

Segment 1

Paul's Apostolic Testimony

Galatians 1:1-2:21

*The young churches Paul recently planted in Galatia are being troubled by the preaching of a false gospel. Paul's response begins by re-establishing his God-given apostolic authority, and clarifying the history of his relationship with the Jerusalem apostles.*

1 **Who?** Paul. Emphasises divine source of authority in context of distortion of his gospel by false teachers, and claims that their contrary 'gospel' was authorised by Jerusalem church.

3-5 **Literary Structure: Greeting.** Paul uses the traditional opening greeting to immediately begin reminding the Galatians of the gospel.

6 **Literary structure: absence of conventional opening prayer.** P's tone is urgent, even angry.

6-9 Strong language: 'astonished', 'deserting', 'accursed'.

8 **Hyperbole:** 'even an angel...'

13-16 Paul's testimony of transformation from his violently zealous Judaism to persecuted apostle to the Gentiles serves three functions: it vividly demonstrates his direct apostolic authority, it confirms his credibility as an interpreter of the Jewish Scriptures, and it provides a dramatic example of the reality of God's grace.

17 **What did Paul do in Arabia?** Acts 9:20 says he 'immediately proclaimed Jesus' in Damascus. So is this a Mt. Sinai (cf. 4:25) prayer retreat? Geographically it requires crossing entire length of Israel.

2:1 **14 years after conversion or first visit?** Regardless, probably Acts 11:29-30, 12:25.

4 'secretly', 'spy out': conspiratorial language! Remember though that Paul does regularly encounter murderous conspiracies! Acts 9:23-25, + later 23:12.

12 Until now, 'the circumcision' has referred to all Jews—now the ESV takes it (rightly) as 'the circumcision party'. But 'party' is not there in the Greek.

12 **At what point in all this did James write his letter saying a person is 'justified by works and not by faith alone' Jas. 1:24?**

14-16 **When should the quotation of Paul's rebuke end? I would include 15-16.**

15 **Idiom: 'Gentile sinners'.** Latent racism!

16 **Note that the 'works of the law' that the circumcision party were insisting on were external marks of Jewish identity (circumcision, food laws), not a catalogue of good deeds. But that hoping in 'the law' would require perfect deeds (eg. 5:3, 6:13) is the implication Paul demonstrates.**

17 **Rhetorical question.**

17-21 The gospel truth that we are justified by faith and not by 'works' applies not just to salvation, but to all the ways we try and find identity and esteem. My value is not in being a YWAM missionary or a Cambridge mathematician but through Christ!

1:1-2 **Apostle not through man**  
 Paul apostle not through man but Jesus  
 To churches of Galatia

3-5 **Grace to deliver us**  
 Grace and peace from God & Jesus  
 Gave himself for our sins  
 Deliver us from present evil age

6-9 **So quickly deserting gospel**  
 Astonished quickly deserting grace  
 Some distort gospel  
 If even angel preach gospel contrary  
 Let him be accursed

10 **Approval: man or God?**  
 If trying to please man

11-17 **From Judaism to Jesus**  
 Gospel not man's gospel.  
 not from man but revelation of Jesus  
 former Judaism persecuted violently, destroy zealous for traditions called by grace  
 reveal to me, that I preach among Gentiles  
 did not consult with Jerusalem

18-24 **Then preaching, still unknown**  
 After 3 yrs Jerusalem to visit Cephas, 15 days  
 None other except James Lord's brother  
 Before God, I do not lie!  
 Then into Syria, Cilicia  
 Still unknown to Judea  
 'used to persecute, now preaching'  
 Glorified God because of me.

