These were towns in the province that he had found on his first missionary journey. So he doesn't like in other epistles, he doesn't are to the church in Galatia with the churches of Galatia in one chapter, one verse, two.

There are many churches. He's not right. It's just one congregation.

And they seem to be the churches of this first missionary journey. Now there's

controversy about that because there's two theories about the, uh, audience. One is called the North Galatian theory.

One's called the South Galatian theory. This make bore some people. So I won't take much time with it.

But it has an impact on when it, when the book was written. There was a, an ethnic group called the Galatians. They were related to the Gauls.

Three Celtic tribes had moved from France a few centuries before the time of Christ into the region of North Asia minor, which is now Turkey. And these Celtic tribes were ethnically called Galatians. And you can tell their name is ethnically similar to the word Gauls, Galatians.

And they were related to the Gauls. Now these were up in a region of central to North Asia minor that Paul has never recorded as ever having evangelized. And since he calls his audience Galatians in Galatians three, one, oh foolish Galatians.

Many scholars feel that this looks like an ethnic designate designation. And therefore that he must have at a time unrecorded in scripture, evangelize that region of the Galatians up there in the further north. And we have any record of him ever going.

Now he didn't go up there on his first missionary journey and there's no record of him going on a second missionary journey there. He wanted to go that region. And we're told in Acts that Paul and his second missionary team from Troas were trying to decide where to go.

And they thought about going into Asia minor, but the Holy Spirit forbade them. And they thought about going to Bithynia, but the Holy Spirit forbade them. Then they ended up going west instead.

So when they might have gone into this region that we're talking about where the ethnic Galatians were, they didn't. And on his third missionary journey, we don't read of them going there either. And after his third missionary journey, he's arrested and goes to Rome and is in prison for most of the until there would appear to be the case that after the book of Acts is over, after the book closes, there was another missionary journey that Paul alludes to in some of his latest epistles, which are the pastoral epistles, Timothy and Titus.

And what I'm saying is in the lifetime of Paul, as recorded in the book of Acts, Paul never went to this region. So if these people are in that region and Paul had converted them and he's now writing them, they must've been covered very late in his life, probably after his release from prison and something like 62 or 63 AD, very near the end of Paul's life. If that is true, then this is one of the latest epistles Paul wrote.

Probably the only later epistles would be the pastoral epistles of first and second Timothy and Titus. So we'd have a very late epistle here. Now this theory, the North Galatian theory was actually held by many of the church fathers, but it has great problems attached to it.

The other theory is the South Galatian theory. Now the people in the South of Asia Minor were within the province that the Romans called Galatia. They were not ethnic Galatians.

They were like Aeonians. They were Phrygians. They were, you know, amphilians.

They were different tribes that were not Galatians, but they were in Galatia in what the Romans called the province of Galatia. And therefore, and Paul writes to the churches of Galatia. And so some feel that when he called these people Galatians, he's not referring to them by their ethnic designation, simply by their geographic designation.

They're in Galatia. They're Galatian people, just like we would all be called Americans, though there's quite a few different ethnicities among us here. You know, there's obviously Asian and Hispanic and Caucasian, Anglo people here, Germanic people.

We've got all kinds of people here. And yet we're all Americans. That's a geographical, not ethnic designation for us.

And so Galatians, if he's talking about the Southern Galatian theory, but down to where Paul and Barnabas evangelize on their first missionary journey, they would be called that not because of their ethnicity, but their geography. Now, this is almost certainly the case for the reason I mentioned earlier. If it was a late epistle, if it was any time after the Jerusalem Council, which was 50 AD.

Then there's no possibility that Paul would write a whole book arguing this thesis when he could simply say, you know, the apostles in Jerusalem already decided this question. I don't have to argue it. There's no the argument is resolved.

I even have a letter from the Jerusalem Council that they told me to bring on to the Gentile churches. It says all these things. Paul wouldn't have to write a letter himself.

Writing a letter is quite an ordeal in those days. And they didn't have the writing materials readily available that we have. They didn't have the, you know, inexpensive things like paper.

They had parchment. I mean, there's there's reasons you wouldn't write a letter if you didn't have to. And if he had the letter from the Jerusalem Council, which he would after Acts chapter 15, then Galatians would never have to have ever been written.

