

Galatians

Paul's Greeting – God and Jesus' Appearance as the Basis of His Apostleship and Man's Mercy

1:1 Paul, an apostle, not from men, nor by the agency of man, but by the agency of Jesus the Messiah and God the Father, who raised him from the dead,¹ **1:2** and all the brothers who are with me, to the gatherings in Galatia.²

1:3 Grace to you and shalom from God our Father and the Lord Jesus the Messiah,³ **1:4** the one who gave himself for our sins, in order that he could rescue us from the present evil age in accordance with the will of God, that is, our Father.⁴ **1:5** To Him be the glory into the ages of ages. Amen.⁵

Biographical Material Before Paul's Main Argument

Paul's Shock at the Galatians' Change of Allegiance From God's Grace to Religious Legalism

1:6 I am stunned that, in the manner in which you are, you are quickly deserting Him, who called you into the grace of the Messiah, for a different message of good news,⁶ **1:7** which is really not another message of good news. It is just that there are some people who are disturbing you, and they desire to alter the good news about the Messiah.⁷

1:8 However, even if we or the *angelos* from heaven were to proclaim to you a message of good news that is the opposite of that which we did proclaim to you, let him be eternally condemned.⁸

1:9 As we have said before and now I am saying again, if someone proclaims to you a message that is contrary to what you embraced, let him be condemned.⁹

Paul Uses His Own Conversion to Emphasize God's Grace and Jesus' Centrality

1:10 Am I now striving to convince men or God? Or am I striving to please men? If I were still pleasing men, then I would not be a slave of the Messiah.¹⁰

1:11 I would have you know, brothers, something about the message of the good news that was proclaimed by me—that it does not have its origin in man,¹¹ **1:12** because I did not receive it from a man. And I was not taught it except through the revealing of Jesus the Messiah.¹²

1:13 You have heard of my former behavior in Judaism, that I was vigorously persecuting the Christian community belonging to God, and I was out to destroy it.¹³ **1:14** I was also advancing in Judaism beyond many of the contemporaries of my people, because I was even more zealous than they are for my ancestral traditions.¹⁴

1:15 However, when God, the One who had set me apart when I came out of my mother's womb and called me using His grace, was pleased¹⁵ **1:16** to reveal His Son in my case for the purpose of my proclaiming the message of good news about him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately go for advice to flesh and blood.¹⁶ **1:17** Neither did I go up to Jerusalem to those who had become apostles before me. Instead, I went away into Arabia and then returned to Damascus.¹⁷

1:18 Subsequently, after three years, I went up to Jerusalem to get to know Cephas, and I stayed with him for fifteen days.¹⁸ **1:19** But I did not see any other of the apostles except James, the Lord's brother.¹⁹ **1:20** What I am writing to you—look! It is before God. I am not lying.²⁰

1:21 Then, I went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia,²¹ **1:22** and I was unknown by sight to the gatherings in the Messiah in Judea.²² **1:23** They just kept hearing, "He who formerly persecuted us is now proclaiming the message of good news of belief which he formerly was trying to destroy."²³ **1:24** And they were glorifying God because of me.²⁴

Paul Uses His Interaction With the Apostles to Emphasize God's Grace and Jesus' Centrality

2:1 Then, after fourteen years, I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and I also took Titus along with us.²⁵ **2:2** I went up on account of a revelation, and I laid before them the message of good news that I proclaim among the Gentiles—but privately to those who seemed to be something, lest, perhaps, I am running or did run for nothing.²⁶ **2:3** It turns out that not even Titus, who was with me, even though he is Greek, **was forced (ἠναγκάσθη)** to be circumcised.²⁷ **2:4** The problem was with the false brethren brought in under false pretenses, who had sneaked in to scope out our freedom that we have in the Messiah Jesus, in order that they could enslave us.²⁸ **2:5** However, we did not yield to and obey them for a moment, so that the truth of the message of good news would continue on for your sakes.²⁹

2:6 In addition, from those who seemed to be something—what sort of people they were makes no difference to me; God is partial to no one—those who seemed to be something added nothing to me.³⁰ **2:7** But on the other hand, they recognized that I have been entrusted with the message of the good news to the uncircumcision, just as Peter has been entrusted with it to the circumcision.³¹ **2:8** This was because He who worked using Peter for the purpose of his discharging his apostolic responsibilities to the circumcision also worked using me for the discharging of my apostolic responsibilities to the Gentiles.³² **2:9** Indeed, James, Cephas, and John, who are recognized to be pillars, understood the gracious gift that was given to me, and they gave to Barnabas and me the right hand of fellowship with the idea in mind that we were gifted to go to the Gentiles, while they were gifted to go to the circumcision.³³ **2:10** The only thing they added was that we should remember the poor, which was exactly what I was also eager to do.³⁴

The Problem with Peter's Show of Forsaking God's Grace and Jesus' Centrality

2:11 However, when Cephas came to Antioch, I confronted him to his face, because he started acting like a condemned person.³⁵ **2:12** Before certain men came from James, he was eating with the Gentiles. But when they came, he pulled away and separated himself, because he feared those of a circumcision mindset.³⁶ **2:13** In addition, the rest of the Jews joined him in this hypocrisy, with the result that even Barnabas was drawn away with them into hypocrisy.³⁷

2:14 Nevertheless, when I saw that they were not acting consistently with the truth of the message of good news, I said to Cephas in front of them all,³⁸

If you, being a Jew, live like a Gentile and not like a Jew, why is it that **you are forcing (ἠναγκάζεις)** the Gentiles to Jewishize their manner of living?³⁹ **2:15** We are Jews physically speaking and not morally depraved human beings from the Gentiles.⁴⁰ **2:16** Nevertheless, we know that a man is not declared forgiven in accordance with works of the Covenant, but through belief in Jesus the Messiah. Indeed, we have believed in the Messiah Jesus, in order that we may be declared forgiven in accordance with belief in the Messiah and not in accordance with works of the Covenant, because every person of flesh will NOT be declared forgiven by works of the Covenant.⁴¹

2:17 Now, if, while seeking to be declared forgiven in the Messiah, we ourselves were also found to be morally depraved human beings, then is the Messiah a proponent of immorality? May it never be!⁴² **2:18** But if I rebuild these things to which I put an end, **then** I demonstrate myself to be a transgressor.⁴³ **2:19** Instead, I died by the Covenant to the Covenant with the result that I live because of God. I have been crucified with the Messiah.⁴⁴ **2:20** Thus, I no longer live, but, the Messiah lives in me. This is to say that the existence which I live in the flesh I live by belief in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself up for me.⁴⁵

2:21 I am not one to nullify the grace of God! If being declared forgiven is through the Covenant, then the Messiah died to no purpose!⁴⁶

Paul's Main Argument

The Spirit of God Worked Within the Galatians Through the Gospel, Not the Mosaic Covenant

3:1 O foolish Galatians, who has deceived you, before whose eyes Jesus the Messiah was publicly proclaimed as crucified?⁴⁷ 3:2 I desire to learn only this from you—did you receive the Spirit in accordance with works of the Covenant or in accordance with hearing that resulted in belief?⁴⁸ 3:3 Are you so foolish? Having begun with the Spirit, are you now finishing with the flesh?⁴⁹ 3:4 Did you experience so many things for nothing, if, indeed, it was for nothing?⁵⁰ 3:5 Therefore, does He who provides the Spirit to you and performs powerful things for your benefit do so in accordance with works of the Covenant or in accordance with hearing that has resulted in belief?⁵¹

God's Third Promise to Abraham Ensures that Those of Similar Belief Acquire His Blessing

3:6 Just as Abraham believed God and it was taken into account with the result that he was declared forgiven,⁵² 3:7 then, you should know that the ones who are characterized by belief, these are the sons of Abraham.⁵³ 3:8 And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles in accordance with belief, proclaimed this good news beforehand to Abraham,

All the nations will be blessed in association with you <Genesis 12:3>.⁵⁴

3:9 The result is that the ones who are characterized by belief are blessed with the believer Abraham.⁵⁵

Jesus and the Holy Spirit vs. Religious Obedience to the Mosaic Covenant

3:10 Consequently, whoever is characterized by works of the Covenant is under a curse, because it has been written,

Cursed is everyone who does not persevere in all the things that have been written in the book of the Covenant so as to do them <Deuteronomy 27:26>.⁵⁶

3:11 That no one is declared forgiven in the sight of God on the basis of the Covenant is obvious, because

the one who is declared unpunishable in accordance with belief shall live <Habakkuk 2:4>.⁵⁷

3:12 Yet, the Covenant is not outside belief, but

he who does them shall live because of them <Leviticus 18:5>.⁵⁸

3:13 The Messiah redeemed us from the curse of the Covenant when he became a curse on our behalf, because it has been written,

Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree <Deuteronomy 21:23>.⁵⁹

3:14 The result is that the blessing of Abraham comes to the nations by means of the Messiah Jesus, so that we receive the promise of the Spirit in view of our belief.⁶⁰

The Purpose of the Mosaic Covenant as a Childhood Guide to Jewish Sinners

3:15 Brothers, let me speak about what we humans do. This is to say that no one disallows or adds to a human contract after it has been put into effect.⁶¹ 3:16 Now, the promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. He does not say, “And to seeds,” as referring to many seeds, but as referring to one seed, “And to your seed,” who is the Messiah.⁶² 3:17 And I am saying this—the Covenant which occurred 430 years later does not nullify the contract which had been put into effect earlier by God with the result that it nullifies the promise.⁶³ 3:18 If the inheritance is based on the Mosaic Covenant, it is no longer based on the promise. But God has graced it to Abraham through the promise.⁶⁴

3:19 So why the Covenant? It was set forth because of transgressions up to the time when the “seed” to whom the promise had been made arrived on the scene, having been ordained through divine theophanies by the hand of a mediator.⁶⁵ 3:20 And the mediator is not there for the one,⁶⁶ but, God is one.⁶⁷

3:21 Is therefore the Covenant outside the promises of God? Absolutely not! Consider this—if the Covenant were given which is able to bring about Life, then indeed forgiveness and moral perfection would be granted in accordance with the Covenant.⁶⁸ 3:22 Instead, the scripture has imprisoned everyone in moral depravity with the result that the promise is given to those who believe in accordance with belief in Jesus the Messiah.⁶⁹

3:23 Certainly, before belief actually happened, we were being protected by the Torah, even as we were prisoners, while we headed toward the goal of the future belief’s being actualized.⁷⁰ 3:24 The result is that the Covenant has been our “childhood” guide to the Messiah, so that we may be justified in accordance with belief.⁷¹ 3:25 But now that belief has actually happened, we are no longer under the tutelage of a “childhood” guide.⁷²

Therefore, All Believers Equally Without Distinction Find Eternal Life Through Belief in Jesus

3:26 Therefore, all of you are sons of God in view of your *belief in the Messiah Jesus*,⁷³ 3:27 because as many of you as were baptized into the Messiah, you clothed yourselves with the Messiah.⁷⁴ 3:28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, neither slave nor freeman, neither male nor female, because you are all one in the Messiah Jesus.⁷⁵ 3:29 And if you belong to the Messiah, then you are the seed of Abraham, heirs according to the promise.⁷⁶

The Analogy of Children vs. Slaves, i.e., Heirs Through Jesus vs. Non-heirs Through “Religion”

4:1 Now I say, as long as the heir is a child, he does not differ from a slave, even though he is the owner of everything.⁷⁷ 4:2 Thus, it is under foremen and managers until the appointed day set by the father.⁷⁸

4:3 In the same manner also, when we were “children,” we had been “slaves” under the basic dynamics of the ordered religious system (ὕπὸ τὰ στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου).⁷⁹ 4:4 But when the fullness of time came, God sent forth His Son, having come into existence by a woman, having come into existence under the Covenant,⁸⁰ 4:5 so that he could redeem those who were under the Covenant, so that we received the adoption as sons.⁸¹

4:6 Likewise, because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts as He cries out, “Abba, Father.”⁸² 4:7 The result is that you are no longer a “slave,” but a “son.” And if you are a son, then you are also an heir through God.⁸³

4:8 Certainly, in the past, when you did not know God, you served gods that by their very nature do not exist.⁸⁴ 4:9 And now, while knowing God, or rather being known by God, why do you turn

back again to weak and worthless basic dynamics (ἐπὶ τὰ ἀσθενῆ καὶ πτωχὰ στοιχεῖα) which you desire to be enslaved all over again?⁸⁵ 4:10 You are meticulously observing days, months, seasons, and years.⁸⁶

4:11 I fear for you lest I have labored over you for nothing.⁸⁷ 4:12 I beg you, brothers, be like me, because I am like you.⁸⁸

Paul's Genuine Love for the Galatians vs. The False Teacher's Selfishly Exploiting Them

You did me no injustice,⁸⁹ 4:13 but you know that I formerly proclaimed the good news to you because of a physical illness.⁹⁰ 4:14 You neither despised nor rejected your time of being tested because of my physical condition. Instead, you welcomed me as an *angelos* of God, as the Messiah Jesus.⁹¹ 4:15 Therefore, where is your sense of being blessed? For I vouch for you that, if possible, you would have plucked out your eyes and given them to me.⁹² 4:16 Accordingly, have I become your enemy by telling you the truth?⁹³

4:17 They are not dedicated to you in a manner which is in accord with what is good. But they desire to exclude you, so that you may seek after them.⁹⁴ 4:18 Certainly, it is always good to have others be dedicated to you in connection with what is good, and not only when I am present with you.⁹⁵

4:19 My children, for whom I am once more suffering birth pangs until the Messiah is formed in you,⁹⁶ 4:20 I would desire to be present with you now and to change my tone, because I am confused about what is going on with you.⁹⁷

Sarah and Hagar Can Allegorize Authentic Judaism and False Judaism Respectively

4:21 Tell me, those who desire to be under the Covenant, do you not listen to the Torah?⁹⁸ 4:22 For it has been written that Abraham had two sons, one by the slave woman and one by the free woman.⁹⁹ 4:23 But, on the one hand, the one by the slave woman has been born according to the flesh, while, on the other hand, the one by the free woman has been born because of the promise.¹⁰⁰

4:24 These things provide me with an opportunity to allegorize like this—these women represent two kinds of “contracts,” one, on the one hand, bearing children from Mt. Sinai resulting in “slavery.” She is Hagar.¹⁰¹ 4:25 And this Hagar is Mt. Sinai in Arabia, and its dynamics are in line with (συστοιχεί) the present Jerusalem, for she is in “slavery” with her children.¹⁰² 4:26 In contrast, the Jerusalem above is “free,” who is our mother.¹⁰³

4:27 Now it has been written,

Rejoice, barren one, who bears no children, break forth and cry out, one who suffers no birth pangs; because many are the children of the deserted one, more than the one who has a husband <Isaiah 54:1; Genesis 11:30>.¹⁰⁴

4:28 And you, brothers, are children of promise in accordance with how Isaac was born.¹⁰⁵

4:29 But just like back then, when the one who was born according to the flesh persecuted the one who has been born according to the Spirit, so also now.¹⁰⁶ 4:30 But what does the scripture say,

Throw out the slave woman and her son, because the son of the slave woman shall never receive the inheritance along with the son of the free woman <Genesis 21:10>.¹⁰⁷

4:31 Therefore, brothers, we are not children of a “slave” woman, but of a “free” woman.¹⁰⁸ 5:1 The Messiah freed us for the sake of “freedom.” Therefore, stand firm and do not be loaded down again with a yoke of “slavery.”¹⁰⁹

Paul's Conclusion That the Messiah and Not the Mosaic Covenant is the Basis of Salvation

5:2 Look! I, Paul, am saying to you that, if you become circumcised, then the Messiah will be of no use to you.¹¹⁰ 5:3 And I insist again to every man who is circumcised that he is obligated to do the whole Torah.¹¹¹

5:4 You who are being justified on the basis of the Covenant have nothing more to do with the Messiah. You have fallen out of grace,¹¹² 5:5 but we through the Spirit by belief are eagerly awaiting the hope of justification/*dikaiosisunay*.¹¹³ 5:6 Within the framework of the Messiah Jesus, neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything, but belief which is being produced through love does.¹¹⁴

5:7 You were running well. Who prevented you from being persuaded of the truth?¹¹⁵ 5:8 This persuasion is not from Him who called you.¹¹⁶ 5:9 A little leaven leavens the whole lump of dough.¹¹⁷ 5:10 I appeal to you within the framework of the Lord that you not think otherwise. And he who is confusing you will bear his condemnation, whoever he is.¹¹⁸

5:11 Now as for me, brothers, if I am still proclaiming circumcision, why then am I myself still being persecuted, because the offense of the cross has been obliterated?¹¹⁹ 5:12 I wish indeed that those who are destabilizing you would excommunicate themselves.¹²⁰

Paul's Additional Comments – The Necessity of Biblical, Messianic Morality

Paul Explains That the Holy Spirit Naturally Leads Christians Into Obligatory Biblical Morality

5:13 Brothers, you were called on the basis of freedom. Only do not use your freedom for an occasion of the flesh, but be enslaved to one another with love.¹²¹ 5:14 For the whole Torah has been summed up in one statement,

You shall love your neighbor as yourself <Leviticus 19:18>.¹²²

5:15 However, if you chew up and devour one another, watch out lest you are destroyed by one another.¹²³

5:16 Now, I say, operate in life in line with the Spirit in order that you not carry out the craving of the flesh.¹²⁴ 5:17 The flesh craves in opposition to the Spirit, and the Spirit “craves” in opposition to the flesh, because these are in opposition to one another. The result will be that you not do whatever these things are that you are desiring.¹²⁵ 5:18 And if you are being led by the Spirit, you are not under the Covenant.¹²⁶

5:19 The actions of the flesh are obvious.¹²⁷ They are sexual immorality, uncleanness, moral impropriety, 5:20 idolatry, a mentality of magic, hatred, strife, jealousy, angers, conflicts, dissensions, factions based on dogma, 5:21 envies, drunken binges, excessive feastings, and things similar to these. I am telling you beforehand, just as I forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the Kingdom of God.¹²⁸

5:22 Instead, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, belief, 5:23 gentleness, and self-control.¹²⁹ The Torah is not in opposition to such people,¹³⁰ 5:24 and those who belong to the Messiah Jesus crucified the flesh along with its passions and desires.¹³¹

5:25 If we are alive because of the Spirit, then let us also adopt the dynamics (στοιχῶμεν) of the Spirit.¹³² 5:26 Let us not have an exaggerated view of ourselves that leads to challenging one another or envying one another.¹³³

Messianic Morality is Characterized by Humility, Compassion, Goodness, and Apostolic Truth

6:1 Brothers, if, as it is bound to happen, a man is overtaken in the midst of some transgression, you, who are spiritual, strengthen such a person with a spirit of gentleness as you pay attention to yourself, lest you also be tempted.¹³⁴ 6:2 Bear one another's burdens and thus fulfill the Covenant of the Messiah.¹³⁵ 6:3 If someone thinks that he is something when he is not, then he is deceiving himself.¹³⁶ 6:4 Instead, let each person examine and learn the genuineness of his own activity. Then he will have something to "brag" about only with respect to himself and not with respect to anyone else,¹³⁷ 6:5 because each person will bear his own load.¹³⁸

6:6 Let him who is taught the message participate in all good things with him who teaches.¹³⁹ 6:7 Do not be deceived. God is not to be treated with contempt, because whatever a man sows, this he will also reap.¹⁴⁰ 6:8 This is to say, he who sows toward his own flesh will reap destruction from the flesh, while he who sows toward the Spirit will reap eternal Life from the Spirit.¹⁴¹ 6:9 Let us not lose enthusiasm in doing good, because we shall reap in due time, if we do not give up.¹⁴² 6:10 Therefore, while we have the opportunity, let us do good towards all men, and especially towards the members of the household of the faith.¹⁴³

Paul's Self-Written Conclusion

Jesus the Messiah With the Inward Work of the Holy Spirit vs. the Mosaic Covenant

6:11 See with what large letters I write to you with my own hand.¹⁴⁴

6:12 Those who desire to make a good showing in the flesh are forcing (ἀναγκάζουσιν) you to be circumcised—only so that they will not be persecuted for the cross of the Messiah.¹⁴⁵ 6:13 For those who are circumcised do not even keep the Covenant themselves. Nevertheless, they desire you to be circumcised, so that they can brag about your flesh.¹⁴⁶ 6:14 However, may it never be that I would brag except in the cross of our Lord Jesus the Messiah, in view of whom religious systemism has been crucified with respect to me, and I have been crucified with respect to religious systemism.¹⁴⁷ 6:15 Therefore, neither is circumcision anything, nor uncircumcision, but what really matters is a new creation.¹⁴⁸ 6:16 As for those who live according to this dynamic (στοιχήσουσιν), *shalom* and *hesed* to them, indeed to the Israel of God.¹⁴⁹

6:17 From now on let no one cause difficulties for me, because I bear the brand marks of Jesus on my body.¹⁵⁰ 6:18 The grace of our Lord Jesus the Messiah be with your spirit, brothers. Amen.¹⁵¹

¹ Παῦλος ἀπόστολος οὐκ ἀπ' ἀνθρώπων οὐδὲ δι' ἀνθρώπου ἀλλὰ διὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ καὶ θεοῦ πατρὸς τοῦ ἐγείραντος αὐτὸν ἐκ νεκρῶν – In this first verse, Paul lists the divine credentials that make it suitable and even necessary for him to respond to the situation in Galatia. He is an “apostle” of the Messiah, which is to say that he has been sent directly by Jesus of Nazareth to proclaim the message of his messiahship. We know this also from Acts 9 when the risen Jesus encountered Paul on the road to Damascus. Paul also indicates that his being an apostle is of divine agency, directly through Jesus from the transcendent God, the Father of Jesus, which, by definition, makes Jesus the Son of God and the Messiah of the Davidic Covenant (cf. 2 Samuel 7, etc.). God proved that Jesus had carried out his responsibility of suffering death in order to qualify for his role as the Son of God and Messiah by raising him from the dead. Thus, Paul can state that he has gotten his understanding of the biblical message directly from God through Jesus. He has not gotten it from the apostles in Jerusalem, implying that his opponents’ message is man-made and not from God. Here, we have the first clue as to what the problem is in the Galatian Christian communities. They are being influenced by ideas that do not originate with God, but with sinful human beings.

Also, God’s raising Jesus from the dead is a clear statement of what is most important to Paul when it comes to God. His mandating that Jesus the Messiah die and then raising him from the dead is central to God’s granting eternal mercy and forgiveness to sinners, which is God’s project in the midst of bringing about Jesus’ rule over His creation for all eternity.

And just as a dead man, even Jesus, cannot raise himself from the dead, so also human beings who are trapped in their moral depravity cannot cause themselves to satisfy the condition of belief in the Messiah in order to obtain God’s mercy and eternal life. This should settle the issue for the Galatians, that their buying into the notion that performing the religious actions of the Mosaic Covenant contributes to God’s granting them mercy, even making themselves worthy of it, is the wrong thing to do. Jesus’ death and resurrection are not an add on to the religion of Judaism centered in the Mosaic Covenant. They are primary while any religious pursuits are secondary, even those within Christianity. Any kind of biblical religion, even one that uses the same language as Jesus and Paul to describe Jesus’ role as the savior who died and rose from the dead on behalf of our sins but then encourages activities that imply that these are what really gains God’s favor is missing the point of His grace, mercy, and Jesus’ role.

² καὶ οἱ σὺν ἐμοὶ πάντες ἀδελφοὶ ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις τῆς Γαλατίας – Galatians is most likely Paul’s first letter, and he wrote it soon after visiting Galatia in central Turkey on his first missionary journey around A.D. 47,48. He has returned to Antioch on the Orontes in northwestern Syria, and he includes in his introduction the Christian “brothers” in the Antioch community. As Paul will go on to describe, he has heard some very disturbing news about the newly formed Christian communities in Galatia, and he is in a bit of a rush to counter the ideas of the opponents to his “gospel,” the good news of Jesus as the Messiah by means of God’s grace and mercy.

Maybe the Jewish Christians who are his opponents in this letter thought that part of the problem for Paul lay in his being headquartered in Antioch with the Gentile Christians there who all wanted to make the gospel more attractive to Gentiles by removing the “obvious” obligation to the Mosaic Covenant. But Paul is willing to include the Antioch believers as those who are writing this letter because he knows he is right—that Jesus is primary while the Mosaic Covenant is secondary for Jews and not obligatory for Gentiles. Plus, it adds the fact that certainly he is not the only one who is thinking the way he is, even though the weight of his argument still has to come from the fact that he is the sole apostle in the Antiochene group of believers.

³ χάρις ὑμῖν καὶ εἰρήνη ἀπὸ θεοῦ πατρὸς ἡμῶν καὶ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ – This greeting is Paul’s expression of his desire that grace (χάρις), divine unsolicited kindness which results in mercy, and the outcome of “peace” (εἰρήνη), eternal shalom (wholeness of the best life possible), for the believing communities in Galatia continue to emerge from his and their transcendent Creator and the One who has adopted them as His children. Paul will use this metaphor of adoption to sonship in his argument in chapter 4. For the time being, we can say by his calling God “our Father,” that He is the source of their role and destiny within the created reality and the One who cares for them by having sent Paul to present them with the gospel of Jesus. Just as God sent Jesus to Paul on the road to Damascus to present him with the gospel, God will also ensure that they obtain eternal life.

Because Paul has mentioned in the first verse that God is Jesus’ Father of the Davidic Covenant, here he must mean that he desires that grace and shalom come also from Jesus, which makes sense in the light of his role as the instrument which God uses to grant eternal mercy to morally depraved human beings. It is this which Paul goes on to describe in more detail in v. 4.

⁴ τοῦ δόντος ἑαυτὸν ὑπὲρ τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ἡμῶν, ὅπως ἐξέλται ἡμᾶς ἐκ τοῦ αἰῶνος τοῦ ἐνεστώτος πονηροῦ κατὰ τὸ θέλημα τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ πατρὸς ἡμῶν – Paul describes how grace and shalom come from Jesus—by virtue of his fulfilling the responsibility which God gave him to qualify to be people’s priest and advocate before God through his suffering death on the cross (cf. Hebrews). This was a “giving of himself” (τοῦ δόντος ἑαυτὸν), because it involved his sacrificing his earthly well-being and comfort for others’ eternal well-being and comfort, indeed for others who deserve only God’s anger, condemnation, and destruction. And by his sacrificing his own life, Jesus became capable of rescuing sinners from the evil of this age that has existed since the creation of Adam and Eve and in which they participate and which has eternal consequences. This age will continue until Jesus returns and sets up his kingdom in Israel with both resurrected/lifted off the earth former believers who are transformed into immortal and morally perfect people and newly converted mortal and immoral believers comprised of both Jews and Gentiles—inaugurating the age

of the Kingdom of God. Then a full transformation of all believers will take place in the kingdom age when God replaces the present cosmos with a new completely perfect one.

Paul is also saying that the process of saving people from His justice is exactly what God wanted as the “Father” of believers, who is the very source of their salvation by virtue of His caring for them in this way. God mandated that Jesus die so that Paul is in no way relying for God’s mercy on sacrifices that he offers through the Levitical priests of the Mosaic Covenant, nor through any other element of obedience to this covenant. He will go on to argue that he would never think of adding this kind of ritual or performance of the Mosaic Covenant to what it means to being a genuine servant of God and His Messiah Jesus—whether as a Jew or as a Gentile. Nor would he add Jesus to whatever importance the Mosaic Covenant has in human history.

In addition, the message of the cross is not only that we all deserve eternal death from God, but also that that we cannot stop ourselves from deserving death by fulfilling the right condition of belief in God and His Messiah (cf. Genesis 15:6; Galatians 3:1ff., and Romans 4). God must of His own initiative and choice cause us to meet this condition, which should settle the issue in Galatians without any further explanation—if the Galatian Christians are listening carefully enough, which is probably not the case, because they have become so influenced by the opponents of the gospel against whom Paul is writing (cf. Galatians 3:1ff.). These opponents are making their obedience of the Mosaic Covenant the basis of their salvation instead of God’s grace through Jesus’ death and qualifying to be their priest to obtain God’s mercy.

“present” could refer to someone now that has changed from a time in the past, e.g., before Noah when the world was incredibly evil. Or it could refer to the world as evil since the creation of Adam and Eve in contrast to the future age which will not be evil, starting with the millennial kingdom when Jesus brings a completely different rule to the whole world and justice and goodness will reign in a manner that has never been seen in human history. Thus, the “future” age begins with the millennial kingdom and will continue with the new heavens and the new earth.

