

Notes on Paulus' Letter to the Galatians

Authorship and Date:

The letter to the Galatians is one of the undisputed writings of Paulus of Tarsus. It is mentioned on every early list of his writings, and it is clear that copies were circulating at an early date, for the very early papyrus manuscript p⁴⁶ contains the letter.

The letter was written not long after his letters to Kolossae and to Titus, probably during 56 CE, for the problems are similar. In fact, the ideas in the letter to the Romans also share themes, although they appear here in a slightly different (and shorter) form. By this time, the author has suffered physically on account of his trust (6:17), and the time of his imprisonment may have been near. The letter was written well after his visit to Galatia (Ac 16), and probably no earlier than close to the end of his "third missionary journey." We date the letter to shortly before his arrival in Jerusalem (Ac 21:17) or immediately thereafter, possibly from Filippus' house (Ac 21:10). Since Paulus does not refer to his defense (Ac 22), the letter was most likely written prior to that time.

Commentary:

Paulus, (an envoy not from human beings nor through a human being but on account of Anointed Jesus and through Father God, the one who raised him from among the dead), and the brothers who are with me,

The author begins by defending his calling. By this time, there was considerable anger among his enemies, with some of them claiming that he was not truly one of the envoys (see also 1C 9:1) -- a claim that was made in order to dispute his mission to gentiles. These claims had persisted for several years and so Paulus' response was now much more detailed. To the Korinthians he had simply asked rhetorically whether or not he was really an envoy, but now (three years later) the questions of his identity called for a detailed discussion of both his sending and the content of the message that he had been spreading among the gentiles (see 1:11-2:10).

Paulus was not sent by a human being. On the other hand, since Jesus had been human, he adds that the originator of the sending had been God, who sent the resurrected Jesus to send Paulus to teach to the gentiles. The fact that others were with him probably rules out Paulus' having written the letter while he was in Roman custody.

To the assemblies of Galatia:

Favor to you, and peace, from Father God and our Lord Anointed Jesus, who gave himself for our errors, so that he might pluck us out of the evil age in which we stand, according to what God (that is, our Father) wants. To him be the glory for ever and ever. A-men.

In the years since his calling, Paulus' view of the pre-Messianic age (the time before the destruction of the temple) has darkened. At this point, he looks forward to the First Revolt, so that God would "pluck us out of the evil age." His giving glory to God at this point reveals a plea to hasten those events. The greeting is somewhat short, and indeed the conclusion will be also, but Paulus is consumed with what will be the body content of the letter.

6 I am surprised that you are being changed so quickly to another good message, away from the one who called you in generosity. It isn't that there is another good message, except to some who are troubling you and who want to overturn the good message of the Anointed One. On the contrary: even if a messenger from heaven should announce a good message to you that is different than what you received, let him be cursed!

The "good message" is the internalization or spiritualization of the Torah by Jesus. Jesus had taught (see Mt 5-7, for example) that the Torah was summarized by internal principles, the greatest of which being trust and love. On the other hand, Paulus' opponents wished to convert any gentile proselytes to the same legalistic form of Judaism that they had been living prior to the coming of Jesus. This included participation in all of the rituals, the most notable of which was the circumcision of all males.

Paulus refers to this return to "religion" first as "another good message" -- a substitute for the message that Jesus had taught -- but then says that there really is no other good message. After all, the message brought by the Judaizers did not free but instead enslaved its adherents. The term "Judaize" is used of those who would compel others to return to the ritual forms of Judaism, and Paulus recognizes that this would be an "overturning" of the good message brought by the Messiah. In effect, to return to Judaism would be to reject the Messiah himself. Having been taught personally by the resurrected Messiah, Paulus is so certain of the good message that he says that "even if a messenger from heaven" tells his readers to do something different, they should instead realize the truth of the message and reject what the messenger says.

Paulus brings down a curse on the hypothetical "messenger from heaven" who might drive people away from the spiritual Torah, but the curse is really directed at the Judaizers.

For to this moment, am I being persuaded by human beings or by God? Or am I seeking to please people? If I were pleasing people, I wouldn't be the Anointed One's slave. But I am making known to you, brothers, that the good message that was announced to you is not from a human being. For I neither received it from nor was taught it by a human being, but through a revelation of Anointed Jesus.

Paulus was given his message by God, through a revelation of Jesus. That is, Jesus did not appear to him in a physical body, but as some sort of apparition – we do not know of what sort. Consequently, Paulus reminds the readers of the story that they heard – of how Paulus spent time with Jesus learning the things that he was now teaching. His every effort was being made to please God and not people, for the Anointed One would have had it no other way.

For you heard of my conduct when I was in Judaism: I overly persecuted God's assembly and was eradicating it. Also, I was making progress in Judaism beyond many people my own age of my race, since I was more of a Zealot for the traditions of my ancestors.

So begins the detail of Paulus' personal testimony. At this point he separates himself from Priestly Judaism, as though Judaism now represents for him only the rituals and physical forms of worship. Life by a legalistic code of actions is what he normally terms living by "the flesh" (an expression that, by itself, can signify anything physical). When Paulus was part of such a system, he was more jealous for God and for the rituals of Judaism than anyone his age. Therefore, those people who now complain about him are "less zealous" for Judaism than he once was.

But when it was well-pleasing to the one who set me apart from the time I left my mother's womb and called me (on account of his generosity) to reveal his son to me, so that I might announce him to the gentiles, I did not immediately consult with flesh and blood. Nor did I go up into Jerusalem to those who

were envoys before me. Instead, I went up into Arabia and returned again to Damaskus. Then, after three years, I went into Jerusalem to inquire of Kefa and continued on with him for fifteen days. But I did not see any of the other envoys except for Jacob, the Lord's brother. Now I am writing this in the presence of God: I am not lying.

The story of how Paulus met Jesus on the road to Damaskus (Ac 9) was well known by the time of the letter; he had no need to retell it. Wishing to emphasize the fact that his current mission to gentiles was indeed his mission in life, Paulus added that it had been his own mission since birth that God "reveal" the Messiah to him, so that he might teach gentiles.

Since the readers were fully aware that Paulus had a vision of Jesus, he goes on to the events that took place afterward, in an effort to prove that he did not receive the message from someone to whom he spoke afterward. In fact, he did not speak with anyone about Jesus right away, instead traveling to Arabia. Did the other envoys tell him about Jesus? No, for he had seen none of them. Three years later, he met up with Kefa and Jacob, but he encountered none of the others. Since Kefa and Jacob were well-known upstanding Jewish Christians, their acceptance of Paulus as a genuine envoy would signify something to the Jewish readers. Paulus' reference to Peter by the Aramaic form of his name adds to his own authenticity as a Jew. Fifteen days was too short a time for them to have taught him all he knew, and so Paulus clearly already had his "good message" by then.