And so the fact that he doesn't mention that council is very significant. And therefore, if you think of how the Book of Acts is laid out, Paul and Barnabas were sent out on the

first missionary journey in Acts 13, and they and they can't continue and completed that missionary journey in Acts 14. And at the end of Acts 14, they came back to their home church that had sent them out, which was Antioch.

At the beginning of chapter 15, then we read that some apparently Jerusalem Christians, some Judaizers came to Antioch while Paul and Barnabas were there, having just returned and were recovering from their first journey where they established those churches. And these Judaizers were arguing with the Antioch Christians about the need for Gentiles to be circumcised. And apparently Paul, around the same time, heard that there are similar false teachers going to the Galatian churches he's just returned from.

And he so what acts tells us is that the Barnabas and Paul went down to Jerusalem and they had the Jerusalem Council, which vindicated them against the false teachers. So since Paul had to have written this before that council, but after those churches existed, he must have written it just at that short interval of months, perhaps, where he and Barnabas were in Antioch. They returned from the first missionary journey, but they had not yet gone to Jerusalem for the Jerusalem Council.

Immediately after the Jerusalem Council, or shortly afterwards, they made their second missionary journey. Now it was on the second missionary journey that Paul established the European churches they wrote to, the Thessalonians, the Corinthians, the Asian churches also. But the Philippian, Thessalonian, and Corinthian churches were all in Europe.

And Ephesians and Colossians and some others were written to Asian churches that did not yet exist on the first missionary journey so that would make Galatians the earliest of Paul's epistles. Written probably around 50 AD. And I believe the arguments for that is pretty much airtight.

Although, of course, there are early witnesses to a North Galatian theory. I don't think it makes sense in a lot of the evidence. So let's just kind of cruise through the book very quickly here.

It's a short book. It's divided into three major parts. Paul's shorter books are usually divided into somewhat equal parts.

Ephesians and Colossians, for example. The first half of Ephesians, that's the first three chapters, are theological. The second half of Ephesians, another three chapters, is practical.

Colossians is on the same plan. Colossians, the first two chapters, are theological. The second two chapters are practical.

The theology comes first, the practical application second. Now, Galatians is like that too, but it has a section before the theological section. That's an autobiographical

section.

The first two chapters are essentially autobiographical. The next two are essentially theological. And the last two are essentially practical.

So you still have almost equal amounts of theological and practical. But in this case, we have another section before that where he tells his story. And his story is told in order to bolster his case.

He tells the parts of his story that help make the points he needs to make, namely that after his conversion, he had very limited contact with the other apostles, which is necessary to point out that he didn't derive any part of his ministry, his gospel, or his authorization from them. They came late into his converted life, and he was already preaching the gospel before he even met them. So that's what he's arguing here.

Let's take a look. I'm going to read through quickly, making relatively few comments, at least as few as I can get away with. Paul, an apostle not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father who raised him from the dead and to all the brethren who are with me to the churches of Galatia.

Grace to you and peace from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ who gave himself for our sins that he might deliver us from this present evil age according to the will of God, our God and Father, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen. I marvel, he says immediately.

Now, most epistles at this point, he says, I thank my God for every remembrance of you. Most of the audiences he writes to, including the Corinthians, who are pretty corrupt church, and they got a lot of compromise and carnality in the Corinthian church. Still, he says, I thank God, you know, at every remembrance of you.

This is actually the only church he writes to that he doesn't thank God for, which is interesting. It might be because it's the first letter he wrote and he hadn't developed that habit yet in his letters, or it may simply be that he is more alarmed about their circumstances than when he writes other letters to other churches. It would be interesting that Paul, if he was more alarmed about the Galatians than, let's say, about the Corinthians, that the Corinthians had all kinds of immorality and division and heresy, you know, people getting drunk at the Lord's table.

I mean, some real bad behavior in the Corinthian church. Also, thank God for them. But the Galatians, he couldn't thank God for them.

Well, what's their crime compared to the Corinthians? They're legalists. They're Judaizers. They're becoming, you know, Torah observant.

It's interesting that Paul would have actually a more positive attitude toward the Gentile

churches that are simply carnal than he would have toward those that are legalistically and Judaistically inclined. But that's fine. Instead of saying, I thank God, he says, I marvel that you are turning away so soon from him who called you to the grace of Christ to a different gospel.

Now, him who called you is referenced not to Paul, but to God who called him. He also, in chapter five, verse eight, uses that expression, him who called you. Chapter five, verse eight, he says, this persuasion does not come from him who calls you.