⁵ ὃ ἡ δόξα εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων, ἀμήν – We notice that Paul does not say “into eternity” but “into the ages of the ages.” The ultimate praise and applause for man’s salvation goes to God, and it starts now and goes on into eternity where there will be age after age of the ongoing, dramatic, concrete narrative of God with meaningful activity in each age by all those who qualify for eternal life. Thus God’s praise will be for His gracious and merciful rescue of human beings from eternal justice and destruction into the drama of human existence for each person as the ages role by.

This is why the news media today focus all their efforts on dramatic events. Human beings are made for drama—to create it, enjoy it, and be in wonder about it as a gift of God. The only problem now is that no credit is given to God and only that drama which can attract people to the media is considered instead of the quiet dramas of every human being’s life and existence.

The implication of Paul’s words here is that the Jewish Christians are stealing God’s glory for themselves by thinking that their obedience to the Mosaic Covenant is that significant, perhaps even the basis for their salvations with Jesus just as an add on.

⁶ θαυμάζω ὅτι οὕτως ταχέως μετατίθεσθε ἀπὸ τοῦ καλέσαντος ὑμᾶς ἐν χάριτι Ἰ[η]σοῦ εἰς ἕτερον εὐαγγέλιον – Here is the crux of the issue. Jesus as the Messiah is at the center of God’s exercising His independent kindness towards evil human beings who need and acquire His mercy. Nothing else and no one else ultimately matters, not even following the Mosaic Covenant, especially its religious and ceremonial requirements such as circumcision and eating kosher. And this is true even though from an Old Testament perspective, the Mosaic Covenant is definitely connected to God’s promises which were given to Abraham and which eventually culminate in how God uses the Messiah in the lives of both the Jews and Gentiles.

The Galatian Christians have abandoned God and His message of crucified messiah grace which places them concretely in the community of Jesus and those who will be rescued from God’s condemnation and destruction (cf. 1 Corinthians 1,2). The good ne which Paul has declared to them requires only that they believe in Jesus and pursue morality—within the context of divine kindness which cannot be merited through even obedience to the Mosaic Covenant. Paul will go on to indicate that his opponents, who are influencing the Galatians, are presenting a very different “good news,” because it promotes human self-effort as the means not just to please God, but to make oneself worthy of mercy and eternal life (cf. Galatians 3:1ff.). It also is backed by an attitude of the Jewish believers where they aggressively pressure the Gentiles to become circumcised and to focus their relationship with God on the religion of Judaism derived from the Mosaic Covenant. Thus, to reject and desert God is to substitute natural human performance and religion for Jesus’ death and God’s grace as the basis and primary means to gain His favor, mercy, and life.

Paul is genuinely shocked that people whom he watched embrace the truth are now actually abandoning it. He had spent anywhere from a few days to perhaps a few weeks in each of the cities such as Pisidian Antioch, Iconium, Lycaonia, Lystra, and Derbe, along with the surrounding area which incorporated Galatia in central Turkey (Acts 13:14-14:28). As a result, he had become convinced that he had seen genuine conversions from paganism to Christianity by many Gentiles in the area. Plus, he most likely had explained to them the important concept of God’s grace, along with the centrality of their belief Jesus as Messiah and advocate, especially in the light of the intense opposition to this message which he encountered among the Jews in cities such as Pisidian Antioch, where he was literally driven out of the city.

Paul is not saying that there is only one way to articulate the gospel, i.e., only one set of words that is true. It is good

and right to present the gospel's ideas in a different order or form depending upon the audience as in the example of Peter who preached to mostly Jews in Jerusalem in Acts 2 and talked about how to obey God in comparison to Paul who preached to Gentile philosophers in Athens in Act 17 and talked about their being only one, true God. Paul's issue with his opponents in this letter is the difference between their apparent belief, which is the same as Paul's as they use the same words to describe Jesus' life, death, and resurrection, and their actual belief, which is radically different from Paul's because they not only emphasize the Mosaic Covenant for both Jews and Gentiles but also aggressively pressure everybody into following it, thus revealing their complete lack of mercy (in contrast to the Jews of Romans 14).

⁷ ὁ οὐκ ἔστιν ἄλλο, εἰ μὴ τινὲς εἰσιν οἱ ταρασσόντες ὑμᾶς καὶ θέλοντες μεταστρέψαι τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τοῦ Χριστοῦ – Paul is emphatic that this new message of which the Galatians are becoming persuaded is NOT good news—meaning that it will result in eternal condemnation and destruction if they wholeheartedly embrace it. Indeed, those who are presenting it, as they upset the Galatians (οἱ ταρασσόντες ὑμᾶς) by calling into question whether or not they have eternal life through strictly their belief in Jesus, are even desirous at a certain level within themselves of distorting the good news of God's grace and the Messiah who suffered death. Therefore, Paul suspects that the desire of these teachers' to alter the biblical message of God, "the good news about the Messiah" (μεταστρέψαι τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τοῦ Χριστοῦ) is coming from their moral depravity, not just from naiveté. They are not simply immature in their biblical understanding. They are wholly committed to falsehood and to encouraging others to follow their lie. How does Paul know this? We will see that it is because he senses that they are using aggressive, pressure tactics that lack grace while promoting their message (in contrast to the gracious "weak" brothers of Romans 14). They are trying to "compel" (ἀναγκάζω – cf. 2:3, 2:14, 6:12) the Galatian Christians to become circumcised and follow the religious commandments of the Mosaic Covenant, which include eating kosher (cf. Galatians 2:11ff.). In turn, Paul accuses his opponents of fostering slave-like loyalty to themselves and their prideful pursuits (cf. 4:17,18). Notice, though, that these teachers' message does contain information about the Messiah, in fact, belief in Jesus as the Messiah. Indeed, if there is naiveté in their motivation, it is the fact that they adhere intellectually to all the points of Paul's theology (which is why it is so easy for the Galatian Christians to be tricked by these false teachers), while also living out a different theology, which actually is the opposite of Paul's. As a result, they want to add to belief in Jesus and God's grace that which they consider necessary for a person to be a legitimate follower of Jesus, which in their opinion is living Jewishly according to God's Mosaic Covenant. However, Paul will explain in this letter that the covenant is for only Jews, not for Gentiles who have no obligation *per se* to it. And even Jews are not obligated to it ultimately for *eternal* salvation (or, by extrapolation, for living in the millennial kingdom), which comes only through Jesus and His sacrificial offering. This is to say that Jews have an historical and national obligation to the Mosaic Covenant but not an eternal and salvific obligation to it.

David, for example, realized this relativizing of the Mosaic Covenant when he said in Psalm 51:16,17, "You do not delight in sacrifice [of animals according to the Mosaic Covenant]. Otherwise, I would give it. You are not pleased with a burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit. You, God, will not despise a broken and crushed heart." It was David's humble, repentant inwardness, not his adherence to the Mosaic Covenant commandment to offer an animal to God, that pleased God, leaving open the door to another kind of sacrifice, i.e., that of the Messiah, to be the only instrument which God would use to administer His mercy to sinners.

In addition, Paul will indicate that these opponents think that they are making themselves worthy of God's blessing of eternal mercy and life because of their strong reliance on their "flesh" (cf. 3:1-5). This is like saying to God, "You must be impressed with my religious performance which makes me a good person and, therefore, worthy of Your mercy," even while these people affirm, in theory, God's grace and deny that they can earn anything from Him. Again, they verbally agree with Paul's theology but deny it by their actions.

Another option for "not another message of good news" is that Paul is referring to the Jewish Christians' message not being different from what they grew up with, because they are only adding Jesus and not seeing him as primary in comparison to the Mosaic Covenant." This is to say that it is not at all different for the Jewish Christians who are preaching it. But Paul is speaking to the Gentiles and wanting to encourage them that the so-called good news of these Jewish Christians is not good at all.

⁸ ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐὰν ἡμεῖς ἡ ἄγγελος ἐξ οὐρανοῦ 'εὐαγγελίζηται [ὑμῖν]' παρ' ὃ εὐηγγελισάμεθα ὑμῖν, ἀνάθεμα ἔστω – To make his point, Paul uses an extreme example of someone's being sent from God to proclaim the "good news" of salvation but who presents a message opposite to the actual truth. This person, even if it were the *angelos* of Yahweh, a theophany, would be eternally condemned and destroyed. This is how egregious and horrendous this error is. The same goes for him and any of his Antiochene fellow Christians. Therefore, to claim that one is focusing on God's grace and Jesus as the Messiah but to declare that a person cannot be a genuine follower of Jesus without following the Mosaic Covenant, while also implying that a person must make himself worthy of God's blessing through his religious performance, thus attempting to compel (ἀναγκάζω – cf. 2:3, etc.) people to embrace error, is to present a message which is opposite to that of both the Old and the New Testaments and will result in eternal condemnation for the person who embraces it.

This is just how confident Paul is in his understanding of the gospel of Jesus as the Messiah.

⁹ ὥς 'προειρήκαμεν καὶ ἄρτι πάλιν λέγω· εἴ τις ὑμᾶς εὐαγγελίζεται παρ' ὃ 'παρελάβετε, ἀνάθεμα ἔστω – It is possible that Paul is referring to what he just wrote in v. 8, so that he is repeating himself for emphasis' sake. However,

on the basis of the resistance which Paul had observed among even Jewish Christians to the simple message of believing in Jesus without feeling equally obligated to follow the Mosaic Covenant (cf. Acts 13-15), it seems more likely that Paul had contrasted the current Judaistic message of salvation with that regarding Jesus as the Messiah in his teaching the Galatians when he had been with them on his first missionary journey. He must have warned them of the danger of following this erroneous Jewishism vs. true Jesusism. The strength of Paul's statements here indicate that he believes the person who is proclaiming this kind of error is not demonstrating a heart of genuine belief and will incur God's condemnation and destruction as a result.

¹⁰ ἄρτι γὰρ ἀνθρώπους πείθω ἢ τὸν θεόν; ἢ ζητῶ ἀνθρώποις ἀρέσκειν; εἰ ᾧ ἔτι ἀνθρώποις ἡρεσκον, Χριστοῦ δοῦλος οὐκ ἂν ἤμην – Two options for what Paul means by “still pleasing men”—

1) Pleasing the Gentiles by presenting them with an erroneous message that is simply believing in Jesus and pursuing moral obedience without keeping the Mosaic Covenant and all its detailed instructions.

2) Pleasing his fellow Jews by being like them without a changed heart and believing that the Mosaic Covenant is the basis of any sinner's salvation which leads to earning God's favor and promises.

Certainly by not insisting that the Gentiles keep the Mosaic Covenant, Paul makes the message of the gospel much more attractive to them. Avoiding circumcision, the religious rituals, the dietary law, and all other non-moral commandments that would feel like an incredible burden to the Gentiles (as they do to the Jews) would make it much easier for Gentiles to embrace Jesus as their Messiah.

Or is Paul asking the Galatians if his original message to them was exactly like that which they are hearing from the false Jewish teachers—believe in God's grace and Jesus, while also obeying the Mosaic Covenant, but with a harsh attitude of insisting that the Gentiles do all this.

I am inclined to think that #2 is correct, and that Paul is unequivocally declaring that he is all about pleasing God regardless of how offensive he may be to the Jewish false teachers, (or how difficult the information of the gospel is to all people because they are sinners and inherently hostile to God) Even if the Jewish false teachers think otherwise he is going to present only that which really is the gospel that is in line with his being a slave of the Messiah and is fulfilling his role as an apostle.

The concepts of being a “slave” of something or someone or “free” with respect to something or someone is a prominent theme in this letter. Paul is concerned that his readers are maintaining their “freedom” to be rescued from God's condemnation by means of His grace through the death of Jesus as the Messiah as the BASIS of their salvation and by means of His inner work within them of changing their hearts by means of the Holy Spirit vs. their submitting to “being enslaved” to seeking to motivate God to bless them with salvation and eternal life by means of their outwardly performing the religious system of the Mosaic Covenant, especially physical circumcision for the men. To be “enslaved” to a religious system is to remain “under sin” and “enslaved” to sin without having a changed heart, while to be “free” in one's belief in God and Jesus is to operate in life from the condition of having a changed heart. Only the latter results in salvation from destruction. The former is a “different” gospel, even if someone claims to believe in Jesus as the crucified and risen Messiah.

¹¹ γινώρισκω ᾧ γὰρ ὑμῖν. ἀδελφοί, τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τὸ εὐαγγελισθὲν ὑπ' ἐμοῦ ὅτι οὐκ ἔστιν κατὰ ἄνθρωπον – In vs. 11-24, Paul describes how he changed from being a violent aggressor against Jesus and Christianity to a humble apostle of this message (cf. 1 Timothy 1:12-14). It was through God's grace resulting in Paul's unhypocritical and accurate belief in the knowledge of Jesus as Messiah and Savior.

Just as there are two kinds of people in the world, there are two sources of ideas—man and God. Paul has already mentioned in v. 1 that his message and his responsibility to proclaim it do not have their origin in human beings. Instead, he will go on to say that he came by the information necessary to fulfill his calling as an apostle through a revelation of the Jesus the Messiah to him followed by a careful restudying of the Old Testament to figure where he had gone wrong in his understanding of it. Consequently, that which is “from man” is always a distortion of the biblical message, which implies that only NT information spoken or written by apostles is true and authoritative.

¹² οὐδὲ γὰρ ἐγὼ παρὰ ἀνθρώπου παρέλαβον αὐτὸ ὅτι ἐδιδάχθην ἀλλὰ δι' ἀποκαλύψεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ – The last phrase makes the most sense as an objective genitive, i.e., “through the revealing of Jesus by God to Paul on the road to Damascus.” This is instead of a subjective genitive, i.e., “through Jesus' revealing the gospel to Paul during the 3+ years of his needing to restudy the OT.

There are two kinds of messages in this world—the kind that is not based upon the biblical message coming from God and the kind that is. Paul's apostolic message did not come from other, sinful human teachers, not even from the apostles in Jerusalem. God revealed Jesus to Paul on the road to Damascus, and in the light of this revelation Paul relearned the Old Testament with God (even Jesus at times?) as his guide. In other words, Paul really rethought the Old Testament from Genesis to Malachi and discovered through his careful study that Jesus really is who he said he was. As a result, Paul is implying that his message and its presentation are both infallible and true. Nothing else should be considered truth in its entirety, because, by definition, people on their own derive ideas that are never completely true in their description of reality. Only the apostles, and the rest of the Bible by extrapolation, will always in their writings be able to provide us with nothing but infallible ideas (cf. John 13:20, “Truly, truly I say to you, he who receives whomever I send receives me. And he who receives me receives the One who sent me”).

The story of the apocalypse/revealing of Jesus to Paul with its effects over a few years is found in Acts 9:1-31. Verses

1-9 (even through v. 19) contain the actual appearance of Jesus to Paul with its immediate effects of a few days. Verse 20 most likely follows after a three year gap (cf. Galatians 1:15-17 and notes below).

¹³ ἡκούσατε γάρ τὴν ἐμὴν ἀναστροφὴν ποτε ἐν τῷ Ἰουδαϊσμῷ, ὅτι καθ' ὑπερβολὴν ἐδίωκον τὴν ἐκκλησίαν τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ ἑπόρθουν αὐτήν – Paul's former "Judaism" was not actually based upon the biblical message but man's distorted interpretation of the biblical message. And this "Judaism" was an attempt to worship God centered in the Mosaic Covenant but without a proper understanding of God's sovereign grace that works in individuals and their hearts leading to receiving His eternal mercy that is not based upon a person's ability and efforts to obey the covenant. It is the same kind of Judaism that the Jewish Christians are promoting among the Galatian Gentile believers with a harshness and critical spirit that reveals their lack of understanding of God's mercy.

Thus, Paul's pursuit of obeying the Bible within the Judaism of his day was actually an anti-Bible message, which was obvious because he was persecuting the people who were following the Bible by virtue of their belief in Jesus as the Messiah. To stand against Jesus and the community who believe in him is to stand against the Bible and God, even if it is being done by people who claim to follow the Bible. Opposition to the biblical message is much more obvious when it is being done by those who claim other documents and texts to be sacred and more worthy of following. Thus, the subtlety of these issues in Galatians.

¹⁴ καὶ προέκοπτον ἐν τῷ Ἰουδαϊσμῷ ὑπὲρ πολλοὺς συνηλικιώτας ἐν τῷ γένει μου, περισσοτέρως ζηλωτὴς ὑπάρχων τῶν πατρικῶν μου παραδόσεων – In fact, Paul considers himself to have been the best of the best of the distorters of the Bible by virtue of his hyper-commitment to the traditions of the Jews that had been passed down from previous generations. However, these traditions were not the essence of biblical truth, because they lead someone, in effect, to deny Jesus' death and its message of God's grace to morally depraved sinners, even while, perhaps, claiming to believe in Jesus—as is the case with those of a "circumcision mindset" (cf. 2:11) to whom he is referring in this letter as opponents of the gospel.

The crux of the issue is whether a person's actual belief is in religious traditions or in God's sovereign and undeserved mercy regardless of a person's level of success in obeying God's moral commandments. Certainly, we need to care about our moral success, but measuring it and determining an actual level that fits some organization's explicit standard of behavior does not result in receiving God's mercy. It is the desire for mercy that does that naturally leads to pursuing morality, which itself is never perfect.

¹⁵ ὅτε δὲ εὐδόκησεν ὁ θεὸς ὁ ἀφορίσας με ἐκ κοιλίας μητρός μου καὶ καλέσας διὰ τῆς χάριτος αὐτοῦ – Paul's God-given destiny and role on earth as the apostle to the Gentiles with authentic belief was already established when he was born. Later, God by His grace changed him into such when Jesus met him on the road to Damascus. Thus, inwardly in his heart God stopped Paul's evil pursuit of declaring an erroneous interpretation of the Bible and led him in the direction of truth and authentic belief—to please God with this message and not change it to make it more attractive to people, including Gentiles because he was the apostle to the Gentiles.

¹⁶ ἀποκαλύψαι τὸν υἱὸν αὐτοῦ ἐν ἐμοί, ἵνα ἑυαγγελίζωμαι αὐτὸν ἐν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν, εὐθέως οὐ προσανεθέμην σαρκὶ καὶ αἵματι – After God had clearly made Jesus as the Messiah the focal point of Paul's life, Paul did not look to a human being to substantiate, verify, and endorse this change and him as an apostle of the Messiah to the non-Jewish portion of the society of the 1st century Roman Empire. Paul never sought the approval of others for what he believes. He has stuck strictly to the source—God through the appearance of Jesus to him and his restudying the scriptures.

¹⁷ οὐδὲ ἀνήλθον εἰς Ἱεροσόλυμα πρὸς τοὺς πρὸ ἐμοῦ ἀποστόλους, ἀλλ' ἀπῆλθον εἰς Ἀραβίαν καὶ πάλιν ὑπέστρεψα εἰς Δαμασκόν – Paul did not even seek the other apostles' understanding of the biblical message or their endorsement. He simply went by himself into the desert to think and learn from the scriptures with God's (even Jesus'?) guidance and then returned to Damascus.

So far we have two of the three elements in Paul's experience as a Christian and apostle that provides him with the confidence to say that anyone who disagrees with him on the gospel is absolutely wrong! The first element is Jesus' appearance to him on the road to Damascus. The second element is his restudying the Old Testament with God's (Jesus') guidance to understand it correctly, that it really is saying that Jesus as the crucified one is truly the Messiah and High Priest of sinners for all eternity. The third element will be the miracles God has performed through him which are the same as those in Acts 2 and which confirm him as an authentic apostle of Jesus (cf. Galatians 3:1-5). These allow Paul to be out in the Roman Empire away from Jerusalem and the other apostles there and to be as bold as he is in proclaiming the gospel without ever doubting himself that he might be wrong in any aspect of what he teaches.

¹⁸ ἔπειτα μετὰ ἑξή τρία ἀνήλθον εἰς Ἱεροσόλυμα ἱστορήσαι Κηφᾶν καὶ ἐπέμεινα πρὸς αὐτὸν ἡμέρας δεκαπέντε – Acts 9:26-30 describe these events when Barnabas takes hold of Paul when no one else will meet with him, brings him to the apostles, and explains to them what happened to Paul on the road to Damascus.

The point is that he still did not have the full endorsement of all the apostles. Nor had he sought out a meeting with all the apostles to learn from them the message which he was supposed to present to the Gentiles. His message was something he learned only from God through Jesus and the OT scriptures.

It is interesting that Paul had taught these Galatian Christians about Peter, i.e., Kephas, and that Paul called him by his original name. cf. 1 Corinthians 1:12.

¹⁹ ἕτερον δὲ τῶν ἀποστόλων οὐκ εἶδον εἰ μὴ Ἰάκωβον τὸν ἀδελφὸν τοῦ κυρίου – Same point as above, but now Paul states that he did meet Jesus' brother James in Jerusalem—different from John's brother James (cf. Acts 12:2, "And [Herod Agrippa I] had James, the brother of John, killed with a sword").

²⁰ ἃ δὲ γράφω ὑμῖν, ἰδοὺ ἐνώπιον τοῦ θεοῦ ὅτι οὐ ψεύδομαι – Yes, Paul did have some contact with two important leaders of Christianity in Jerusalem, the center of Jewish Christianity, but he was not disciplined by them. God through the Old Testament was his sole teacher. Someone really seems to be trying hard to tell a story about Paul that is different from what actually happened, in order to claim that he is wrong about being a *bona fide* apostle of Jesus who knows the truth. Or Paul is simply affirming and emphasizing the fact that his message is not derived from man, e.g., from renowned Jewish teachers who have become believers in Jesus and who therefore must know the correct way to understand the Messiah in the light of the OT. Instead, his message is from God alone through the Messiah, like that of the other apostles, even though he did not consult them in order to make sure he was getting it right. Therefore, he did not change the message in order to accommodate the desires of Gentiles who would not want to go through circumcision and follow all the commandments of the Mosaic Covenant.

²¹ ἔπειτα ἦλθον εἰς τὰ κλίματα τῆς Συρίας καὶ ὁτὶς Κιλικίας – Acts 9:30 describes Paul's departure from Jerusalem after everyone learned that the Hellenistic Jews were plotting to kill Paul. They took him to Caesarea Maritima on the Mediterranean coast, put him on a ship, and sent him to Tarsus in Cilicia, where he stayed for approximately 8 years. Thus, Paul continued to stay away from Jerusalem after his first meeting there with Peter and his seeing James, Jesus' brother.

Syria and Cilicia are north of Israel proper, and Paul's hometown Tarsus is in Cilicia.

²² ἡμῖν δὲ ἀγνοοῦμενος τῷ προσώπῳ ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις τῆς Ἰουδαίας ταῖς ἐν Χριστῷ – Paul also had no interaction personally with the Jewish Christians in all the area of Judea around Jerusalem.

²³ μόνον δὲ ἀκούοντες ἦσαν ὅτι ὁ διώκων ἡμᾶς ποτε νῦν εὐαγγελίζεται τὴν πίστιν ἣν ποτε ἑπόρευε – The Judean community of believers only kept hearing that this person who had been out to destroy the message of Jesus as the Messiah was now proclaiming it as true. Quite a radical change for a former Pharisee—something that could happen only by virtue of God's grace working within him and fully convincing him that not only had he been wrong in his understanding of Judaism, but also that he could now confidently proclaim that the crucified man, Jesus of Nazareth, was the biblical Messiah. This kind of change truly requires a miracle of God to bring it about. Of course, Paul's personally being confronted by Jesus on the road to Damascus would be rather convincing, even on just a human level. However, Jesus' miracles among the Jews and their leaders while he was on earth did not fully convince them. Such is the evil condition of the human heart. Thus, the miracle of God includes His changing Paul's heart.

²⁴ καὶ ἐδόξαζον ἐν ἐμοὶ τὸν θεόν – Paul had gone through a radical change—from a person who sought people's approval and was hostile to the biblical message in the midst of trying to use a distorted version of it, i.e., even while claiming to obey the biblical message, to a person who sought God's approval and was an apostle of the NT message to the Gentiles, specifically designated as such by Jesus and taught of God (Jesus?) through restudying the Old Testament. The Judean Jewish Christians marveled at God's powerful and miraculous change of Paul. He is implying that it is this same radical change that all morally depraved human beings need to experience, including the teachers of falsehood who are influencing the Galatians, in order to obtain God's mercy. Thus, Romans 14 makes sense that people who are still emotionally committed to the Mosaic Covenant can grant mercy to people who are not, because they understand both the depth of their own moral depravity, making it impossible for them to act in such a way as to become worthy of God's blessings, and the necessity of God's absolute grace, i.e., God's being motivated to work within someone in spite of there being nothing inherently good about him.

²⁵ ἔπειτα διὰ ῥεκατεσσάρων ἐτῶν ἄλλιν ἀνέβην εἰς Ἱεροσόλυμα μετὰ Βαρναβᾶ συμπαραλαβὼν καὶ Τίτον – First, it would make sense that Paul would have continued to study the OT while he was in Tarsus and Cilicia between Acts 9:30 when he was forced to leave Jerusalem and Acts 11:25 when Barnabas went to Tarsus to get Paul and bring him to Antioch where for a year they met with the Christians (Acts 11:26) and just before the trip down to Jerusalem after Agabus' revelation of a famine in that area (Acts 11:27-30).

Now Paul describes to the Galatians what his interactions with other men were like, particularly with the apostles and false Christians in Jerusalem, because this will contribute to his point that the apostolic message of grace, belief in the Messiah, and pursuit of morality, so as not to add anything to this message, is key to and the only elements necessary for a person's eternal destiny. This is probably around “14 years” after his first encounter with Jesus on the road to Damascus—assuming that “14 years” is an idiomatic expression that simply means between 7 and 14 years. Thus, this could be as early as A.D. 46 or as late as 49 (36+14=50) when Paul, Barnabas, and “some others” traveled from Antioch to Jerusalem and consulted with the other apostles on the issue of requiring the Gentiles who believe in Jesus to obey the Mosaic Covenant.

It would be easy to think this meeting was the same as the major conference described in Acts 15. However, the details Paul provides in Galatians 2:1-10 and his description of confronting Peter in Antioch in Galatians 2:11-21 fit better with a trip that Barnabas and he took to Jerusalem in Acts 11:27-30. In addition, Paul would have written this letter during his visit to Antioch as described by Luke in Acts 14:24-28. Notice especially v. 28, “And they spent a long time with the disciples [in Antioch].”

²⁶ ἀνέβην δὲ κατὰ ἀποκάλυψιν καὶ ἀνέθεμν αὐτοῖς τὸ εὐαγγέλιον ὃ κηρύσσω ἐν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν, κατ' ἰδίαν δὲ τοῖς δοκοῦσιν, μή πως εἰς κενὸν τρέχω ἢ ἔδραμον – As to the timing of this trip to Jerusalem, the fact that Paul says that it was “according to a revelation” fits better with Acts 11:27-30 where Agabus had provided the Christian community in Antioch with the revelation that a famine was going to occur and that they needed to do something in support of the Christians in the Jerusalem area.

In addition, Paul mentions that he met privately with “those who seemed to be something,” i.e., with certain apostles, which was certainly not the case in Acts 15. Therefore, the primary purpose of this trip had been to bring support to the Christians in Judea. But while there, Paul had broached the subject with the apostles of exactly what the gospel was and discussed this.

The words “lest, perhaps, I am running...for nothing” could be interpreted two ways. 1) Paul was concerned that only he had the correct understanding of the gospel after 14 years of studying the OT with God’s (even Jesus’, depending upon how to interpret Galatians 1:12 correctly) guidance and would have to separate himself from the apostles in Jerusalem who had an incorrect understanding. 2) Paul was concerned about the logical possibility that after all this study of the OT that he did not have a correct understanding of the gospel, so that all his previous efforts on his first missionary trip and afterwards were in vain, and he would have to start all over again proclaiming the message of Jesus the Messiah to the Gentiles.

#2 makes more sense in that it demonstrates not only Paul’s humility, but also his willingness to confer with and even submit to, if necessary, the apostles in Jerusalem who had spent three years being taught the gospel by Jesus himself. This means that no one apostle can categorically state that God has spoken to him and that everyone must abide with what he says is the truth (as is the case with the pope in Roman Catholicism). Instead, there are not only the other apostles to corroborate the message of the gospel, but also the scriptures (in Paul’s and the other apostles’ case, the OT) to which anyone can go and study for themselves with a rational approach to discover the truth.