Then I went into the region of Syria and Kilikia, but my face was unknown to those Judean assemblies which are in the Anointed One. Instead, they had only been hearing that "the one who was once persecuting us is now announcing the good message of the faith which he was once eradicating." And they were glorifying God in me.

Tarsus was the capital of Kilikia, and so Paulus may have returned to his home region to spread the message, but the Jewish Christians in Judea never saw him, so that he did not receive his message from them. The readers might recall how the rumors had begun to spread of Saul's having turned from persecutor to Christian teacher.

2:1 *Then, fourteen years later, I went up again into Jerusalem with Bar-Nabas, taking along Titus also. Now I went according to a revelation and submitted to them the good message that I am heralding among the gentiles. Now I did this by myself to those who are thought well of; otherwise somehow I would be running (or would have been running) worthlessly.*

It was not for another fourteen years -- seventeen years after his conversion -- that Paulus did indeed converse with the other envoys about the content of his message. Even at that point, he had not gone to Jerusalem (Ac 15) because someone had demanded it but because God had revealed to the Christians in his area (Ac 15:1-2) that Paulus and Bar-Nabas should be sent to Jerusalem to detail what God had taught him (through a revelation of Jesus).

Paulus refers to these things as "what I **am** heralding" to indicate two things: first of all, that he is a genuine herald or representative of Jesus; and secondly, that his message has not changed since then. Paulus explained his message not out of compulsion but because he wanted to share the news with them and hoping that the message that he had been sharing with others was consistent with what Jesus had taught the others while he was still physically here. Naturally, he was confident that this was the case, but his wording here shows his willingness to accept corrections (if necessary) from those who had known Jesus.

But not even Titus (the one who was with me, who was Greek) needed to be circumcised. Now this was happening on account of those false brothers who were gathering around. These people came in among us to scope out the freedom that we hold in Anointed Jesus, so that they might totally enslave us.

Had Paulus been wrong when he taught that converts need not submit to any rituals -- not even circumcision? No! For while he was there with the remaining envoys, Titus the gentile was not told to be circumcised. In fact, the whole gathering (Ac 15) of envoys and the people had occurred precisely to stop the practice of compelling gentiles to be circumcised (Ac 15:19, 28). Paulus' inference is that the Judaizers had actually been jealous of the freedom that Christians had and were trying to "enslave" them back to ritual religion on account of that jealousy.

Not even for one hour did we yield to them in submission, in order that the truth of the good message might continue in your direction. But from those who are thought to be something, these who are thought of communicated nothing to me. Whatever they were, it means nothing to me: God does not accept human appearance. But on the contrary, when they saw that I was entrusted with the good message to the foreskinned, just as Peter to the circumcised, and when they realized the generosity that had been granted me, Jacob and Peter and Johannes (those who are thought to be pillars) gave Bar-Nabas and me the right hand of fellowship. (For the one who was working out a dispatch to the circumcision in Peter was also working in me for the gentiles.) They only said that we remember the poor; I was already trying hard to do this.

What was the outcome of that meeting? Neither Paulus nor any of his fellow envoys yielded to the pleas of the Judaizers. Together they recognized that God had freed his people from all forms of ritualized religion. Was any of this actually Paulus' teaching, or did the other envoys simply take over the conversation? Paulus affirms that the others actually contributed nothing to what he was already teaching, hoping only that he would emphasize helping the poor -- something that he was already doing anyway.

Instead of telling Paulus how to behave, Peter, Jacob, and Johannes recognized Paulus as indeed an equal and acknowledged that they had been sent with the good message to their fellow Jews while Paulus had been given the same message to take to gentiles. Notice that in acknowledging that the Twelve had been sent to Jews, this letter provides testimony that Lk 24:47 (=Mt 28:19) was limited in scope to Jewish converts. Peter and the others extended full partnership (fellowship) to Paulus and Bar-Nabas, acknowledging that Jesus had told Paulus exactly what he had previously taught the others. Therefore, Paulus has completed the defense of his own work, having provided testimony from three of the Twelve on his behalf.

11 *But when Kefa came into Antiochus, I opposed him to his face because he was at fault. For he used to eat with the gentiles before someone came from Jacob. But when he came, he withdrew from them and separated himself off because he feared those of the circumcision. And the other Jews separated themselves along with him. And so, Bar-Nabas was also led astray to their hypocrisy.*

In his effort to demonstrate that the equality of Jews and gentiles was intended in the message that Peter and Jacob had agreed to, Paulus brings up another encounter with Peter which is not mentioned in the Actions of the Envoys.

The envoys were still unsure themselves of exactly how they should act, and Peter's actions demonstrate this. After the meeting in Acts 15, Peter had determined that eating with gentiles was certainly appropriate behavior, since Jewish and gentile Christians ought to be regarded as equals. "Men from Jacob" visited, though, and Peter began to act as though he never ate with gentiles, because those men would only eat with Jews. Notice that Paulus does not condemn Jacob himself -- in fact, he never says that Jacob taught against eating with gentiles. Instead, what he says is that certain Jewish men who knew Jacob would not eat with gentiles, and that after Peter met with them, he began to imitate their example, refusing to eat with gentiles even though he knew there was nothing wrong with the practice. Therefore, it is Peter's "hypocrisy" that Paulus attacks, for out of fear of being ostracized Peter had changed his behavior, and he had pulled Bar-Nabas down with him!

But when I noticed they were not walking properly toward the truth of the good message, I said to Kefa in everyone's presence, "If you who are a Jew live like a gentile, why are you forcing the gentiles to Judaize? We are Jews by nature and are not errant people of the gentiles. Knowing that no one is justified out of works of the Torah, except through trust in Anointed Jesus, we have also trusted in Anointed Jesus, so that we may be justified out of trust in the Anointed One and not out of works of a code."

Since Peter's actions of hypocrisy had been public, Paulus confronted his fellow envoy in public, and everyone there was made to realize that Peter's actions had been inappropriate. Peter "lived like a gentile" because he no longer performed the ritual washings and ate together with gentiles. Yet now he would no longer eat with those gentiles because they did not perform the various Jewish rituals. Consequently, if they still wanted to associate with Peter, they would have to conform to certain facets of Judaism. In effect, Peter was forcing his gentile friends to Judaize.

The condemnation of this practice was based on the message of Jesus. Since Peter knew that Jesus had explained that no one is justified through a code like the Torah, he should not have compelled the gentiles to follow rituals, nor should he have bowed to the Jewish men and followed them himself. "We have trusted in Anointed Jesus" -- Paulus puts himself with Peter so that the condemnation will be less harsh, but both he and Peter already knew that the ritual serves only as a teaching device and not as an actual means of justification, for justification comes by "trust," just as the Messiah had taught.