That is from Jesus. Which different gospel is not really another gospel. It parades itself as the gospel, but it's a perversion of the gospel.

It's not really good news at all. It's a false gospel. It's contrary to the gospel, which is not another, but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ.

But even if we are an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be a curse, as we have said before. So now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than we have preached or you have received from us, let him be a curse. This concern about receiving another gospel also occurs a few pages earlier in the New Testament when Paul's writing to the Corinthians, second Corinthians, chapter 11, probably just two pages before this in your Bible.

And first, second Corinthians 11, Paul says in verses three and four, I fear less somehow as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness. So your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. For if he who comes preaches another Jesus whom you've not preached, whom we've not preached, or if you receive a different spirit, which you've not received or a different gospel, which you've not accepted, you may well put up with it.

That's Paul's concern. I'm afraid you'll put up with this kind of stuff, false gospels, false Jesus's. And so here also any gospel other than the one Paul preached is not okay.

Now, there are some people who say that Paul legitimately preached one gospel that was different from the gospel of Jesus and the other apostles. This is the dispensational position that Jesus and the apostles preached the gospel of the kingdom, but because the kingdom was forfeit by the Jews, by the rejection of Christ, another dispensation came where the gospel of grace replaces the gospel of the kingdom. But that would not be okay either.

I mean, there's no difference in the kingdom of the gospel, the kingdom of the gospel of grace. Paul equates the two in Acts 20, verse 24 and 25. He basically uses both terms for the same gospel he preached.

Now, no other gospel than what Paul preaches is okay or was ever. Jesus didn't preach another gospel. If he did, then Paul's calling Jesus a curse.

Peter and James and John didn't preach another gospel. If they did, Paul says there occurs. Clearly, he's not saying that.

He's saying that he's preaching the same one and only gospel that came at the beginning from Christ and that the other apostles preach also. He says in verse 10, for now, he says, do I now persuade men or God? Do I seek to please men? If I still pleased men, I would not be a servant of Christ. Now, that last line is important motto for any Christian.

If I'm going to please men, I won't be able to serve Christ. And that's something I need to get squared away at the beginning of my Christian life. Am I going to serve Christ or we're going to try to please men? We're just talking before the meeting.

We have some churches that are compromising watering down their message, avoiding negative things so the congregation can stay large. It's very clear that they're making a choice. Are they going to please men or are they going to serve Christ? In their case, they're choosing to please men.

Paul said that's not okay for him. He's going to serve Christ and that's why he doesn't seek the pleasure of men. Of course, every preacher would love to be welcomed and pleasing in the side of the congregation.

And, you know, if you've got a godly congregation who wants vigorous, truthful preaching, you probably can serve Christ and also please those men and women, but not all men. You can't make pleasing men or being popular any part of your goal in the ministry. He says, But I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man, for I neither received it from man nor was I taught it, but it came through the revelation of Jesus Christ.

For you have heard of my former conduct in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God beyond measure and tried to destroy it. This is his autobiography he begins to talk about. And I advanced in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries in my own nation, being more exceedingly zealous for the traditions of my fathers.

Now, Paul gives a little bit of this kind of autobiographical information in Philippians, chapter three, when he says, If anyone has anything to boast, I do more if it is if it comes to boasting in the flesh. He said, I was a Pharisee of the Pharisees. I was a Jew of the tribe of Benjamin.

And, you know, according to the righteousness of the law, I was flawless and so forth. But he went on to say, but those things which I counted gain, I now consider dumb. They're worthless to me now.

They were important then, but not now. And Paul's basically saying the same thing here. I exceeded the other zealous Jews of my generation.

But he says, when it pleased God who separated me from my mother's womb and called me through his grace to reveal his son in me, that I might preach him among the Gentiles. I did not immediately confer with flesh and blood, nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me. But I went to Arabia and returned again to Damascus.

Now, there's some things Paul says here about his biography that that people have sometimes found difficult to harmonize with the story of his conversion and the first years after his conversion found in Acts nine. Of course, we read of his conversion on the road to Damascus in Acts nine, and he comes into Damascus and Ananias, one of the brothers in the church there, comes and lays hands on him, opens his eyes, which have been blinded, baptizing him in water. He's filled with the spirit.

And then we read in Acts nine that he preached in Damascus until he received such opposition. He had to escape through a window in the wall in a basket. And it indicates there that he then went to Jerusalem when he escaped in the basket from Damascus.

