

GALATIANS

Paul's most urgent letter

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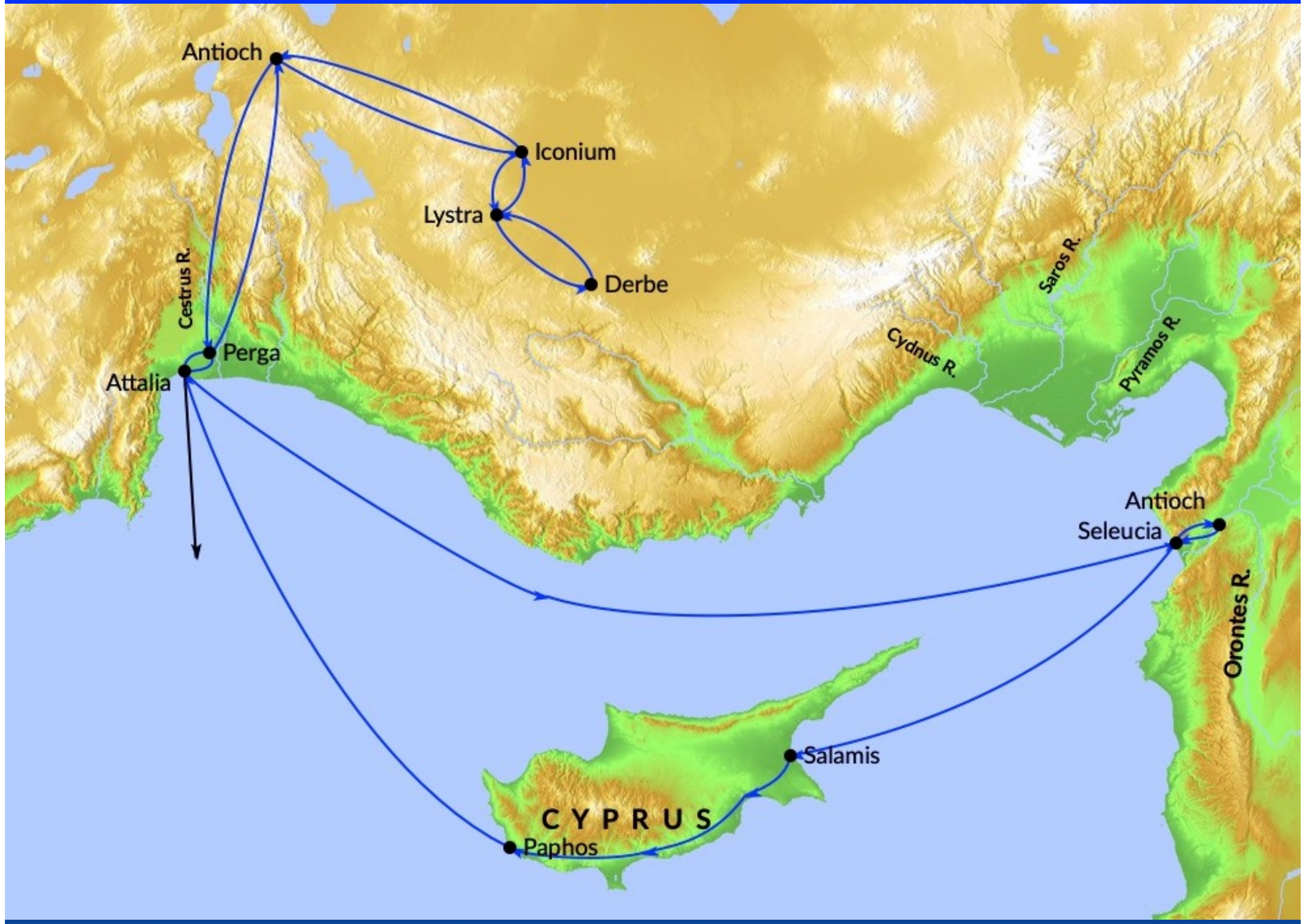
Why does reading Galatians matter?

- Galatians takes us to the heart of the gospel
- Galatians shows us how to think of ourselves
- Galatians shows us how to live the Christian life

The Galatian situation

Who? The Galatians

- converts from Paul and Barnabas' mission trip in Acts 13–14



Who? The Galatians, Paul and Barnabas

- converts from Paul and Barnabas' mission trip in Acts 13–14
- mainly pagan rather than Jewish 4:8; 6:12
- came to faith through Paul and Barnabas' visits
 - Paul unwell when first visited 4:13
 - remarkable events 3:1–5

1 You foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? It was before your eyes that Jesus Christ was publicly exhibited as crucified! 2 The only thing I want to learn from you is this: Did you receive the Spirit by doing the works of the law or by believing what you heard? 3 Are you so foolish? Having started with the Spirit, are you now ending with the flesh? 4 Did you experience so much for nothing?—if it really was for nothing. 5 Well then, does God supply you with the Spirit and work miracles among you by your doing the works of the law, or by your believing what you heard?