2:1-10 **Peter, James, added nothing**  
 After 14 years, Jerusalem with Barnabas, Titus  
 Revelation, set gospel, make sure not in vain  
 Titus not forced circumcised though Greek  
 False brothers spy out freedom, so slavery  
 Did not yield, so truth of gospel preserved  
 Influential makes no difference, added nothing  
 Saw I entrusted with gospel to uncircumcised  
 Just as Peter for circumcised  
 James, Cephas, John, perceived grace to me  
 Only remember poor, I was eager

11-14 **When Cephas acted hypocritically**  
 Cephas, Antioch, I opposed, he condemned,  
 from James, C drew back fearing circumcision  
 Rest Jews acted hypocritically, even Barnabas  
 Not in step with gospel, to Cephas before all

15-16 **By faith not works**  
 We Jews by birth not Gentile sinners, yet know  
 Justified by faith not works of law

17-21 **Do not nullify grace**  
 If we found sinners, Christ servant of sin? Not!  
 If I rebuild what tore down, transgressor  
 Through law, died to law, that I live to God  
 Crucified with Christ, no longer 'I', by faith  
 nullify grace, if through law, Christ no purpose

2 **Where? Galatia.** Assuming this letter written after First Mission and before Jerusalem Council (cf. Acts 15:1-5), then = Derbe, Lystra, Iconium, Pys. Antioch.

7 **Who are these false teachers?** They are Jewish Christians who preach 'a different gospel', which requires 'works of the law' 3:2 in addition to faith, in particular 'circumcision' 5:3; claiming authority of Jerusalem, particularly 'James' 2:12.

10 Being focused on pleasing God rather than worried about pleasing people is important for every 'servant of Christ'. Constant people-pleasing is just an insidious form of fear of man.

15 **Allusion: Jeremiah 1:5.**

11-17 Whether or not it is as dramatic as Paul's, every Christian has a testimony, and sharing our stories helps give authority to our gospel witness.

18-19 This must be the visit described in Acts 9:26-30, but Luke's emphasis there is on Paul's inclusion, whereas here Paul emphasises independence.

22 'still unknown' – can this fit with Acts 9:28? Yes: 23-24 implies P not entirely unknown.

4 **Contrast of 'freedom' and 'slavery':** developed in 4:1-5:12.

2:7-8 **Why does Paul suddenly switch from 'Cephas' (Greek John 1:42) to 'Peter'?** (This is the only recorded place Paul calls him Peter—in 1 Corinthians he consistently used Cephas. My theory: that Cephas sounded more familiar (particularly to Galatians who didn't speak Aramaic), while 'Peter' sounded more formal (Peter himself never uses Cephas in his writing, cf. 1+2 Peter). And so here, Paul emphasises Peter's formal apostolic leadership, because Paul's own apostolic authority is being acknowledged—by Peter!—to be equivalent. Whereas in every other place, Paul is doing everything he can to minimise the weight of Peter's name, because it is causing division (cf. 1 Cor.1:12) or doctrinal error (here).

19 **Metaphor: 'through the law I died', 'I have been crucified'.**

Segment 2

The Gospel: Faith not Works

Galatians 3:1-29

*Paul demonstrates the truth of his gospel by appeals to Scripture, in particular the narrative of Abraham. He contrasts the promise made to Abraham with the law given through 'an intermediary' – and then wrestles with the consequent question of why God ever gave the Law in the first place.*

1,3 Why does Paul call them 'foolish'? Obviously he disagrees, but insults don't usually persuade! My theory: The false teachers are saying Paul is foolish and doesn't know the Scriptures very well. So Paul turns the tables on his opponents, throwing the 'foolish' accusation back at them, and then vindicating this move by his rapid-fire series of Scriptural proofs.

7 Why is Abraham so important? Jews considered themselves 'children of Abraham' (eg. Jn.8:56), and God even names himself in reference to Abraham' (Ex. 3:6). The false teachers would no doubt have emphasised the fact that 'God said to Abraham '... this is my covenant... every male throughout your generations... shall be circumcised' (Genesis 17:9-13).

14 Having before contrasted 'we...Jews by birth' with 'Gentile sinners', Paul now includes himself ('we') with the Gentiles! The Gospel should put an end to racism and every sort of prejudice.