Romans or Acts nine tells us of him then going to Jerusalem and meeting the apostles. Here we see him saying he didn't go to Jerusalem. He went away to Arabia and returned to Damascus.

Then after three years, I went up to Jerusalem. Apparently, after his conversion, he did not for three years. He didn't go to Jerusalem.

What did he do? Well, he went to Damascus. Then he went to Arabia. Then he came back to Damascus.

Apparently, when he had returned to Damascus, that he had to be let through the window of the wall and escape. So in other words, Acts nine kind of skips over the fact that when he first got saved, he went to Arabia for a while. Apparently, nothing worth reporting happened there.

People guess, you know, what did Paul do during those three years in Arabia? I don't know. A lot of people say, well, maybe he was contemplating the scriptures. He's a new convert out of, you know, being a Pharisee and to rethink things.

Maybe he got the revelations of the gospel that he talks about very well could have. Some people describe him as just doing nothing for those three years, which is a possibility. Although there's no reason to believe he wasn't preaching in Arabia.

He doesn't say that he wasn't preaching there. We just don't know. He went to Arabia for the better part of three years and then returned to Damascus where he had been converted.

And then as according to Acts, he was let out the window of the wall in a basket. And

then he went to Jerusalem. And now he speaks of that.

And this is now three years after his conversion. Then after three years, I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter and remained with him 15 days, just two weeks. And I saw none of the other apostles except James, the Lord's brother.

Now, concerning the things which I write to you, indeed, before God, I'm not lying. Now notice, why would he say that? I mean, why would anyone even think he was lying? Obviously, he's answering some critics who are arguing that Paul had very early influence and apparently extensive influence from the apostles in Jerusalem. They say, hey, I didn't even meet any of the apostles until three years after I'd been preaching in Damascus.

And when I did, I only met Peter and James, the Lord's brother. That's not exactly an immersion course in Christianity from the Jerusalem apostles. And he said, after I went to the regions of Syria and Cilicia, now Acts nine does record that, how that after he'd been in Jerusalem for a couple of weeks, there was a plot against him.

And Jesus appeared to him in the temple, said, you need to get out of this city and go away. So he did. He went away to Syria and Cilicia.

Now, Cilicia was his hometown. Tarsus, where Paul was born and raised, was in Cilicia. And we do read of him going to Tarsus.

Syria is where Antioch was. It's later on after he'd been in Tarsus, Barnabas went and found him and took him to Antioch in Acts chapter 11. So, I mean, some people have a hard time harmonizing acts with these these statements in the first chapter of Galatians, but they're not really that hard to harmonize.

They can be done. And so he went to the region of Syria and again, far from Jerusalem and the apostles there. And I was unknown by face to the churches of Judea, which were in Christ.

I'd spent so little time in Jerusalem. The churches that region didn't even know my face. And I'd walked up to them.

They wouldn't know who I was. That's how unfamiliar I was and how little time I've spent. But they were hearing only that he who formerly persecuted us now preaches the faith, which once he tried to destroy.

And they glorified God in me. Now, chapter two, after 14 years and it's not known whether it means after his conversion or after the first three years, I think it's probably after 14 years after the first three. So this would make it after 17 years after his conversion, I went up again to Jerusalem.

So he went once when he was three years old and a second time when he's 17 years old. That's not a lot of exposure. I went up with Barnabas and also took Titus with me.

Now, some people think that this is a reference to the Jerusalem Council, because we do read in Acts 15 that Paul and Barnabas and Titus did go to the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15. And some say, OK, so this is talking about the Jerusalem Council. But I think not because he doesn't mention the council.

He doesn't mention the letter that throughout the council. And if he had such a letter, as I said, he wouldn't bother write this letter. Now, there was another time and he is trying to get a total account of how many times we went to Jerusalem.

So no one could. He doesn't want people to think he's fudging here. He's trying to say how seldom he was there.

There was a time in Acts 11 when he and Barnabas went to Jerusalem in Acts 11. At the end, it says that in Antioch, where Paul and Barnabas lived, a prophet named Agabus prophesied there's going to be a famine and it's going to affect the Judean churches. So the church in Antioch took up an offering to help out the Jerusalem church and sent it by the hands of Paul and Barnabas to Jerusalem.

We're not told of anything that happened there, except that they delivered the money, the gift to the Jerusalem church. And as far as we know, went home again. Nothing worth recording that we know of happened there, according to Acts chapter 11.