Galatians 3:1-5

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- converts from Paul and Barnabas' mission trip in Acts 13–14
- mainly pagan rather than Jewish 4:8; 6:12
- came to faith through Paul and Barnabas' visits
- when the missionaries left, the believers were...
 - baptised 3:36-28
 - 'running well' 5:7
 - experiencing the Spirit and deeds of power 3:2, 5; 4:6
 - experiencing 'the grace of Christ' 1:6

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- came to faith through Paul and Barnabas' visits
- when the missionaries left, the believers were...
- when Paul wrote, the believers were...
 - deserting the gospel for 'another gospel' 1:6
 - moving towards 'works of the law' 3:2
 - keeping 'times and seasons' 4:10
- when Paul wrote, he feared he had wasted effort 4:11

Who? The 'teachers'

- brought a 'different gospel' 1:6,9
- Jewish emphasis
 - observe the 'works of the law' 3:2, 5
 - adopt Jewish feast days 4:8-11
 - submit to the 'teachers' 4:17
 - circumcision for men 5:2
 - law of Moses showed how to live 5:16, 24

‘I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery; you shall have no other gods before me.’

Exodus 20:2-3

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 - law of Moses showed how to live 5:16, 24
 - claimed to represent the Jerusalem church
 - based teaching on Scripture, esp. Abraham Gen 17:1
- not Jews vs. Christians!

Who? The 'teachers'

- brought a 'different gospel' 1:6,9
- Jewish emphasis
- not Jews vs. Christians!
- Galatian believers not yet circumcised 5:2; 6:12
- criticisms of Paul
 - seeks human approval 1:10
 - not a real apostle 1:11-12

When? Visits to Jerusalem

- Galatians
 - 1:18-24 'after three years'
 - 2:1-10 'after fourteen years'
- Acts
 - 9:26-30 Saul's first visit after his conversion
 - 11:29-30 famine relief visit
 - 15:1-30 council of Jerusalem

Acts 9 = Gal 1

- both from Damascus Acts 9:19, 25-26; Gal 1:17-18
- both were first contact with apostles Acts 9:27; Gal 1:18-19
- but
 - Gal 1:18-19 Peter and James vs. Acts 9:27 the apostles
 - Gal 1:22 Paul not known to churches of Judaea vs. Acts 9:28-29 Paul went about freely

Gal 2 = Acts 15

- same people
 - Paul, Barnabas (and Titus) Acts 15:2; Gal 2:1
 - James and Peter Acts 15:7-11; Gal 2:9 (Peter); Acts 15:13-21; Gal 2:9 (James)
- same dispute—circumcision of gentile converts
Acts 15:5; Gal 2:4
- same result
 - gentile converts need not be under the law
Acts 15:19-21, 28-29; Gal 2:5-6
 - no circumcision required for gentile believers
Acts 15:19-20; Gal 2:7-9

Gal 2 = Acts 15

- no mention of apostolic decree in Gal 2 because it was only a temporary expedient
- but
 - people not the same
 - subjects not the same
 - results not the same
 - 'next' Gal 2:1 implies Paul omitted nothing, and he has taken an oath on that Gal 1:20
 - but if Gal 2 = Acts 15, Paul has omitted the visit in Acts 11:29-30

Gal 2 = Acts 11

- famine relief visit (Acts 11) became occasion for consultation of Gal 2
- same cause of visit
 - 'by revelation' Gal 2:2
 - prophecy of Agabus Acts 11:28

Gal 2 = Acts 11

- famine relief visit (Acts 11) became occasion for consultation of Gal 2
- same cause of visit
- Paul in Antioch according to Acts
 - after famine relief visit and before council
12:25–13:3 = Gal 2:11–14
 - after council 15:30–35

Gal 2 = Acts 11

- famine relief visit (Acts 11) became occasion for consultation of Gal 2
- same cause of visit
- Paul in Antioch according to Acts
- makes sense of disagreement between Paul and Cephas Gal 2:11-14
 - hard to see how Peter and Barnabas would act this way if the council had met
- if Gal pre-council, it would not mention the apostolic decree (because it didn't exist yet)

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- 'three years' Gal 1:18 and 'fourteen years' Gal 2:1

What? Two key cultural/social settings

- Roman empire
 - worship of many gods
 - religion not a 'private' thing
- Judaism traditionally understood
 - special privileges
- believers walking a tightrope
 - being the true descendants of Abraham
 - and including gentiles as gentiles

What? Paul's response

- Paul needs to
 - critique the teachers' arguments
 - explain the gospel afresh
- ferocious critique
 - the death of Jesus 2:20-21; 6:14-15
 - the power of the Holy Spirit 5:16-26
 - freedom, equality and baptism 2:5, 14; 3:26-28
- the issue is not 'law vs. gospel'

Galatians among ancient letters

Ancient letters

- common in the ancient world
- generally fairly short
- form
 - **opening**: sender, recipient, greeting, wish for good health
 - **thanksgiving**
 - **body**
 - **closing**: greeting, wish for good health

Antonius Maximus to his sister, Sabina, very many greetings. Before all else I pray that you are well, for I myself am well. Making mention of you before the gods here, I received a letter from Antonius our fellow citizen. And when I learned that you were well, I rejoiced exceedingly. And I do not hesitate to write to you about my welfare and that of my family at every opportunity. Greet Maximus much and Kpres, my lord. My wife, Aufidia, greets you and so does my son, Maxmumus, whose birthday is the thirtieth of Epeiph according to Greek reckoning, as well Elpis and Fortunata. Salute my lord...I pray that you may be well.