#1 would make sense if Paul had spent 14 years being taught the entire OT by Jesus personally on exactly what is the gospel and its ramifications especially for Gentiles, and Jesus did this specifically to ensure that Paul would teach the gospel accurately *to the Gentiles*. But is this what Paul is really saying in Galatians 1:12 by δι’ ἀποκαλύψεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ? If so, then obviously no one could be more confident about the biblical message to the Gentiles than Paul, and he would have to continue his ministry without being unified in his understanding with the Jerusalem apostles. And this actually became the case when Peter came to Antioch as described by Paul in Galatians 2:11-21. But I still think that it makes more sense that Paul spent fourteen years restudying the Old Testament and, in the process, realized that Gamaliel, his former teacher, had been wrong, and that he now had a correct handle on the message of God’s grace, man’s sin, and the good news of the Messiah as king, high priest, leader, champion, and sacrifice to God through his death on the cross.

²⁷ ἀλλ’ οὐδὲ Τίτος ὁ σὺν ἐμοί. Ἑλλήν ὢν, ἡναγκάσθη περιτμηθῆνα – Paul was pleasantly surprised that the Jerusalem apostles did agree with him as to the ramifications of the gospel. They grasped the gracious aspect of the NT message and the sole and central place that Jesus occupies for obtaining God’s mercy to the effect that Gentiles are not required to become Jewish by following the Mosaic Covenant. As a result, none of the other apostles were at all interested in Titus’ as a Gentile believer being circumcised.

Nevertheless, as Paul will go on to say, the people of a circumcision mindset (2:4ff.) would want to add circumcision and scrupulous obedience of the Mosaic Covenant to Titus’ belief in Jesus as the Messiah as that which qualifies him to be a genuine believer in and follower of Jesus. For these Jewish Christians, Jesus is not the sole basis for obtaining God’s mercy and eternal life. Instead, the Mosaic Covenant is at least the primary basis for doing so, probably along with the perspective that a person makes himself worthy of God’s blessing by his following the commandments of the Mosaic Covenant.

ἀναγκάζω is the key word in this passage. The attitude behind it of a person’s insisting (to the point of excluding grace and mercy from his interactions with others) that people obey him is what Paul is mainly objecting to. This is the anti-gospel of Galatians, because it reveals man’s moral depravity and hostility toward God, who is the only one who can “compel” people to think, believe, and act a particular way. For people to insist that others act according to their form of Christianity, because not to do so calls into question their eternal destiny, is to rebel against God and usurp His position as the only one, by His grace, who can make such demands. This would obviously come as a great surprise to both those in the Judaism of Paul’s day and the Christianity of history. Cf. Romans 14,15. Cf. Acts 26:11, “And as I punished them often in all the synagogues, I tried to force them to blaspheme (ἡνάγκαζον βλασφημεῖν); and being furiously enraged at them, I kept pursuing them even to foreign cities (περισσῶς τε ἐμμαινόμενος αὐτοῖς ἐδίωκον ἕως καὶ εἰς τὰς ἕξω πόλεις).” Jewish leaders and church leaders of the mindset of Paul’s opponents in Galatians love to hunt people down and destroy them and their authentic belief.

²⁸ διὰ δὲ τοὺς παρεισάκτους ψευδαδελφούς, οἵτινες παρεισῆλθον κατασκοπεῖσαι τὴν ἐλευθερίαν ἡμῶν ἣν ἔχομεν ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ, ἵνα ἡμᾶς καταδουλώσουσιν – So these are “false brethren,” not abject Pharisees who are not only focused strictly on the Mosaic Covenant, but also reject Jesus as the Messiah. Therefore, these are people who overtly and enthusiastically embrace the grace of God and Jesus as the Messiah, but they are living their belief in such a way that it becomes clear that they are of the mindset that the only way to be a legitimate Christian, whether Jew or Gentile, is to obey the Mosaic Covenant and keep it central in one’s relationship with God. They probably did not take part in the private meeting between Paul and the other apostles. Nevertheless, they are a part of the Christian community in Jerusalem and are seeking to influence people towards their perspective on how God provides salvation. Paul describes them as wanting to take away their freedom from the Mosaic Covenant and enslave them to it (and therefore to themselves as proponents of the Mosaic Covenant).

Therefore, their intent would certainly be to change the minds of Paul, Barnabas, and Titus and to force them somehow to adopt their view of the Bible by intimidating them. In this way, Paul reveals an effect of moral depravity—its desire

to make other people acknowledge its authority and legitimacy and thereby make them slaves of its worldview. In other words, moral depravity is not interested in or respectful of other people being authentic, thoughtful, and mature individuals. Instead, these false Christians are following their own evil desires, are interested in others' being their followers who submit to their superior thinking, capability, and authority. Therefore, we will find these people exercising their moral depravity in this way as leaders of even present day Christian and biblical organizations, and the dead giveaway that they are wolves in sheep's clothing is that they seek to compel people to follow them and base their thinking and authority on traditions and creeds, while claiming that their knowledge is grounded in the Bible.

Paul also indicates in this verse that the other authentic, believing Jews and he have a certain freedom—even as Jews. He will go on to explain this more explicitly in chapters 3 & 4, but he means that, with a proper understanding of the mercy which God grants through Jesus' advocacy, even a Jew is free in an eternal sense from his obligation to the Mosaic Covenant. While God has given this covenant to the Jewish people in order to distinguish them from the rest of the world, from Gentiles, nevertheless, Jesus as their eternal priest, who appeals to God for mercy on their behalf at the judgment, frees them from having to rely on the Mosaic Covenant for this same mercy and even to obey it if circumstances warrant their departing from it, e.g., Paul when he is among Gentiles (cf. 1 Corinthians 9:19-23). Therefore, even an OT Jewish believer, who studied his scriptures carefully, would have understood that God was going to use some other means than the Mosaic Covenant to provide him with eternal mercy, thus rendering him "free" from the covenant in exactly the same way that both NT Jewish and Gentile believers are free from it. In addition, Paul's concern in this letter is to remind his Gentile readers that they have no obligation whatsoever to the Mosaic Covenant, while the Jews do within the historical reality of that time when God changes the hearts of all the Jews living on the land of Israel, and, for the first time in history, they perform the commandments of the covenant as they were meant to do so—as a nation unified in heart, theology, and submission to the Messiah.

²⁹ 'οἷς οὐδὲ' πρὸς ὥραν εἵξαμεν τῇ ὑποταγῇ, ἵνα ἡ ἀλήθεια τοῦ εὐαγγελίου ῥησθῇ πρὸς ὑμᾶς – Paul, Barnabas, and Titus did not hesitate for a moment in their refusal to be intimidated by these believers of a false "gospel." And Paul says that the reason was so that the true gospel could continue to be the only message presented to Gentiles like the Galatian Christians, which, of course, means that these latter people are way off the path of truth by giving in to the teacher(s) with the circumcision mindset (cf. 2:11ff.). Certainly, this should be enough to settle the issue and motivate the Galatian Christians to abandon their current attraction to this false teaching, but Paul goes on for another four and a half chapters to make it clear exactly what is the truth and the problem with their thinking.

³⁰ ἀπὸ δὲ τῶν δοκούντων εἶναι τι, — ὅποιοι ποτε ἦσαν οὐδὲν μοι διαφέρει πρόσωπον ὁ θεὸς ἀνθρώπου οὐ λαμβάνει — ἐμοὶ γὰρ οἱ δοκοῦντες οὐδὲν προσανέθεντο — Again Paul mentions "those who seemed to be something," the apostles, but reminds the Galatian readers that God is not a respecter of people in the sense that just because someone has prestige in the eyes of man, this does not mean that he is prestigious to God. He goes on to say that these Jerusalem apostles had nothing to add, such as circumcision and following the Mosaic Covenant for the Gentiles, to Paul's NT message, because there was nothing to add to a clear understanding and indication of God's grace and mercy through belief in the Messiah as the means to obtaining God's mercy! In other words, Paul's understanding of the gospel lined up with that of the other apostles.

³¹ ἀλλὰ τοῦναντίον ἰδόντες ὅτι πεπίστευμαι τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τῆς ἀκροβυστίας καθὼς Πέτρος τῆς περιτομῆς — It is interesting that Paul says literally "the gospel of the uncircumcised" and "[the gospel] of the circumcised," which could be interpreted as referring to two different gospels, one for Gentiles and the other for Jews. However, it becomes clear in Galatians that this is not the case. Therefore, it makes more sense to translate the genitives τῆς ἀκροβυστίας and τῆς περιτομῆς with the English preposition "to." Paul is saying that the Jerusalem apostles were on the same page as he was in regard to the elements of grace toward both Jews and Gentiles and the Messiah as the focal point of God's mercy, to the extent that James, Cephas, and John endorsed Paul and Barnabas in Paul's responsibility to take the message of Jesus as the Messiah to the Gentiles with the same level of directive from God to Peter to take this message to the Jews. Cf. John 21:15-19 when Jesus says to Peter, "Feed/Shepherd my sheep," referring to Jewish believers.

³² ὁ γὰρ ἐνεργήσας Πέτρῳ εἰς ἀποστολὴν τῆς περιτομῆς ἐνήργησεν καὶ ἐμοὶ εἰς τὰ ἔθνη — This must be God to whom Paul is referring as the one who directly "energizes" both Peter and Paul to fulfill their apostolic responsibilities to the Jews and the Gentiles respectively. Thus, the other apostles saw that God was using Paul in proclaiming the NT message to the Gentiles just as God had used and was using Peter among the Jews. Cf. John 21:15-19 & Acts 2. As a result, the apostles were able to conclude that Paul was a legitimate apostle. Indeed, Paul's whole story confirmed this.

³³ καὶ γνόντες τὴν χάριν τὴν δοθεισάν μοι, Ἰάκωβος καὶ Κηφᾶς καὶ Ἰωάννης, οἱ δοκοῦντες στῦλοι εἶναι, δεξιὰς ἔδωκαν ἐμοὶ καὶ Βαρναβᾶ κοινωνίας, ἵνα ἡμεῖς εἰς τὰ ἔθνη. αὐτοὶ δὲ εἰς τὴν περιτομήν — Not only were the apostles all on the same page theologically with respect to grace and the Messiah, but James (probably the brother of Jesus), Peter, and John saw no problem with Paul's pursuing presenting the message of a Jewish Messiah to Gentiles, because they recognized that this function and role had been given to him by God. Thus, there was no difference between James et al. and Paul and Barnabas as, probably, the circumcision mindset believers may have been trying to say (cf. 2:11ff.). This is another clue that the people affecting the Galatians claimed to be Christians from Jerusalem, who knew the Jewish Christian leadership there. They were trying to drive a wedge between Paul and the Jerusalem apostles—thus driving a wedge between the Jerusalem Christians (who are mostly if not exclusively Jews) and the Antiochene Christians (who are mostly Gentiles). They want them to join ranks with the Jerusalem Christians, as if the latter

support them in their adding religious obedience of the Mosaic Covenant to the gospel as the basis for salvation, which Paul is clearly pointing out is NOT the case.

³⁴ μόνον τῶν πτωχῶν ἵνα μνημονεύωμεν, ὃ καὶ ἐσπούδασα αὐτὸ τοῦτο ποιῆσαι – The word “add” is not in the text. However, the flow of Paul’s thinking here has to do with changing the apostolic message by adding strict religious obedience of the Mosaic Covenant to the Gentiles’ Christianity. Therefore, Paul is saying that the other apostles did “add” something to Paul’s theology, but it was not really an addition, because Paul already had it in his theology—to be compassionate to the poor. This encouragement by the apostles to Paul fits well with the Acts 11:27-30 visit where Paul and Barnabas had brought a gift from the Antioch Christians to the “poor” Christians in Jerusalem who were going to undergo a famine.

So this is no different from adding morality to morality. It is not really an addition. It is simply a restatement of the whole truth. Authentic believers in God’s grace and the Jewish Messiah naturally pursue morality, which includes compassion and caring towards those in need in our world, especially those of the Christian community who will share in the wealth of eternal life. Paul will make this “addition” of Spirit-caused morality clear in chapter 5.

³⁵ ὅτε δὲ ἦλθεν Κηφᾶς εἰς Ἀντιόχειαν, κατὰ πρόσωπον αὐτῷ ἀντέστην, ὅτι κατεγνωσμένος ἦν – After Paul has been affirmed by Peter, James, and the other apostles in their unified and identical understanding of God’s grace and belief in Jesus the Messiah, a strange thing happens. He returns to Antioch with the message of the freedom from religious pursuits for all Christians, both Jews and Gentiles, and Peter comes a visiting the mostly Gentile Christian community in Antioch. He starts off fine in his visit, but then, after some other Jews arrive who are supposedly Christians, he completely changes his tune and begins acting as though he repudiates the gospel. Indeed, Paul puts it in terms of his acting like a condemned person, as someone who is committed to disobeying God and incurring God’s condemnation and eternal destruction (κατεγνωσμένος ἦν), which he is implying is what is going on with the other Jews who are acting like Christians but misunderstanding the mercy of God.

Thus, Paul’s description of Peter implies that the Jewish Christians who are influencing the Galatians are condemned people, if they are as committed to their perspective as he thinks they are. He has already said as much in 1:8,9.

This must be taking place before the large conference of Acts 15 when the controversy is still raging. Paul is not accusing Peter of bad doctrine, because he has already said that they agree with one another. Instead, he is accusing him of bad actions that are confusing the Gentile Christians in Antioch, even if Peter might be thinking he is acting appropriately by hoping that he can change the Jewish, immature Christians’ minds a la Romans 14.

³⁶ πρὸ τοῦ γὰρ ἐλθεῖν ἑτίνους ἀπὸ Ἰακώβου μετὰ τῶν ἔθνων ἑσυνήσθην ὅτε δὲ ἦλθον, ὑπέστελλον καὶ ἀφώριζεν ἑαυτὸν φοβούμενος τοὺς ἐκ περιτομῆς – So Paul has returned to Antioch from Jerusalem, and Peter sometime later follows him. Then, “certain men...from James” visit. These, like Peter, are Jewish Christians from Jerusalem, which means that they must have outwardly indicated that they believed as the apostles did, so that it is God’s grace and belief in Jesus as the Messiah which qualifies a person for God’s mercy and eternal life. **But Paul calls them in this verse “those of a circumcision mindset” (τοὺς ἐκ περιτομῆς), meaning that they still remain inwardly committed to the erroneous belief that following the Jewish Mosaic Covenant must be at the center of a person’s relationship with God and the basis of a person’s salvation, even to the extent that this person makes himself worthy of God’s blessings, while also embracing Jesus as Messiah.** Therefore, the people of this mindset outwardly agree with Paul and the apostles (even James, while it must be that James would not agree with them as 2:6-10 indicate) regarding the primacy of God’s grace, mercy, and the crucified Messiah, but they act as though their obedience of the Mosaic Covenant is most necessary (indeed, the basis) in order to obtain God’s blessings. As a result, by their actions and intimidation of Peter, they are wholeheartedly embracing the error against which Paul is writing in this letter, so that even Peter begins trying to compel (ἀναγκάζεις – 2:14) the Gentiles to comply with them—or at least it would seem like this to the Gentile believers because Peter appears to agree with these other Jews.

Paul is not accusing Jesus’ brother James of believing this error (cf. 2:6-10), but is simply indicating that these men come from Jerusalem. Because they are surrounded by Jews and Jewish Christians in Jerusalem, they are still thinking that all Christians, both Jews and Gentiles, should follow the Mosaic Covenant as the basis for their salvation and the manner by which they demonstrate *bona fide* belief in Jesus as the Messiah—in spite of the fact that their leaders, the apostles, do not believe this. This discrepancy is not clicking in their heads, and when they arrive in Antioch, they somehow are able to convince Peter to abandon the truth (even through intimidation), and he withdraws from eating non-kosher food with the Gentiles, even though he had been willing to do so prior to the arrival of these men. Paul says that Peter is intimidated by these men, thus displaying how powerful intimidation and the threat of ostracization is and, thus, the very kind of effect that the Jewish believers are having on the Galatian Christians—causing them to be afraid of them such they want to avoid being ostracized from the community of believers (cf. 4:17).

Peter probably wants to win these men over to the truth, but there must be also a desire not to be rejected by them—even if they are committed to their error of viewing their obedience to the Mosaic Covenant as the basis for their salvation (in contrast to Jesus’ and his death and resurrection as the sole basis). For Paul, this is also like “acting like a condemned person” (cf. 2:11). The inference we can draw is that a proper, biblical mindset sees no difference between believing Gentiles who do not eat kosher and believing Jews who do (or do not, in the midst of their belief in God’s grace and Jesus as their Messiah), thus permitting the latter to eat non-kosher food with believing Gentiles without affecting their relationship with God. Yes, it is appropriate for Jews to follow the Mosaic Covenant as a national covenant and a good condition for demonstrating their belief in God’s grace and mercy through Jesus, but God also

would allow believing Jews to love their fellow Gentile believers by not following its religious regulations such as always eating kosher when this is appropriate. In other words, the crux of any believer's obedience to God is belief in Jesus as the sole basis for His mercy and gift of eternal life. While a Jew is on the land of Israel and living among his fellow Jews, it makes sense for Jews to demonstrate that they are bona fide members of the nation of Israel, but in a situation like Antioch in Syria where a Jew is fellowshipping with other believers in Jesus as their Messiah and Savior, it makes sense for the Jew to act like the Gentiles and eat non-kosher food together. Paul is saying the same thing below in 1 Corinthians 9:19-23—

1 Corinthians 9:19 Now, while being free from everyone, I have enslaved myself to everyone, in order that I may gain a great number of them. **9:20** For example, I have become like a Jew to Jews, so that I may gain Jews. I have become like one under the Covenant to those who are under the Covenant, even though I myself am not under the Covenant, so that I may gain those who are under the Covenant. **9:21** I have become like one who is outside the jurisdiction of the Mosaic Covenant to those who are outside of the jurisdiction of the Mosaic Covenant, while I am not outside God's jurisdiction but inside the Messiah's jurisdiction, in order that I may gain those who are outside the jurisdiction of the Mosaic Covenant. **9:22** I became weak to those who are weak, so that I might gain the weak. I have become all things to all men, so that I may save at least some of them. **9:23** And I do everything because of the good news, in order that I may participate in it.

Thus, Peter ends up being intimidated by the so-called believing Jews from Jerusalem with their religious and systematic mentality of adding meticulous performance of the entire Mosaic Covenant with its rituals to God's grace and belief in Jesus in order to gain His mercy for the sake of eternal life—whether a person is a Jew or a Gentile. In this case, they are promoting the idea that Jews and Gentiles must eat only kosher food, even (and perhaps especially) when both Jews and Gentiles are followers of the Jewish Messiah Jesus as the basis for their salvation. Thus, Peter demonstrates his weakness in wisdom by being willing to confuse the Gentile believers in the presence of demanding and aggressive Jewish “believers.” He is not really following through on the complete ramifications of the gospel. Compare Peter's experience in Acts 10 & 11 of eating non-kosher food with Cornelius and his family and this then finding objection among the Jewish believers in Jerusalem. Maybe these other Jewish “believers” are the same ones who so vociferously objected to his associating with Gentiles, even for the sake of their obtaining God's eternal mercy and life. It is, therefore, quite striking that Peter has forgotten his experience with Cornelius' family, or he is at least not understanding the effect his detrimental actions of pulling away from the Gentile believers is going to have on them.

³⁷ καὶ συνυπεκρίθησαν αὐτῷ ὅτι οἱ λοιποὶ Ἰουδαῖοι, ὥστε καὶ Βαρναβᾶς συναπήχθη αὐτῶν τῇ ὑποκρίσει – Paul must have been really disappointed to see Barnabas' falling prey to the intimidation of those of a circumcision mindset and getting so confused as to how to demonstrate the grace and mercy of the gospel to others. The hypocrisy is the appearance of pursuing something good with an inward motivation that is pure evil. Or, in this case, it is the Jews' claiming to believe all the correct points of truth of the gospel, while acting in a manner contrary to the truth. Consequently, their adherence to the truth is merely play acting and not genuine.

³⁸ ἀλλ' ὅτε εἶδον ὅτι οὐκ ὀρθοποδοῦσιν πρὸς τὴν ἀλήθειαν τοῦ εὐαγγελίου, εἶπον τῷ Ῥηφᾷ ἔμπροσθεν πάντων – Here is another way that Paul describes the problem, “not acting consistently with the truth of the gospel.” Certainly, Peter would have explicitly agreed with Paul that a person is saved through the grace of God and belief in the Messiah (which results in pursuing morality; cf. 2:6-10 and chapter 5). However, he is acting in such a way that he believes that a person must not only obey the religious commandments of the Mosaic Covenant, but also make himself worthy of God's blessings (which comes out in the rest of v. 14 and which is consistent with Paul's objection to the mindset of the Jews who are intimidating and compelling the Galatian Gentile Christians to follow the Mosaic Covenant as the basis for their salvation).

Thus, by these men's actions, it becomes a we/they situation. “We,” the Jews, are obeying the religious commandments of the Mosaic Covenant as that which is necessary to make oneself worthy of obtaining God's mercy through Jesus the Messiah. “They,” the Gentiles, must comply with our thoughts and actions or face expulsion from the Christian community. But this is flat out denial of the truth of the biblical message of God's grace.

³⁹ εἰ σὺ Ἰουδαῖος ὑπάρχων ἐθνικῶς καὶ οὐχὶ Ἰουδαϊκῶς ζῇς, πῶς τὰ ἔθνη ἀναγκάζεις ἰουδαΐζειν – Paul is writing this letter so hastily that it is difficult to know exactly when his statements to Peter end and his instructions to the Galatians resume, but it seems best to place this transition at 3:1.

This paragraph of 2:14b-20 really needs the rest of Galatians in order to explain it, but v. 14 is another great way to summarize the issue. The Jewish apostle Peter has been living his life with the perspective which any Christian, including a Gentile, should have, that neither Jews nor Gentiles are obligated *per se* to the Mosaic Covenant as either the basis or the condition of their obtaining God's eternal mercy through His grace and the advocacy of the Messiah. Indeed, the only basis for salvation is Jesus and the only condition *per se* is belief in Jesus. And Peter has been operating on this basis by eating non-kosher food with the Gentile believers in Antioch. Paul is therefore asking why all of a sudden it makes sense to Peter to change his tune and appear to require that both Jews and Gentiles eat kosher—with the included mentality that it makes one worthy of God's blessings (since intimidation is part of the visiting Jews' message)? Maybe Peter hopes to win these aggressive Jews to his perspective, but Paul is saying the cost is too high because of the confusion he is causing among the Gentiles in the midst of the ongoing controversy there in Antioch. A Jew's obedience to the national and historical obligation of the Mosaic Covenant is unnecessary for obtaining eternal mercy through Jesus such that a Jew's lack of obedience to the covenant for existential reasons is irrelevant to his

eternal standing before God. Paul is saying to Peter that he has been operating within his Christianity on the basis of grace and the freedom to be a Jewish sinner without thinking that his performance of the religious commandments of the Mosaic Covenant affects his obtaining God's mercy. Paul will go on in chapters 4 & 5 to describe this as the Jew's being "free" from the covenant, just as the Gentile is "free" from the covenant. And certainly one's performance of the religious commandments does not earn him God's blessing, which would be the full meaning of "to Jewishize their manner of living," i.e., to act like Jews who are thinking erroneously that a person earns God's mercy through obedience to all the commandments of the Mosaic Covenant.

But now Peter appears to have switched to operating on the basis of his own prideful self-efforts of performing religious actions, eating kosher in this case. This has led him to come across to the Gentiles that everyone must imitate him in order to qualify for and earn God's mercy. Thus, "forcing (ἀναγκάζεις) the Gentiles to Jewishize their manner of living" = attempting to compel them to live like legalistic Jewish believers, those who may not explicitly claim that they need to make themselves worthy of God's mercy by means of their religious actions in line with the Mosaic Covenant, but they are living and treating others as though they believe it is necessary—because they believe the Mosaic Covenant and not Jesus is the basis for salvation. Plus, there is nothing like strength in numbers, even within a religious institution, whereas, biblically, a person's strength is supposed to come from God alone and the truth of God's grace alone so that he can stand as an individual without needing others to verify the authenticity of his faith.

The personally imposed psychological pressure to seek approval from others for the authenticity of one's Christianity is usually too great for most people to be able to stand alone and find their confirmation in their own individual understanding of the biblical message. As a result, religious institutions such as churches exploit this need and provide people with a convenient place to avoid their individual responsibility before God and join others in group deception—believing that their common religious pursuits of participating in the church's activities verify the genuineness of their being Christians, and, without stating this explicitly, impresses God to the extent that they earn His blessings. This is why they seek to compel others to join them in their particular church and its religion.

⁴⁰ ἡμεῖς φύσει Ἰουδαῖοι καὶ οὐκ ἐξ ἐθνῶν ἁμαρτωλοὶ – A simple and straightforward admission by Paul that Peter and he are members of the chosen people of God and that there is a definite ethnic and biblical difference between them and the Gentiles. For example, God gave the Mosaic Covenant to the Jews, not to the Gentiles. Also, Paul's statement about the Gentiles as sinners does not exclude the Jews from being sinners. It merely highlights the fact that the OT has spoken of Jewish sinners and Gentile sinners, because there is an ethnic, religious, and historical difference between the two groups for didactic reasons. Also, it is easy for the Jews of the circumcision mindset in Antioch to pick out the sinners among the Gentiles, i.e., anyone who, in their eyes, is not obeying the Mosaic Covenant, even while they are claiming to believe in the Jewish Messiah, Jesus.

⁴¹ εἰδότες ὅτι οὐ δικαιοῦται ἄνθρωπος ἐξ ἔργων νόμου ἐὰν μὴ διὰ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, καὶ ἡμεῖς εἰς Χριστὸν Ἰησοῦν ἐπιστεύσαμεν, ἵνα δικαιωθῶμεν ἐκ πίστεως Χριστοῦ καὶ οὐκ ἐξ ἔργων νόμου οὐ δικαιωθήσεται πᾶσα σὰρξ – Again, Paul is providing another great summary of his theology and the point of contention in this letter. After mentioning in the previous verse that there are Jewish sinners and Gentile sinners, he uses the generic term ἄνθρωπος = man to state that any person, regardless of their ethnic origin, should not view the Mosaic Covenant as the basis for his obtaining God's eternal mercy. The only basis is Jesus the Messiah. What follows from this is that obeying the Mosaic Covenant (and in the context of this letter to the Galatians, the *religious commandments* of the covenant such as eating kosher) is not the primary condition for obtaining God's mercy. The primary and hence only condition is *belief* in the Messiah (that naturally results in pursuing morality; cf. chapter 5). The verb δικαιοῦται/δικαιωθῶμεν is usually translated "justified" and is a legal term for standing before a judge and being granted mercy in the light of one's crime which deserves punishment. As a result, I have translated it "declared forgiven."

With the phrase ἐξ ἔργων νόμου = works of the Covenant, Paul is referring mainly to the basis for how a human being becomes forgiven by God while also including in the statement the condition. It is not by following the Mosaic Covenant, including its religious commandments, as if a person could make himself worthy of such forgiveness. Instead, it is διὰ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ/ἐκ πίστεως Χριστοῦ = through belief in Jesus the Messiah, i.e., by accepting the message of the cross and recognizing one's complete inability to please God, along with the fact that only Jesus can adequately appeal to God for mercy.

Thus, Paul reminds Peter that καὶ ἡμεῖς = "indeed, we," you and I Peter as apostles of Jesus the Messiah are counting on only our belief in him (along with our pursuit of morality; cf. chapter 5) as what we need to do to be forgiven by God. Therefore, Jesus alone is the basis of salvation and the focal point of a true believer's belief, so that religious obedience to the Mosaic Covenant (even for a believing Jew) is not *eternally* relevant for the believer. And Paul supplies the reason why this must be the case, because ἐξ ἔργων νόμου οὐ δικαιωθήσεται πᾶσα σὰρξ = by following the commandments of the Mosaic Covenant through natural human performance, no person whose moral essence is defined as "flesh," i.e., inherently and incurably evil this side of eternity, can find forgiveness from God. The basis and condition for salvation are the Messiah and belief in him that has all been brought about by God's grace.