But that was the second post conversion visit to Jerusalem. And that's what Paul seems to be describing here. Here he tells us something about what did happen.

This is before the Jerusalem council. The Jerusalem council would be his third visit there after his conversion. This this visit from X 1130.

Acts tells us nothing except that he delivered the money, but but Paul tells us something about that business. Then I went up by revelation and communicated to them that gospel, which I preach among the Gentiles. I've been preaching for 17 years among the Gentiles, and now he's going to check with the apostles if they think it's OK.

He obviously was hadn't gotten his gospel from them. They weren't even apparently he wasn't sure they were that familiar with it. He wasn't even sure they'd approve of it, as we see.

He says. But I did it privately to those who were of reputation in the apostles, lest by any means I might run or had run in vain. In other words, I I wanted to make sure before I made it public in Jerusalem, I'll make sure the apostles are OK with this, because if they weren't, this would be a problem because he would still preach it even if they didn't approve.

But that would have caused a huge rift. You know, he said, I want to make sure they were on the same page with me. And he says, yet even Titus, who is with me, being a Greek, was not compelled to be circumcised.

But this occurred, that is, the whole issue of whether Titus should be circumcised or not came up because false brethren secretly brought in who came in by stealth to spy out our liberty, which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage to whom we did not yield submission even for an hour that the truth of the gospel might continue with you. Now, people say, wait a minute, when Paul took Timothy with him on his second missionary journey in Acts 16, it says that Paul had Timothy circumcised before he left Lystra and then then Timothy traveled. But here he says Titus was not made to be circumcised.

So in fact, Paul said that be compromising the gospel to require Titus to be circumcised. So I didn't stand for that suggestion of him being circumcised because I didn't want to compromise the gospel. So why do you have Timothy circumcised? What's not that mysterious? Timothy had a Jewish mother and a Gentile father.

Apparently, when he was born, his father being a Gentile did not wish for him to be circumcised, but he was technically Jewish in the eyes of the Jewish community. He had a Jewish mother. So Timothy was in a rare situation from mixed marriage.

He was an uncircumcised Jew. Now, Paul had him circumcised because he was a Jew and he knew that people might ask, is Paul traveling with a Jew who's not circumcised? And Paul would be able to say, no, he's circumcised. Paul never was opposed to Jewish converts being circumcised.

It never came up, though, because most Jewish converts have been circumcised as babies. Timothy was an exception. When Paul came to Jerusalem on his final trip there in Acts chapter 21, James said there were people in Jerusalem accusing Paul of teaching Jews not to circumcise their children.

And James said, we know you're not teaching people that. And to prove that you're not, we want you to go and support these four Nazarites as they pay vows in the temple. Now, Paul didn't say, wait a minute, no, I am teaching Jews not to circumcise children.

No, Paul didn't teach Jews not to circumcise. He wasn't concerned whether Jews circumcised their children or not. He didn't want Gentiles be circumcised because that would suggest they have to become Jews.

Jews are already Jews, and they're generally circumcised before the issue of them becoming Christians even comes up. But Titus was a pagan who was converted, and there's no way that Paul is going to send the message that he had to be circumcised. He didn't mind the message that Jewish Christians are circumcised.

Almost all of them were before they became Christians. Timothy had not been circumcised before he became a Christian, but let's circumcise and get that out of the way just in case the Jews are going to object to that. The Jews can't object to Gentiles not being circumcised since the Jews got nothing to say about Gentiles.

But they can object to a Jew who's not. So Timothy being a Jew had to, Paul felt it would solve more problems if he just went ahead and got circumcised. Titus, Paul never gave it a thought to let him be circumcised.

I would not yield to these people for an hour, he said, in verse 5, because I didn't want the truth of the gospel to be compromised. I wanted the truth of the gospel to continue with you. But from those who seem to be something, he means Peter, James, and John, as he mentions down a little further in verse 9, whatever they were, it makes no difference to me.

God shows personal favor to no man. For those who seem to be something added nothing to me. But on the contrary, when they saw that the gospel for the uncircumcised, meaning for the Gentiles, had been committed to me as the gospel for the Jews, the circumcised was committed to Peter, then in parentheses he says, for he who worked effectively in Peter for the apostasy of the circumcised also worked effectively in me toward the Gentiles.