John L. White, *Light from Ancient Letters*, Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986, 160-61, letter 103B, 2nd century AD.

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1 Paul an apostle—sent neither by human commission
nor from human authorities, but through Jesus Christ
and God the Father, who raised him from the dead—
2 and all the members of God's family who are with me,
To the churches of Galatia:

3 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and
the Lord Jesus Christ, 4 who gave himself for our sins
to set us free from the present evil age, according to
the will of our God and Father, 5 to whom be the glory
forever and ever. Amen.

Galatians 1:1-5

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Galatians 1:1-5

4 I give thanks to my God always for you because of the
grace of God that has been given you in Christ Jesus,
5 for in every way you have been enriched in him, in
speech and knowledge of every kind— 6 just as the
testimony of Christ has been strengthened among you
—7 so that you are not lacking in any spiritual gift as
you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ.

I Corinthians 1:4-7

6 I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel—7 not that there is another gospel, but there are some who are confusing you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. 8 But even if we or an angel from heaven should proclaim to you a gospel contrary to what we proclaimed to you, let that one be accursed! 9 As we have said before, so now I repeat, if anyone proclaims to you a gospel contrary to what you received, let that one be accursed!

Galatians 1:6-9

The shape of the letter

Getting started 1:1-9

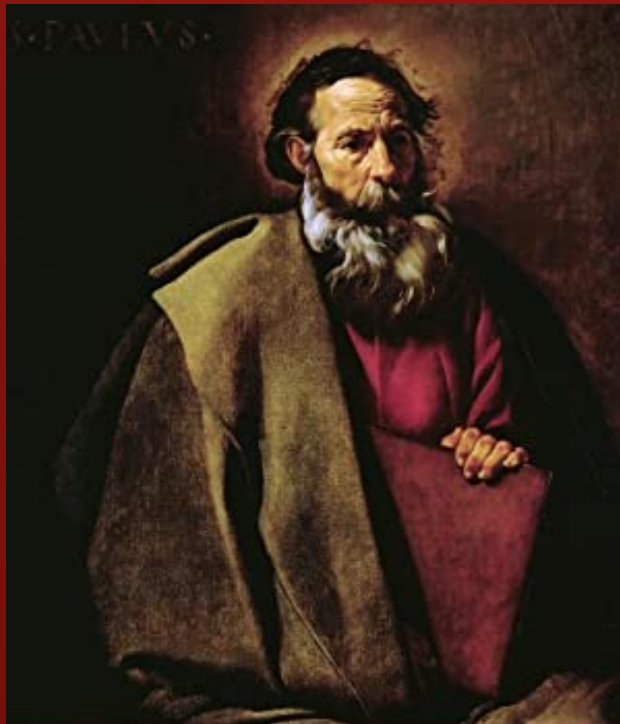
- Opening and greeting 1:1-5
- The central issue 1:6-9

Paul's self-defence 1:10–2:21

- Paul is not a people-pleaser 1:10
- How Paul received the gospel 1:11-17
- First visit to Jerusalem 1:18-24
- Second visit to Jerusalem 2:1-10
- The controversy with Peter in Antioch 2:11-14
 - believing community in Antioch Acts 11:20-30
- Implications 2:15-21