16 Because no flesh will be justified out of works of a code. Now if we are seeking to be justified in the Anointed One and we are found to be errant, then is the Anointed One a servant of error? May it not happen! For if I let all those things fall down that I have constructed, then I make myself a wanderer. For I died through the Torah so that I might live through God. I have been crucified with the Anointed One.

The event now breaks off. Instead of addressing Peter, Paulus addresses his readers with the general statement that "no flesh" will be justified by performing rituals. "No flesh" means more than simply "no one," it indicates that the Torah (or any written code) addresses physical things, and we cannot be justified by our deeds.

"If we are seeking..." -- If we claim to follow the teachings of Jesus, which show that we are justified through trust, and if we still cling to ritualized religion as a means of justification, then we are not justified. Did the Messiah cause that? No. We will have brought our own destruction by rejecting everything that we "constructed" -- everything we learned from Jesus. Paulus would be making **himself** into a wanderer - one who deviates from the Torah -- if he were to reject Jesus.

But this is not the path for Paulus and should not be the readers' path. "For I died" -- The Torah did teach Paulus what it was supposed to teach him: to die to ritual religion and to live for God. Therefore, just as Jesus' crucifixion started a new covenant, Paulus' has been crucified with him, dying to religion and becoming part of the new covenant.

But I am alive. It is no longer I, but the Anointed One lives in me. And the life that I now live physically, I live trusting in God and in the Anointed One, who loved me and gave himself up on my behalf. I am not setting aside God's generosity: for if there is justification through the Torah, then the Anointed One died meaninglessly.

How is it that Paulus has life in the new covenant? Not through keeping a code of rituals, but because as he lives according to the principles taught by the Messiah, the Messiah (metaphorically) lives within him. Paulus lives physically, but through the teachings of the Anointed One he also lives spiritually because he trusts in God and in the Messiah whom God sent.

Knowing all of these things, Paulus refuses to "set aside God's generosity" and turn back to ritual religion for atonement. After all, if it were even possible to be justified that way -- which it isn't -- then there would have been no need to send the Messiah at all. He would have died without teaching anything more -- a meaningless death.

3:1 *You mindless Galatians! Who has deluded you? Anointed Jesus was written out earlier for you as crucified, before your eyes. I only want to learn this from you: Did you receive the spirit out of works of the Torah, or out of a trusting hearing?*

At this point, Paulus turns his indictment away from Peter, and away from the Judaizers, and directs it toward the readers themselves. Since the readers know that Jesus was crucified, and since they know that the Messiah had to die, then the earlier system is complete -- something that the Galatians should also know. The new covenant is here.

"Did you receive the spirit" -- As in Romans, "spirit" is used to indicate an attitude or way of thinking. How did they learn what they had learned about following the principles of trust and love? Did they learn it through legalistically adhering to the Torah, or did they learn it because they had heard the message about the Messiah and had trusted in him? The question is rhetorical, because Paulus knows that the freedom they now enjoy is because of the Anointed One.

You are so mindless! You who started spiritually, are you now being made complete physically? You have suffered so many things for nothing, if indeed it is for nothing. Therefore, is the one who supplies you with the breath and works wonders among you doing so out of works of the Torah, or out of a trusting hearing? Just as Abraham "trusted God and it was recorded for him as justification."

Since the readers realize that they became who they were because of the spiritual understanding of the Torah, and since they realize that no one can be justified through their own deeds, how can they possibly submit to circumcision and the Torah now and expect justification that way?

If they leave their Messiah for ritual Judaism, then all of the struggles they have gone through to keep their freedom will have been for nothing. And so, Paulus reminded them of the confirming signs that God provided to distinguish spiritual Judaism from ritual Judaism. Did those signs come because they followed

the rituals of the Torah? No, those signs came because they heard the message of their Anointed One. and they had trusted, just as Abraham was justified because he had trusted God.

Surely you know that those who belong to trust, these are Abraham's sons. Now since the writing foresaw that God would justify the nations out of trust, it previously announced the good message to Abraham that "in you all the nations will be praised." And so, those who belong to trust are praised along with trusting Abraham.

Using the understanding that to be someone's "son" is to follow in that person's footsteps, Paulus' application of the trust and justification is that the true "sons of Abraham" are not those who merely bear the mark of circumcision but are those who follow his example of living by trust. The author even points out that the extension of a covenant to gentiles was prefigured in Abraham, through whom the nations (i.e., gentiles) would have praise (Gen 12:3). Simply put, the Christian readers -- Jew or gentile -- who followed Abraham's example of trust were justified like Abraham and were praised according to God's promise.

10 *For as many as there are who belong to works of a code are under a curse. For it was written that, "A curse is on each one who does not continue in each of the things to do which are written in the scroll of the Torah."*

Now having established that those who live by trust are praised (or blessed) by God, and that such a notion was promise in the Torah, Paulus goes on to look at the other side. What about the people who continue to live by the Torah as though it were a code of actions? Legalism, he writes, brings about a curse.

Paulus' support for this strong statement comes from the Torah itself. As Moses was concluding his presentation of the Torah to the people (Dt 27), he directed the Levites to speak to the people and to tell them (at Mount Gerizim) that various curses were to be pronounced on people for certain actions. The people were to agree to these curses. The last of the curses was as follows (v. 26), "Cursed is the one who does not confirm the sayings of this Torah by doing them." Paulus' analysis is that here the view of the Torah as the people's legal code is summed up, and the people themselves agreed that if they did not keep the whole Torah, then they were to be cursed. Therefore, since the perfect keeping of the Torah (as a legal code) is virtually impossible, anyone who has such a mindset is cursed.

But it is clear that no one is made right before God by the Torah, because, "Out of trust, the just one will live." Now the Torah is not out of trust. On the contrary, "The one who has done these things will live in them." An Anointed One has bought us out of the Torah's curse, becoming a curse on our behalf--because it was written, "Each one who hangs on a tree is cursed" -- so that in Anointed Jesus the praise of Abraham might happen to the nations and so that through trust we might receive the praise of the Spirit.