And when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that had been given to me, they gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised. Now, the right hand of fellowship is a partnership, a sign of partnership. Okay, we recognize we're on the same team.

You've got a different field. You're going to the Gentiles, we're going to the Jews. We're not going to oppose what you're doing.

We recognize you as partners in the kingdom of God. And so Paul's saying here, yeah, I did meet the apostles briefly on this occasion, but they didn't add anything to my beliefs. They just agreed with what I was doing.

He says, they desired only that we should remember the poor, the very thing which I was eager to do. Now, I'm going to give you a break in just a moment. I want to finish chapter two and we'll have much less to come back to.

There's one other story in chapter two. We don't know when it happened, but it must have happened, I'm thinking, probably before the first missionary journey. It could have happened sometime later than that, but it was early on, probably before the Jerusalem Council.

Because he says when Peter had come to Antioch, now Antioch was in Syria, that was Paul and Barnabas's home church. Antioch was the church that sent Paul and Barnabas

out on their first and second missionary journeys and third. So Peter visited Paul's church and Barnabas's church.

And he says, I withstood him to his face because he was to be blamed. I mean, if any false teachers telling the Galatians that Paul kowtows to the apostles or second only then, he says, you should have seen what happened in Antioch. I confronted Peter.

He was to be blamed. I'm not, I'm not his servant. I'm not, I'm not under him in some way.

For before certain men came from James, which is from Jerusalem, he would eat with the Gentiles. But when they came, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing those who are the circumcision. Now, what this means is that Peter apparently had no real problem eating with uncircumcised Gentiles.

He was on Paul's side of this matter. But the Jerusalem Christians weren't so much on his side, which means the council had not yet met. After the Jerusalem Council, the whole Jerusalem church was on Paul's side, too.

But apparently, James, the leader of the church in Jerusalem and those who came from him were much more immersed in the Hebrew roots, Torah observant aspects of being a Jewish Christian. Peter was like Paul when he was with the Jews. He behaved like Jew.

When he was with the Gentiles, he ate with the Gentiles. No problem. But when the people came up from James to Antioch, Peter acted like he wasn't OK with the Gentiles.

He withdrew from table fellowship with the Gentiles because a Jew would never eat at the same table with an uncircumcised Gentile or even go into their house. Now, Peter had the liberty to do that and did so. But when the Jewish people from the Jewish church came, Peter withdrew.

Now, Peter may have done this simply to be like Paul, not to offend the people from the home church in Jerusalem. But Paul saw it as a very dangerous thing for Peter to do, because before the Jerusalem Council, the question of whether Gentiles have been circumcised was very much still up in the air, very much controversial. Peter knew they didn't have to be, and he showed it by eating with them without any problems.

But when the Jews, Christians from Jerusalem came up, he acted like he was on their side of the question. Paul saw this as compromising the gospel. Now, after the Jerusalem Council, there'd be no need for this to be a question.

But it was at this point. And so Paul sees Peter's being a duplicitous, being a hypocrite. Peter knows it's okay, but now he's kind of communicating by his new behavior when the Jews have arrived that he doesn't agree with Paul.

And he says, and the rest of the Jews also played the hypocrite with him so that even Barnabas was carried away by the hypocrite. Peter had such clout among Jewish Christians that when Peter withdrew, the other Jewish Christians thought, oh, I guess we better do it too, you know. So Peter was infecting the Jewish Christians with this idea that the Gentiles were not okay uncircumcised, even though they were brothers.

And he says, when I saw they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel, I said to Peter before them all, if you being a Jew, live in the manner of Gentiles, which is very clear that Peter did not live a Torah observant life as a Christian. He lived like the Gentiles, Paul said, most of the time. He says, if you being Jew, live in the manner of Gentiles and not as the Jews, why do you compel Gentiles to live as Jews? By his actions, he was putting pressure on the Gentiles to conform to the circumcision mandate.

He says, why have them do it when you don't even live like a Jew yourself? We who are Jews by nature, Peter, you and I, and not sinners of the Gentiles, knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law. For by works of the law, no flesh shall be justified. But if while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners.

Is Christ therefore a minister of sin? Certainly not. For if I build again those things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor. Now, apparently he's thinking about being a sinner.

In this case is being a hypocrite, acting like, you know, like you think circumcision is necessary for Christians. He says, you don't, I destroyed that wall. Actually, in Ephesians 2, Paul says, God broke down that middle wall, a partition between Jew and Gentile and Christ.