Grace and gift in Galatians

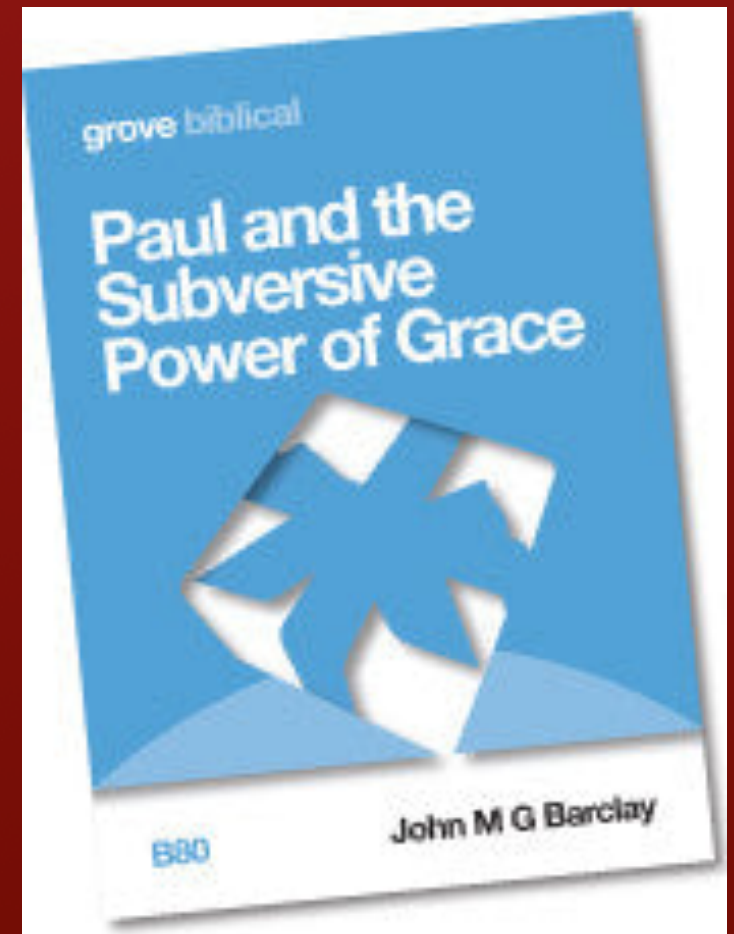
- 'I do not nullify the grace/gift of God' 2:21
 - grace/gift = *charis*



Paul & the Gift
JOHN M. G. BARCLAY



Paul & the Power of Grace
JOHN M. G. BARCLAY



Gift-giving in the ancient world

- patron-client system
- reciprocity vital to social relationships
- gifts given to people
 - worthy to receive them
 - able to reciprocate
- the modern western idea of 'pure gift' did not exist

Six 'perfections' of grace

- grace as **abundant**
'God gives hyper-generously' (Barclay, *Subversive*, 4)
- grace as **singular**—that God gives **only** grace
(e.g. Marcion—thus no wrath)
- grace as **prior**—God gives **before** humans respond
- grace as **incongruous**—God gives to the **undeserving**
- grace as **efficacious**—God both **enables and transforms** people
 - in some cases, the work is entirely God's: monergism
- grace as **non-circular**—God gives **without the necessity or expectation of response**

Gift and grace in Galatians

- the central issue: must gentile (male) believers be circumcised and keep the law to be true followers of Jesus?
- contrast 'works of the law' vs 'faith in Christ'/'the faithfulness of Christ' 2:15-21
 - 'I do not nullify the grace of God; for if justification comes through the law, then Christ died for nothing.' 2:21
 - 'You who want to be justified by the law have cut yourselves off from Christ; you have fallen away from grace.' 5:4

Gift and grace in Galatians

- What sense of 'grace/gift' is Paul using here?
 - Christ's gift as incongruous, undeserved
 - so circumcision and keeping the law are irrelevant—
God's grace rejects previous criteria of who is
deserving

Gift and grace in Galatians

- What sense of 'grace/gift' is Paul using here?
 - Christ's gift as incongruous, undeserved
- Paul as undeserving
 - 'You have heard, no doubt, of my earlier life in Judaism. I was violently persecuting the church of God and was trying to destroy it. I advanced in Judaism beyond many among my people of the same age, for I was far more zealous for the traditions of my ancestors.'
1:13-14; cf. Phil 3:4b-6
 - 'But...God...called me through his grace' 1:15

Gift and grace in Galatians

- What sense of 'grace/gift' is Paul using here?
 - Christ's gift as incongruous, undeserved
- Paul as undeserving
- hence baptism is for all
 - 'As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.' 3:27-28
 - differences are not erased—but in relating to God, they no longer matter

Grace, gift and torah 3:1-29

- Gospel or torah vv 1-5
- who is a true descendant of Abraham? vv 6-14
 - faith in God the crucial factor vv 6-9
 - not ethnic Jewish identity vv 10-12
 - the cross enables gentiles to be Abraham's descendants by faith vv 13-14

The cross as the heart of the matter

- ‘the Lord Jesus Christ...gave himself for our sins to set us free from the present evil age’ 1:3-4
- ‘I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the son of God, who love me and gave himself for me.’ 2:19b-20
 - cf. ‘baptised into Christ’ 3:27
- ‘It was before your eyes that Jesus Christ was publicly exhibited as crucified.’ 3:1
- ‘Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree” 3:13 (Deut 21:23)
 - the Spirit flows from the cross 3:14
- ‘the offence of the cross’ 5:11
- ‘May I never boast of anything except the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.’ 6:14; cf. 6:12

Grace, gift and torah 3:1-29

- gospel or torah vv 1-5
- who is a true descendant of Abraham? vv 6-14
- illustration by example vv 15-18
- torah and promise vv 19-29
 - the torah's role vv 19-24
 - faith as the way vv 25-29
 - 'And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to the promise.' v 29