Since the attitude of legalism brings a curse and not a blessing, and since it is trust (and not law-keeping) that justifies, the sending of the Anointed One was necessary, so that Israel would learn that the Torah was intended as a teaching tool. For although the Torah revealed that in order to live, one must keep the Torah (Lv 18:5), it also revealed that the true principle was that trust was what justifies (Hab 2:4). In order to "remove the curse" in completing the old covenant system, the Messiah became something that was considered "cursed" under that system: he became a criminal, convicted of wrongdoing and sentenced to death: "If someone has committed a crime punishable by death and he is executed, and if you hang him

on a tree, then his body will not remain all night on the tree, but you will bury him the same day, for a hanged man is cursed by God." (Lv 21:23)

And so, the Anointed One was wrongly convicted of a crime punishable by death and was publically executed, which was considered such a disgrace that the body had to be taken down before sunset or the land itself would be defiled. Some authors get hung up (no pun intended) on the use of "hanging" in Leviticus. In the OT, the public display did signify the impaling of a body on a stake. While it is true that crucifixion involves the staking of a body to a piece of wood, the point of the passage has nothing to do with the form of public execution. The disgrace comes because the felon was convicted of a capital offense, and this is what happened to Jesus.

It is in Jesus' making the system complete that he removed the "curse" from the Torah. This was actually done by teaching the deeper principles of trust and love, but Paulus symbolically represents it (here as always) by Jesus' willing death at the hands of his captors. In teaching that people are justified by trust and not code-keeping, Jesus brought the promises of Abraham to those gentiles who live by trust.

Brothers, I am telling you according to human reasoning: although human, no one sets aside or makes further changes to a covenant that has been ratified. Now the promises were spoken to Abraham and to his "seed". It does not say, "and to the seeds," as though it were about many, but as though it were about one: "and to your seed," which is an anointed one.

The word used in the promise to Abraham's descendants is, literally, "seed." The normal meaning of the word is one's progeny, that is, Abraham's physical descendants, and so the term is elsewhere understood in the New Testament. Paulus does not intend to change that significance, but he points to another interpretation that allows him to say that the blessings come through the sending of an anointed one. He has used the expression "an anointed one" earlier to refer to Jesus. This time, God's chosen one was Moses, who had been anointed to bring the Torah. The "seed," in Paulus' midrash, is that anointed one, for that descendent ("seed") brought the Torah which coincided with the promise to inherit the land – the land to which the people traveled along with Moses.

Now I say this: The Torah -- which occurred after four hundred thirty years -- does not annul a covenant ratified earlier by God to the point of canceling the promise. For if the inheritance came through the Torah, it would no longer be out of the promise. But God gave it freely to Abraham through a promise.

Paulus has called this a bit of "human reasoning," for his rationale is not from the Torah directly but from logic. Just as any covenant (which some regard as a "will") is not destroyed by things that happen later, the Torah itself does not negate the covenant that God had already made with Abraham. The promise of inheritance had not been made through the Torah, but it preceded the Torah and was not nullified by the Torah. Therefore, God's gift to humanity through the Messiah was from "the promise;" as far as that promise was concerned, the Torah had no bearing on it.

Interestingly, the author appears to reject the timeline given in the later Masoretic Text of the Torah, for the 430 year span between the promise and the giving of the Torah is found in certain manuscripts of the Septuagint, in which the 430 years includes the total time between the two, rather than just the time spent in Egypt. Paulus' account appears to indicate that the Hebrew manuscripts of his day supported the earlier reading of the Septuagint over what became the reading in the Masoretic Text.

Then why the code of actions? It was arranged by messengers in the hand of a mediator until the seed would come (to whom the promises were given). But a mediator is not the mediator of one person, but God is one. So, is the Torah against the promises? May it not happen!

The readers might wonder why the Torah had been given at all if indeed the promises had been given ahead of time and if the Torah had nothing to do with them. The legal code was crafted into the Torah. The Torah was, here, a "mediator." It existed as a teaching tool, filling the space between the time of Moses and the time when God would send the complete teaching. There is only one God. The Torah mediated a relationship not between God and himself but between God and his people. So, was the legal code in opposition to the promises? Did it teach justification by ritual deeds rather than trust? The author denies that.

Just as Moses was a descendant (seed) of Abraham, and he was the one who had brought the Torah while leading them to the promised land, more recently Jesus – a descendant of Abraham – brought the people to a state of trust.

For if a code were given which was able to give life, there would have even been justification in the Torah. But the writing has sealed up everyone together under error, so that the promise of Anointed Jesus' trust would be given to those who trust.

The Torah never taught that ritual deeds caused justification. If it had, there would have been no need for the Messiah. Instead, the writings pointed out sin, so that when the people were ready to understand the Messiah, he would come and make the Torah complete. Jesus pointed out that trust like his trust was what saved, and so he brought the Abrahamic promises to those who trust.

Now before the coming of the trust, we were being guarded under the Torah, sealed together for the trust that was about to be revealed. And so, the Torah was our schoolmaster. This occurred until the Anointed One, so that we might be made right out of trust. But since the trust came, we are no longer under a schoolmaster. For you are God's sons on account of Anointed Jesus' trust.

The "coming of the trust" refers in tandem to the trust that Jesus showed us, for the focus of his teaching was in his example, and to the understanding that salvation comes through trust. Before the Messiah came, the Torah was a sort of "guardian." Both that term (or function) and the expression "mediator" (used above) refer to someone who has been tasked with caring for a child as it matures. Humanity was not yet mature, and so the Torah took care of us. The Torah was, then, our schoolmaster. It was an instructional tool, but it was not the complete teaching. When the Anointed One came, he lived trust and taught trust, so that the people who had become mature while living under the Torah might understand that the purpose of the Torah was to teach not legalism but trust. Jesus brought "the trust," and so the schoolmaster is no longer necessary, for the complete teaching is here. Paulus does not reject the Torah itself, per se, but the way of thinking that regards the Torah as a legal code rather than as an instructional device. The Torah was supposed to get people ready to understand the greater teaching that the Messiah explained. That deeper teaching, and not the "legal code" notion, was what had made the readers into "sons of Abraham." They were sons because they imitated his trust, and they learned of the importance of trust through Jesus.

For as many as have been baptized into the Anointed One have been clothed with the Anointed One. "There is neither Jew nor Greek. There is neither slave nor free. There is no 'male and female.'" For you are all one in Anointed Jesus. Now if you are the Anointed One's, you are surely the seed of Abraham.

Paulus uses "baptism" as a symbol, here. The expression, "baptize into," universally refers to a covenant in the NT. Being "baptized into the Anointed One" signifies covenanting with the Messiah. Given the things just written, Paulus has in mind the concept of living by trust. Whoever lives in the trust that Jesus brought has been "clothed with the Anointed One." This means that when God looks at a Christian, he sees Jesus in them. He sees that they are following the Messianic teachings, and that is enough. God does **not** see physical distinctions of any kind. Circumcision is certainly one kind of physical distinction, but society had and has other such distinctions, such as those between the classes and genders. God sees none of those things when he looks at a Christian -- he sees the teachings of his Anointed One being acted out.