20 'intermediary implies more than one, but God is one (Deut. 6:4)'. What does this mean? Unlike in the giving of the Law, where Moses acted as intermediary between God and the people of Israel, now we have received the Spirit, and since 'God is one', it is incoherent that anything could be needed to mediate between a Spirit-filled believer and God. The logic of this seems to require Paul's underlying understanding of God to be Trinitarian, (in that God the Father, Jesus the Son, and the Spirit are distinct but all equally God and relationally/essentially 'one'), or else Paul's argument collapses under the similarity between Christ's mediation of the promise and Moses' giving of the law.

28 **Contrasts:**  
 'Jew' vs. 'Greek';  
 'slave' vs. 'free',  
 'male' vs. 'female'

28 The application of this is more than just recognising that we need to overcome racism and prejudice and welcome people into God's kingdom and our lives regardless of ethnicity, cultural background, employment, gender, etc. For even the 'circumcision party' was willing to accept Gentiles—so long as they were circumcised! Whereas Paul is saying that since in Christ there is 'neither Jew nor Greek', therefore Greeks must be allowed to continue to be Greeks! Christian unity does not mean uniformity. So we need to actively celebrate of diversity.

3:1-6 **Are you so foolish?**  
 Foolish Galatians! Bewitched? Christ crucified Spirit by works of law or hearing with faith? So foolish? Begun by Spirit now flesh? Suffer in vain?  
 Spirit, miracles by works of law or faith?  
 Abraham believed, counted as righteousness

7-9 **Who are the sons?**  
 Those of faith are sons of Abraham  
 Scripture foreseeing Gentiles, preached gospel  
 Those of faith blessed with Abraham

10-14 **'For it is written'**  
 Works of law under curse for 'Cursed...'  
 No one justified by law for 'righteous by faith'  
 Law not of faith, for 'who does shall live'  
 Christ redeemed curse by becoming 'Cursed...'  
 So blessing, Gentiles, we receive Spirit by faith

15-18 **By promise not law**  
 Even man-made covenant, no-one annuls  
 Promises to Abraham and one offspring, Christ  
 Law 430 years after not make promise void  
 if by law, no longer by promise

19-22 **Why then the law?**  
 Why law? Because transgressions  
 Through intermediary implies more than one  
 Law contrary to promise? If could then would  
 But everything under sin so by faith

23-25 **Our guardian until Christ**  
 captive under law until faith revealed  
 law guardian until Christ that by faith  
 now faith no longer guardian

26-29 **All sons through faith**  
 In Christ all sons through faith  
 Baptized have put on Christ  
 Neither Jew/Greek, slave/free, male/female  
 All one, if Christ's then Abraham's offspring

26 & 27 **Comparison** suggests Paul sees faith and baptism as equivalent: an unbaptized believer and an unbelieving baptized person are both contradictions! This would imply that we should baptise new believers as soon as is reasonably possible, while also making clear that baptism without faith can give no assurance of salvation.

1 'publicly portrayed' – presumably refers to vivid preaching. Although imagine P & Barnabas doing street drama!

2,3,4 **Contrasts:**  
 'flesh' vs. 'Spirit'; 'works of law' vs. 'hearing with faith', 'blessed' vs. 'cursed'; 'promise' vs. 'law'

**Quotations:**  
 Gen. 15:6 (6); Gen 12:3 (8); Deut. 27:26 (10) Hab. 2:4 (11); Lev. 18:5 (12); Deut. 21:23 (13).

While the false teachers appeal to the authority of Jerusalem, Paul appeals to 'Scripture' as the authority of his 'gospel'  
 8. As a Bible teacher, my authority must come directly from Scripture, not from personality or scholarship.