The history of salvation 4:1-20

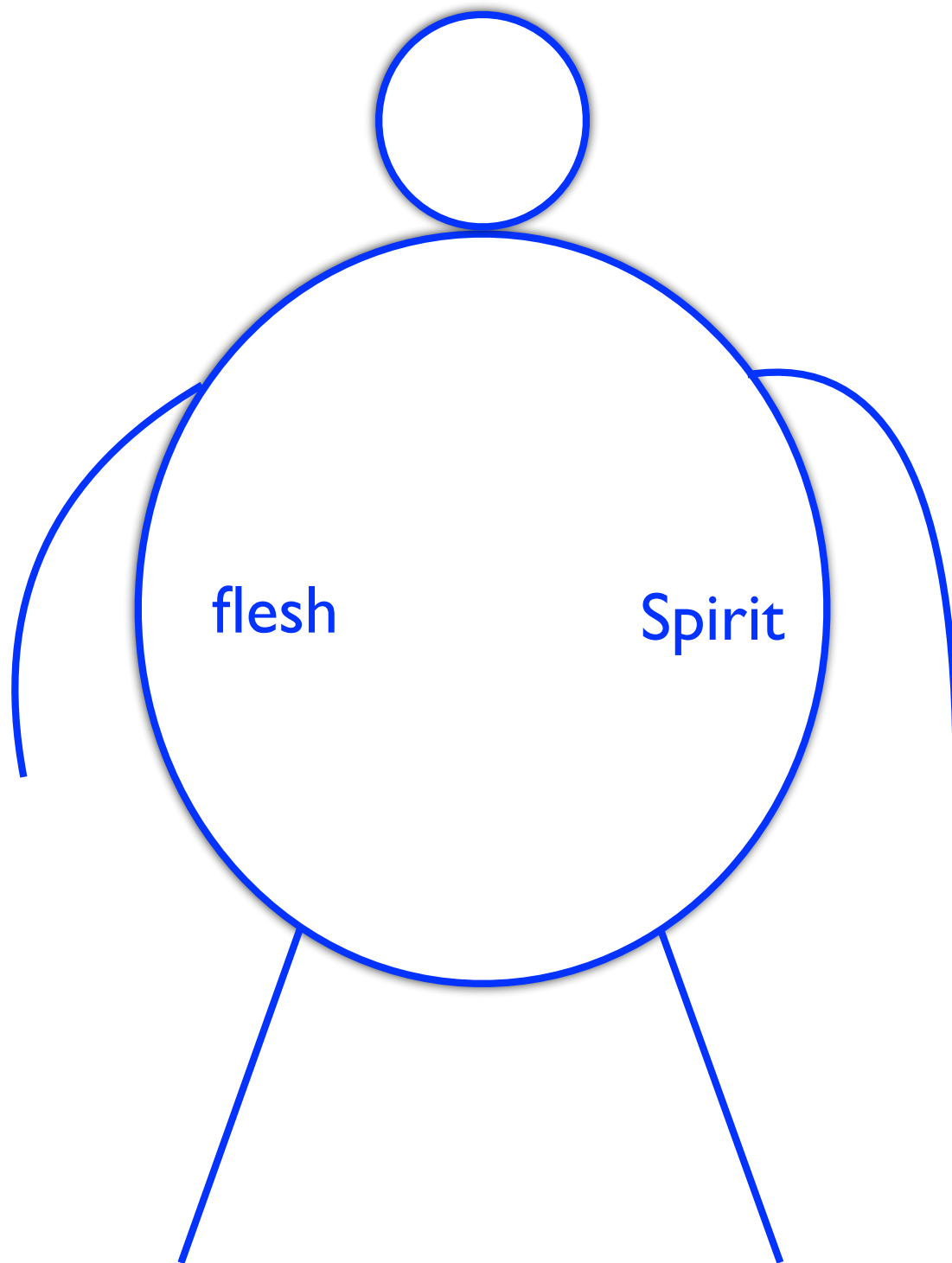
- slaves and sons vv 1-11
 - you were like minors vv 1-3
 - through Jesus that has all changed vv 4-7
 - so why go back? vv 8-11
- personal appeal vv 12-20
 - remember our relationship vv 12-15
 - contrast the teachers vv 16-18
 - consider my pain over you vv 19-20