The expressions of distinction that appear here are most interesting. There was a "dominical saying" or prayer that circulated in Paulus' time among both gentiles and Jews. Three times this saying was recorded by Jewish writers, once in this form:

"Praised be God that He has not created me a Gentile!

Praised be God that He has not created me a woman!

Praised be God that He has not created me a slave!" (Tosephta Berakhoth 7,8)

Our author appears to have been aware of this saying and to have denied it any credence whatsoever. Instead of praising the cultural distinctions, Paulus nullifies them. In fact, the change in wording from "neither...nor" to "male and female" appears to have been borrowed from the Genesis creation account, in which God made humanity "male and female." Such distinctions are irrelevant on a spiritual level, having been declared irrelevant by the Anointed One and his covenant of trust and love.

At this point, rejecting ritual religion and embracing a message of trust and love, the readers themselves would truly become "the seed of Abraham" -- in fulfillment of the promise.

According to the promise, you are heirs. But I say this: As long a time as the heir is a baby, he is no different from a slave, although he is lord of all. But he is under guardians and stewards until the time determined earlier by the father. It is also this way with us. When we were babies, we were enslaved under the elements of creation. But when the full amount of time went by, God sent out his son (born of a woman, born under the Torah), so that he might redeem those who were under the Torah -- so that we would receive sonship.

Who are the heirs? Those Jews and gentiles who live by the principle of trust that Jesus brought. In essence, all humanity inherits the promise made to Abraham, provided that they live by Abraham's example of trust. "As long as the heir is a baby" again refers to the time prior to the coming of the Messiah. The Israelite people were still "under a schoolmaster" because they were not yet mature enough to understand the complete message. And so, they had been "under guardians and stewards" -- the Jewish system of religion -- until "the time determined by the father."

Thus, it was legalism that caused people to be "enslaved under the elements of creation." Paulus is not referring to specific errors here but to the mentality that opposes living by trust. But when the Anointed One came, those who were "under the Torah" became able to understand its deeper significance.

Others have written much about the description of the Messiah here: "born of a woman, born under the Torah." Some have said that "born of a woman" signifies that Yosef was not Jesus' biological father. Others have said that it is somehow a "fulfillment" of the non-Messianic passage in Genesis 3:15. Neither of these views can be accurate, nor is it a reference to Adam (who was not born of women). Instead, we read a quite similar saying in the praise of John the Baptizer (Lk 7:28; Mt 11:11), who was the greatest among those "born of women." The phrase emphasizes full humanity. Just as among all humanity, John was most deserving of praise, so also Jesus was "born of a woman," meaning that he was fully human. He was also "born under the Torah," meaning that he was in every respect a Jew.

Now because you are sons, God sent out his spirit into our hearts, calling out "Dad! Father!" And so, you are no longer a slave, but a son. Now if you are a son, you are also an heir on account of God.

"His spirit" is the spirit of sonship, and the spirit of sonship is the attitude of living by trust rather than code-keeping. It is this recognition not of sinfulness but of forgiveness that allows Paulus to call out to God lovingly as his Father. Now that the Messiah has come, the readers are no longer under their schoolmaster (like slaves), but they are fully sons -- heirs of whatever God had promised Abraham.

But then indeed, when you didn't know God, you were a slave to those who by nature are not gods. But now, since you know God (or rather, are known by God), how can you turn again to those weak and poor elements? Do you want to be enslaved to them again, as you were from the beginning -- observing days, and new moons, and seasons, and years? I am afraid for you...perhaps I have labored for you in vain?

"When you didn't know God" refers not to gentile object-worship but to the lack of true recognition of God that was present under the religious system. The religious system and its leaders had kept them enslaved, just as the Israelites had been in Egypt. In their past, the readers had not truly known God at all, whereas now they can call him "Dad." But now that they have their Messiah and have close relationships with God, why would they ever **want** to return to ritual religion? The term "elements" is used here as in v. 3 to refer to rudimentary religious notions. He asks, pseudo-rhetorically, why they would want to go back to their ritualistic ways and observances (including, but not limited to, all of the Jewish festivals). If indeed they want to go back to those things, the author worries about them. In this way, Paulus expresses that it would not make sense to want to return to ritual religion after being set free.

Brothers, I am begging you: become as I am, for I also became as you are. You did me no wrong. Now you know that I previously announced the good message to you through a weakness of the flesh, and that you did not despise my test in the flesh. On the contrary, you embraced me as a messenger of God, as Anointed Jesus.

"Become as I am" -- Paulus implores his readers to happily turn away from the past and accept the freedom that they have because of Jesus. "I became as you are" -- The parallel phrase identifies the author with his readers. After all, he is just like they are. "You did me no wrong" indicates that he is not upset with them, but the thought of their returning to religious ritual does bother him.

Paulus' reference to "physical weakness" may refer to one of three things. Many believe that the "physical weakness" was meant to indicate that he was traveling under an illness of some sort. However, the readers were personally aware that the Judaizers had made him physically weak with persecution, and at this point in the letter he reminds them of that fact and of their own acceptance of him at that point. For

they had realized then that God had sent him, and so they received him as they would have received the Messiah.

So, where is your blessedness? For I am testifying to you that you would have plucked out your eyes and given them to me, if it were possible. And so, have I become your enemy by being truthful? They are jealous for you: not in a nice way; rather, they want to sequester you, so that you would be jealous for them. Now it is always a nice thing to be jealous in a nice way and not only during the time when I present myself to you.

Still reminding them of their own loving concern for him, Paulus asks them to treat him similarly now. Should he be considered their enemy now for telling them the truth. In fact, the truth that this letter contains is the same truth that they had embraced when shielding him from his persecutors.

Both he and the Judaizers are "jealous" for the readers, meaning that they have an eager desire to see the readers do something. However, whereas Paulus' desire is for something nice -- their freedom -- the Judaizers want to imprison the readers. The only reason that the Judaizers are so nice toward the readers, Paulus asserts, is that they want some sort of reciprocation. They want to be able to "call in favors" at a later time. Paulus isn't calling in a favor; he merely wants them to be themselves. Or were they only being kind toward him because he was there with them? He knows that such an idea was wrong -- that the Galatians really have love within them, even if now they seem wrongfully angry with him.