16 Why does it matter that 'offspring' is singular not plural?  
 Paul is obviously aware that 'offspring' can refer to a collective group as well as an individual – indeed, he applies it to the group of those 'in Christ' (29)! I think he coming against the idea that there are two ways to come into covenant with God (circumcision/'works of the law' and faith). So the point is that through Christ alone can we receive God's promise. Now, this can't have been the majority view of the 'circumcision party', who would have agreed that there was only one way to be in covenant with God—only would have said that it involved submission to the Law. So speculatively, I suggest that in the context of violent tension (cf. Acts 13:50-14:7, 19) between established synagogues of Diaspora Jews and the new congregations of Christians claiming that both Jews and Gentiles needed to trust in Jesus, some Christian (perhaps even a Diaspora Jew from 'Phrygia [which was quite near Pysidian Antioch]' cf. Acts 2:10, who had been in Jerusalem for the first outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost!) must have tried to effect a superficial reconciliation by assuring both parties that their 'way' was valid. Perhaps then James hears of this in Jerusalem and sends a team to correct this pluralism and insist on 'Christ alone'! But also to correct the alleged lawlessness of Paul's Gentile converts by teaching that like Abraham their faith must be 'completed by works' cf. Jas. 2:22. Maybe then one of this team—without necessarily having the authorisation of James— took this to mean that circumcision was necessary (at one level, an easy conclusion to draw, from eg. Gen. 17:13). And maybe it was at this point that Paul heard of the situation in Galatia, prompting him to write this urgent letter.

Segment 3

The Gospel: Freedom not Slavery

Galatians 4:1-5:12

*Paul illustrates the difference between living under the Law and through the Spirit with the example of a child effectively 'enslaved' until he comes of age, and worries that the Galatians are returning to slavery. He then turns again to the Scriptural account of Abraham to demonstrate his point.*

3 **Analogy**: between a child who receives his inheritance and freedom only when he comes of age, and between 'those under the law' (5). Paul's illustration allows him to affirm the special relationship that Jews had with God under the Law, while also vividly showing the difference between being under the Law and filled with the Spirit. I need to constantly remember and remind those around me that the assurance of my identity as a son in the family of God comes not from living up to a standard of morality or productivity, but simply through experiencing the Spirit.

12 Paul draws a **comparison** between the way he 'became as' the Galatians in identifying with them as a missionary (cf. 1 Cor. 9:19-23), and the way he wants them to 'become as I am', in defending the gospel of grace through faith alone.

19 **Metaphor**: 'anguish of childbirth'. This emphasises both the intensity of the pain Paul is going through, but also the relational responsibility and intimate involvement that he feels towards the Galatian churches.

25, 26 **Metonymy**: 'Sinai', 'Jerusalem'. Paul is not here talking about the places but the religious system of Judaism that they represent (the Sinai covenant, and Jerusalem Temple).

21-31 Paul has already argued that contrary to proving the necessity of works, in fact the story of Abraham begins with his prior justification by faith. But to defend against the argument that this needed to be 'completed' (eg. Jas. 2:22) by works (specifically, circumcision), Paul here demonstrates his hypothesis with Isaac and Ishmael, who (necessarily) were both circumcised, proving that the decisive factor is not circumcision but being supernaturally born of the Spirit.

6 After treating 'works' and 'faith' as polar opposites, it comes as a shock to hear Paul speak of 'faith working'. Why the change? This is a **pivotal** verse, as Paul begins to bring to a close his central section defending the doctrinal truth of justification by faith and transition into his final exhortation to Spirit-led ethical living.

11 Paul assumes that to be **persecuted** is a normal part of the Christian life. If I'm not being persecuted, is it because I am compromising in my witness to the cross, and somehow watering down its offense?

4:1-7 **Son, no longer slave**  
**Heir** as child no different from **slave**  
 Under **guardians** until date set by **father**  
 Same way we were **enslaved**  
 God sent **Son born** of woman, under law  
 To **redeem** those under **law**, so adoption  
 Because **sons**, God sent **Spirit** of **Son**, 'Abba!  
 So no **slave**, but **son**, if **son**, then **heir**

4:8-11 **Be not enslaved again!**  
 Formerly enslaved to those not gods  
 Now know God, known by God, again slaves?  
 Observe days/months/seasons/years  
 Afraid I laboured in **vain**