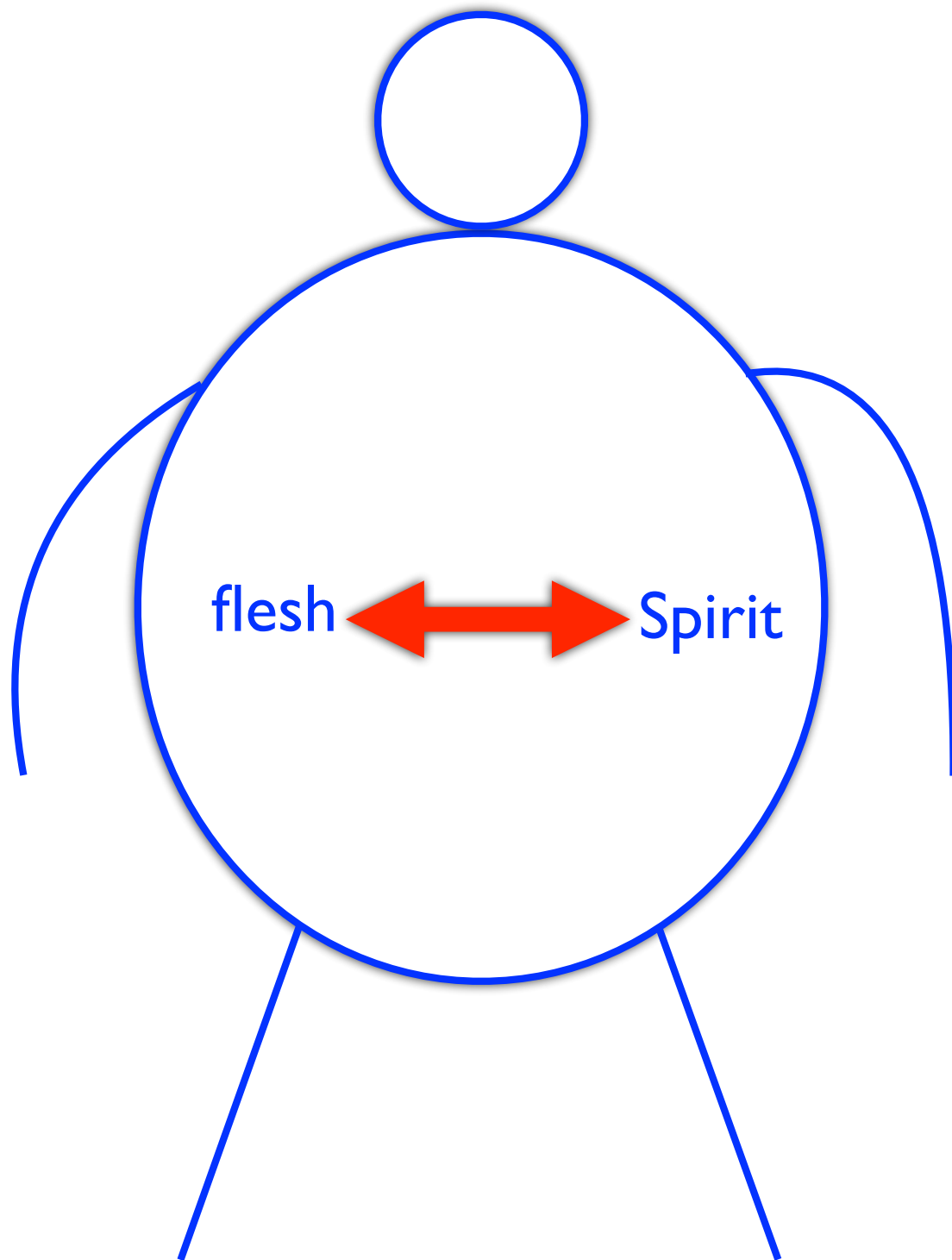
Further arguments 4:21–5:12

- Hagar, Sarah and the mountains 4:21–5:1
- why not go back? 5:2-12
 - you lose everything you gain in Christ vv 2-4
 - what we need is accessible only in Christ vv 5-6
 - so don't go back! vv 7-10
 - and that's why I'm preaching the cross, not circumcision vv 11-12