This is the crux of the issue here in Galatians. The people with a circumcision mindset openly and publicly say that they believe in God's grace and Jesus as the Messiah. But do they really, because they feel compelled to focus on the Mosaic Covenant as the basis for their salvation and on their obedience of it as the proper condition—thus placing the responsibility for both the basis and the condition of salvation on their own shoulders? It is through their natural human

performance of all the Mosaic Covenant that they believe they are demonstrating that they are genuine followers of Jesus as the Jewish Messiah. And they even feel it necessary to intimidate people into following their lead so as not to condone any moral laxity that comes from ignoring any part of the Covenant.

Even if Peter hopes to win these men over to the correct perspective of the difference between the Mosaic Covenant and Jesus as the basis of salvation, we see how easy it was to send a confusing message to the Antiochene Christian community that was struggling to find clarity on this issue.

⁴² εἰ δὲ ζητοῦντες δικαιοθῆναι ἐν Χριστῷ εὐρέθημεν καὶ αὐτοὶ ἁμαρτωλοὶ, ἄρα Χριστὸς ἁμαρτίας διάκονος; μὴ γένοιτο – If Paul’s and Peter’s being associated with the Messiah by belief in him and God’s grace means that other people, such as those of the circumcision mindset, consider them sinners because they are not sticking strictly to all the religious commandments of the Mosaic Covenant, resulting in their eating non-kosher food, does this make the Messiah a proponent of disobeying God and an opponent of the Mosaic Covenant? Certainly not. It simply highlights the two important concepts of grace and belief in the Messiah, along with, of course the inability of human beings to impress God with their religious performance because of their being incurably evil at the level of their defining moral essence—in their “flesh.” It also highlights the difference in understanding of God’s purpose for the Mosaic Covenant, that it is entirely permissible for Jews to set it aside when they are interacting with believing Gentiles who have no responsibility to follow the covenant. In other words, Jews can still “follow” the covenant while not actually performing its religious commandments in the presence of Gentile believers by acknowledging that when the nation is together on the land of Israel when Jesus returns, they will definitely pursue keeping the covenant. Indeed, even Gentiles will be required to do so as Isaiah 56:6-8 points out.

⁴³ εἰ γὰρ ἃ κατέλυσα ταῦτα πάλιν οἰκοδομῶ, παραβάτην ἐμαυτὸν συνιστάνω – If Paul were to go the direction of the circumcision mindset, as Peter has done, then he would simply be reinstating the same kind of Pharisaical, legalistic, and erroneous theology to which he adhered prior to his becoming a Christian. Thus, he would become a transgressor of the biblical message and the Mosaic Covenant by promoting the covenant above the Messiah as the basis of salvation and by distorting the concept of grace.

⁴⁴ ἐγὼ γὰρ διὰ νόμου νόμῳ ἀπέθανον, ἵνα θεῷ ζήσω. Χριστῷ συνεσταύρωμαι – The “I” of Paul prior to his becoming changed inwardly by God was convinced that he had within himself the necessary ability to please God through obedience to the Mosaic Covenant. The “I” of Paul after his inward change is convinced he can do nothing in and of himself with respect to morality and the covenant to please God. For example, no amount of animal sacrifices will solve the problem of his needing forgiveness as he pursues obedience to the commandments of the Mosaic Covenant. If he is going to please God, then God must cause him to do so, and only Jesus is the sufficient offering to God for eternal forgiveness.

This is similar to what Paul says in Romans 7 & 8. He has realized by means of the work of God’s grace, which has been working at the level of his heart commitments and in the midst of performing the commandments of the Mosaic Covenant, that he is a morally depraved human being who deserves only God’s wrath and condemnation along with eternal death. Thus, he can say here in Galatians that he was crucified with the Messiah. What Jesus suffered, Paul deserves to suffer, i.e., eternal death, the recognition of which leads him to repudiate his evil nature as an adequate means to please God. Instead, he knows through Jesus’ crucifixion that he deserves to be condemned by God, regardless of how well he thought he was obeying the Mosaic Covenant, because he is incurably a morally depraved sinner. The result of his discovery in the midst of the NT message is that God is now causing him by His grace to believe in the Messiah and pursue authentic obedience to Him. Thus, Paul’s personal crucifixion with Jesus is his acceptance of the fact that he is entirely morally incapable of pleasing God in and of himself, so that he dies to any attempt to impress God with his moral or religious actions, including those seemingly in line with the Mosaic Covenant. In addition, he recognizes that only Jesus’ death and not multiple animal deaths provides eternal forgiveness.

⁴⁵ ζῶ δὲ οὐκέτι ἐγώ, ζῇ δὲ ἐν ἐμοὶ Χριστός· ὁ δὲ νῦν ζῶ ἐν σαρκί, ἐν πίστει ζῶ τῇ τοῦ ‘υἱοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ’ τοῦ ἀγαπήσαντός με καὶ παραδόντος ἑαυτὸν ὑπὲρ ἐμοῦ – The “I” of Paul who considered himself a good person in God’s good graces by virtue of his committed performance of the Mosaic Covenant is no longer at the heart of who he is and is that which is motivating him. Thus, also, he has no intent to gain God’s favor and eternal life, indeed even earn it, through his efforts to obey the Covenant. Instead, it is “the Messiah,” i.e., his understanding of himself through facing into what Jesus’ death means to him as a morally depraved human being, that is at the heart of who he is and motivating him. Therefore, it is not his performance of the Mosaic Covenant as the basis of salvation which defines him and his relationship with God, even though he is a Jew. Instead, what God has done to and for him by using the Messiah to demonstrate what his moral depravity deserves is what drives Paul and makes him acceptable to God. As a result, Paul always thinks of Jesus and his death for the impetus to accept his condition of moral depravity and need for God’s grace alone that can cause him to meet the necessary condition of belief in the Messiah for eternal life. Paul even says that the Messiah loved him by being willing to offer himself through death to God. Jesus’ love for him must also be contributing to Paul’s motivation to live his life the way he is. Thus, once again, Paul is emphasizing that Jesus and not the Mosaic Covenant is the basis of his salvation.

⁴⁶ οὐκ ἄθετῶ τὴν χάριν τοῦ θεοῦ· εἰ γὰρ διὰ νόμου δικαιοσύνη, ἄρα Χριστὸς δωρεὰν ἀπέθανεν – The purpose of the Messiah’s death was to demonstrate both what human beings deserve, God’s condemnation and destruction, and what human beings cannot do, extricate themselves from this horrible predicament by performing their ways out of it, even with the Mosaic Covenant. Therefore, if it is possible to obey the Mosaic Covenant through natural human performance

AND by doing so obtain God's mercy, then what is the point of His making Jesus die on the cross, especially when Jesus' death demonstrates what human beings deserve through their natural human performance? If the Mosaic Covenant is the basis of salvation, then what use is it for the Messiah to die? None whatsoever!

Therefore, as in other letters by Paul, the bottom line in regard to a morally depraved human being's salvation is God's independent and active grace inwardly, along with the Messiah's death on the cross (cf. Hebrews 13:9, "Do not be carried away by various and foreign teachings. It is good for the heart to be strengthened by grace, not by foods, in which those who conducted their lives were not benefited"). There are two kinds of people in this world—those who have believed the biblical message and are choosing to be utterly dependent on only the grace of God for obtaining His goodness, mercy, and salvation (plus, believe in the Messiah now that he has appeared since he is the basis of salvation), and those who are hostile to the biblical message and are choosing to depend on themselves to please God through their natural human performance (or ignore Him) (and who use religion, even the Mosaic Covenant, as the basis of their salvation). Only the former are truly understanding and following the biblical message. Thus, Paul refuses to do or say anything that would denigrate God's grace as the one and only cause of a sinner's salvation. If it were possible only to perform humanly the Mosaic Covenant and then receive eternal forgiveness and life, then what was the point of the Messiah's dying that demonstrates the depth of our moral depravity, the absolute need for God's undeserved grace, and our need for the Messiah to intervene at the judgment for God's mercy—making him and not the Mosaic Covenant as the basis of a sinner's salvation? In other words, the Messiah's death is intended to teach a very important lesson—that even Jews, who should be inwardly committed to obeying the Mosaic Covenant for historical purposes, are morally depraved sinners who need more than their religious and moral performance to gain God's eternal mercy.

As I said before, it seems reasonable that 2:14b-21 were all spoken to Peter in front of the Jews who were distorting the gospel message. The point of all these statements is that ONLY the Messiah and God's grace, along with belief in the Messiah, are the ONLY right way to relate to God. Performing the religious commandments of the Mosaic Covenant and trying to use them as the basis for one's salvation is a complete misunderstanding of both Jesus and the Covenant.

⁴⁷ ὃ ἀνόητοι Γαλάται, τίς ὑμᾶς ἐβάσκανεν ^τ, οἷς κατ' ὀφθαλμοὺς Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς προεγράφη ^τ ἑσταυρωμένος; – These Galatian Christians are now acting as though Jesus' death either did not take place or was meaningless, as Paul has just intimated in 2:21. In other words, they really do not grasp the significance of Jesus' death—that it is the sole basis of salvation (apart from God's predestination) and proclaims that not only do human beings deserve God's condemnation and destruction, but also they are inherently incapable of changing their status before God and pleasing Him, even obtaining His mercy—thus rendering "works of the Covenant" as the Jerusalem Jews understand them irrelevant.

Thus, it is only by God's using Jesus as the sole qualified advocate and taking the initiative of changing sinners inwardly in order for them to meet the condition of exercising authentic belief in Him and His Messiah that they can escape His judgment. It is God's grace and mercy, not a person's adhering *per se* to the Mosaic Covenant as taught by those of the circumcision mindset that someone becomes pleasing to God and obtains eternal life. By extrapolation, pleasing God does not occur by means of a person's adhering *per se* to a religious system and doctrinal standard put forth by non-apostolic leaders within the church. Yet, these are the kinds of man-made requirements which naturally get set forth by people because of our common immorality at the core of our essence.

Paul had publicly and personally proclaimed to these Galatian Christians that Jesus is the Messiah and that his death was an integral part of the message that communicates the profundity of human depravity as well as his necessary role of high priest and advocate within God's story—the former pointing to God's causing the necessary condition of belief through his grace and the latter pointing to Jesus with his death as the sole basis of salvation. Paul is now astounded that they have forgotten this important part of the message and chosen to believe that their self-effort and religious performance of the Mosaic Covenant is the basis and means of their earning and gaining God's mercy. Cf. 1 Corinthians 1 & 2—the profundity of the cross and a Crucified Messiah.

The MT includes the words τῇ ἀληθείᾳ μὴ πείθεσθαι after ἐβάσκανεν, i.e., "Who has deceived you from being persuaded of the truth." This makes sense in the light of the whole letter.

The MT also adds ἐν ὑμῖν after προεγράφη, i.e., "was publicly proclaimed as crucified in you," but probably should be translated "because of you" or "in your case," referring to the Gentiles own problem of incurable immorality at their deepest, moral level, so that Jesus' death depicted their need for God's grace and mercy just as much as it did for the Jews.

⁴⁸ τοῦτο μόνον θέλω μαθεῖν ἀπ' ὑμῶν ἐξ ἔργων νόμου τὸ πνεῦμα ἐλάβετε ἢ ἐξ ἀκοῆς πίστεως – Here is a very simple question from Paul to the Galatian Christians, did they come by inward work of the Spirit of God and their belief leading to the assurance of their salvation by virtue of their obeying the Mosaic Covenant or their listening to Paul preach Jesus as the crucified Messiah? And the very simple answer is, the latter.

Thus, Paul implies that part of the message of the circumcision mindset is that first a person obeys God by doing the Mosaic Covenant, and then God responds to him by granting him His Spirit and all that accompanies His work, including forgiveness and eternal life. Thus, Paul is asking the Galatian Christians, when they first heard the NT message of grace from Paul, did the change of inwardness that they as Gentiles experienced occur as a result of their performing the Mosaic Covenant or in the midst of their simply hearing the apostolic message from Paul? Again, the obvious answer is the latter. Therefore, if God is not bothered by these Gentiles' lack of circumcision, then nobody

should be.

Paul does not have to imply in this question the additional element of a person's thinking that he can make himself worthy of God's blessing, because all that suffices to make his point is that the Galatian Christians' becoming believers had nothing to do with the Mosaic Covenant. Nevertheless, this issue is there, because it is important to Paul's whole point in this letter. He certainly would not have used the Mosaic Covenant in his teaching these Gentile Christians about the Messiah, because it is extraneous to the point of the gospel—especially for Gentiles!! And he certainly would not have taught them that they need to earn God's mercy through their religious actions. Plus, it is most likely that these Gentiles changed from being Greek polytheists to Christian messianic monotheists, having never really heard about or been taught the Mosaic Covenant.

⁴⁹ οὕτως ἀνόητοί ἐστε, ἐναρξάμενοι πνεύματι νῦν σαρκὶ ἐπιτελείσθε – Another very simple question, does it make sense midstream in one's Christian journey to change the dynamics of a proper relationship to God—from God's grace and belief in Jesus as the sole basis of salvation to relying solely on one's obedience to the Mosaic Covenant and earning God's salvation as the basis and condition of salvation. The obvious answer should be, no.

Thus, this question is key to understanding both Paul's biblical mindset of gaining God's forgiveness and eternal life and the religious mindset of his opponents in this letter.

Another way of saying it, does it really make sense that the Galatians would start their Christian journey towards God's mercy and eternal life by His miraculously changing their inwardness independently of them and causing them to believe in the crucified Messiah Jesus, then, they finish the journey by their own self-effort of natural human performance of the Mosaic Covenant and making themselves worthy of God's forgiveness and eternal life? Of course not.

Surely, the Gentile Galatians would admit that they were not at all engaged in doing Jewish religious acts when they heard the NT message from Paul and became believers. Therefore, the cause of their entrance into following the Messiah was God through His Spirit, not themselves and their religious activity. So why shift gears now and focus on the Mosaic Covenant when it was not even on their minds when they became believers? This would be foolish to do, especially because the new gear demonstrates rebellion and not obedience toward God as it quite plainly includes a mentality of earning God's forgiveness and eternal life.

In our day, people so easily forget that they became Christians to escape God's eternal condemnation through Jesus' intercession at the judgment, because they start to focus on pleasing God religiously in order supposedly to enhance their earthly lives. And they do so collectively in order to gain encouragement and approval from others, thus convincing each other that their religious acts are what demonstrate the legitimacy of their Christianity, when God is the only one whose approval they should care about and who does approve of them through strictly their belief in Jesus as Messiah and advocate, which He has brought about by means of His grace. Nevertheless, Paul will go on in 5:13ff. to make sure the Galatians realize that their legitimate lack of connection to the Mosaic Covenant does not mean that they are disconnected from pursuing morality *per se*, indeed the morality that is being brought about by the Spirit of God and that is in line with Jesus' commandments (especially to love one another as he has loved us—sacrificially).

⁵⁰ τοσαῦτα ἐπάθετε εἰκῇ; εἴ γε καὶ εἰκῇ – Another very simple but thought provoking question, are the Galatian Christians going to throw away what God started in their lives by His grace just so that they can receive the applause and admiration of other people instead of their intimidation and criticism? Whatever God did to demonstrate Himself in their midst as Paul proclaimed the gospel to them, even producing miracles on their behalf, did He do these things in vain, so that now they are going to rebel against God and throw it all away? Clearly, a profound question in the light of the ramifications.

⁵¹ ὁ οὖν ἐπιχορηγῶν ὑμῖν τὸ πνεῦμα καὶ ἐνεργῶν δυνάμεις ἐν ὑμῖν, ἐξ ἔργων νόμου ἢ ἐξ ἀκοῆς πίστεως – Similar to the question in 3:2. Did God begin and continue working among the Galatian Christians by providing the operation of His Holy Spirit because of their religious behavior according to the Jewish Mosaic Covenant as the basis and condition of their salvation, or because of their listening to the NT message of the crucified Messiah as the basis which Paul presented, and then they believed it as the condition of their salvation?

Paul is making neither listening nor believing another religious act. He is simply pointing out the context in which God was working—that of listening and believing and NOT religious activity. In other words, belief while listening is something caused by the Spirit of God, but it can feel so unsubstantial for people compared to doing religion.

Nevertheless, they should not get fooled into engaging in outward religion simply because it feels good and receives the accolades of their fellow sinners, when what really matters to God is His gracious, inward work of causing people to believe in the Messiah and the ramifications of his death for the sake of eternal mercy and life.

⁵² καθὼς Ἀβραὰμ ἐπίστευσεν τῷ θεῷ, καὶ ἐλογίσθη αὐτῷ εἰς δικαιοσύνην – We can assume by the flow of his argument, that Paul is saying that the dynamics of Abraham's coming to faith were the same as a NT Christian's, even though he is referring to an event in Abraham's life after he had initially believed God. In Genesis 15, God proclaims a kind of "gospel" to Abraham to the effect that his physical descendants would be as numerous as the stars. Abraham's response to this "gospel" is to believe God. However, his belief must have been caused by the Spirit of God just as a Christian's belief is caused by Him. In addition, Abraham was not engaged in following the Mosaic Covenant when this experience of authentic belief occurred in him, because the covenant had not yet been given by God to the Jews. Paul explains this point in more detail in Romans 4. Therefore, Abraham was in no way performing religious acts when he believed God and He declared him forgiven. Neither was he yet circumcised before this. All that was going on was

God's presenting the truth of the "gospel" of numerous descendants to Abraham and his believing this truth—by means of the Holy Spirit. In addition, if we look at the entirety of Abraham's life, including God's declaring that it was because Abraham was willing to believe and obey Him when He commanded him to sacrifice his son Isaac that He swore He would fulfill His promises to him, then we can see that Paul considers Abraham's belief to be a necessary and sufficient condition for his acquiring the fulfillment of the promises of the Abrahamic Covenant (cf. Genesis 20 regarding the sacrifice of Isaac and Genesis 12:1-3 regarding the covenant with its promises).

Paul goes on to say that it is in the same way that all other believers acquire *tz'daqah*. Genesis 15:6 reads, "And he believed in Yahweh, and He accounted it to him as *tz'daqah* (דִּקְיָהּ, δικαιοσύνην = justification/ forgiveness)."

By referring to Abraham this way, Paul is implying that God's purpose for giving the Mosaic Covenant to the Jews must not have involved the necessity of obeying it as the basis for their acquiring His blessings, because certainly God would not have changed His mind and, while permitting Abraham to be declared forgiven without doing anything religious, required that his descendants perform religious acts in order to obtain the same forgiveness. If any Jew who lived after Abraham wanted *tz'daqah*, all he would have to do is take his cue from Abraham and authentically believe God for His truth—whether His truth was the number of Abraham's descendants, or the Mosaic Covenant, or (and finally) Jesus as the Messiah.

⁵³ γινώσκετε ἄρα ὅτι οἱ ἐκ πίστεως, οὗτοι 'υἱοὶ εἰσιν' Ἀβραάμ – The people who can really claim to be the "seed of Abraham" and his descendants are those who have gone through the same relatively simple process of doing authentic belief. They hear the "message" of God; God works within them by His Spirit; and they choose to believe God for the truth which He has spoken to them—just like Abraham and in fulfillment of the third promise of the Abrahamic Covenant in Genesis 12:2b-3, "And make your name great; And so you shall be a blessing; 3 And I will bless those who bless you, And the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed" (which Paul will quote in 3:8). It is true though too that God's first promise to make of him and his physical descendants a great nation also requires that Jews become the authentic "seed of Abraham," because their greatness lies not only in their political, economic, and military prowess when Jesus will rule over them after his return and during the millennial kingdom, but also and most especially in their changed inwardness—just like Gentiles who become the "seed of Abraham" and qualified to receive ultimately entrance into the Kingdom of God of the new heavens and new earth (cf. 2 Peter 3 and Revelation 21:1).

In this way, authentic believers of all ethnic groups throughout all human history mimic and imitate inwardly the exact same kind of belief which Abraham both performed within himself and displayed outside himself. Thus, at no time in history, even after God has given the Mosaic Covenant to the nation of Israel, is religious performance by a human being in and of himself the necessary condition for either a Jew or a Gentile to become an authentic, biblical believer and obtain God's mercy (*tz'daqah*) and eternal life.

Cf. Galatians 3:29 and Romans 4. [No wonder the Jews need to say that Abraham was performing the Mosaic Covenant even before it was given to Moses and the Israelites in the Sinai desert five hundred years later. This unwarranted emphasis on the Mosaic Covenant is exactly what Paul is addressing in this letter.]

⁵⁴ προῖδοῦσα δὲ ἡ γραφὴ ὅτι ἐκ πίστεως δικαιοὶ τὰ ἔθνη ὁ θεός, προεὐηγγελίσατο τῷ Ἀβραάμ ὅτι ἐνευλογηθήσονται ἐν σοὶ πάντα τὰ ἔθνη – Even though God had in mind to separate out the Jews as Abraham's physical descendants from all other peoples and make them a very religious group by giving them the Mosaic Covenant during the present realm (as well as the greatest nation in all history, i.e., during the millennial kingdom of Jesus when he returns), He still also planned to grant eternal life and forgiveness (the full "blessing" of Abraham) to other people who were not Jews and were not required to be religious like the Jews (and to the Jews completely apart from their religious performance as Paul argues by quoting Habakkuk 2:4). Cf. Genesis 12:3b, וְנִבְרַךְ בְּךָ כָּל מִשְׁפָּחַת הָאָדָמָה (LXX – καὶ ἐνευλογηθήσονται ἐν σοὶ πάσαι αἱ φυλαὶ τῆς γῆς). Thus, when God was making His promises to Abraham long before and separately from the Mosaic Covenant, He promised to grant mercy and eternal life to all ethnic groups, i.e., to both Jews and Gentiles, to those within the ethnic community of Abraham's physical descendants, the Jews, and to those outside this group, the Gentiles. Thus, God was thinking of only authentic, inward belief in biblical truth like Abraham's as that which would qualify both Jews and Gentiles for His mercy and eternal life. In other words, in Genesis 12:3b, God is referring to both Jews and Gentiles with the word מִשְׁפָּחָה (*mishp'choth*, LXX – αἱ φυλαὶ). Paul substitutes τὰ ἔθνη for αἱ φυλαὶ, but the meaning is still the same, the ethnic groups of the world which include both Jews and Gentiles.

Certainly, reading carefully the rest of the story of Abraham also sheds a lot of light on what God means in Genesis 12, e.g., that Abraham, and anyone wishing to be like him, obtains God's ultimately blessing of *tz'daqah* and forgiveness by responding to His truth with genuine belief (cf. Genesis 15, 22), not by being religious, even though, in Genesis 17, He commands Abraham and his descendants to circumcise themselves. However, this is merely the beginning of the religious distinction which God is requiring of Abraham's physical descendants, the Jews, and this distinction in Abraham's life comes many years after God declares him forgiven and qualified for his blessings by means of his belief (cf. Genesis 15:6, "And he believed in Yahweh, and He accounted to him *tz'daqah* = forgiveness; דִּקְיָהּ לֵאמֹר

וְנִבְרַךְ בְּךָ כָּל מִשְׁפָּחָה וְנִבְרַךְ בְּךָ כָּל מִשְׁפָּחָה; καὶ ἐπίστευσεν Ἀβραμ τῷ θεῷ, καὶ ἐλογίσθη αὐτῷ εἰς δικαιοσύνην).

⁵⁵ ὥστε οἱ ἐκ πίστεως εὐλογοῦνται σὺν τῷ πιστῷ Ἀβραάμ – Here, as in the previous verse, Paul uses a term that is very important to his argument—"blessed." It is reasonable to assume that he is referring to God's promises to

Abraham in Genesis 12:3 that He would “bless” Abraham (וְאֶבְרָהָם) and those associated with him (וְאֶתְּכֶם), i.e., God will eventually mold Abraham’s descendants, the Jews, into a messianic kingdom on the land of Israel, He will allow Abraham to participate in this nation as a resurrected, morally perfect believer, and He will provide eternal mercy and life to Abraham and all human beings who choose to associate with him by exercising the same kind of belief as his (cf. the books of the prophets in the Old Testament, 1 Thessalonians 4, and Revelation with its description of the millennial kingdom in chapters 20 & 21). Hence, all human beings of genuine belief in some way participate with Abraham in these promises of God simply because of their belief in His message, specifically His message in NT times of Jesus as the Messiah, and NOT because of their religious performance, even their performance of the Mosaic Covenant!

⁵⁶ ὅσοι γὰρ ἐξ ἔργων νόμου εἰσὶν ὑπὸ κατάραν εἰσὶν γέγραπται γὰρ ὅτι ἐπικατάρατος πᾶς ὃς οὐκ ἐμμένει τ᾽ πᾶσιν τοῖς γεγραμμένοις ἐν τῷ βιβλίῳ τοῦ νόμου τοῦ ποιῆσαι αὐτά – This next paragraph of vs. 10-14 is sometimes interpreted as Paul’s contrasting the impossibility of obeying the Mosaic Covenant, i.e., the impossibility of being morally perfect, which results in a person’s becoming cursed by God, with Jesus’ paying the penalty which we deserve from God and our escaping this penalty of eternal death through belief in Jesus. However, more coherent with v. 12 that the Covenant is “not outside belief,” Paul is contrasting a person’s misunderstanding the Mosaic Covenant whereby he thinks that he can earn God’s blessings through his concerted human performance of it with the fact that the Covenant includes the commandment to have proper human inwardness and authentic belief. In other words, the Mosaic Covenant does not require moral perfection on the part of the Jews. It requires *the same thing as the gospel*—authentic belief which comes from an inwardness that has been changed by God (cf. Deuteronomy 10:16 and chapters 29 and 30). Therefore, it has always been the case, even for the Jews, that inwardness and not scrupulous and perfect religious performance of the Mosaic Covenant is what God requires. Consequently, a proper belief in the Messiah recognizes that his death on the cross demonstrates our inability to produce proper inwardness, so that God’s blessings to Abraham are obtained by anyone through God’s grace and the belief in the crucified Messiah which it creates (cf. 1 Corinthians 1,2).

Thus, in this verse, Paul presents the opposite of inwardness, belief, and being blessed. It is doing works of the Covenant (ὅσοι γὰρ ἐξ ἔργων νόμου εἰσὶν) and being cursed (ὑπὸ κατάραν εἰσὶν) by God. Because this is the opposite of belief and therefore inwardness, Paul must mean by “works of the Covenant” strict reliance on one’s natural human religious performance of the Mosaic Covenant that is believed to make a person worthy of God’s blessing. But this leads to a person’s being cursed and condemned by God, because only authentic inward change by the Spirit which can then be combined with pursuing obeying the Mosaic Covenant is the proper condition for obtaining God’s blessing, as long as the person’s attitude does not devolve into thinking that he is earning anything from God. (cf. Deuteronomy 10:16, “Circumcise your heart, and stiffen your neck no longer.”). As a result, anyone who believes that simply his religious obedience of the Covenant satisfies the necessary condition and makes him worthy of mercy is cursed, not blessed. He deserves God’s condemnation and destruction, not forgiveness and life from God—whether Jew or Gentile, because he has not properly and fully taken into account his moral inability to please God apart from God’s changing him inwardly through His Spirit and grace.

In line with this, the quoted verse of Deuteronomy 27:26 is saying that grasping everything being taught by the Mosaic Covenant, including the need for grace and changed inwardness, is necessary to gain God’s favor. Anything less will result in being cursed by God. Therefore, if someone is depending on his religious and moral performance of the Covenant to gain God’s eternal mercy, then he does not understand his moral depravity and God’s grace. He does not understand the message of Jesus’ death on the cross. In addition, he does not understand the Abrahamic Covenant and the fact that for Abraham it was simple inwardness and belief caused by the Spirit of God, not outward religious behavior performed by Abraham, which were the correct, fulfilled condition of *his* proper relationship with God and for anyone else who desires to be blessed with him. Cf. Deuteronomy 27:26, אֶת־יְהוָה יְהוּדָה־הַיְזְרָאֵל לַעֲשׂוֹת אֶת־כָּל־הַצִּוִּיּוֹת אֲשֶׁר־צִוָּה לַעֲשׂוֹת (LXX – ἐπικατάρατος πᾶς ἄνθρωπος, ὃς οὐκ ἐμμένει ἐν πᾶσιν τοῖς λόγοις τοῦ νόμου τούτου τοῦ ποιῆσαι αὐτούς).

Paul is implying this same idea in Romans 7.

The TR includes ἐν before πᾶσιν, which is clearer that the translation is as I have presented it, “in all the things...”