12-20 **Again in anguish, perplexed**  
 Become as I am, for I have become as you  
 Because of ailment I preached **gospel** first  
 Did not despise but received me as angel  
 You would have gouged out eyes  
 Have I become enemy by telling **truth**?  
 They **make much of** you, you of them  
 Good to be **made much of** for good  
 Again in anguish of childbirth  
 Wish could be present, perplexed

21-31 **Two sons interpreted allegorically**  
 Desire under **law**, listen to **law**  
 Abraham had **two sons**, one **slave**, one **free**  
**Slave born flesh**, **free born** through **promise**  
 Allegorically covenants. Sinai, **slavery**, **Hagar**  
**Hagar** present **Jerusalem**, **slavery**  
**Jerusalem** above free, our mother  
 'Rejoice O barren'  
 You like **Isaac**, **promise**  
**Flesh persecuted born** according to **Spirit**  
 Scripture: 'slave not inherit with son of free'  
 Not **slave** but **free**

5:1 **Set free for freedom**  
 Not submit again to **slavery**

2-6 **If circumcision, no Christ**  
 I Paul, if **circumcision**, Christ no advantage  
**Accepts circumcision** obligated to whole **law**  
 Severed, fallen from **grace**  
 Through **Spirit** by **faith** we eagerly hope  
 Neither counts, only **faith** working **love**

7-12 **A little leavens whole**  
 Running well. Who hindered obeying truth?  
 Persuasion not from him who calls  
 Little **leavens** whole  
 I have confidence  
**Circumcision**, **persecuted**? Offense of cross.  
 Wish emasculate themselves!

'slave', 'redeem': **Metaphor** for being under the Law.  
 6 'Abba!' Paul uses the Aramaic word that Jesus would have used, perhaps feeling that the Greek 'Father' doesn't do justice do the intimacy expressed.

10 'days, months, seasons, years'  
 --these must be Jewish festivals.

13 What 'ailment' is this?  
 Perhaps he is talking about his extended stay in Derbe while he recovered from having been stoned and left for dead by the crowds at Lystra (cf. Acts 14:19-21).

15 **Hyperbole**: 'gouged...eyes'. This is surely a reference to the words of Jesus (presumably mentioned by Paul in his preaching) about dealing severely with sin (eg. Mk. 9:47).

21-31 **Typology** is (in my opinion) a better word for what Paul is doing here than 'allegory', in spite of the temptation to transliterate ἀλληγορούμενα (24, Greek).

**Quotations**: Isa. 54:1 (27), Gen. 21:10 (30)

**Rhetorical Wordplay**: When Paul speaks of 'the flesh' (eg.23) in Galatians, he is using wordplay to create a rhetorical link between life without the Spirit ('in the flesh') and circumcision's cutting of the foreskin's **flesh**.  
 5:2 Paul assumes the unity and indivisibility of the Law (as does James cf. Jas. 2:10, interestingly) and concludes that to accept circumcision requires keeping the whole law.

9 **Proverbial**. Jesus used 'leaven' as a parable both for the gospel and for the false teaching and hypocrisy of the Pharisees (Luke 13:21 Matt. 16:12, Luke 12:1). But since Paul uses 5:9's words in 1 Cor. 5:6 (without quite quoting Jesus) was likely a proverb of some sort.

12 **Hyperbole**. Paul may be about to give an eloquent education to fulfil the law through love, but he is still incredibly angry with those distorting his gospel!

Segment 4

The Freedom of Spirit-led Love

Galatians 5:13-6:18

*Paul clarifies that freedom does not imply licence but rather love. He uses metaphors from nature to explain and reinforce his point, contrasting the evil works of the flesh with the virtuous fruit of Spirit-led life. He signs off with a call to stay faithful to the Cross of Christ in spite of persecution.*

15 **Metaphor:** 'bite...devour...consumed'  
 Paul develops this **series** of eating words using the metaphor of a wolf (or some such devouring animal) for the way they are sinning against each other—particularly with their mouths!—, to show that if the Galatians continue in this manner it will completely destroy them.