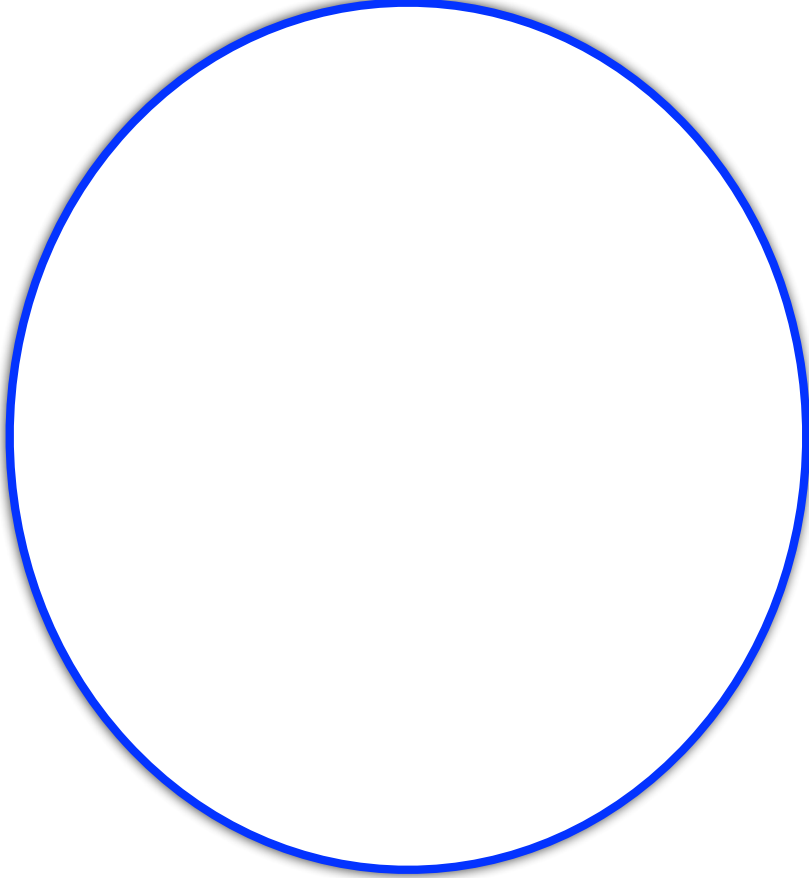
Freedom and the Spirit 5:13-26

- true freedom is freedom to serve vv 13-15
- 'the flesh' versus the Spirit vv 16-26
 - walk v 16
 - be led v 18
 - bear the fruit v 22
 - live and keep in step with v 25

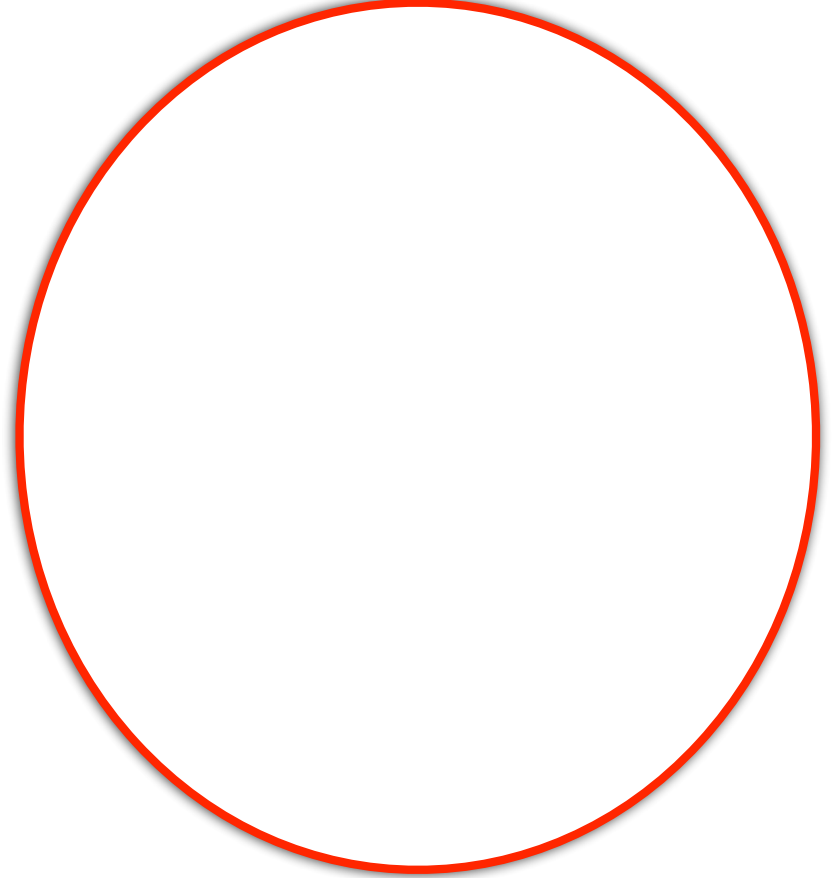




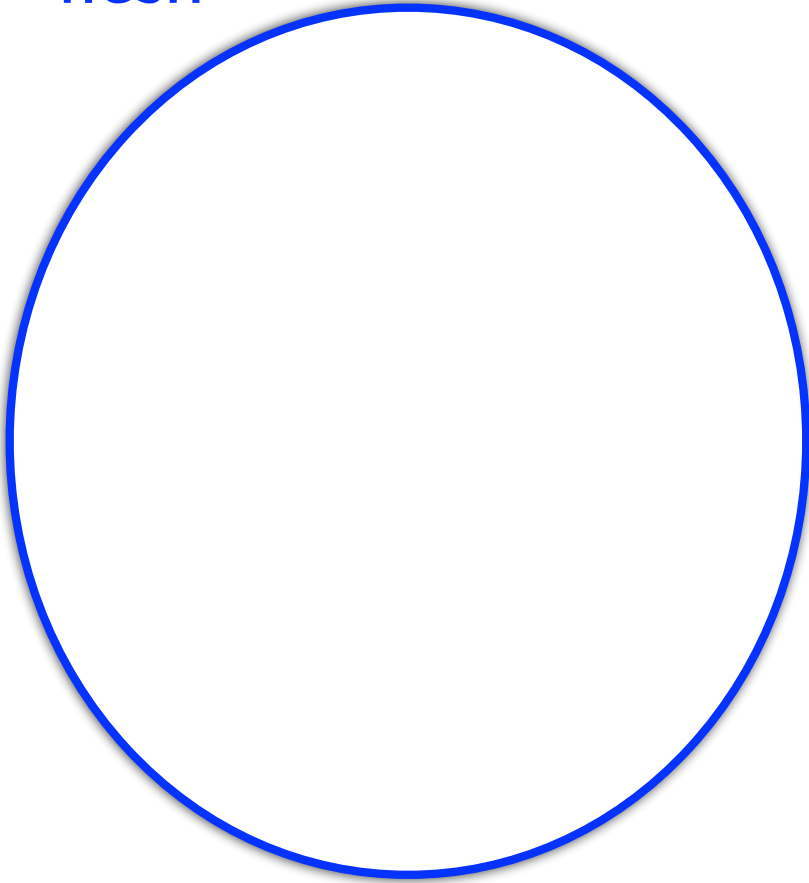
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Spirit