⁵⁷ ὅτι δὲ ἐν νόμῳ οὐδεὶς δικαιοῦται παρὰ τῷ θεῷ δῆλον, ὅτι ὁ δίκαιος ἐκ πίστεως ζήσεται – Here, again, Paul is using “Covenant” to refer to an incorrect perspective on it, that religious performance of its commandments makes a person worthy of God’s blessing, whether Jew or Gentile. However, God in Habakkuk implies that simply performing the Mosaic Covenant outwardly does not please Him. Another way to say this is that at the core of following the MC is genuine, inward belief, thus rendering any mentality that attempts to please God through strict outward adherence unacceptable. What is pleasing to Him is inwardness and belief in the truth that He declares to human beings—and this prior to and apart from even considering the importance of the Mosaic Covenant, which was certainly the case for Abraham, as Paul has been arguing. Thus, genuine belief in Yahweh and His truth, apart from outward religious activity, even religious activity within the context of the very biblical Mosaic Covenant, will qualify a morally depraved human being, whether Jew or Gentile, for forgiveness and God’s blessings.

Cf. Habakkuk 2:4, הַיָּשָׁר יִחְיֶה בְּאֵמֶן (LXX – ὁ δὲ δίκαιος ἐκ πίστεώς μου ζήσεται). Notice that, as in Romans 1:17, Paul does not include the word μου. God is not saying that the *tzaddeeq* = the righteous person who is declared

forgiven lives, i.e., gains true life, eternal life, by His faithfulness, but by the *tzaddeeq*'s belief—in line with the Hebrew text.

⁵⁸ ὁ δὲ νόμος οὐκ ἔστιν ἐκ πίστεως, ἀλλ' ὁ ποιήσας αὐτὰ ὅτι ζήσεται ἐν αὐτοῖς – While a misunderstanding of the Mosaic Covenant is contrary to belief, Paul is stating that the Covenant itself is neither opposed to belief nor properly performed outside the context of authentic belief. Instead, a Jew can very easily be forgiven while performing the Covenant as long as he has authentic inwardness—because it is his belief in God's truth and the Messiah's advocacy which, together, supersede his performance of the Covenant. This is the point of Leviticus 18:5, **וְהָיָה כִּי יִשְׁמַע בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת הַקּוֹלָם וְעָשׂוּ אֶת כָּל הַצִּוִּיּוֹת אֲשֶׁר אֶתְּנָה לָהֶם** (LXX – καὶ φυλάξεσθε πάντα τὰ προστάγματα μου καὶ πάντα τὰ κρίματά μου καὶ ποιήσετε αὐτά, ἃ ποιήσας ἄνθρωπος ζήσεται ἐν αὐτοῖς· ἐγὼ κύριος ὁ θεὸς ὑμῶν). Yet, Paul will go on to show that the basis of forgiveness for the Covenant obeying Jew is not the Covenant, but the Messiah.

The TR adds ἄνθρωπος after ὁ ποιήσας αὐτὰ, meaning “the person who does them,” the same as I have translated the quote from Leviticus 18:5 without this word, “he who does them.”

Ezekiel 18 is fuller explanation of Leviticus 18:5, that the Jew who rightly performs the Mosaic Covenant and guards it all his life is acceptable to God and gains “life,” i.e., eternal life.

⁵⁹ Χριστὸς ἡμᾶς ἐξηγόρασεν ἐκ τῆς κατάρας τοῦ νόμου γενόμενος ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν κατάρᾳ, ὅτι γέγραπται ἐπικατάρατος πᾶς ὁ κρεμᾶμενος ἐπὶ ξύλου – Paul is saying that ultimately, even the physical punishment stipulated by the Mosaic Covenant for Jews who violated it was intended to send the message that all human beings are morally depraved and irreversibly and eternally cursed and condemned before God apart from His gracious mercy. This is the same message of the Messiah's death and execution as a criminal, which then also allowed him to qualify to be our advocate at the judgment. God displayed the case against us, i.e., our culpability and eternal condemnation, in the death of the Messiah when he hung on the cross and gave up his life for us.

Thus, Paul is saying here that Jesus, by offering himself to God in order to become human beings' advocate and obtain God's mercy, “delivered” them who deserved to be cursed and destroyed by God. Of the four uses of ἐξαγοράζω in the NT, the two of these in Galatians (here and 4:5) mean “deliver” as in extricate and free human beings from the difficulty of deserving and incurring God's wrath, condemnation, and destruction. The other two uses in Ephesians 5:16 and Colossians 4:5 mean “make the most of” one's time or a situation in life.

We should note that Deuteronomy 21:23 is speaking of a situation where, instead of mercy being extended to a criminal, he receives the justice of being executed, i.e., capital punishment. This is because he has committed a sin against God which is worthy of death. Paul uses this example by relating it to Jesus' death, even though he did nothing to deserve to be executed. God's having Jesus “hang on a tree” so to speak by his dying on a cross sends the same message that all other human beings are evil to the extent that they are worthy of death and execution—indeed, eternal death and destruction. Therefore, if all one does is pursue religious performance of the Mosaic Covenant and rebelliously miss the point of the gracious promises of the Abrahamic Covenant and the lesson of the crucified Messiah, then this person is cursed by God. In addition, Jesus demonstrated this principle by fulfilling his goal of being the crucified Messiah who played the role of a criminal who deserved to die under the Covenant. Thus, Jesus qualified to rescue people from being cursed under the Covenant, even eternally, by his interceding for them at the final judgment, i.e., by being their high priest (cf. Hebrews).

Cf. Deuteronomy 21:23, **וְהָיָה כִּי יִשְׁמַע בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת הַקּוֹלָם וְעָשׂוּ אֶת כָּל הַצִּוִּיּוֹת אֲשֶׁר אֶתְּנָה לָהֶם** (LXX – ὅτι κεκατηραμένος ὑπὸ θεοῦ πᾶς κρεμᾶμενος ἐπὶ ξύλου).

⁶⁰ ἵνα εἰς τὰ ἔθνη ἡ εὐλογία τοῦ Ἀβραάμ γένηται ἐν ᾧ Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ, ἵνα τὴν ἑπαγγελίαν τοῦ πνεύματος λάβωμεν διὰ τῆς πίστεως – In Genesis 12:3, God promised to Abraham that “in [him] all the families of the earth (**וְהָיוּ כָל הָעַמִּים בְּרָכָה**, i.e., tribes, nations, families, ethnic groups) (αἱ φυλαὶ τῆς γῆς) would be blessed—ultimately referring to eternal mercy and life. Thus, Paul is saying in line with his reasoning with respect to the Galatian Gentile Christians and Abraham that God's promise of the Spirit and belief (cf. 3:2-9) to the nations results not from their religious activity under the Mosaic Covenant, but from the Messiah's suffering the curse of death to qualify to be their advocate. Because performing the Mosaic Covenant *per se* does not qualify a person for eternal life, grasping the significance of Jesus' death and having him intercede at the judgment does, especially now that the events of Jesus' existence as the Messiah have taken place! To be a Jew who knows that following the Mosaic Covenant is *nationally* important to his relationship with God and then hear about Jesus as the crucified Messiah and reject him is to remain under the curse of the Mosaic Covenant—because rejecting the Messiah displays of heart of unbelief. Thus, Paul, by using the 1st person plural pronoun “we,” is including the Jews and even himself in the “nations” (Genesis 12:3, **πᾶσαι αἱ φυλαὶ τῆς γῆς**) who will be blessed through Abraham when they are given the Spirit of God and made to believe in God so as to receive His promise, eternal life. Thus, they receive the promise of eternal life that comes from God, the Spirit, through the work of the Spirit. This is why after Jesus' first appearance, belief most especially includes belief in Jesus as the Messiah.

⁶¹ Ἀδελφοί, κατὰ ἄνθρωπον λέγω· ὁμῶς ἀνθρώπου κεκυρωμένην διαθήκην οὐδεὶς ἀθετεῖ ἢ ἐπιδιатάσσεται – Paul's point is going to be that once a contractual relationship is established, it does not get changed afterwards by adding more stipulations to it—even in the case of the Mosaic Covenant's being added to the Abrahamic Covenant for historical purposes. The Mosaic Covenant does not change the fact that God promised eternal life to Abraham and his “seed” simply by their becoming believers like Abraham—whether Jews or Gentiles. But the problem of those of a

circumcision mindset is that they are saying, “It is all well and good that you are believing in Jesus as the Messiah, but if you really want to be a *bona fide* disciple of his, then you must add following the Mosaic Covenant to your belief, *because this is what God did for the Jews and anyone else among the mishp^echoth of the rest of the earth.*” However, they are wrong. Thus, Paul is also saying that God’s promises to Abraham remain in effect in spite of the Mosaic Covenant and apart from the Jewish national obligation to it, which was not supposed to render the fulfillment of the promises to be conditioned on obeying the Covenant *per se*. The key is the concept of promise, as well as the fact that Gentiles are under no obligation to the Mosaic Covenant and included in the promise of Genesis 12:1-3.

⁶² τῷ δὲ Ἀβραὰμ ἐρρέθησαν αἱ ἐπαγγελίαι καὶ τῷ σπέρματι αὐτοῦ. οὐ λέγει· καὶ τοῖς σπέρμασιν, ὡς ἐπὶ πολλῶν ἄλλ’ ὡς ἐφ’ ἐνός· καὶ τῷ σπέρματι σου, ὅς ἐστιν Χριστός – cf. Genesis 12:7, “Yahweh appeared to Abram and said, ‘To your seed (שְׁרָאָה, τῷ σπέρματί σου) I am giving this land.’ And he built an altar there to Yahweh, who appeared to him.” While this use of “seed” in Genesis 12:7 obviously refers to only Jews, Paul exploits the fact that their key characteristic will be authentic belief during the millennial kingdom to argue that all those who inherit the promises made to Abraham, whether Jews or Gentiles (the latter receiving eternal life), must possess this key characteristic, thereby making even believing Gentiles the “seed” of Abraham. In line with this thinking, it is only Jews who have genuine belief in Yahweh and His Messiah Jesus who will live in the millennial kingdom and acquire eternal life, and it is only Gentiles who have genuine belief likewise who will also acquire eternal life. Cf. Genesis 15:18; 17:8-14 and Deuteronomy 34:4.

Thus, God was referring to one kind of person who would be genuinely included in the “seed” of Abraham to whom the promises, especially the promise of eternal life, were made. This kind of person, whether a Jew or eventually a Gentile, would be one who would recognize the value of a crucified Messiah and believe this truth. In other words, no Jew or Gentile can really be a “seed” of Abraham, i.e., a descendant of Abraham, who is not associated ultimately with the Messiah of God’s choosing, who is Jesus of Nazareth with all that his crucifixion means of demonstrating for the rest of mankind the consequences of being trapped in immorality at the level of their moral essence. Jesus is not the seed *per se*, but those who genuinely associate with him through biblical faith like Abraham’s are. This is the sense in which Paul is using the word Messiah (Χριστός) in this verse, i.e., as a synecdoche, where a part is being used to refer to a whole, with Jesus’ obviously being the most important part. In this way, the Abrahamic promises can be said to be made to Jesus as a member of one of the מִשְׁפָּחֹת הָאָדָמָה (mishp^echoth ha’adamah), “families of the earth.” And they are also made to those properly associated with Jesus by their belief in him. Cf. Galatians 3:29.

Thus, it is the “line of descent” from Abraham of people characterized by belief and ultimately in the Messiah by their belief in the Messiah who obtain the fulfillment of God’s promise to Abraham of the blessing of eternal life—just as the line of descent through the promised son Isaac (not Ishmael) and then Jacob (not Esau) become the nation of Israel.

⁶³ τοῦτο δὲ λέγω· διαθήκην προκεκυρωμένην ὑπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ ἡ μετὰ τετρακόσια καὶ τριάκοντα ἔτη γεγονώς νόμος οὐκ ἄκυροί εἰς τὸ καταργῆσαι τὴν ἐπαγγελίαν – The circumcision mindset of the Jews from Jerusalem in effect nullifies the whole concept of divine promise. It ultimately makes the blessing of God and eternal life dependent on religious performance, not on God’s grace. This was not at all God’s intent when He instituted the Mosaic Covenant following the Abrahamic Covenant. Properly understood, the Mosaic Covenant neither changes nor adds its requirements to the Abrahamic promises, which God will ensure are fulfilled by His Spirit in both Jews and Gentiles by causing them to have genuine belief. Again, this is best demonstrated by Abraham’s being justified by only belief long before God required any religious performance of either him or his Jewish descendants in Genesis 17 and Exodus-Deuteronomy respectively.

⁶⁴ εἰ γὰρ ἔκ νόμου ἡ κληρονομία, οὐκέτι ἐξ ἐπαγγελίας· τῷ δὲ Ἀβραὰμ δι’ ἐπαγγελίας κεχάρισται ὁ θεός – The Mosaic Covenant appears to be the basis for Abraham’s descendants who are his “seed” and their experiencing the fulfillment of God’s promises, whether the inheritance (ἡ κληρονομία) of the land of Israel during the millennial kingdom or eternal life (cf. Deuteronomy 4:1). However, the Covenant’s intent was simply as a *national* Jewish covenant which would expose the hearts of genuine belief of the Jews—eventually, i.e., during the millennial kingdom. Therefore, it is not the basis of any of the Abrahamic promises. While the circumcision mindset may see only living like a religious Jew in obedience to the Jewish Mosaic Covenant as that which qualifies a human being for the promises of God, His mercy, and eternal life, Paul is arguing that God’s grace which causes authentic belief in the Messiah does so. Therefore, the circumcision mindset Jews are misunderstanding both the Abrahamic and Mosaic Covenants. In addition, making proper obedience of the Mosaic Covenant, i.e., with genuine belief, a condition of obtaining the blessings of Abraham is incorrect. It is not this Covenant which is the central condition, but belief in the Messiah which is—historically speaking. Belief in Jesus as the Messiah is that which qualifies both Jews and Gentiles for God’s blessings, one of which will be living on the land of Israel during the millennial kingdom. In this way, proper obedience of the Mosaic Covenant follows belief in the Messiah, not precedes it.

⁶⁵ τί οὖν ὁ νόμος; τῶν παραβάσεων χάριν προσετέθη· ἄχρις οὗ ἔλθῃ τὸ σπέρμα ᾧ ἐπηγγέλλεται, διαταγείς δι’ ἁγγέλων ἐν χειρὶ μεσίτου – The Mosaic Covenant was given to the Jewish people by means of theophanies of God who spoke with the mediator Moses (it was through his “hand” that they received the covenant).

Option 1) – it was intended to provide these people with a religious framework focused on the Jews’ moral transgressions and moral depravity as history moved toward the coming of the Messiah and of genuine belief in him by those whom God changed inwardly.

Option 2) – it was intended to heightened the Jews’ awareness of their sins as Paul talks about in Romans 5:20 and Romans 7. This option makes better sense.

Here, as in 3:16, Paul is using the word “seed” (τὸ σπέρμα) to refer to the line of descent of believers in Jesus as the Messiah, and to whom God grants the blessing of eternal life, whether Jews or Gentiles (cf. Hebrews 7:11, “Therefore, if indeed reaching the goal (*telos*) (τελείωσις) were through the Levitical priesthood (for the people have been given the Covenant on the basis of it), then why was there yet the need for a different priest to arise according to the order of Melchizedek, and not to be called according to the order of Aaron?”). In other words, the Mosaic Covenant was a didactic tool that would constantly point out the Jews’ own moral depravity, and, by extrapolation, the moral depravity of all mankind, a problem which would ultimately be solved by the intercession of the Messiah at the final judgment, a role for which he qualified by suffering death on the cross. Thus, the coming of the Messiah and belief in him by both Jews and Gentiles started the clock ticking in a clearer way toward the fulfillment of God’s promise to make of the Jews a people of belief during the millennial kingdom and to bring about eternal salvation to both Jews and Gentiles.

⁶⁶ ὁ δὲ μεσίτης ἐνὸς οὐκ ἔστιν – Paul is saying that the Mosaic Covenant mediated through Moses was given to only all the physical Jews, descendants of Abraham through Isaac and Jacob, and not to the “one seed” so to speak, the group of people, both Jews and Gentiles, who are all genuinely sons of Abraham, i.e., the “seed” of Abraham associated with the Messiah because of their authentic belief like Abraham, to whom Paul refers in 3:19, the “seed” of Jesus the Messiah along with all the people, both Jews and Gentiles, who believe in him and embrace him for obtaining the Abrahamic promises of God.

⁶⁷ ὁ δὲ θεὸς εἷς ἔστιν – God is the one God who fulfills His promise to Abraham to bless all the families (nations) of the earth through making them believers. Cf. Genesis 12:1-3. Cf. Romans 3:29,30, “Or is God the God of Jews only? Is He not the God of Gentiles also? Yes, of Gentiles also, since indeed God who will justify the circumcised by belief and the uncircumcised through belief is one.”

Therefore, while the Mosaic Covenant is confined to the Jews as a subset of the “one seed” of Jesus and all believers, God is one God over all believers, both Jews and Gentiles. This further bolsters Paul’s argument in this letter that Gentiles are not obligated to keep the Mosaic Covenant, and because they are not, neither really are the Jews *with respect to the eternal mercy of God through the Messiah as their advocate*.

⁶⁸ ὁ οὖν νόμος κατὰ τῶν ἐπαγγελιῶν τοῦ θεοῦ; μὴ γένοιτο· εἰ γὰρ ἐδόθη νόμος ὁ δυνάμενος ζωοποιῆσαι, ὄντως ἐκ νόμου ἂν ἦν ἡ δικαιοσύνη – Similar to Paul’s statement in 3:12 that “the Covenant is not outside belief (οὐκ ἔστιν ἐκ πίστεως),” he asks if it is “outside the promises of God (κατὰ τῶν ἐπαγγελιῶν τοῦ θεοῦ)?” If the Mosaic Covenant were given on the assumption that simple outward obedience to it would qualify any human being for eternal forgiveness and life by making him worthy and deserving of them, then it would basically be outside and in opposition to the promises of God which assume that human beings are incurably immoral at the core level of their moral essence, thus making them completely dependent on God’s initiative and grace to change them inwardly and transform them into believers in His truth in order to gain His favor and eternal mercy.

Again, it is important to realize that Paul is including the idea of a person’s making himself deserving of the Abrahamic blessings in his assessment of the mindset of his opponents in Galatians, even though they would deny it and claim that their theology of salvation is exactly the same as Paul’s—one of strictly grace, even grace properly understood. But the way they are living their “belief” in Paul’s theology fails to demonstrate a correct understanding of the biblical message and instead reveals that they believe the opposite.

⁶⁹ ἀλλὰ συνέκλεισεν ἡ γραφὴ τὰ πάντα ὑπὸ ἁμαρτίαν, ἵνα ἡ ἐπαγγελία ἐκ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ δοθῇ τοῖς πιστεύουσιν – The actual truth of the Bible that the Jews with the circumcision mindset insist that they are proclaiming but are misunderstanding declares that people are so encumbered with moral depravity that eternal life can be acquired only through God’s fulfilling His promises through His grace in a person’s being and life. Because the Messiah has come and manifested himself, belief now includes as its object Jesus as the Messiah as the very litmus test of genuine obedience to God, whether the person is a Jew or a Gentile.

Thus, no one is capable of making himself good enough to impress God to grant him eternal life. Only God’s promise and Jesus as the Messiah and our belief in him can save us.

⁷⁰ πρὸ τοῦ δὲ ἐλθεῖν τὴν πίστιν ὑπὸ νόμον ἐφρουρούμεθα ὡς συγκλειόμενοι εἰς τὴν μέλλουσαν πίστιν ἀποκαλυφθῆναι – Here, Paul is speaking of Jews and genuine belief in Jesus the Messiah. While the latter is now necessary for any Jew to attain God’s eternal mercy and life, nevertheless Jews had a biblical context in which they were living and which could be looked at as a protective wall around them. This wall was the Torah with its Mosaic Covenant and what it provided in regard to knowledge of God. And the Covenant provided the Jews with God’s instructions and commandments in the midst of their own moral depravity to the effect that a sacrifice is needed to obtain His mercy. Thus, they were imprisoned by their own unbelief and rebellion, yet while also being protected and guided by the Mosaic Covenant towards the truth of belief in the Messiah who offered himself to qualify as High Priest. This goal obviously would not become a reality until the Messiah appeared, died, and qualified for his role as king and priest for the Jews—and for the sake of God’s mercy and eternal life.

⁷¹ ὥστε ὁ νόμος παιδαγωγὸς ἡμῶν ᾗ γέγονεν εἰς Χριστόν, ἵνα ἐκ πίστεως δικαιωθῶμεν – The Mosaic Covenant is intended to act merely as a guide to the truth of belief in the crucified Messiah. Performance of it *per se*, even proper performance of genuine belief (if this belief does not eventually move on to having Jesus the Messiah as its primary

object), does not in and of itself qualify a Jew for forgiveness and eternal life. Instead, it is belief in the Messiah through God's grace which does. This keeps the Messiah at the very center of God's plans and purposes as intended.

⁷² ἐλθούσης δὲ τῆς πίστεως οὐκέτι ὑπὸ παιδαγωγὸν ἔσμεν – Like those of the circumcision mindset, Jews, who have come to authentic belief in the Messiah, did have the Mosaic Covenant as the focal point of their lives and their only guide toward their moral depravity and need for God's grace and the Messiah. Now, though, Jesus with his death, resurrection, and ascension is their guide, not the Covenant. Nevertheless, the Mosaic Covenant remains a guide to the Jews as to their historical and earthly role, and Jesus becomes the one and only guide to eternal life and mercy. A logical ramification is that obeying the religious commandments of the Mosaic Covenant is completely unnecessary for both believing Jews and believing Gentiles in order to gain eternal life. Only belief in Jesus the Messiah is necessary (along with pursuing morality as Paul will describe in chapter 5). Nevertheless, it is not wrong for the Jews to pursue obedience to the Mosaic Covenant in the midst of their belief in Jesus as their Messiah, because this is exactly what is going to happen in the millennial kingdom.

⁷³ πάντες γὰρ υἱοὶ θεοῦ ἐστε διὰ ὅτις πίστεως ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ – Just as the Jews were tutored by the Mosaic Covenant to become believers in the Messiah and inwardly changed people, so also Gentiles need simply to become believers in the Messiah and not religious performers of the Mosaic Covenant in order to become genuine children of God and qualify for eternal mercy. Paul is saying that this is what has happened to his Galatian Gentile readers—implying of course that they should simply stay the course of their current, permanent status before God and not succumb to the lies of the religiously minded Jews who are intimidating them.

To be a “son of God” is to be a bona fide descendant/son of Abraham who belongs to the Messiah and inherits the promise of the blessing of Abraham, i.e., eternal life (cf. 3:29).

⁷⁴ ὅσοι γὰρ εἰς Χριστὸν ἐβαπτίσθητε, Χριστὸν ἐνεδύσασθε – Paul now refers to the common practice in the ANE and within Judaism of water baptism. These Gentile Christians have gone through this ritual of being baptized into the Messiah as an outward expression of their inward decision to believe what Paul had taught them of the gospel. And Paul employs the metaphor of putting on clothes. Their garment is the Messiah, i.e., that which defines them and identifies them just as normal clothes do. Thus, they need no clothing of a religious performance nature, even performance of eating kosher according to the Mosaic Covenant, which strictly is a Jewish covenant. They are demonstrating the unique, correct, and appropriate *biblical and historical* characteristic of *belief in Jesus as the Messiah* as that which constitutes their fulfilling the one, necessary condition for obtaining God's eternal mercy and life—just as Abraham did.

⁷⁵ οὐκ ἔνι Ἰουδαῖος οὐδὲ Ἕλλην, οὐκ ἔνι δούλος οὐδὲ ἐλεύθερος, οὐκ ἔνι ἄρσεν καὶ θῆλυ· πάντες γὰρ ὑμεῖς ἐῖς ἐστε ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ – The nations, not just Jews, are rescued from God's eternal condemnation through belief in the Messiah, just as the Abrahamic Covenant promised. Thus, when it comes to eternal salvation, the peculiar people of the Jews, who were the only ones given the Mosaic Covenant, lose their peculiarity and unique status. Belief in the one and only advocate at the final judgment, Jesus, eliminates any distinction—ethnic, social, economic, gender, etc.—between people. All believers belong to the one group who will be rescued from God's eternal condemnation by the Messiah at the judgment.

As a result, the movement today to create social, political, and moral equality is correct in one sense, that human beings, *if they have authentic belief*, have equal *eternal and judicial status before God*. But if God and the biblical message *as it exists by having been superintended by God* is left out of the conversation, then the equality which is promoted by rebellious human beings is obviously going to be a perversion of that which the Bible describes. Jews are still Jews, and Gentiles are still Gentiles—socially. Masters and slaves have different economic status and roles as Paul points out in Colossians and Ephesians. Husbands and wives have different roles as Paul also points out in Colossians, Ephesians, and 1 Timothy. Eternal life, on the other hand, is equally given to any human being who is made in the image of God and has proper inwardness that manifests itself in belief in the Jesus as the Messiah.

⁷⁶ εἰ δὲ ὑμεῖς Χριστοῦ, ἄρα τοῦ Ἀβραάμ σπέρμα ἐστέ, κατ' ἐπαγγελίαν κληρονόμοι – A person can belong to the Jewish Messiah for the purpose of eternal life and be a child/descendant of Abraham simply by genuinely believing in him without following the Mosaic Covenant, just as Abraham belonged to God and would gain the promise of eternal life by genuinely believing Him without following the Mosaic Covenant.

The Jews with the circumcision mindset certainly are not ignoring the Abrahamic Covenant. They just believe that the promises and inheritance of the land of Israel and eternal life come to only those who are religiously committed to the Mosaic Covenant and that it is good and moral to put pressure on people to be such, so that intimidating them with the threat of being ostracized from the “in” group is justified—for their own good. However, ultimately, in the Abrahamic Covenant, God was talking about authentic believers who would be *bona fide* descendants of Abraham who possessed the promise of the land of Israel (the Jews) and eternal life through the quintessential descendant of Abraham, the Messiah (both Jews and Gentiles). Thus, belief in Jesus as the Messiah, not religious performance of the Mosaic Covenant (or religious performance of any other kind, including following historical Christian doctrines), is the mark of an eternally saved person.

⁷⁷ λέγω δέ, ἐφ' ὅσον χρόνον ὁ κληρονόμος νηπίος ἐστίν, οὐδὲν διαφέρει δούλου κύριος πάντων ὧν – Paul continues with the language of inheritance by sons that he started using in 3:18 and, to bolster his point, employs the analogy of a Roman household with a father, son, slave, foremen, and managers. As long as the son has not reached the age which his father has set for him to inherit his property, he does not look any different in what he “owns” from a slave in the

same household. The son owns the property only in the sense that he will eventually do so. Therefore, at the moment, he owns nothing, while also the slave owns nothing. They are no different in what they own. The son might as well be a slave when it comes to what he actually and currently owns.

⁷⁸ ἀλλὰ ὑπὸ ἐπιτρόπους ἐστὶν καὶ οἰκονόμους ἄχρι τῆς προθεσμίας τοῦ πατρὸς – In the light of other uses of ἐπιτροπος and οἰκονόμος in the New Testament, it makes sense that ἐστὶν is referring to the father's property, not to his son who stands to inherit it. Until the time which the father has determined for transferring the management of his property from the foremen (ἐπιτρόπους) and managers (οἰκονόμους) to the son, the property remains under the control of these latter "hired" servants. The fact that there are multiple foremen and managers indicates that the father is very wealthy, and his property is extensive. Thus, the son stands to receive a substantial and rich inheritance. And, obviously, any slave is merely a laborer on the property and, technically, neither a family member nor owner or potential owner of the property.

If Paul intends the foremen and managers to refer to the Mosaic Covenant, then it tells the "heir," any Jew, what to do until he reaches the proper age of hearing from the Messiah (when he enters history) on what he should do, i.e., believe in him as the basis of his salvation.