And Paul says, I'm going to build that wall again. Not I, not you either. You shouldn't, because if you build what has been broken down, you're making yourself a transgressor.

For I, through the law, died to the law that I might live to God. Now that's a strange thought. He died to the law in what sense? He actually brings that up in Romans 7. He said that we are married to the law, but we died to the law through the body of Christ.

And Paul explains that now in verse 20, for I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live that Christ lives in me and the life which I now live in the flesh. I live by the faith and the son of God who loved me and gave himself for me.

I do not set aside the grace of God for if righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died in vain. Now I'm crucified with Christ. Paul brings this up again later on in chapter five and verse 24.

He says, and those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and

desires. And in Galatians 6, 14, one more time, he brings this up. But God forbid that I should glory except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me and I to the world.

Now, when Paul talks about being crucified, this is a different topic than, for example, when Jesus said, if anyone can't come after me, let him take up his cross, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me, because taking up a cross is a different action than being crucified. A person takes up a cross and carries it to the place of crucifixion. He stops doing so when he's crucified.

Jesus, of course, you need to bear your cross. He's not going to be willing to accept the shame and the scorn and the alienation from the world that a man experiences when he's condemned and off to be crucified. That's what bearing a cross looks like, accepting the hardships that come with being a follower of Christ and the persecution and the ostracism and those kinds of things.

Paul's talking about something else when he talks about being crucified with Christ. He's talking about being identified with Christ in Christ's crucifixion. When you become a Christian, you are put into Christ.

The Holy Spirit baptizes you into the body of Christ, Paul says in 1 Corinthians 12, and you become part of Christ. He, of course, Jesus is the head, and you become part of that body, and you have the same identity he has. Therefore, you share in the status he has.

That's why Paul in Ephesians talks so much about what we are in Christ. We're justified in Christ. We're accepted in Christ.

We're seated in heavenly places in Christ. What is true of Christ is said to be true of us because we're in him. And therefore, when Christ was crucified, we were crucified, too.

He was our substitute, doing it in our place. Paul actually talks that way in 1 Corinthians 5, 2 Corinthians 5, 14 and 15. Paul says, for the love of Christ constrains us because we judge thus.

This is how we think, that if one died for all, meaning if Jesus died as the substitute for all people, then all died. That's the point. If he died in my place, then I died.

If he died in every man's place, then everyone died. When he died, we died. Now, that doesn't sound like a positive, but it is in the context of the fact that I am a sinner, and the wage of sin is death.

Therefore, I'm on death row. However, if I've already died, I'm not on death row anymore. And Christ died as my substitute so that I was on death row.

Not anymore. I've already died, but I've also risen with Christ. So I'm free from the

condemnation that comes with my crimes.

The death penalty that I deserve is now in my past. When Jesus died, I died. If one died in the place of all, then all died when he did.

That's what he's saying. He's the substitute. What's done by a substitute for you is counted as if you've done it.

If you can't fulfill an obligation, or you can't go buy something, you send one of your assistants to go do it, or you send somebody to do it in your name, well, you've done it. You've taken on that responsibility through a substitute. That's you doing that.

Same thing. If someone dies as your substitute, then you've died. That's how he reasons.

That's how he's thinking, he says. So I've been crucified when Christ was crucified. That means, of course, I was crucified among other things.

I was died to the law. When Christ died, he was no longer under the law. So when I died with Christ, I'm no longer.

I died to the law with Christ. So the law is no longer relevant to a man who has died and risen again because I've risen into a newness of life, a new kind of life, not under the law. He said, I don't set aside the grace of God for righteousness comes through the law.

Then Christ died for nothing. The point being, Christ died for our righteousness, for our justification. If that could have been done some easier way, like, oh, just keep these rules and you'll be righteous.

When Jesus sure was stupid to come and pay such a price for that, which could have been done easier. God was pretty bad economists to send his son to pay a price for something that could have gotten cheaper. Why would he come and die if that was not necessary and it would not be necessary if there were rules you could just keep and have righteousness by keeping those rules.

If righteousness came from keeping the law, Jesus died unnecessarily. And that's rather absurd to think that God would make that kind of a mistake. Paul says the very fact that Jesus died demonstrates there was no other way that this could be accomplished.

Righteousness was not available through any lesser means of that. Now, when Paul gets to chapter three, he starts giving the theology, very important theology. I'm going to take a break right now.