flesh



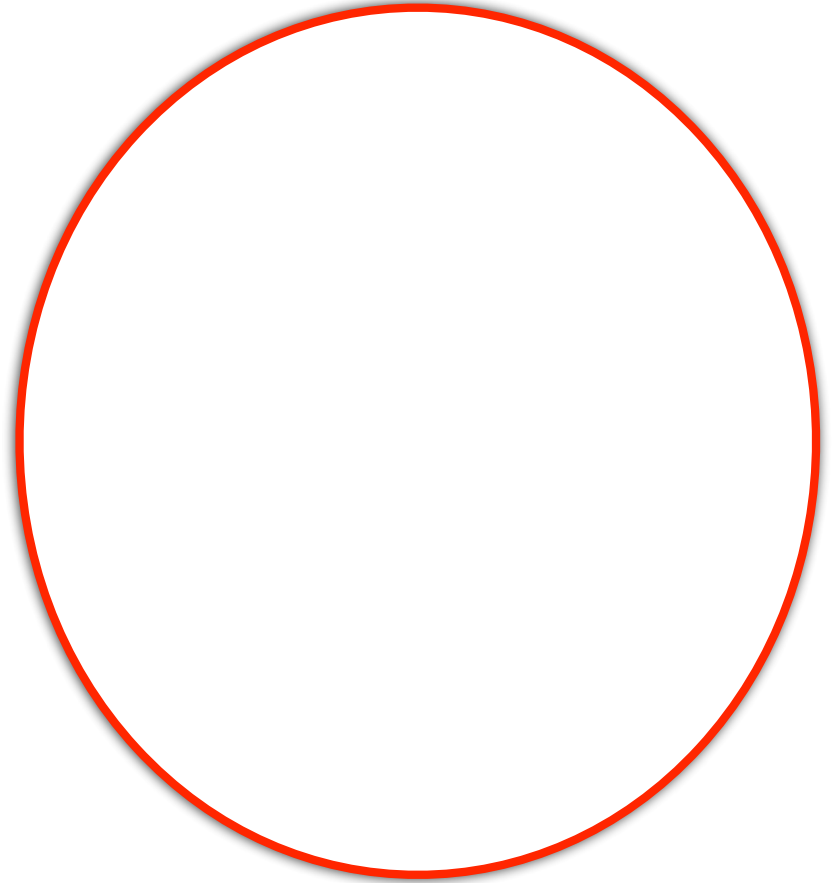
Spirit



flesh



Spirit



The Spirit in Galatians

- the Spirit at the start of the Christian life 3:1-5
 - they can remember what the Spirit did vv 2, 4
 - their Christian lives were initiated by the Spirit v 3
 - the Spirit's work is in response to faith v 5
- the Spirit as the heart of the Christian life 3:13-14; 4:4-7
 - the Spirit flows from Jesus' death on the cross 3:13
 - the Spirit is the one who marks Abraham's children 3:14
 - the Spirit brings assurance of adoption 4:6
- the Spirit as the power of the Christian life 5:16-26
- the Spirit at the end of the Christian life 5:5; 6:8

Summing up 6:1-18

- the Christian life is a shared life vv 1-10
 - dealing with failure in others and yourself vv 1-5
 - being generous with what you have and know vv 6-10
- Paul picks up the pen vv 11-18
 - signing off and summing up v 11
 - the issue isn't really about circumcision v 15a
 - what really matters is
 - new creation v 15b
 - through the cross v 14
 - the true Israel is those who trust in Jesus v 16

THIRD EDITION, REVISED AND EXPANDED

EXPLORING THE NEW TESTAMENT

VOLUME TWO

A GUIDE TO THE
LETTERS & REVELATION

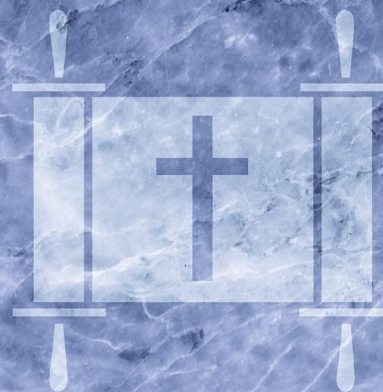
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STEPHEN TRAVIS & IAN PAUL

'An invaluable resource for both students and teachers'
Dr Lucy Peppiatt



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