⁷⁹ οὕτως καὶ ἡμεῖς, ὅτε ἤμεν νήπιοι, ὑπὸ τὰ στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου ἤμεθα δεδουλωμένοι – As in 3:23-25, Paul uses the first person plural pronoun "we" to refer to the Jews. He also calls Jews "children" to connect them to the analogy of the Roman household in 4:1,2. Because Paul then uses the same preposition ὑπὸ as in the previous verse, it seems appropriate to connect the idea of the τὰ στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου to the ἐπιτρόπους and οἰκονόμους, as though the child/children was/were "under" the foremen and managers, which Paul is now identifying as the Mosaic Covenant. However, Paul goes on to relate how the "children," the Jews, transition from being "slaves" to becoming adopted sons, i.e., adults who can say they truly have possession of the inheritance of eternal life, in 4:5, meaning that the property is "under" the management of the foremen and managers, while the child/children is/are under the prescriptions of the father. And, in the case of the Jews, the prescriptions of the father are the commandments of the religious system of the Mosaic Covenant—until the time when God transitions them from only these to the commandments of the Messiah when Jesus appears. Thus, the τὰ στοιχεῖα do refer to the Mosaic Covenant itself as a religious system (τοῦ κόσμου), i.e., the manner in which God prescribed the religion of the Jews through this covenant.

Paul has said in 4:1,2 that before the proper time set by the father, the "children" are no different in what they own as "slaves." This is to say that they own nothing and might as well be slaves. Thus, the issue is the history of God's plan to keep the Jews looking to the Mosaic Covenant as how they primarily relate to God until the arrival of the Messiah, who not only changes their relationship by being the focal point of all creation history, but also solidifies the Jews' ability to obtain eternal life, the blessing of Abraham, by becoming the basis of their salvation.

⁸⁰ ὅτε δὲ ἦλθεν τὸ πλήρωμα τοῦ χρόνου, ἐξαπέστειλεν ὁ θεὸς τὸν υἱὸν αὐτοῦ, γενόμενον ἐκ γυναικός, γενόμενον ὑπὸ νόμον – When God was ready for the Jews to transition from being "slaves" to adults, *who are capable of possessing in full actuality His provision of eternal mercy and life*, He caused the Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth, to appear within the creation and carry out his role as preacher, prophet, healer, and sacrifice/offering.

Paul says that Jesus was a full human being, having come into existence by means of a woman, i.e., through the process of a natural human birth.

He also says that Jesus was under the same "ordered religious system" (ὑπὸ νόμον) so to speak as the Jews, the Mosaic Covenant, meaning that he was Jewish, subject to the requirements and purposes of the Covenant to the extent that a morally perfect person could be, but he was not subject to sin. Obviously, this meant that he never had to bring any sin offerings to God. But he acknowledged the intent of the Covenant for the Jewish nation as that which was to "tutor" them to him (cf. 3:23-25) and as that which they were misinterpreting by trying to make themselves worthy of God's blessing by especially obeying its religious requirements.

Thus, Jesus was circumcised at eight days old, ate kosher, and celebrated the Jewish festivals of the OT, i.e., Passover, of Weeks, and of Booths.

⁸¹ ἵνα τοὺς ὑπὸ νόμον ἐξαγοράσῃ, ἵνα τὴν υἰοθεσίαν ἀπολάβωμεν – Paul clarifies here an important element of the father, son, slave, property analogy. The Jews ("those who were under the Covenant" and "we") need to be "adopted" by God in order to become "sons," i.e., adults. Jews without the inward work of the Holy Spirit are no better off in their status before God than slaves of a Roman household with respect to the "father's property" until two things happen—1) Jesus arrives on the scene to qualify to be their king and advocate, which role delivers them from God's eternal condemnation, and 2) God changes them inwardly, so that their heart commitment is to believe in Jesus as the Messiah and NOT to make themselves worthy of being "children of the father" by obeying the religion of the Mosaic Covenant. Thus, Paul calls the transition from their "childhood under the covenant," which was not a childhood as property owners of eternal mercy and life, to an "adoption" (τὴν υἰοθεσίαν). As children under the covenant, they were like slaves. Therefore, they needed to be "adopted" by God in order to change from like-slaveness as "children" to adults. The transition is a taking on of the role of being Yahweh's children in a new and radically different way from how they were the children of God in the Old Testament. In Exodus 4:22, God calls the Jews both "Israel" and His "son" to highlight what He intends to do to the Egyptians by killing their firstborn sons if Pharaoh does not release the Jews and allow them to leave Egypt. However, to be adopted by God as a "son" through belief in Jesus, His Messiah, *now that Jesus has appeared and offered himself on the cross to Him*, is to be granted eternal mercy and life, which technically could NOT be achieved through the Mosaic Covenant because of Jesus' central role in the purposes of God.

Paul also calls what Jesus has accomplished for the Jews a “deliverance” (ἐξαγοράση). The reason for the change is the that the transition from slaveness to adulthood by any Jew required being rescued from God’s eternal condemnation. The Jews’ slaveness under the Mosaic Covenant left them in a condition where they were not children of their Father, God, the way they needed to be in order to obtain His eternal mercy. Therefore, even the Jews who were naturally descended from Abraham had to be “adopted” as sons of God in the sense that they had to be rescued from God’s condemnation because of their moral depravity—and this only through Jesus’ role as Messiah and Priest, NOT through the Mosaic Covenant. Thus, Paul has been arguing that the Jews’ physical descendancy from Abraham and their religious commitment to the Mosaic Covenant does not automatically make them God’s children and heirs of eternal life. It is their belief in Jesus as the Messiah through the inward work of the Spirit which does—as is the case with Gentiles, too. Cf. Romans 9.

⁸² ὅτι δὲ ἔστε υἱοί, ἐξαπέστειλεν ὁ θεὸς τὸ πνεῦμα τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ εἰς τὰς καρδίας ἡμῶν κράζον· ἀββὰ ὁ πατήρ – Paul now addresses his Gentile readers who have become believers in Jesus, the Jewish Messiah who rescues Jews under the Mosaic Covenant from God’s condemnation. They, like the believing Jews, are sons of God, meaning that they too have been adopted by Him to inherit His eternal mercy and life. This means, also, that they are now just as much full adults children of the father in the Roman household analogy and not like slaves as even the Jews had been, which accords with 3:28 that there is neither Jew nor Gentile when we are talking about the eternal status before God of those associated with Jesus the Messiah by virtue of their Spirit caused belief.

We also notice that Paul uses the same word ἐξαπέστειλεν = He sent that he used to refer in 4:4 to God’s sending the Son “when the fullness of time came.” Here, it is that God has sent the Spirit of His Son, i.e., the Holy Spirit who was promised and prayed for by the Son and whose work is in line with God’s purposes for the Son, into the hearts of these Galatian Gentile believers to cause them to be authentic believers in Jesus (cf. John 17). He also says that the result is they all cry out to God, calling Him “Papa” (Abba in Aramaic), meaning that they are acknowledging their “adoption” by God, thus making explicit how even the Jews are adopted as sons as Paul spoke about it in the previous verse. This means the same thing for the Gentiles as their being delivered from God’s eternal condemnation through Jesus, which he also mentioned in 4:4. As a result, the Galatian Gentile believers have gone through the same kind of spiritual and religious transition as the Jewish believers, as Paul goes to explain in 4:7.

Paul writes as though it is God’s Spirit who does the crying out, but he means that the Spirit *causes* the Gentiles to do so.

In addition, there is a variant in the text, that “our hearts” could be “your hearts,” and the latter makes more sense in the context. Just as God uses His Spirit to change Jews inwardly and rescue them from His eternal condemnation (implied in 4:1-5), so also God used His Spirit to change Paul’s readers, the Galatian Gentiles, and adopt them so to speak as His children.

⁸³ ὥστε οὐκέτι ὁ δοῦλος ἀλλ’ υἱός· εἰ δὲ υἱός, καὶ κληρονόμος διὰ θεοῦ – Paul continues with the metaphor of father, son, and slave in a household. While a Jew is like a child under the tutelage of the Mosaic Covenant and, therefore, not a property owner, thus rendering him no better off than a slave, a Gentile is also like a “slave” amongst the same family. Neither one has ownership of the “father’s property.” However, with the appearance of Jesus, both the believing Jew and the believing Gentile leave their state of being a child like a slave and a slave like a slave respectively and become adopted sons (adults) of God and full heirs of God’s “property” of eternal mercy and salvation through their belief in Jesus.

We also notice that the implied situation for the Gentile as being like a “slave” without being a “child” is that the Gentile was never “under the basic dynamics of the ordered religious system” (ὑπὸ τὰ στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου; cf. 4:3). Only the Jew can be such, because the Mosaic Covenant is intended by God to be a strictly *Jewish* covenant. The Gentile is under the same basic dynamics, i.e., those of his pagan religious system (cf. 4:3,9), but not under the Jewish Mosaic Covenant.

In addition, the Jew did not appear to be an owner of his Father’s full “property” of eternal mercy any more than the Gentile did, because the Messiah had not yet come. However, now that the Messiah has come and God has inwardly changed Gentiles, they are just as much sons of God who are heirs of the fullness of God’s inheritance of eternal mercy and life as the Jews who are properly doing so. The result will be that the Gentiles will receive eternal life on the basis of their belief in the Messiah, not on the basis of their performance of the Mosaic Covenant, just as much as the Jews will do the same on the basis of their belief in the Messiah. Therefore, Jews and Gentiles both get adopted as children of God by the same mechanism—by the inward work of the Holy Spirit to change them and cause them to become genuine believers in the crucified Jesus as the Messiah. And this has nothing to do with following the Mosaic Covenant for either of them.

⁸⁴ ἀλλὰ τότε μὲν οὐκ εἰδότες θεὸν ἐδουλεύσατε τοῖς ὀφύσει μὴ οὖσιν θεοῖς – Paul now reminds the Galatian Christians of that they had come from pagan polytheism. Now, if all they do is believe in Jesus the Messiah, they are sons of God. But if they submit to the influence of the erroneous theology of the Jews with the circumcision mindset, it will lead them back to where they were before they became Christians—outside God’s eternal mercy and “children” like “slaves.”

Before they knew and believed in the one true God, the God of the Jews whose Messiah is Jesus, on the basis of Paul’s exposing them to the ideas of the NT message, they were committed to granting total influence in their lives to forces within the creation that are not really gods *per se*, because the transcendent Creator is in control of them.

Like the Jews under strictly the tutelage of the Mosaic Covenant, the Gentiles were not yet heirs of eternal life as they engaged in pagan idolatry and its principles of operation, which are humanly the same as those of the circumcision mindset—committed to making oneself worthy of the god’s favor through religious performance, drawing from their moral depravity.

⁸⁵ νῦν δὲ γνόντες θεόν, μᾶλλον δὲ γνωσθέντες ὑπὸ θεοῦ, πῶς ἐπιστρέφετε πάλιν ἐπὶ τὰ ἄσθενῆ καὶ πτωχὰ στοιχεῖα οἷς πάλιν ἄνωθεν ἡδουλεύειν θέλετε; – The Galatian Christians had transitioned from pagan polytheism to the only legitimate belief in God in this world, that of the Jewish God along with His Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth. This had set them free from the mentality of pagan polytheism, which Paul is indicating is the same as that of the circumcision mindset of the Jews with the erroneous theology. Just as the Gentile Galatian Christians had attempted to appease and please their multiply “gods” within the creation with their religious actions and make themselves worthy of the gods’ benefiting them with good things, they are now attempting to do the same with the biblical God and His blessing of eternal mercy and life. In other words, the στοιχεῖα (dynamics) of polytheism are the same as those of the biblical theology of the Jews who are influencing them in as much as the latter has a distorted view of Jesus and God’s grace. They are the commitments to religious performance and making oneself deserving of blessings, while drawing upon one’s moral depravity.

Thus, to add obedience of the religious commandments of the Mosaic Covenant to the definition of an authentic Christian is like adding pagan idol worship to belief in Jesus as the definition of authentic biblical obedience. The worldly dynamic of engaging in religious activity to please the pagan gods is the same dynamic of the circumcision mindset, perhaps minus the intimidation and compulsion—or not, because the Roman society criticized Christians for abandoning their gods who needed to be pleased so that they would support the empire. Thus, when things later go bad for the Roman Empire, the pagans thought that those who were not following their religious principles, the Christians, were to blame for making the gods angry. Thus, intimidation became *the* manner of relating to non-pagans, i.e., Christians, by persecuting them. Interestingly enough, the Jews had always been exempt from being required to worship the Romans gods—except after the Jewish revolt in A.D. 70 when Emperor Vespasian imposed a tax on the Jews that went towards the support of the pagan temple of Jupiter Capitolinus in Rome and its cult.

This allows us to derive an important principle of life. When an individual is not willing to join the masses and be unified with them in their worldview, dynamics of life, and actions by which they are calming their fears that are arising from the elements of human existence which are out of their control, he himself becomes feared and must be eliminated so as not to disrupt the apparent equilibrium of the masses and their world. They use the individual as a scapegoat for their inability to eliminate all their fears. Cf. The Scapegoat by René Girard.

In our secular times, the word “religious” is not used to label the beliefs and actions of the masses, but it might as well be, because the mentality is the same—whereby they are making themselves worthy of their “gods.” These “gods” include being affirmed and accepted by everyone around them in their culture. Indeed, in our case, the culture and its approval is the “god” of these people.

⁸⁶ ἡμέρας ἡ παρατηρεῖσθε καὶ μῆνας καὶ καιροὺς καὶ ἐνιαυτοὺς – Paul lists the religious actions of the Galatian Christians by which they are trying to earn God’s blessings. They are committed to performing the Mosaic Covenant’s holy days and festivals the same way they were to their pagan holy days and festivals—and with the same mindset, to gain God’s favor apart from accepting His mercy through His grace and their belief in Jesus the Messiah. Therefore, I have translated παρατηρεῖσθε with the two words “meticulously observing.” The careful and precise nature of their observing holy days is with the belief that their religious performance is making them deserving of God’s blessings, even His using Jesus as their advocate at the final judgment.

⁸⁷ φοβοῦμαι ὑμᾶς μή πως εἰκῇ ἡ κεκοπίακα εἰς ὑμᾶς – Paul’s concern is that, after the Galatians enthusiastically received his information of God’s grace and the Jewish Messiah in regard to their personal eternal salvations, they never had authentic belief in the first place, so that his hard work of presenting them the NT message will not turn out to be eternally beneficial for them.

Once a person encounters the message of grace, one would think that he would never again resort to religious performance to make himself worthy of God’s blessings. However, because of our immoral nature at the level of the very essence of our being, even while we commit ourselves in our hearts to pursuing life according to the biblical truth, we will simply naturally tend to fall back into an erroneous perspective which is a basic denial of God’s grace. This is why constant exposure to the truth of the Bible is vital to our daily lives—to keep us on the right track.

⁸⁸ γίνεσθε ὡς ἐγώ, ὅτι καὶ γὰρ ὡς ὑμεῖς, ἀδελφοί, δέομαι ὑμῶν. – Just as Peter was existing like a Gentile among the Antiochene Gentile Christians by submitting completely to God’s grace without any thought that his religious activity of eating kosher within the Mosaic Covenant was gaining God’s favor, so is Paul and did Paul when he was first with the Galatians. Now he wants his Galatian Gentile readers to return to this mindset of pure grace and belief in Jesus the Messiah as he had demonstrated and taught when he first presented the gospel to them.

⁸⁹ οὐδὲν με ἡδικήσατε – Paul’s Galatian readers initially acknowledged that Paul was an authentic apostle of Jesus as the Messiah and had treated him with great deference, because it seemed that they really grasped the significance of God’s grace and the Messiah. They in no way considered him the bad guy, the way they are now because of having been influenced by the Jews with the circumcision mindset. They are now thinking that Paul did a good job of introducing them to the concept of Jesus as the Messiah, but he did not communicate the fullness of the gospel which

requires obedience to the religious commandments of the Mosaic Covenant (and thereby making oneself worthy of God's blessings of eternal mercy and life).

⁹⁰ οἴδατε δὲ ὅτι δι' ἀσθένειαν τῆς σαρκὸς εὐηγγελισάμην ὑμῖν τὸ πρότερον – Under normal circumstances, Paul's physical illness of a major eye problem (?) would be a deterrent to anyone's being willing to listen to him. He was simply hard to look at. However, the Galatians had such a strong interest in what he was saying that they enthusiastically overlooked the potentially offensive appearance of this infirmity that involved his eyes (cf. 4:15). EBC – Many attempts have been made to identify the precise nature of Paul's illness and link it to the question whether he is writing to Christians in northern or southern Galatia. But it is impossible to be so precise. Some have imagined that Paul was suffering from a form of malaria he had contracted while on the mosquito-infested coast and that he had therefore left the coastal area for the highlands to recuperate there. Others have guessed that Paul is referring to the physical abuse and resulting weakness he had suffered at Lystra (Acts 14:19; 2Tim 3:11) as a result of which he may have remained longer in southern Galatia than he had intended. Still others have linked Paul's illness to his "thorn in the flesh" (2Cor 12:7) and to his reference to the desire of the Galatians to give him their eyes (v.15). On the basis of these verses they have supposed that Paul was suffering from an eye disorder, perhaps some form of ophthalmia. That Paul was suffering from bad eyesight is possible (see on 6:11), but it is not necessary to find a reference to that here. The only thing we can say with certainty is that some form of unpleasant illness lay behind Paul's first visit to the Galatians and that, though they could have despised him for his resulting appearance or weakness, they did not and, instead, received him favorably.

⁹¹ καὶ τὸν πειρασμὸν ὁμῶν ἐν τῇ σαρκί μου οὐκ ἐξουθενήσατε οὐδὲ ἐξεπτύσατε, ἀλλὰ ὡς ἄγγελον θεοῦ ἐδέξασθέ με, ὡς Χριστὸν Ἰησοῦν – From a strictly human standpoint, Paul would not have been surprised if the Galatians had wanted to wait until his physical illness was gone before they would listen to him. It was this difficult to be in his presence. However, his illness was no impediment at all to their wanting to hear what he had to say about Jesus as the Messiah. Thus, authentic belief which comes from the inward work of God allows people to zero in on the truth of the message in the midst of difficult and unfavorable circumstances, which might normally make them reluctant to be in someone else's presence if the information the person is providing is not so important. Indeed, it was as though Paul, in their minds, was a true messenger of God, as though he was the Messiah himself, even though of course he would vigorously deny this.

And was Paul's poor physical appearance an indication to the Jews of the circumcision mindset that he was not blessed by God and, therefore, wrong in his message of grace/belief vs. the Mosaic Covenant? Did they believe that if he committed himself to following the religious commandments of the covenant, then God would heal him? Perhaps.

⁹² τοῦ οὖν τὸ μακαρισμὸς ὑμῶν· μαρτυρῶ γὰρ ὑμῖν ὅτι εἰ δυνατόν τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς ὑμῶν ἐξορύξαντες ἐδώκατέ μοι – Nevertheless, the Galatians' interest in the biblical truth was so strong that they were willing to lose their own eyes to gain access to it through Paul. To him, this certainly seemed like a sure sign that God was working within them to cause them to believe. Their enthusiastic and strong attraction to the concepts of God's grace and His Messiah which he was championing seemed to Paul to be completely genuine and God-given.

⁹³ ὥστε ἐχθρὸς ὑμῶν γέγονα ἀληθεύων ὑμῖν – Accordingly, Paul is wondering where this initial desire for the core elements of the gospel went in these Galatian Christians. The Jews of a circumcision mindset obviously have worked hard to turn the Galatians against Paul, so that they now consider him basically an enemy of God and the truth. This is how different their message is. And they have practically succeeded—an astonishing turn of events for Paul, that people who had been so interested in the truth of grace and solely the Messiah are now so hostile towards it. But this is the case, that all human beings are fundamentally antagonistic towards God and the biblical truth, which antagonism God overrides when He changes a person's heart and causes him to become committed at this level to genuine belief in Jesus as the Messiah and the ramifications of the cross, that God's grace must initiate and keep initiating in a person in order for him to remain enthusiastic about and committed to the pure apostolic message and thereby obtain eternal mercy and life.

⁹⁴ ζηλοῦσιν ὑμᾶς οὐ καλῶς, ἀλλὰ ἐκκλεῖσαι ὑμᾶς θέλουσιν, ἵνα αὐτοὺς ζηλοῦτε τ· – Here Paul offers insight into the psychological and emotional state of the Jewish teachers with the circumcision mindset. As he implied in Galatians 1:10, this kind of erroneous perspective on the biblical message results in people desperately seeking approval from other human beings, not from God. And, in this case, the promoters of error are using the strategy of threatening to bar the Galatian believers from participating in the Christian community, only so that these believers will feel the pain of being excluded from the group with whom they must desire to be and, thereby, be willing to comply with the religious demands of these men. Then, in the final analysis, the goal of these supposed leaders of Christianity, which is characterized not by grace and belief, but by performing religious actions, is to manipulate people into submitting to their leadership, only to build up their egos. They do not really want what is best for the Galatian Gentile Christians, i.e., God's eternal mercy and life, like Paul. They want to satisfy their own selfish craving for power by subtly demanding people's loyalty to them.

Rather than taking Paul seriously as an apostle, his Galatian readers are listening to the Jews with a circumcision mindset, who see a person's relationship with God through mainly the lens of religious performance of the Mosaic Covenant which they believe makes a person worthy of God's mercy through Jesus. And here Paul begins explaining the relational, not just theological, problem of these Mosaic Covenant focused Jews. It would be one thing for these Jews to adhere improperly and too strongly to the Mosaic Covenant while *properly* relying on God's grace through

Jesus as the Messiah for His mercy and salvation, like the “weaker” brother in Romans 14, who can still treat Gentiles who are not focused on the Mosaic Covenant with patience, kindness, and acceptance as authentic believers of equal status before God. But it is a whole another thing for them to look down on, act superior to, pressure, intimidate and even ostracize these Gentile believers, thus demonstrating an attitude which completely misunderstands God’s grace and will gain them only God’s condemnation, not mercy (cf. Galatians 1:8,9; 4:29; 5:15,26; 6:3,12). And the theological irony is that to the degree that these harsh Jewish believers ostracize the Gentile believers for their lack of religious, Jewish orthodoxy, to the same degree Paul is declaring them excluded from God’s mercy. However, Paul is not doing so out of self-righteousness and an air of superiority. He does so out of abject humility and as an authorized apostle of the Messiah, knowing and counting on only God’s grace to be the ultimate factor in his obtaining eternal mercy and salvation through his belief in Jesus as the crucified Messiah.

Indeed, as Paul states in this verse, a dead giveaway of a Galatian mindset is when a group ostracizes other sinners from their “in group” until they comply with their doctrinal, religious, and moral demands, i.e., their orthodoxy—in this case, until the Gentiles submit to these Jews’ pressure to perform the Mosaic Covenant with an attitude of making themselves worthy of God’s mercy. And Paul is trying to lead the Galatians back to the truth of the apostolic message of grace and the Messiah. The circumcision mindset Jews understand the psychological and emotional value of withholding acceptance and participation in their group to those who disagree with them. In other words, it is working. But Paul is hoping to convince these Gentile believers otherwise—that the approval of these Jews is not worth abandoning the truth of grace and the Messiah, along with eternal life and salvation.

⁹⁵ καλὸν δὲ ζηλοῦσθαι ἐν καλῷ πάντοτε καὶ μὴ μόνον ἐν τῷ παρεῖναι με πρὸς ὑμᾶς – Paul wants to allow for others besides himself to visit the Galatians and help them in their understanding of the truth. However, their motivation must be to lead them towards that which is good and not evil, the latter of which is what is happening with the Jewish Christians with the circumcision mindset. Their whole approach to Christianity is the very opposite of what it should be.

⁹⁶ τέκνα μου, οὓς πάλιν ὠδίνω μέχρις οὗ μορφωθῇ Χριστὸς ἐν ὑμῖν – Paul is not concerned about their allegiance to him as the false teachers are in regard to themselves. Instead, he wants them to know the Messiah and believe in him for the sake of their eternal salvations. So once again he feels like a mother who is giving birth to children such that their birth means that they are settled in their commitment to God’s grace and Jesus the Messiah apart from thinking that religious activity contributes to their gaining favor with God. He thought that they were there before he left them and after he had presented the NT message to them. Now, it is as though they are back to square one, and he has to wait until they recapture the same understanding of the news of the Messiah that they had when he first interacted with them.

⁹⁷ ἤθελον δὲ παρεῖναι πρὸς ὑμᾶς ἄρτι καὶ ἀλλάξαι τὴν φωνήν μου, ὅτι ἀποροῦμαι ἐν ὑμῖν – Paul would rather be with the Galatians and have a nice conversation about God’s grace and the Messiah the way he had when he first presented them with this message. If this were the case, then he would not have to speak to them in a somewhat aggressive and harsh manner which he is using right now in this letter. But he is frustrated and confused and recognizes that he is coming across this way. How could the Galatian Christians so suddenly change their understanding of God to what is extremely erroneous in accordance with the Jewish Christians of a circumcision mindset?

⁹⁸ λέγετέ μοι, οἱ ὑπὸ νόμον θέλοντες εἶναι, τὸν νόμον οὐκ ἄκούετε; – The foundational documents for even Paul’s gospel is the Torah, the Jewish scriptures, which of course the Jewish Christians with the circumcision mindset would agree. But they are not really listening to it, because they are placing themselves “under the Covenant” instead of under God’s grace, and they are dragging the Galatian Gentile Christians down into this error also. Thus, Paul wants them all to think through exactly what the Jewish Torah is saying, which he will now explain by using two events as the basis for a helpful allegory/analogy with which to teach his readers. While it is true that the author of Genesis was not specifically teaching these lessons by writing down the stories of Hagar, Ishmael, Sarah, and Isaac, Paul is going to use them for this purpose.

He is continuing his instruction from the previous part of the letter that people who consider the Mosaic Covenant to be the basis of their salvation are not really listening to the Torah, because it teaches the necessity of promise, grace, miracle, and inward change as the necessary human condition to bring about the result of eternal blessing and mercy in contrast to natural, human performance, especially of religious commandments and principles.

⁹⁹ γέγραπται γάρ ὅτι Ἀβραάμ δύο υἱοὺς ἔσχεν. ἓνα ἐκ τῆς παιδείας καὶ ἓνα ἐκ τῆς ἐλευθέρως – cf. Genesis 16 and 21, which are the stories of the births of first Abraham’s son Ishmael through Hagar, the Egyptian slave, and second Isaac through his wife Sarah. Paul calls Hagar the “slave woman” and Sarah the “free woman,” labels which were basically true of both Hagar, a handmaiden and servant, and Sarah, a woman whose status was that of being free and not enslaved to anyone else. Paul will now go on to explain how he is going to use the status of each woman as similar to his argument in this letter.

¹⁰⁰ ἀλλ’ ὁ ὅμως ἐκ τῆς παιδείας κατὰ σάρκα γεγέννηται, ὁ δὲ ἐκ τῆς ἐλευθέρως ἔδι’ ἐπαγγελίας – The conception and birth of Isaac required a miracle of God and His being gracious to Abraham and Sarah, who, like all human beings, did not deserve the gift of a son, while indeed Sarah was also barren. The conception and birth of Ishmael did not involve a miracle *per se*, because it came about simply by natural human actions, i.e., Abraham’s having sex with Hagar.

In this case, “according to the flesh” (κατὰ σάρκα) does not have to include the meaning of evil and rebellion against

God. Paul is more likely using the phrase only to highlight the fact that Ishmael's birth was not in line with God's promise to Abraham of physical descendants (cf. Genesis 12:1-3,7). Therefore, it was not within the context of God's grace which results in belief in the truth for the sake of a person's participating in the fulfillment of God's promises.

¹⁰¹ ἄτινά ἐστιν ἀλληγορούμενα· αὐταὶ γὰρ εἰσιν δύο διαθήκαι, μία μὲν ἀπὸ ὄρους Σινᾶ εἰς δουλείαν γεννώσα, ἥτις ἐστὶν Ἀγάρ – This is the only use of ἀλληγορέω in the NT. If we take the fact that the two events to which Paul is referring, the births of Isaac through Sarah and Ishmael through Hagar, do not directly refer to the Mosaic Covenant, then we can understand him to be saying that he is using these stories in a way for which they were not originally intended by the biblical author Moses. Consequently, Paul is using them as an allegory/analogy, meaning that he is going to use certain elements of these stories to make a point which will correspond to what he has been arguing in Galatians regarding the promises of God coming about through only His grace, while human beings, especially Jews who have been given the Mosaic Covenant, derive a meaning from this Covenant to the effect that all people, Jews and Gentiles, must obey the religious commandments of the Covenant in order to make themselves worthy of God's blessings and promises, even while embracing Jesus as the crucified Messiah. However, the concept of "crucified" becomes completely misunderstood and overlooked in this way of thinking.