My children, with whom I am pregnant again until the Anointed One is formed in you: I might want to present myself to you now, and to change the way I sound, because I am confused about you. Tell me, you who want to be under a code, don't you hear the Torah? For it was written that Abraham had two sons, one by the servant woman and one by the freewoman. But the one by the servant woman was born according to the flesh, but the one by the freewoman was born through a promise. These things are symbolic. For these things are the two covenants, one indeed from Mount Sinai giving birth to children for slavery--that is, Hagar. Now Sinai is a mountain in Arabia, but it represents the modern Jerusalem. For she and her children are in slavery. But the original Jerusalem is a free woman; this one is our mother. For it was written, "Have a good attitude, barren woman who is not bearing children! Break out and shout, you who are not in labor! Because there are many more children of the one who was deserted than of the one who has the husband."

Paulus is still "pregnant" with them again because he had once "given birth" to them by making them his "children" in the faith, but now, since they were considering leaving the teachings of trust, he has to "give birth" to them all over again. That process continues until they fully accept the Anointed One's teachings.

The writer wishes that he could be with them, because maybe they would better understand him if he were there. He is not angry (as they think him to be) but confused and concerned.

The good message and the Torah are like Isaak and Ishmael. Ishmael represents the Torah, for Ishmael was the child of a slave woman, and anyone under the Torah is in slavery. But the new covenant is represented by Isaak, the heir of the covenant, the full son, the child of a free woman. The good message of Jesus brings freedom.

Mount Sinai was the place where the beginning concepts of the Torah were first given to Moses (Ex 19-20), and Paulus sees in it a symbol of the "modern Jerusalem." That is, he sees Judaism in its current state

as represented the place where the Torah was given. He depicts Sinai as the dwelling place of Hagar the slave woman. For lawkeeping enslaves, but the "original Jerusalem" -- the home of Sarah in the analogy - is the place where the promises were made to Abraham. Sarah, the free woman, is the "mother" of those who have received Jesus as the Messiah and who follow his teachings of trust and love.

The citation comes from Isa 54:1. In its original context, the "barren woman" refers to exiled Israel, whereas the "married woman" was Israel prior to the Exile. Paulus relates the "barren woman" to Sarah, the free "mother" of the Christians. The "married woman" then represents modern Judaism, but the analogy does not extend beyond that. Paulus says that in the end, Christian Judaism will be more prosperous than non-Christian Judaism, for he realizes that Priestly Judaism would soon be coming to an end.

I need to stress that when the NT authors make analogies of this nature, they are not claiming that the original passage was meant to apply to their situation. Instead, Paulus makes an application from the original passage because he believes the situation (or even the language) relates to the current crisis between Judaizers and free Christians.

Now brothers, you are children of a promise, represented by Isaak. But just as the one who was born then according to the flesh persecuted the one who was born according to the spirit, it is also the same way now. But what does the writing say? "Cast away the servant woman and her son. For the son of the servant woman will by no means inherit along with the son" of the free woman. Then, brothers, we are not children of a servant woman, but of a free woman.

Ishmael's descendants had been at odds with Isaak's descendants for many years by the time of writing, and so Paulus notes that just as the children of the slave's son had persecuted the children of the free woman's son, shouldn't the readers also expect the same thing to happen now? Shouldn't the Judaizers persecute those who want to live by trust? Indeed, that was what was happening.

The writing (Gen 21:10) has been quoted by some people in support of antisemitism. Some claim that Paulus is saying that Christians should have nothing to do with Jews, but the view is ridiculous. In the first place, many of his readers were Jewish, so the matter is not about ethnic stock at all. Paulus means the same thing here as when he earlier urged them to be as he is. He wants them to reject the slavery of formalized religion and embrace the sonship of life by the Messianic precepts. He continues to say similar things:

The Anointed One freed us for freedom. Therefore, stand in the freedom for which the Anointed One freed us, and do not again be held in a yoke of slavery. Look, I Paulus am telling you that if you should get circumcised, the Anointed One will be worth nothing to you. Now I am testifying again to everyone who gets circumcised that he is bound to do the whole Torah. You who are justifying yourselves in the Torah are causing the Anointed One to pass away. You have fallen out of favor.

Being "freed for freedom" means simply that Jesus did not complete the Torah and remove ritual religion so that God's people would return to slavery in them. If that had been the case, the Anointed One's death would have had no significance. Therefore, Paulus urges the Christians in Galatia not to return to the Jewish religious system.

There is no difference between circumcision and the rest of the ritual religion. Anyone who gets circumcised because he thinks that the Torah teaches it to be more spiritual, that person might as well add in all of the prescribed rituals and do them. In fact, because Deuteronomy mentions that the Torah was to be taken as a unit, accepting any portion of it legalistically (whether circumcision, or sabbath-keeping, or offerings) obligates that person to carry out the whole thing. After all, for that person it is just as though the Messiah had never come. Such a person would have to justify himself by performing the entire Torah if he rejects the favor that Jesus brought.

For we are watching spiritually in trust for a hope of being made right. For in Anointed Jesus neither circumcision nor a foreskin is strong, but trust working through love is strong. You were running nicely. Who hindered you from being persuaded by the truth? This persuasion is not from the one who is calling you; a little leaven ferments the whole mass.

A hope of being made right, of justification, is not to be had by people who perform various rituals as a constant reminder of everything that they have done wrong. That hope comes with living in God's favor - in the teachings of Jesus. What matters now that the Messiah has come? It is unimportant whether or not someone has been physically circumcised -- those things mean nothing -- but the strength comes in living lives of trust and love, just as Jesus summarized the Torah.

Paulus' next matter, then, is not rhetorical. Since he himself had personal knowledge that the readers had begun to understand the spiritual message, who could have prevented them from holding on to the truth? The readers are supposed to answer that question to themselves, keeping in mind who has caused them to fall out of favor. For "this persuasion" -- i.e., the things that they persuaded the readers to do -- isn't from God.

"A little leaven ferments the whole mass" is true of a mass of bread dough, and the Jewish readers recognize the significance of unleavened (unfermented) bread: it is unsuitable for the Passover. The leaven (yeast), as Jesus also taught, is the teaching of those people who want to reject the Messianic teachings of Jesus. Just as Jesus referred to the "leaven of the Perushim," Paulus remarks that to admit even the smallest bit of their legalism is to destroy all of what the Anointed One came to establish.

I have confidence in you in the Lord, that you will have no other attitude, but the one who is causing you trouble will bear the judgment, whoever he may be. Now brothers, if I were still heralding circumcision, why am I still being persecuted? Then has the stumbling block of the cross passed away? Then [I want that] those who are capsizing you should also cut themselves off!

Paulus does not particularly care to hear specific allegations now against the Judaizers. He is not interested in finger-pointing. Instead, he makes the blanket statement that whoever these people are, God will judge them. In fact, "the judgment" may allude to the impending judgment on Israel, which the Judaizers who clung to ritual religion were sure to face.