19,22 **Contrast:** 'works' vs. 'fruit'  
 The **metaphor** 'fruit' helps emphasise the point Paul is making about freedom in the Spirit, in which ethical character is a consequence that inevitably develops, rather than a task to be done as with 'works' of the law. The 'works of the flesh' could properly be called 'fruit' in the same way, but Paul is probably making a rhetorical connection with the false teachers who insist on works—as he points out in 6:13, not even they succeed in keeping the moral law.

6:1-5 This is a beautiful little picture of holy community. My primary focus in seeking holiness has to be my own behaviour – but nevertheless, love means that sometimes I have to challenge others and do what I can to help them get free of sin. Always keeping in mind my own weakness will help me be gentle as I do this, which in turn will help others to be receptive to the challenge.

9 The encouragement to 'not grow weary' is one that I need to hear right now!

11 Paul's usual practise is not to write his letters himself, but to make use of an amanuensis (as is explicit in Rom. 16:22). So Paul is now authenticating all that has been written with his personal signature. Apparently he always did this—'this is the sign of genuineness in every letter of mine' 2 Thess. 3:17—although he only comments on it in circumstances of particular controversy.

17 Paul **contrasts** the marks of persecution that he has suffered for the gospel with the mark of circumcision that the false teachers are forcing the Galatian churches to accept.

5:13-15 **Love fulfilled the law**  
 Freedom not flesh, through love serve  
 Whole law fulfilled in one word: 'love'  
 If bite and devour, watch not consumed

16-24 **By Spirit not law**  
 Walk by Spirit, will not gratify desires of flesh  
 For desires of flesh and Spirit opposed  
 If led by Spirit not under law  
Works of flesh

**Those** will not inherit kingdom of God  
 Fruit of Spirit  
 Against such no law  
 Belong to Christ, crucified flesh

25-26 **In step with Spirit**  
 Live by Spirit, keep in step  
 Not conceited, provoking, envying

6:1-5 **Watch yourself, restore neighbour**  
 transgression, spiritual restore gentleness  
bear burdens, fulfil law of Christ  
 thinks something, when nothing, deceives  
 test his own work  
bear his own load

6-10 **Reap whatever we sow**  
**Taught word** share with **who teaches**  
 Whatever one sows, will reap  
 To flesh, corruption; to Spirit, eternal life  
 Not grow weary, do not give up  
 Opportunities, do good, especially to faith

11-16 **'Christ crucified'—not 'circumcised'**  
 What large letters, own hand  
 Force circumcised that not persecuted cross  
 Even circumcised not keep law, boast in flesh  
 Boast in cross, crucified to world  
 Neither cir-/un-circumcision, new creation  
 Walk by this rule, and Israel of God

17 **I bear the marks**  
 No trouble, I bear marks of Jesus

18 **Grace with your spirit**  
Grace with spirit, Amen.

14 **Quotation:** Lev. 19:18.  
 Why doesn't Paul mention the command to love God (cf. Mk.12:30)?

19-23 **Contrasting lists**

<b>'works of flesh'</b> 19-21	<b>'fruit of Spirit'</b> 22-23
Sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, things like these.	Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.

6:7 **Analogy** of farming. **Implies** that character is the result of consistent choices. Blessing and judgement are not arbitrary divine commands, but necessary consequences.

16 **Who are the 'Israel of God'?**  
 Does Paul mean all believers in Christ?—in which case the 'and' is intensifying (and would better be translated 'even'), or does he mean those Jews who truly believe the authentic gospel?—in which case the 'and' distinguishes those 'uncircumcised' primarily under Paul's apostolic 'rule' cf. 2:7, from the 'Israel of God', primarily under Peter's rule. The question is relevant today in terms of the identity of Messianic Jews—did Paul intend for a homogenously uncircumcised church to 'supersede' Israel, or for the church to maintain its cultural diversity even while becoming united relationally as a result of spiritual union with Christ. I think the latter (see also note on 3:28).