As a result, Paul is saying that the events of Hagar, Sarah's *slave*, and Ishmael's birth can be likened to the erroneous perspective which the Jews of the circumcision mindset have derived from the Mosaic Covenant. This perspective ends up bearing children (γεννώσα) who have this false mindset. It is not that God through the Mosaic Covenant encourages people to make themselves worthy of His blessings by obeying its religious commandments. It is that human beings naturally go this direction, thus making them slaves of their own moral rebellion against God at the level of both their moral essence and their heart commitments. They also never become authentic children of God, but remain slaves without the father's property as explained by Paul in the previous analogy of the Roman family. Consequently, like Ishmael, these people, even Jews who are physically members of the chosen people of God, are outside the promises of God. Cf. Genesis 21:10, "And [Sarah] said to Abraham, 'Drive out this slave and her son, because the son of this slave will not be an heir with my son Isaac.'"

¹⁰² τὸ 'δὲ Ἀγάρ Σινᾶ' ὅρος ἐστὶν ἐν τῇ Ἀραβίᾳ· 'συστοιχεῖ δὲ' τῇ νῦν Ἱερουσαλὴμ, δουλεύει γὰρ μετὰ τῶν τέκνων αὐτῆς – Paul goes on to connect the enslaved people of the erroneous mindset with the Jews living in Jerusalem in his time. Thus, the current Jewish culture centered in the leadership in Jerusalem and that includes the Jewish Christians against whom he is writing are actually outside the Abrahamic promises because of their circumcision mindset of focusing on scrupulously following the religious commandments of the Mosaic Covenant in order to make themselves worthy of God's promises and blessings (cf. Matthew 23:23).

Of course, this statement by Paul would be highly offensive to all Jews of a circumcision mindset, that Paul is likening them to Ishmael, saying that they are "born" of an Egyptian slave.

It is interesting that Paul uses the verb συστοιχεῖ which comes from the same root as στοιχεῖα in 4:3,9. Thus, he is saying that people of a circumcision mindset with respect to the Mosaic Covenant are using the same principles of existence, the same dynamics, as Abraham did with Hagar and Ishmael, "I can help God out by my human performance and not have to count strictly on His grace to accomplish what He has promised" (whether or not these dynamics are considered rebellious towards God).

¹⁰³ ἡ δὲ ἄνω Ἱερουσαλὴμ ἐλευθέρᾳ ἐστίν, ἥτις ἐστὶν μήτηρ τῶν ἡμῶν – Paul moves on to associate himself and his fellow believers in Jesus the Messiah, *who have a proper understanding and commitment to God's grace and the Messiah*, with the "freedom" of the children of God, who have become such by virtue of God's having independently and graciously changed them inwardly (again, in line with the previous analogy of the Roman family). And he uses the label "Jerusalem above" to refer specifically to a second kind of Judaism that of course could include Gentiles who recognize their not needing to follow the Mosaic Covenant in the midst of their belief in Jesus in order to gain the ultimate blessing of Abraham of eternal life. This Jerusalem above is the one which comes from God in the millennial kingdom when all Jews (and Gentiles who choose to associate with them) will become authentic believers on the land of Israel. This will all be God's doing and not man's.

Thus, Paul's perspective ends up bearing children (γεννώσα from 4:24) who have a correct understanding of biblical theology and are free from performing the religious commandments of the Mosaic Covenant (even as Jews!) and from thinking that their religious performance makes them deserving of God's blessings. Therefore, anyone who follows in the footsteps of Abraham and Sarah with respect to their authentic belief is "free," in the sense that he is operating within the Abrahamic Covenant and its characteristics of divine grace and promise as opposed to those who follow in the footsteps of Abraham and Hagar who merely had a child by the conventional, natural method.

Again, this freedom also implies that a person is no longer enslaved to moral depravity and to the mindset of living religiously to earn God's blessings, so that Paul can say that these people, both Jews and Gentiles, are "born" of Sarah, the free woman of promise. Obviously, it is better to be called a "son of Sarah" than a "son of an Egyptian slave."

¹⁰⁴ γέγραπται γὰρ· εὐφράνθητι, στεῖρα ἢ οὐ τίκτουσα, ῥῆξον καὶ βόησον, ἢ οὐκ ὠδίνουσα· ὅτι πολλὰ τὰ τέκνα τῆς ἐρήμου μάλλον ἢ τῆς ἐχούσης τὸν ἄνδρα – In Isaiah 54, Israel is likened to an abandoned wife, because God has handed the nation over to the Babylonians to lead them into exile and away from the land of Israel. Thus, Israel is "barren" with respect to having participants who are authentic believers and pleasing to God. But God will restore Israel to the land and regenerate every Jewish heart miraculously in the millennial kingdom when Jesus returns (cf. Deuteronomy 29,30 and the Prophets). In this way, "barren" Israel, like barren Sarah, will have more true children of

God than the “fertile” Israel of Paul’s time, like fertile Hagar. “Fertile” Israel, i.e., the Jews of Jerusalem with the erroneous circumcision mindset, has been intimidating everyone into focusing on and following the Mosaic Covenant, especially the religious commandments—at the expense of focusing on God’s grace and Jesus as the Messiah. It was this mindset among the Jewish leaders which actually rejected the Messiah and crucified him.

¹⁰⁵ ὑμεῖς δέ, ἀδελφοί, κατὰ Ἰσαὰκ ἐπαγγελίας τέκνα ἔστε – Consequently, the Gentile Galatian believers are participants in the group who will receive the Abrahamic promise of the blessing of eternal mercy and life in the same manner that Isaac miraculously received earthly life through his barren mother Sarah and his aged father Abraham (100 years old!)—strictly by the miraculous working of God’s grace.

¹⁰⁶ ἀλλ’ ὥσπερ τότε ὁ κατὰ σάρκα γεννηθεὶς ἐδίωκεν τὸν κατὰ πνεῦμα, οὕτως καὶ νῦν – Ishmael, the natural child, mistreated Isaac and looked down on him, the supernatural child (cf. Genesis 21:9, “And Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, whom she had borne to Abraham, laughing [at Isaac]”). The same kind of thing is happening in Paul’s day—the biblically religious people of the circumcision mindset who are performing their spirituality naturally (in their case, according to their moral rebellion against God) are mistreating the people who are performing their spirituality supernaturally.

As Paul has been arguing, a dead giveaway of a Galatian mindset is when people try to intimidate others to conform to their beliefs and religious performance in order to be accepted into their group. Thus, they mistreat authentic believers who are relying on God’s grace through Jesus as their advocate for His mercy rather than on their adherence to religious principles, such as a set of ideas derived from creeds, or such as an institutionalized religion which involves a church organization.

¹⁰⁷ ἀλλὰ τί λέγει ἡ γραφή: ἔκβαλε τὴν παιδίσκην καὶ τὸν υἱὸν αὐτῆς· οὐ γὰρ μὴ κληρονομήσει ὁ υἱὸς τῆς παιδίσκης μετὰ τοῦ υἱοῦ ‘τῆς ἐλευθέρως’. – cf. Genesis 21:10 – פָּרַחַם עַם־בְּנֵי עֵשָׂא אֶת־יִצְחָק בְּנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל לֵאמֹר לֹא־יָרִיד עִמָּנוּ אֶת־הָאָרֶץ (LXX – καὶ εἶπεν τῷ Ἀβραάμ Ἐκβαλε τὴν παιδίσκην ταύτην καὶ τὸν υἱὸν αὐτῆς· οὐ γὰρ κληρονομήσει ὁ υἱὸς τῆς παιδίσκης ταύτης μετὰ τοῦ υἱοῦ μου Ἰσαὰκ), “And [Sarah] said to Abraham, ‘Throw out this slave and her son, because the son of this slave shall not be an heir with my son Isaac.’” Even though it was Sarah who said this, Paul uses it as “scripture,” i.e., as what is true. Indeed, Ishmael technically is outside the promises and blessings of the Abrahamic Covenant, especially that of becoming the “great nation” with the Messiah ruling over them and the whole earth.

Paul uses the truth of Sarah’s statement to indicate that those who remain “enslaved” to operating on the basis of their natural born rebellion and trying to use the Mosaic Covenant as their basis of salvation will not inherit eternal life with those who operate on the basis of God’s work of grace within them by means of His Spirit and belief in Jesus as the Messiah. Only the latter are living according to God’s promises. The former do not understand the meaning of the concept of divine promises, His grace, and the Messiah. The irony is that the religious outcasts and persecuted ones on earth are actually members of the in-group in “heaven,” i.e., in the eternal Kingdom of God.

Thus, Paul encourages the authentic Galatian believers to “kick out” the false teachers by not allowing them to influence them to abandon the truth of the gospel of Jesus the Messiah and God’s grace.

¹⁰⁸ ῥδιό, ἀδελφοί, οὐκ ἔσμεν παιδίσκης τέκνα ἀλλὰ τῆς ἐλευθέρως – Here Paul clearly means by the “we” both Jewish and Gentile Christians, including obviously both his Gentile readers in Galatia and himself as the Jewish apostle to the Gentiles. Authentic believers, whether Jews or Gentiles, are birthed by God’s promise and miracle of grace, not by their own human pursuit of religious performance, by which they hope to make themselves worthy of God’s blessing. If anyone pursues life in the latter manner of religious performance which is supposed to impress God and motivate Him to grant the person His blessings, then he ends up in miserable failure, even eternal condemnation and destruction.

¹⁰⁹ τῇ ἐλευθερίᾳ ἡμᾶς Χριστὸς ἠλευθέρωσεν· στήκετε οὖν· καὶ μὴ πάλιν ζυγῷ δουλείας ἐνέχεσθε – A religious performance mindset is a heavy yoke that is impossible to carry in order to obtain God’s mercy. It, therefore, results in being outside of God’s promises. Only freedom from this yoke under God’s grace results in being inside God’s promises and obtaining eternal salvation. This is the meaning of Jesus’ death, that we need God’s grace to be set free from God’s eternal condemnation and cannot make ourselves acceptable to Him, because all our efforts will result in only eternal death.

As Paul has been arguing, this freedom includes for Jews not having to stick to the Mosaic Covenant when it is either not possible (living outside the land of Israel) or not appropriate (eating food which is not kosher with Gentiles).

¹¹⁰ Ἴδε ἐγὼ Παῦλος λέγω ὑμῖν ὅτι ἐὰν περιτέμνησθε, Χριστὸς ὑμᾶς οὐδὲν ὠφελήσει – It is not that circumcision is evil, but here the word stands for the mentality of adding it and obedience to the Mosaic Covenant to the requirement of believing the truth of God regarding Jesus as the Messiah, along with thinking that it can make a person worthy of obtaining eternal life, i.e., seeing Genesis 17 (religion) and the Mosaic Covenant as the basis of salvation and eternal life. Paul is reiterating that this circumcision mindset is worth nothing but condemnation from God, not His blessing. Someone can declare all day long that he believes in God’s grace and Jesus as the Messiah, while singing hymns to Jesus *ad infinitum*, but if he also adds to his declaration and singing some kind of religious performance for people to do, along with intimidating them into doing it, in order for them to gain eternal life, then this is of no eternal benefit to anybody, and he may not have eternal life!

¹¹¹ μαρτύρομαι δὲ ἄλλιν παντὶ ἀνθρώπῳ περιτεμνομένῳ ὅτι ὀφειλέτης ἐστὶν ὅλον τὸν νόμον ῥποιῆσαι – Here, Paul could mean that a person who sees the Mosaic Covenant as the basis of salvation is obligated to think of his whole life as governed strictly by it so that every decision he makes is a Jewish decision. But I think it makes more sense that he means by “doing the whole Torah” doing it correctly, with authentic belief. The person of a circumcision mindset is not taking into account the entirety of the OT teaching regarding eternal life, especially the Abrahamic Covenant and its promises, which Paul has already addressed in chapters 3 & 4. The circumcision mindset person is so focused on the Mosaic Covenant that he insists on inappropriately adding it to belief in Jesus as the Messiah, instead of seeing according to Deuteronomy 10:16 and Deuteronomy 30 that a divinely caused inward change resulting in authentic belief is the necessary condition for being blessed by God, thus disqualifying himself from the benefits of believing in Jesus as the Messiah. Cf. Galatians 4:21.

¹¹² κατηγορήθητε ἀπὸ Χριστοῦ, οἵτινες ἐν νόμῳ δικαιοῦσθε, τῆς χάριτος ἐξεπέσατε – Again, Paul is not speaking of any Christians who are correctly counting on “being justified on the ‘basis’ of the Covenant,” which would be to see it strictly as a “tutor” and guide to the one and only means to God’s eternal mercy, the crucified Messiah, thus actually counting on “being justified *on the basis of the Messiah*.” He is speaking of people who are focused on the religious commandments of the Covenant as a means to make themselves worthy of God’s promises and blessings, while also claiming that they believe in His grace and the Messiah. By missing the point of the Messiah, they actually do not belong to the Messiah, regardless of how much they claim they do.

¹¹³ ἡμεῖς γὰρ πνεύματι ἐκ πίστεως ἐλπίδα δικαιοσύνης ἀπεκδεχόμεθα – Paul has been arguing that belief in the Messiah brought about by the miraculous, inward work of God’s Spirit is the necessary and sufficient condition for “being justified” (δικαιοῦσθε in 5:4 and δικαιοσύνης here in 5:5) for being in current state which will result in obtaining God’s eternal mercy and life. Thus, Paul and his fellow authentic believers are eagerly counting on only the divine mechanism of God’s activity within them which causes them to believe in the Messiah and will bring about the fulfillment of their expectation of eternal life. This is what will result from their being justified now. All authentic believers do the same and will receive the same.

This is instead of translating ἐλπίδα δικαιοσύνης “the hope of righteousness, i.e., moral perfection.” The context lends itself better to understanding Paul not to be talking about the content of the hope, an eternal life that is characterized by moral perfection, but instead to be talking about the effect of being in a condition in this life whereby a sinner stands to be forgiven, where the ultimate effect is still moral perfection.

The characteristic of “eagerly awaiting” eternal life and the Kingdom of God as God’s promise to Abraham and the Jews through the various covenants is key for Christians in the midst of life and its ups and downs in the present realm that is filled with so much sin and disappointment.

Romans 8:19 Thus, the eager longing of the creation eagerly awaits (ἀπεκδέχεται) the revelation of the sons of God.

Romans 8:23 And not only this, but we also, because we have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan within ourselves, while we eagerly await (ἀπεκδεχόμενοι) our adoption, being released from our body.

Romans 8:25 However, if we hope for what we do not see, we are eagerly awaiting it (ἀπεκδεχόμεθα) with patient endurance.

¹¹⁴ ἐν γὰρ Χριστῷ Ὁ Ἰησοῦ οὕτε περιτομή τι ἰσχύει οὕτε ἀκροβυστία ἀλλὰ πίστις δι’ ἀγάπης ἐνεργουμένη – Paul wants to make it clear that performing the religious commandments of the Mosaic Covenant is not illegal and immoral. Instead, it contributes nothing to one’s standing before God. It neither enhances it nor takes away from it. Instead, authentic belief in Jesus the Messiah which has been created by God’s loving work within a fundamentally immoral human being “means something” (ἰσχύει) and counts towards eternity in the Kingdom of God. Thus, outwardness does not qualify for mercy and eternal life; inwardness does. The addition of outward religious behavior is irrelevant in the light of authentic inwardness produced through the loving work of God by His Spirit which deals properly with one’s heart commitments which reorient a person towards accepting God’s gracious gift of mercy without thinking that there is something one can do to earn it. Because it is this important inward change which results in mercy and justification, nothing a person performs with his body or even his emotions contributes anything substantial in the sense that it makes the person worthy of obtaining God’s mercy. He cannot perform any action, e.g., prayer, worship, evangelism, service, etc., and he cannot make himself feel a particular way, even make himself feel faith, in order to impress God and convince Him to bless him. Only God’s activity and causation of genuine belief (along with pursuing morality; cf. 5:13ff.) ultimately impresses God.

Another possibility is that the “love” is that which results in authentic belief, i.e., a person’s love for God. But this is all the context of understanding properly God’s grace and the work of the His Spirit, which leads me to think that it is God’s love for a sinner that produces belief in Jesus as the Messiah.

¹¹⁵ ἐτρέχετε καλῶς· τίς ὑμᾶς ἐνέκοψεν ὁ[τῇ] ἀληθείᾳ μὴ πείθεσθαι; τ – In Paul’s opinion, these Galatian Christians had demonstrated authentic belief in their understanding of God’s grace and the message of Jesus as the Messiah when he presented all this information to them. However, since then, someone has aggressively worked on changing their minds about not only how a relationship with God functions, but also who is presenting them with truth. The claim of the circumcision mindset Jews is that Paul is a bearer of falsehood and error, and that they have the message correct.

This implies that we cannot tell from someone’s initial response to the gospel, even if it looks like genuine belief, that it really has come from the inward work of the Spirit of God. Instead, all belief must be tested over the course of time and through the difficulties of life.

¹¹⁶ ἡ πεισμονὴ οὐκ ἐκ τοῦ καλοῦντος ὑμᾶς – Paul is saying that being properly persuaded about truth comes from God, and that as much as the false teachers are trying to convince the Galatians that God is working through them and that their understanding of the biblical message is correct, they are wrong.

he is asking if this was not really the case for the Galatian Christians? Also, Paul knows that he is an apostle, and he must have explained how his obtaining this responsibility came about through Jesus' appearance to him on the road to Damascus (cf. Galatians 1:10ff. and Acts 9). Therefore, he is implying that the Galatians need to think through who is an authoritative teacher of the message of Jesus as the Messiah, and who is not.

Therefore, it is incumbent on all human beings to figure out rationally and logically who can be trusted to provide truth, and who cannot.

¹¹⁷ μικρὰ ζύμη ὅλον τὸ φύραμα ἔζυμοι. – In addition to stating categorically that God is not wanting the Galatians to adopt the false teachers' understanding of the Bible, he is saying that their perspective is like leaven and spreading insidiously through their community. Like culture in our day.

¹¹⁸ ἐγὼ πέποιθα εἰς ὑμᾶς ἐν κυρίῳ ὅτι οὐδὲν ἄλλο φρονήσετε ὁ δὲ ταράσσω ὑμᾶς βαστάσει τὸ κρίμα. ὅστις ἐὰν ᾗ – It sounds as though there is one person in particular who is attempting to be very persuasive in the Galatian Christians' lives with steering them toward a circumcision mindset. Not unusual that a single protagonist insinuates himself into a leadership position in order to stroke his own ego by getting people to think of him as really smart and right, this being another dead giveaway of a Galatian mindset. Even Paul is not doing this in spite of the fact that, intellectually speaking, he has a right to, because he is an apostle. He of course has the responsibility to be authoritative, but without being authoritarian. Not too many people can do this, but it was incumbent on the apostles to state the correct facts of Jesus as the Messiah and the ideas of the rest of the Bible without violating people's independence as thinkers who must make the choice to believe the gospel apart from any sense of coercion from others. This is also in line with the fact that people become and remain believers ultimately because of the work of God's grace through His Spirit within them. How much sense does it make for any human being to "compel" someone else to believe and obey the gospel, when it is only God who can transcendently cause him to do so?

Thus, Paul is encouraging the Galatian Christians to think very carefully about their situation and God's gracious persuasion of them in accordance with the message of the Messiah. He also indicates to them that the person who is attempting to foist and impose this error on them will incur a proper response from God, probably that of condemnation if his assessment of this man is correct that he not only understands the Bible incorrectly, but also lacks genuine faith because of the lack of his being gracious towards others.

¹¹⁹ ἐγὼ δέ, ἀδελφοί, εἰ περιτομὴν ἔτι κηρύσσω, τί ἔτι διώκομαι; ἄρα κατήργηται τὸ σκάνδαλον τοῦ σταυροῦ – It sounds as though someone, maybe all the false teachers, is saying that Paul actually agrees with him (them). But Paul points out that his experience is not one of being embraced by people of a religious and circumcision mindset. Instead, it is the exact opposite for the very reason that he presents the message of the cross for exactly what it is—and offense to man's pride whereby we all want to think that we have performed well enough for God that He is duly impressed with us and pays us with His blessings.

Thus, another key idea that helps understand Paul's discussion in this letter is that Jesus' crucifixion should first and foremost offend people, because it says that we cannot please God with our religious and moral actions, thus offending our pride. This also leads to realizing that the Mosaic Covenant focused and pagan mindsets rely on human pride and self-acclamation as their driving force.

Paul is so convinced of the truth of God's grace that he knows that adding human effort to it, even the effort to obey God through the very covenant which He made with the nation of Israel at Mt. Sinai, would make him a pursuer of falsehood, not truth. And it is the crucifixion of Jesus that proves this. What would be the point of the cross if a circumcision mindset were the correct way to gain God's eternal mercy? All that anyone would have to do to gain eternal life is to perform the Mosaic Covenant as best as possible with no real change of heart and coming to grips with the depth of his sin. But the message of the cross is that we morally depraved human beings are completely incapable of gaining favor with God by our own efforts. God must independently act toward us and be merciful to us, or we will encounter His eternal condemnation. Therefore, there is no way that Paul would encourage people to follow the religious commandments of the Mosaic Covenant and use it as the means and basis to obtain God's mercy, because to do so would be to ignore the point of Jesus' death, that human beings are so immoral that God must work within them first and change the commitments of their hearts in order for them to please Him by choosing to believe the truth of the Messiah, who is our advocate at the final judgment.

¹²⁰ Ὅφελον καὶ ἀποκόψονται οἱ ἀναστατοῦντες ὑμᾶς – Paul would never demand that Christians ostracize others who have even such a distorted understanding of reality as the Jews with the circumcision mindset, but he would not mind if these Jews removed themselves from the group of Christians—and maybe they will, if the Christians even lovingly stand up for the apostolic truth. Certainly, Paul would not mind if people who are wrong about the concept of grace remove themselves from those who are right, rather than ostracizing the latter. Or, perhaps, all that he is saying is that he hopes that they cease from disturbing the Galatian Christians by being converted to a proper mindset by the grace of God.

It does not really make sense that Paul is calling for the false teachers to castrate themselves, as is the typical interpretation. Much more reasonable for Paul to hope that they weary of trying to foist their false religion on the Galatians and leave them.

¹²¹ ὑμεῖς γὰρ ἐπ' ἐλευθερίᾳ ἐκλήθητε, ἀδελφοί· μόνον μὴ τὴν ἐλευθερίαν εἰς ἀφορμὴν τῇ σαρκί, ἀλλὰ διὰ τῆς ἀγάπης· δουλεύετε ἀλλήλοις – Perhaps this refers to an objection to the truth by those of a Mosaic Covenant focused mindset, that Paul's message naturally leads to believing that one is free to commit immorality—precisely because it takes the focus off God's moral commandments. Or it could certainly seem so if Paul is arguing that no one, not even Jews, have an obligation to the Mosaic Covenant in the light of belief in Jesus as the Messiah. This is to say that the Mosaic Covenant is not the basis for salvation. It is Jesus who is such. But then, it could seem that the Mosaic Covenant is good for nothing, not even for teaching morality, thus rendering life as a believer in Jesus free from any obligation to biblical morality. However, Paul says that this is definitely not true.

Thus, Paul is encouraging the Galatians not to allow the gospel of free grace as an opportunity for their natural inclination which is to rebel against God and pursue immorality.

Thus, Paul is segueing to using “freedom” and “slavery” to refer to the possible conclusion to which a person could come in the light of the profundity of the concept of God's grace and his proclamation that obedience to the Mosaic Covenant is not necessary for eternal salvation. A person does not need the Mosaic Covenant in order to be pleasing to God just as a person does not need “Christian religion” to be pleasing to God. Nothing will get in the way of God's graciously causing people to become inwardly qualified to obtain eternal life—not even their moral depravity. But, does this mean that a person can willfully and intentionally disobey the moral commandments of the Mosaic Covenant and pursue immorality in the midst of being affected by God's grace? Absolutely not! Cf. Romans 6 & 7. Therefore, even though Gentile believers do not have to pay attention to the Mosaic Covenant at all, and Jewish believers do not have to pay attention to the Mosaic Covenant with respect to their *eternal* destiny, they all must and will pay attention to morality, and especially to love for one another as fellow believers in Jesus as the Messiah! And it is true that biblical morality is described by the Mosaic Covenant and that Jews have an historical obligation to it. The Jews have an obligation in the history of the present realm to live out their lives as a nation on the land of Israel in conformity to the Mosaic Covenant. But no individual Jew has an obligation to obey the Mosaic Covenant with respect to his eternal destiny in the light of his belief in Jesus as the Messiah and High Priest of his salvation.

In addition, it sounds as though these Galatian Christians are harshly competing with one another for “Most Religious Christian” and therefore for “Most Pleasing to God” (cf. v. 15).

¹²² ὁ γὰρ πᾶς νόμος ἐν ᾧ λόγῳ ᾧ πληρῶται, ἐν τῷ ἀγαπήσεις τὸν πλησίον σου ὡς σεαυτόν – Ironically, even though Gentiles are not obligated to keep the Mosaic Covenant, it provides the best stated summary of the biblical message—on the horizontal level of human relationships, i.e., to be kind to and care for genuinely, graciously, and mercifully other human beings. Cf. Leviticus 19:18 – You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the sons of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself. I am the Yahweh (יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ) (καὶ ἀγαπήσεις τὸν πλησίον σου ὡς σεαυτόν ἐγὼ εἰμι κύριος).

¹²³ εἰ δὲ ἀλλήλους δάκνετε καὶ κατεσθίετε, βλέπετε μὴ ὑπ' ἀλλήλων ἀναλωθῆτε – By ignoring the moral imperatives of the gospel that are in conjunction with the moral imperatives of the Mosaic Covenant, the Galatian Christians' lies could easily devolve into rabid religious performance, intimidation, and competition which destroys relationships and, ultimately, belief, not because Christians are so powerful that they can actually blow up another person's faith inside him, but because their natural inclinations and even committing themselves in their hearts to religion (= a system of human behavior where certain rituals, ceremonies, and doctrines are required to be followed in order for a person to be permitted by the leadership to participate in their group), which naturally leads to competition and the thinking that one is making himself worthy of God's blessing, is a kind of destruction of belief—unless authentic belief truly exists in a person, in which case God will ensure that he recognizes his error and returns to the purity of the gospel of grace and the Messiah. Cf. 1 Corinthians 1-6 where competition and rivalry among this Christian community is not based on Jewish influence that is forcing them to follow the Mosaic Covenant as the primary characteristic of their relationship with God, but on some other influence which has convinced people to follow human leaders, which is dividing the community of believers.

¹²⁴ λέγω δέ, πνεύματι περιπατεῖτε καὶ ἐπιθυμίαν σαρκὸς οὐ μὴ τελέσητε – In an indirect way, Paul is pointing out to the Galatians could easily become convinced that they have the license to behave in line with the immoral cravings of their natural born moral depravity, i.e., their “flesh” (σὰρξ). He exhorts them to choose to behave in line with the inward work of God at the level of their heart commitments, i.e., their “being alive because of the Spirit” (ζῶμεν πνεύματι) and their “conforming their lives to the Spirit” (πνεύματι καὶ στοιχῶμεν) as he will say in 5:25. While it is not possible for human beings to change their immoral condition at the level of their foundational moral nature and defining moral essence (their σὰρξ = flesh), it is possible for them, in line with the work of the Spirit of God, to change and pursue goodness and become more committed to the gospel, which is to conform their lives to the Spirit (πνεύματι καὶ στοιχῶμεν), even though this does not result in their ability to be morally perfect.

¹²⁵ ἢ γὰρ σὰρξ ἐπιθυμεῖ κατὰ τοῦ πνεύματος, τὸ δὲ πνεῦμα κατὰ τῆς σαρκὸς, ταῦτα ἑαυτοῖς ἀντίκειται, ἵνα μὴ ἂ ἐάν θέλητε ταῦτα ποιῆτε – Parenthetically, Paul emphasizes that there are two opposing principles of human existence, one whose source is God's activity, the Spirit (τὸ πνεῦμα), within authentic believers in the midst of their inner moral depravity, their flesh (σὰρξ), and the other which is people's own innate moral depravity at the level of their foundation moral nature, their flesh (σὰρξ).