The author has left the ritual trappings of religion entirely, and he can prove it, for he is being persecuted for that very reason. So clearly, at the then-present time, the notion of a suffering servant Messiah was still a point of stumbling for the Judaizers. Unable to accept that the Torah and kingdom are to be interpreted spiritually, they were clinging to the physical nation of Israel (which was about to be destroyed).

There are two interpretations of the next line. Since Paulus has said (in the immediate context) that the readers should leave ritual religion behind just as he himself had done, the Judaizers "cutting themselves off" signifies their having nothing to do with the Galatian Christians. Paulus hopes that this will be the case. Others have noticed a double-entendre in his words. Does Paulus mean that he wants the Judaizers to be completely ignored, or when he says "cut off" is he hoping that they will castrate themselves? The word **does** mean "amputate" and can refer to body parts (see, for instance, Mk 9:43; Jn 18:10). It appears in the middle voice, which normally indicates that someone is doing something themselves. The Liddell and Scott Lexicon interprets the passage that way: "make oneself a eunuch." So also, the RSV, NIV, and other popular translations. If this is the case, then it would be a pun based around the concept of circumcision, and Paulus elsewhere (Ph 3:2) makes such a pun. The fact that he uses a different verb here, though, leads me to believe that he means not one or the other but both. What he really wants to see is for the Judaizers to leave his readers alone, but he writes this in such a way that it refers to amputation.

For you were called to freedom, brothers, only not to freedom as an opportunity for the flesh. On the contrary, be slaves to one another through love. For all of the Torah is summed up in this one saying, "You will love your neighbor as yourself." But if you bite and devour one another, see to it that you not be eaten up by one another. Now I say, "walk spiritually" and do not fulfill the strong desires of the flesh:

Now that the readers realize that they should not consider returning to Judaism to be a viable option, Paulus focuses them on how they should treat one another. Since the Torah is summed up simply in love (Lv 19:18), it is necessary for them to love one another.

There is freedom in the Messianic teachings, as opposed to the slavery of ritual religion, and the readers must take care not to given in to any temptation to return to ritual religion, that is, "the flesh." Paulus often uses "the flesh" to signify a religion that is physical as opposed to spiritual, and in juxtaposition to the Torah being summed up in love, this is what he means here. However, he is about to relate the spiritual aspects of relationships to certain obvious physical issues. So, he extends from the ritual religion that he has been talking about to **any** sort of danger that might prevent the Galatians from living lives of love toward one another.

When he says, "live spiritually," he means "live according to Jesus' message," which sums up all of life in the precepts of trust and love. But what constitutes a loving life, and what opposes a loving life? In between mentions of "walk spiritually," Paulus elaborates. The desires of the flesh indicate a desire for a physical religion.

For the flesh strongly desires against the spirit; now the spirit strongly desires against the flesh. For these things are opposed to one another, so that you don't do what you want to do. Now if you are led spiritually, you are not under a code, but the works of the flesh are apparent; these are: prostitution, moral uncleanness, debauchery, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, rage, bigotry, group divisions, factions, envyings; drunkenness, drinking parties, and things like these. I tell you in advance about these, just as I said before, that those who practice these things will not inherit God's kingdom.

"The flesh," here, is now any thing or idea that opposes trust or love. The "spirit" is the attitude of living by trust and love. Consequently, the two concepts are "opposed to one another."

For the person who is led spiritually -- that is, for the follower of Jesus who has rejected religion as a gateway to God's kingdom -- there is no Torah punishing people for performing certain actions, but since

trust and love are supreme, there are still certain "obvious" wrongs. The list begins, intentionally, with items that every Jewish reader would recognize as wrong: prostitution...idolatry... sorcery. However, the author was referring to the ritual religion as being a collection of all of those things. It was no different from the idolatry that the readers found in the Torah. Likewise, the list concludes with "obvious" no-nos: drunkenness and drinking parties. These items are irrelevant to the rest of the list, for the author's point is to set the readers up for the items that pertain to relationships. Paulus' point is not to state the "apparent" (obvious) but to indicate what sorts of things happen in relationships that are not loving. These include:

- enmity -- This is a feud or hostility and may indicate a grudge against someone.
- strife -- This is chaos or infighting in relationships.
- jealousy -- Rivalry, trying to become better than someone.
- rage -- Some translate this as "fits of rage" or "outbursts of anger."
- bigotry -- This is the attitude of regarding one's group as somehow superior. Party squabbling or bickering is part of bigotry. Racism, sexism, and the like.
- group divisions -- This indicates dissention between sects or subgroups.
- factions -- The word for a "school of thought" is used here with a negative connotation; normally, the connotation is neutral. When used negatively in the New Testament, it means sectarianism. Beyond division or dissention, the term here is now indicative of people who will not associate with one another because of their disagreements.
- envyings -- With an "envying," one's heart burns with malice for another person, perhaps thinking that the other person is perceived as better.

Every one of these situations hinders a person from living a life of love, and Paulus hopes that the Galatians will avoid such things in their relationships with one another, for they are indicative of a life that is NOT led by the teachings of Jesus.

But the spirit's fruit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, truthfulness, trust, meekness, self-control. The Torah is not against these. But those who belong to the Anointed One have crucified the flesh, along with the passions and strong desires. "If we live spiritually, we should walk orderly and spiritually." We should not become worthlessly conceited, challenging one another and envying one another.

On the other hand, what are the characteristics of living a life according to Jesus' teachings about relationships? These things together are the product ("fruit") of living spiritually:

- love -- Since the Torah is summed up by love, this item was necessarily listed first. Someone who love places others' needs ahead of his own.
- joy -- No one is truly happy (joyful) unless he realizes that he is in control of his own joy. Being controlled by circumstances or jealous for what you don't have will not accomplish this, but if someone is content in his circumstances (as Paulus was) and happy enough to live the life that God wants, then (s)he will have joy.
- peace -- By accepting others and allowing them to live their own lives, conflicts do not arise so readily. Peace comes through treating others with love and respect.
- longsuffering -- If you love someone, you become stronger -- more able to put up with times of difficulty in the relationship.
- kindness -- The word signifies a goodness and honesty that comes from the heart.

- truthfulness -- The person who lives in trust and love has nothing to fear from his friends. It is lies and secrets that control a person; if someone lives according to Jesus' teaching, (s)he can be truthful and find tranquility in the truth.
- trust -- This is the other pillar of Christian life. The "beatitudes" (or blessings) spoken by Jesus in the "Sermon on the Mount" all relate to trust, to love, or to both. What a wonderful thing for Christians to find relationships characterized by trust.
- meekness -- This is the opposite of rage and is an attitude of calmness. Meekness in a relationship is the ability to treat one another lovingly without going berserk and "losing your cool." It is most certainly a strength that is hard to acquire without love.
- self-control -- It is the ability to restrain oneself from taking rash emotional actions. In the relationship setting, saying something best unsaid, striking another, or abandoning the relationship are all more easily dealt with by the person who possesses self-control because of his/her love for another.