Paul is saying that an effect of God's activity through His Spirit in a morally depraved human being is that, after a fundamental change to his heart commitments has taken place, he will be oriented as an authentic believer toward

morality, so that he pursues it in the midst of his ongoing moral depravity and its desires to lead him away from obeying God. Ultimately, God wins this battle, but as can be seen in the case of the Galatian Christians, believers are certainly susceptible to erroneous ideas and immoral influences, which can seem to sidetrack them for a period of time. “These things...that you are desiring” (ἃ ἐὰν θέλητε ταῦτα) could refer to the religious activities of the circumcision mindset, but more likely refer to the sins listed in 5:19-21.

Paul will say the same thing in Romans 7:24-25, **7:24** I am one miserable person! Who will rescue me from this deadly body? **7:25** Thanks be to God in the light of Jesus the Messiah our Lord! Therefore, as a result, on the one hand, with my mind I am serving the instruction [Torah] of God, but, on the other hand, with my natural-born humanity the instruction [Torah] of sin.

¹²⁶ εἰ δὲ πνεύματι ἄγεσθε, οὐκ ἐστὲ ὑπὸ νόμον – Paul puts the matter very simply that a Christian’s moral obligation is to the Spirit of God’s work within him to direct him towards God’s grace, the Messiah, and morality and away from religion and using it to make oneself deserving of God’s blessings. Thus, Paul’s readers neither are obligated to obey the Jewish Mosaic Covenant nor should they add it to belief in Jesus as the Messiah by adopting a circumcision mindset like the Jewish believers who are trying to influence them—just as he has been arguing all along in this letter. They are free from the Covenant but not from morality. Nor, of course, should they allow their “moral” behavior to become based on their natural inclinations, but instead on the Spirit of God who is at work within them.

¹²⁷ φανερά δέ ἐστιν τὰ ἔργα τῆς σαρκός – Paul now lists the basic actions which result from a person’s foundational moral essence which is evil, i.e., from a person’s “flesh” (σάρξ) and render someone condemned before God if this kind of behavior defines them.

An authentic believer is not free to engage in these activities, even though he is free from the Mosaic Covenant with respect to his eternal salvation. Thus, Paul is making it clear exactly what is morality towards which a person pursues in line with the Spirit of God.

This paragraph sounds as though the Galatians could possibly have had their moral judgment clouded by their abandonment of the pure apostolic message just as the Corinthians did, which Paul discusses in 1 Corinthians 1-6. Plus, the list of immoral actions includes those which would have been acceptable within the Galatian pagan culture due to their polytheistic religion, so that the Galatian Christians may have returned to their former lifestyle as the Corinthians basically had. Or they have started tolerating such sin in the midst of their claiming to be believers in the Jewish Messiah.

All this kind of evil is the manifestation of people’s natural born depravity, which includes evil of the type which the circumcision mindset Jews have been encouraging, even though Paul does not explicitly put it in the list. He has already dealt with it in the major portion of the letter.

¹²⁸ ἅτινά ἐστιν ^τ πορνεία, ἀκαθαρσία, ἀσέλγεια, εἰδωλολατρία, φαρμακεία, ἔχθραι, ἔρις, ἔζηλος, θυμοί, ἐριθειαι, διχοστασίαι, αἰρέσεις, φθόνοι ^τ, μέθαι, κῶμοι καὶ τὰ ὅμοια τούτοις, ἃ προλέγω ὑμῖν, καθὼς προεῖπον ὅτι οἱ ταῦτα τοιαῦτα πράσσοντες βασιλείαν θεοῦ οὐ κληρονομήσουσιν – This list by Paul serves both to remind his Galatian readers of the kinds of immorality of which they are not free to pursue, even though they are free from the Mosaic Covenant. In addition, he reminds them that people who are committed to the actions which flow out of their innate immoral nature, even while purportedly believing in Jesus as the Messiah, will not obtain eternal life.

Also, by having said in 5:18 that they are “not under the Covenant” and not obligated to it, he is indicating that a commitment to a circumcision mindset instead of following the apostolic message of grace and the crucified Messiah which he presented to them will result in the same outcome as pursuing abject immorality—not inheriting the Kingdom of God.

¹²⁹ ὁ δὲ καρπὸς τοῦ πνεύματος ἐστὶν ἀγάπη χαρὰ εἰρήνη, μακροθυμία χρηστότης ἀγαθωσύνη, πίστις πραΰτης ἐγκράτεια – Paul is continuing to argue that “freedom” from the Mosaic Covenant as the basis of God’s mercy does not mean that Christians are free from morality. Indeed, the Spirit of God, God’s activity within authentic believers whose goal is now the eternal Kingdom of God, causes Christians to pursue at the level of their heart commitments genuine morality as listed in 5:22,23. This is what will result from their “operating in life in line with the Spirit (πνεύματι περιπατεῖτε)” (5:16).

¹³⁰ ^τ. κατὰ τῶν τοιούτων οὐκ ἐστὶν νόμος – Paul also adds that, while a human being is not dependent on his obedience to the Mosaic Covenant *per se* for obtaining God’s eternal mercy and life, certainly, for the sake of the Jews with a circumcision mindset, the Torah and Mosaic Covenant are in no way opposed to the direction towards morality which the Spirit of God causes a person to head. Thus, both believing Jews and Gentiles exhibit the characteristics listed in 5:22,23 from genuine, biblical inwardness. The inference is that the Torah and the Covenant declare that these inwardly changed people are definitely obeying God correctly—in spite of the current Jewish false teachers who think otherwise. It seems contradictory, but while the Torah and Mosaic Covenant exhort the Jews to be obedient to them for historical purposes, they in no way object to a Jew’s being a moral human being who pursues love, joy, peace, patience, etc. simply as a result of the work of the Spirit of God within him. Indeed, the Torah agrees with the gospel that this person is eternally saved by the mercy of God—through the Messiah! Thus, the example of Abraham as justified by his belief before he was given any religious prescriptions by God is the foundational example for Paul both in Galatians 3 and Romans 4.

¹³¹ οἱ δὲ τοῦ Χριστοῦ ^ο[Ἰησοῦ] τὴν σάρκα ἐσταύρωσαν σὺν τοῖς παθήμασιν καὶ ταῖς ἐπιθυμίαις – Paul now mentions, too, the proper effect of coming to grips with the Messiah’s crucifixion, that a person crucifies

(ἐσταύρωσαν), i.e., acknowledges and repudiates, his foundational, immoral essence and its evil desires which render him damnable before God. This implies, too, that with the new commitment of his heart to obey God, he pursues the “fruit of the Spirit” mentioned in the two previous verses.

Thus, authentic believers, on the basis of Jesus’ death as the most graphic teaching tool of man’s evil that God has used in human history, grasp the profundity of their moral depravity and the uselessness of trying to please God in and of themselves. The result is that they understand the importance of pursuing biblical morality from a position of God’s grace, not from a position of religious performance that is supposed to impress God and make them worthy of His eternal mercy and life.

¹³² εἰζόμεν πνεύματι, πνεύματι καὶ στοιχόμεν – Paul exhorts his readers (and himself), having grasped the full significance of Jesus’ death, to choose to act in line with the inner, miraculous work of God. If God has changed us in the created reality in such a way that we now are oriented toward repentance, mercy, eternal life, and Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah and away from the inherent evil within us at the level of our “flesh” and moral essence, then we should pursue making moral and loving choices which correspond to this inner orientation produced by God. From God, we have come by a new kind of human existence, which Paul calls “being alive because of the Spirit” (ζόμεν πνεύματι). Thus, we should act in accordance with it, which is to “adopt the dynamics of the Spirit” (πνεύματι καὶ στοιχόμεν). We notice also that Paul uses the verb form στοιχόμεν of στοιχεῖα, which he mentioned in 4:3,9 with respect to the principles that a morally depraved human being employs to follow the Mosaic Covenant apart from God’s grace, i.e., the dynamics of his own orientation towards his “flesh” whereby he thinks that he can make himself worthy of God’s blessings. Thus, here in 5:25 Paul is encouraging the Galatian Christians to operate in their lives on the basis of the different dynamics which are available because the Spirit of God has changed the commitments of their hearts. They are now devoted in their spirit to God’s grace, the Messiah, morality, and God’s mercy without any thought of their deserving His mercy. Thus, they should seek to make choices which reflect their commitment to these things, along with the fact the Spirit of God is going to lead them in this direction as part of how continues to operate in people whose hearts He changes.

¹³³ μὴ γινώμεθα κενόδοξοι, ἀλλήλους προκαλούμενοι, ἑαυτοῖς φθονοῦντες – Paul mentions here an effect of one’s inner immoral essence and the mindset towards which they are being influenced by the Jewish teachers who do not understand God’s grace and the cross—both a competitive spirit and the need to be considered great by having others buy into one’s mindset and pursuits, which is exhibiting itself in this case as obeying the religious commandments of the Mosaic Covenant, but certainly could exhibit itself by any other unnecessary and superfluous religious pursuits, including those of humanly derived doctrines which are made standard within a church denomination or organization. Again, this sounds similar to the problem in Corinth of competition leading to divisions within the Christian community based upon the people’s favorite teachers (cf. 1 Corinthians 1-6).

The opposite of this mindset is to operate on the basis of the inner work of God’s Spirit, which releases a person from a competitive spirit and the need to be considered great by others. Paul is saying, pursue avoiding a competitive spirit which arises from leaders who aggressively promote religion at the expense of the truth of God’s grace and the Messiah. This is why “leadership” in any context is so morally treacherous and potentially damnable. Basic human immoral nature drives people to lead through pride and self-righteousness.

¹³⁴ Ἀδελφοί, ἐάν καὶ προληφθῇ ἄνθρωπος ἐν τινὶ παραπτώματι, ὑμεῖς οἰκνουμενικὸν καταρτίετε τὸν τοιοῦτον ἐν πνεύματι πραΰτητος, σκοπῶν σεαυτὸν μὴ καὶ σὺ πειρασθῆς – Paul is implying that the very opposite of being competitive with one another as a result of simply falling in line with one’s immoral essence is to be gracious and patient with people who find themselves trapped in a particular sin. Just because the Spirit changes people’s fundamental heart commitments, away from being devoted to evil and towards being devoted to goodness, does not mean that their foundational immoral nature will not rear its ugly head on a regular basis without their being able to stop it and cause them to come across in an evil way to others, even getting stuck in this happening within them. Thus, Paul assumes that Christians will display evil in their lives—almost as though they are committed to it.

But the proper response is neither panic nor condemnation, both of which a circumcision mindset and would naturally produce and which fellow Christians would be tempted to adopt. Instead, the proper response is graciousness, patience, and gentle persuasion to turn away from the immorality and pursue goodness. The circumcision mindset is causing the Galatians to tell people who are obviously stuck in some immoral action simply to get their acts together. There is no compassion, grace, mercy, patience, or proper identification with those who are even genuinely repentant. Basically, the Galatian Christian community has become a society of religious performers, who expect all within the community to perform equally well as part of what is affirming the community as a valid Christian one.

¹³⁵ Ἀλλήλων τὰ βάρη βαστάετε καὶ οὕτως ἑαυτοὺς πληρώετε τὸν νόμον τοῦ Χριστοῦ – Rather than graciously and patiently helping those who are struggling with their own sin, people of a religious mindset are harsh and critical. They are demanding that those who are struggling with their sin simply need to get their act together and be as good as they are. And, of course, if people cannot perform as quickly and completely as they demand, they shun them as those who are clearly not committed to the truth.

However, Paul is saying that, rather than ostracizing their fellow believers who are committing immorality and struggling with sin, Christians are called to walk with one another through it. They should act like the Messiah who died sacrificially for people who commit immorality. In this way he inaugurated his own “Covenant” so to speak which will eventually result in salvation for people from God’s eternal condemnation.

All this then is the contrast to Mosaic Covenant focused people and those who are focused on God's grace and Jesus as their Messiah and advocate before God.

¹³⁶ εἰ γὰρ δοκεῖ τις εἶναι τι μὴδὲν ὄν, φρεναπατᾶ ἑαυτόν – This, too, is an effect of the circumcision mindset and a person's natural inclinations, that people, who base their relationship with God on their performance of rituals, belief in doctrines, and following Christian traditions, think that they are hot stuff. But they are taking themselves much too seriously. They consider themselves as better than others who do not conform to their standards. They are also putting themselves in the position of the same level of authority as the apostles, believing that they are inerrant like them. Consequently they are risking God's anger and eternal condemnation, just as Jesus told the Pharisees in Matthew 23 and as Paul states in chapter 1 of this letter.

¹³⁷ τὸ δὲ ἔργον ἑαυτοῦ δοκιμαζέτω ἕκαστος, καὶ τότε εἰς ἑαυτὸν μόνον τὸ καύχημα ἔξει καὶ οὐκ εἰς τὸν ἕτερον – Paul is indicating that the important thing for any human being to do is to understand his own immoral condition and the quality of his decisions in the light of his changed inwardness, if this has truly happened by a miracle of God, and not be more concerned about other people's spiritual condition, since the latter more often than not leads to comparing himself with them and trying to convince himself that he is better than they are. Paul uses the word "brag" euphemistically. It is not that a morally depraved human being can actually brag about anything. But, if he is going to point out something, especially to himself and to God, it should be his moral depravity and God's miraculous, gracious, and sovereign work of having changed him inwardly into an authentic believer in the Messiah. Cf. Paul's similar use of brag/boast in 1 Corinthians 9:1-18. He brags about the grace of God, but not from any position whereby he deserves His grace or has motivated God in and of himself to grant him grace and mercy.

¹³⁸ ἕκαστος γὰρ τὸ ἴδιον φορτίον βαστάσει – Everybody is different and will live out the effects of God's grace with a different level of success with respect to his current moral behavior. Nevertheless, each authentic believer will have a genuine desire for his own pursuit of morality and ultimate goal of eternal mercy and life. Paul is further indicating that each person will be accountable for his own stuff at the judgment and, therefore, should be most concerned in this life with preparing himself for the judgment—whether or not others are actually doing the same. Here is the subjective, existential element of the biblical message, even for Jews within the nation of Israel living in conformity to the Mosaic Covenant. Every Jew's greatest concern should not be national but individual as he submits to God's grace, believes in the Messiah, and humbly looks forward to God's eternal mercy and forgiveness. Thus, the task of a human being is to prepare himself for the judgment.

¹³⁹ Κοινωνεῖτω δὲ ὁ κατηχούμενος τὸν λόγον τῷ κατηχοῦντι ἐν πάσιν ἀγαθοῖς – Paul wants his Galatian readers to conform their worldview to his and the apostolic teachers, so that they may participate in the fulfillment of all God's promises with respect to eternal salvation.

He is not talking about supporting teachers financially. The whole point of this letter has been to encourage the Galatian Christians to think like Jesus and the apostles.

¹⁴⁰ ὅμη πλανᾶσθε, θεὸς οὐ μυκτηρίζεται. ὁ γὰρ ἐὰν σπείρῃ ἄνθρωπος, τοῦτο καὶ θερίσει – While the false teacher(s) is/are claiming to believe in the same gospel as Paul (God's grace, belief in the crucified Messiah, pursuing righteousness as an important manifestation of belief), he/they nevertheless is/are deceiving himself/themselves (and likewise trying to deceive God) in thinking that obedience to the Mosaic Covenant is not only the necessary way to pursue righteousness, but also the only way that a person can make himself worthy of God's blessing of eternal life. Paul's rebuttal has been to say that God cannot be tricked into thinking that a person is genuinely interested in authentic belief and eternal salvation when he is more concerned about keeping up appearances through his religious efforts which provide him with a sense that he is better than others. The effect of a person's life will be according to what is truly going on inside of him, not according to what he has been able to convince others about him through his religious efforts. To think otherwise is to treat God with contempt, repudiating His method of rescuing people from His eternal condemnation strictly by means of grace and the Messiah.

¹⁴¹ ὅτι ὁ σπείρων εἰς τὴν σάρκα ἑαυτοῦ ἐκ τῆς σαρκὸς θερίσει φθοράν. ὁ δὲ σπείρων εἰς τὸ πνεῦμα ἐκ τοῦ πνεύματος θερίσει ζωὴν αἰώνιον – Paul goes on to state the nub of the issue. What mostly characterizes a person? Is it his immoral and foundational essence, which is always IMMORAL, or is it the Spirit of God who has changed him at the level of his heart commitments so that he genuinely pursues goodness with biblical belief in the Messiah? Only the latter results in eternal life. The outcome of the former is eternal condemnation and destruction from God.

Thus, if a person pretends to embrace the truth, even claiming that Jesus is the Messiah, while also adding to this truth the necessity of performing the Mosaic Covenant or of adhering to some religious, moral, or doctrinal standard established by non-apostolic church leaders, then Paul says that this person will receive God's eternal condemnation, not His salvation. It is only those who not only truly grasp the significance and implications of God's grace and the miraculous inner work of the Spirit of God, but who also treat others in a genuine Christian manner that does not include intimidating people into conforming to some human "Christian" standard and does not include ostracizing sinners from a context of hearing the good news of God's grace and mercy, who will receive God's forgiveness and eternal salvation.

¹⁴² τὸ δὲ καλὸν ποιοῦντες μὴ ἔγκακῶμεν, καιρῷ γὰρ ἰδίῳ θερίσομεν μὴ ἐκλυόμενοι – It is easy to give up one's enthusiasm for doing simple, biblical goodness (καλὸν) vs. feeling the need to follow one's moral depravity and either exercise power and authority over others as a way to demonstrate just how righteous one is or follow such leaders to demonstrate the same thing, especially by setting up and mandating unnecessary, religious requirements like those of

the circumcision mindset. Paul is encouraging his readers to fight this natural temptation, because the outcome of such a person's life who does genuinely resist this temptation will be the "reward" of eternal life—by God's grace. cf. **Romans 2:5** In accord with your stubbornness and unrepentant heart, you are storing up anger for yourself in the day of anger and the bringing to light of the just and fair verdict of God. **2:6** He will pay back each man according to his deeds—**2:7** on the one hand, eternal life to those who, in accordance with their perseverance in doing good, seek for glory, honor, and immortality, **2:8** but, on the other hand, anger and fury to those who, out of selfish ambition, disobey the truth and obey unrighteousness. **2:9** God will pay back tribulation and anguish to everyone who pursues evil, to the Jew first and also to the Greek, **2:10** but glory, honor, and shalom to everyone who pursues what is good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

¹⁴³ Ἄρα οὖν ὡς καιρὸν ἔχομεν, ἔργαζώμεθα τὸ ἀγαθὸν πρὸς πάντας, μάλιστα δὲ πρὸς τοὺς οἰκείους τῆς πίστεως – As long as the Galatians and Paul still have breath to breathe and God has not brought about the return of the Messiah, they should pursue love and morality toward all people, even when times are difficult in the midst of religious persecution and in the midst of the temptation to follow their moral depravity and to give in to the intimidation of the circumcision mindset teachers. Paul wants his readers to pay special attention to how they treat others who believe not only that Jesus is the Messiah, but also that no humanistic requirements should be added to what God has stated in the Bible.

¹⁴⁴ Ἴδετε ἡγλίκοις ὑμῖν γράμμασιν ἔγραψα τῇ ἐμῇ χειρὶ – Paul writes this last portion of the letter himself and refers to his eye problems which are causing him to write with letters larger than normal (cf. 4:15).

¹⁴⁵ Ὅσοι θέλουσιν εὐπροσωπῆσαι ἐν σαρκί, οὗτοι ἀναγκάζουσιν ὑμᾶς περιτέμεσθαι, μόνον ἵνα τῷ σταυρῷ τοῦ Χριστοῦ ἢ μὴ ἰδιώκονται – Here Paul provides a nice summary of the issue. The Jewish Christians with a circumcision mindset are forcing the Gentile believers to follow the religious commandments of the Mosaic Covenant, and the key example of these commandments is that of circumcision. Thus, all people who demonstrate their rebellion against God with religious pursuits work at forcing others to perform their external religious system, which therefore is a complete rejection of one of the main points of Jesus' crucifixion, that our moral depravity prevents us from being able to please God apart from His gracious, inward work which moves us to authentic belief and pursuit of genuine morality and love for God and others. Indeed, religious rebels are driven by their own moral depravity to reject the significance of Jesus' death, even while claiming to believe that it is important to their own relationship with God. Their purpose for doing so is to avoid having to suffer any negative consequences in the world with respect to their Christianity. Here, these Jewish Christians do not want to be persecuted by the Jewish community, which Paul is willing to have happen to him (cf. 5:11). Another example is when people would rather make sure that their church organization continues, in order to keep up the appearance of the success of their church and the genuineness of their Christianity, than adhere to the apostolic message and suffer the possible consequences of being rejected by not only the world but also other religious Christians. But, as Paul has said in 6:7, God is not deceived by their depending upon their natural born depravity and will reward them likewise—with eternal destruction.

¹⁴⁶ οὐδὲ γὰρ οἱ περιτεμνόμενοι αὐτοὶ νόμον φυλάσσουν ἀλλὰ θέλουσιν ὑμᾶς περιτέμεσθαι, ἵνα ἐν τῇ ὑμετέρᾳ σαρκὶ καυχῶνται – cf. Galatians 1:10 and Galatians 3. For the Jews who focus on religious obedience to the Mosaic Covenant, it is all about pride in and their own display of outward religious performance as that which is assumed to demonstrate their authentic Christianity. Then, by deceiving others into adopting their religious system, they can brag about the number of people who are following them vs. the number of people who are following Paul, a true apostle. They can claim greater success in evangelism! However, their perspective on Christianity ignores the focal point of biblical spirituality—humble and hidden inwardness with belief in Jesus only as the basis of salvation.

These Jewish Christians need other people to know how well they are performing the Mosaic Covenant and how many others they are persuading to perform it like them. However, biblically spiritual people do not need anyone else but God to know about their Christianity—because ultimately God is the only one who knows anyway. Cf. 1 Corinthians 4:1-5. **4:1** As a result, let someone consider us [Paul and Apollos] as the Messiah's subordinate assistants and managers of the mysteries of God. **4:2** In this connection, it is required of managers that each one be found faithful. **4:3** **However, it is of little or no importance to me that I be called to account by you or by human judgment. In fact, I do not even examine myself. 4:4 For I am aware of nothing against myself, but I have not been justified by this. Instead, he who examines me is the Lord. 4:5** Therefore, do not judge someone before the time—until the Lord comes, who will both bring to light the things hidden in the darkness and manifest the intentions of hearts. And then each one's praise will come from God" (emphasis mine).

And God knows because He creates a person's Christianity!! Thus, the Jews who are so focused on obeying the Mosaic Covenant and compelling Gentiles to do the same are not even obeying it properly, i.e., inwardly, even though they think they are being obedient to God and pleasing Him. The same would be true of so-called Christians who add adherence to a religious and/or doctrinal system to belief in Jesus as the Messiah, which comes from God's grace, as that which defines biblical Christianity. Heaven forbid that a church die out and fail because it adheres to the true, apostolic message of grace and mercy through God's sovereign work. Instead, what ends up happening is that church leaders, with their rebellion against God, feel compelled to ensure that the organization survives while truth vanishes into thin air, thus incurring for themselves the eternal condemnation of God.

¹⁴⁷ Ἐμοὶ δὲ μὴ γένοιτο καυχᾶσθαι εἰ μὴ ἐν τῷ σταυρῷ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, δι' οὗ ἐμοὶ κόσμος ἐσταύρωται καὶ γὼ κόσμῳ – The only "performance" which Paul is willing to brag about is the Messiah's death on the

cross, which demonstrates both Paul's (and all other human beings') inability to perform anything pleasing to God apart from God's gracious work within him and his deserving eternal condemnation and destruction from God. Therefore, even the external, religious system of the Mosaic Covenant, which God set up for the Jews, is irrelevant unless a Jew also possesses authentic inwardness—which itself will lead him to recognize eventually that it is only the Messiah, not the Mosaic Covenant, who rescues him from God's eternal condemnation. Paul repudiates any thought of being obligated to a religious system, even the Mosaic Covenant, if it adds to the NT message of belief in Jesus as the Messiah with its moral ramifications for a morally depraved human being. Biblical morality, even apart from the Mosaic Covenant, and which follows from God's grace and belief in the Messiah is the only requirement to obtain God's eternal mercy and salvation. In this way, religious systemism, i.e., adhering to religious practices, doctrines, organizations, etc., has been crucified (killed and does not exist) in so far as an authentic biblical believer is concerned, and the authentic believer has died in so far as needing to attach himself to such a system. He repudiates outward religion and is completely free to believe in the Messiah and pursue acting in such a way that only the "fruit of the Spirit" of 5:22,23 appears in his life. He has no religious obligations per se.

¹⁴⁸ οὐτε γὰρ περιτομή τί ἐστίν οὐτε ἀκροβυστία ἀλλὰ καινὴ κτίσις – Paul repeats his statement of 5:6 but substitutes "a new creation" for "belief which is being produced through love." Because it is the Holy Spirit, God, who lovingly creates belief in a morally depraved human being, Paul can call this person a "new creation." At the level of the commitments of his heart, he is utterly new, because now he is oriented towards accepting the truth of God and pursuing goodness without any thought of making himself worthy of God's blessings through religious actions. Thus, outward religious performance is irrelevant in comparison to God's creating a completely different inwardness at the level of the heart within morally depraved human beings, an inwardness which leads a person to recognize the irrelevance of his outward religious performance and the sole relevance of Jesus' death as that which qualifies him to be his advocate at the final judgment and the first resurrection (cf. 1 Thessalonians 4 and Revelation 20).

¹⁴⁹ καὶ ὅσοι τῷ κανόνι τούτῳ ἵστοιχέουσιν, εἰρήνην ἐπ' αὐτοὺς καὶ ἔλεος καὶ ἐπὶ τὸν Ἰσραὴλ τοῦ θεοῦ – The very things that Jews make a claim to having, the shalom and wholeness of life from God, along with God's loyal love to His people, are the very things that the religious Jews who are Paul's opponents do not have. Yet, authentically inward people, including Gentiles, do have both God's shalom and loyal love.

Thus, Paul makes mention of the true "Israel" of God, the seed of Abraham, i.e., those Jews and Gentiles who do possess authentic inwardness (cf. Galatians 3:29). The Jews with the circumcision mindset want the Gentiles to join the Israel of God by following the religious commandments of the Mosaic Covenant. Paul wants them to join the "Israel of God" through His grace by belief in the Jewish Messiah. Likewise, church leaders of a circumcision mindset want others to join the Israel of God by following the religious practices, doctrines, and form of their church organizations. Paul would have them join the Israel of God through only His grace by belief in the Jewish Messiah, which results in authentic pursuit of morality.

This interpretation of "Israel" could lead to a replacement theology where the church is now God's only chosen people, and the Jews as a national entity no longer have a role in human history. However, Paul has argued in this letter that all believers are the "seed of Abraham," but this does not mean that ethnic Jews no longer are involved in God's fulfilling His first promise to Abraham to make of them a "great nation." Instead, Paul is concerned with only the third promise in this letter, which is certainly reasonable to allow him to do. To claim that the first promise is no longer in effect because Paul and the NT do not explicitly comment on it is an argument from silence which, by definition, is an invalid argument.

¹⁵⁰ Τοῦ λοιποῦ κόπους μοι μηδεὶς παρεχέτω· ἐγὼ γὰρ τὰ στίγματα τοῦ Ἰησοῦ ἐν τῷ σώματί μου βαστάζω – The only outward "performance" of Paul's own that he is willing to point to as being an important aspect of his Christianity is that caused by those who opposed the biblical truth in Lystra in Acts 14. They stoned Paul in their anger and caused marks on his body which resulted in permanent scars—the stigmata of Jesus. Paul's own circumcision means nothing to him in comparison to the scars he received for proclaiming the truth of God's grace and the Messiah!

And he encourages the Galatian Christians to cause him no more distress by being influenced by the false teachers of Judaism.

¹⁵¹ Ἡ χάρις τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ μετὰ τοῦ πνεύματος ὑμῶν, ἀδελφοί· ἀμήν – Paul ends by expressing his desire that God's grace associated both with Jesus' death as the crucified Messiah and with belief in Jesus as such be that which is in operation in the Galatian Christians, as opposed to strictly their own moral depravity which is currently leading them away from the apostolic message. Throughout this letter, Paul has been reviewing for their sakes the truth of the Bible in contrast to the teaching of the people of a circumcision mindset who are focused on adding obedience of the Mosaic Covenant to belief in the Messiah in order to gain God's mercy and blessings, even making themselves worthy of these.