If indeed they were living according to Jesus' spiritual Torah, it would show in their lives -- even though the true Torah is not physical. Some direct applications follow. First of all, Christians should not challenge one another. Some challenges seem "friendly," but all challenging is to be avoided. In some cases, it is indicative of an "I know better than you" or simply "I am better" attitude. They should not become so conceited as to challenge one another. On the other hand, they should not envy another person's abilities or differences. Likely, they should even avoid conflict with the Judaizers if they were able to do so.

Brothers, if a person should even be surprised by any fault, you who are spiritual should restore that one in a spirit of meekness, watching yourself so that you would not also be tempted. Bear one another's burdens, and fulfill the Anointed One's code in this way. For if someone thinks himself to be something, he is deceiving himself, since he is nothing. But he should prove his own work, and then he will have boasting in himself alone, and not in another person. For each one will bear his own load.

The expression "surprised by..." means that he does not mean to include people who have chosen to ignore the teachings of the Anointed One. But if an otherwise trusting and loving person makes mistakes, ignore them. Treat those mistakes as though they do not exist. It is the ones who **are** living by the spiritual teachings of whom this is expected. Since meekness in a relationship indicates being cool when there is a problem, then restoring someone in meekness means calmly and peacefully allowing them to continue in the same relationship without retribution. This attitude, Paulus says, is the loving one, fulfilling the Messianic teachings.

Assisting one another in weakness is a function of loving one another, and therefore it is a necessity. Therefore and on the other hand, no one should be so proud as to reject someone who has been struggling, because we are all nothing without God. None are justified by ourselves.

When we help someone, though, we must be careful not to take "credit" where it is not due. God is working in our friends' hearts (and only *through*) us to keep someone in the fold. None of us are so great that we can save another person. Consequently, we should not boast that "we saved so-and-so," for only God saves, and every one of us is personally responsible for his own actions and no one else's.

The one who is being instructed the message should share in all good things with the one who is teaching. Make no mistake: God is not to be mocked. For whatever things a person may sow, he will also reap these things. Because the one who sows for his flesh will reap corruption from the flesh, but the one who sows for the spirit will reap eternal life from the spirit. Now we should not do a poor job of doing a nice thing,

for in its own season we will reap if we do not let things go. So then, as we have the season, we should work good toward all people, but especially toward the household of the faith.

The passage has nothing to do with sharing physical things (food or money), but everyone who has learned to love should demonstrate that love in kindness toward all people, and in particular toward the people who explained love to them. If we have been taught love, then we must live lives of love.

Paulus may be talking about himself and the other envoys here, for his explanation deals with repaying your spiritual teacher by displaying actions of legalistic religion ("the flesh") rather than trust and love ("the spirit"). Therefore, he is urging his readers to behave as they learned to behave, instead of repaying his teaching of love by reverting to a religion full of physical rituals.

Whatever we sow, we will reap. Anyone among the readers who returns to the "flesh" (physical religion) would profit nothing, for when the Roman armies destroy the temple, their religion would prove worthless. On the other hand, those who live spiritually (according to Jesus' teachings) would have the eternal life that is God's gift and reward.

Therefore, it is necessary to live such lives of love, showing love wherever possible, and especially toward other Christians. "We should not do a poor job of doing a nice thing" sums up the whole thought, as the author urges his beloved Galatian friends to show love toward him and, more greatly, toward all Christians and everyone.

Look at how few things I have written in letters to you with my own hand. As many as want to appear good in the flesh, these people are forcing you to be circumcised. They do this only so that they will not be persecuted for the cross of Anointed Jesus. For not even the circumcised themselves are keeping the Torah. On the contrary, they want you to be circumcised so that they may boast in your flesh. But it is not for me to boast, except in the cross of our Lord, Anointed Jesus, through which the creation was crucified to me, and I to the creation. For neither is circumcision anything, nor is a foreskin; but a new creation is something! And as many as will walk rightly in this rule, there will be mercy and peace upon them, and on God's Israel.

Some translate "how many" instead of "how few," but the expression can mean either. Since this letter is quite small by comparison to a typical "long" letter, the expression "how few" is probably right, although some point out that "how many" may be accurate, compared to the author's even smaller letters. Still, from his summary that follows, he perceives that he has written only a few things. I note also that some make this an examination of the size of Paulus' handwriting ("how large"). Such an analysis is out of place at this point in the letter and is surely incorrect.

"As many as want to appear good in the flesh" -- The physical religion of the Judaizers praises them for converting people to their ritual ways, and Paulus bluntly states his belief that the Judaizers simply want to look good in front of others and avoid persecution; they have no real concern for the Galatian Christians' welfare. His proof of this is simple: that those people who are so strongly urging the readers to keep the Torah legalistically aren't doing that themselves.

In contrast to the Judaizers, Paulus hasn't boasted about how many people he "converted." Instead, he only praises God for sending Jesus to the cross to inaugurate a new way of thinking. For ritual acts like circumcision (or baptism, or communion, or whatever) mean nothing. The important thing is this "new

creation" that we become when we realize that formalized religion is not the path to God, but that trust and love are what save.

"God's Israel," then, is not physical Israel but those who follow the teachings of Jesus by living according to the spiritual Torah of love and trust.

What remains is this: let no one cause me troubles, for I bear in my body the marks of Jesus. May the favor of our Lord, Anointed Jesus, be with your spirit, brothers. A-men.

If anyone there in Galatia still wants to criticize Paulus for telling them to be persecuted by the Judaizers in remaining with Jesus, they need to remember that he himself has been beaten for his beliefs -- something that had not yet happened to any of the Galatians. Paulus was living by his convictions because he was certain that they were right, and his readers should realize by this point that they too knew that Jesus was who he claimed to be.

The closing blessing is the blessing of the favor (generosity, grace) brought by the Anointed One. Even in parting, he leaves them with a reminder that God's generosity came through Jesus. So it is right for him to say, "with your spirit(s)," rather than simply, "with you," for his intent has been to focus them away from the physical religion and onto the spiritual.

The letter to the Galatians contains a defense for everything that Paulus lived his life for: his own conversion; his calling; and the principles of Love and Trust that were taught to him in truth by Anointed Jesus, making him realize that all people are equal. The strength that comes from pursuing trust and love carried Paulus through years of pain and suffering, and those principles are just as important for Christians of any time period.