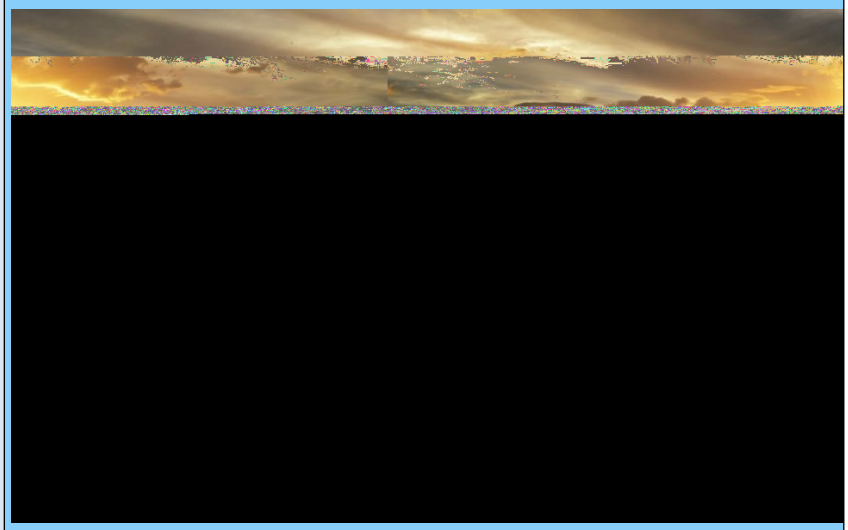
Galatians 4-6 ; Ephesians 1-2

B R C
Study the Bible and follow Jesus

NT #37 Bible Reading Class
Pastor: Wentang Wang

A Bible Reader's Conviction

- ***All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work. (2 Tim. 3:16-17, NIV)***

A Blessed Journey	Study the Bible, follow Jesus
1. May you study God's Word with a reverent heart and walk in His will. 2. May the Lord's Word flourish, and may He add to the church those who are being saved. 3. May the Lord bless your days of reading the Scriptures.	

The Guiding Principles of BRC

- Christ-Centered
- Bible-Based
- Mission-Minded

BRC: A Gentleman's Agreement

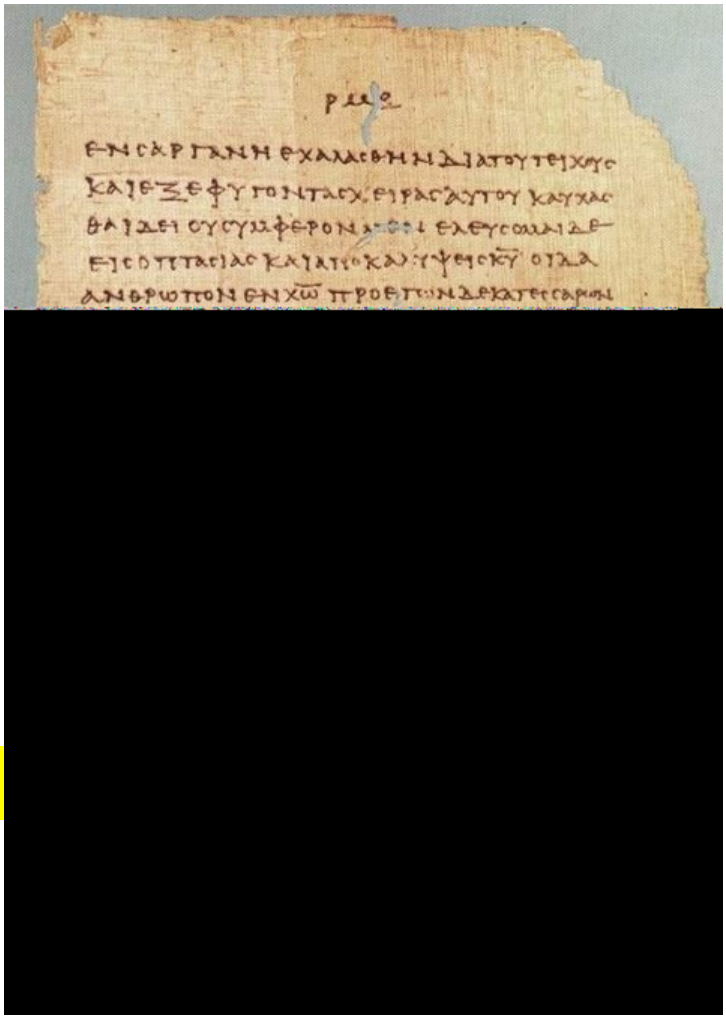
I'll complete weekly reading assignment

I'll watch weekly teaching video in its entirety

I'll complete weekly quiz (closed book)

The Structure of the 27 Books of the New Testament

- The Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke) John
- The Fourfold Gospel, Acts, The Thirteen Pauline Epistles, The Other Nine Epistles (General Epistles and Others)
- Five Books of Historical Narrative, Twenty-Two Books of Doctrinal Teaching



Galatians

The Classification of Paul's Thirteen Epistles

• According to doctrine, Paul's thirteen epistles can be categorized into four groups in order: Soteriology (Salvation), Christology, Eschatology, and Ecclesiology.

Soteriology (Salvation)	Christology	Eschatology	Ecclesiology
1) Romans 2) 1 Corinthians 3) 2 Corinthians 4) Galatians	5) Ephesians 6) Philippians 7) Colossians	8) 1 Thessalonians 9) 2 Thessalonians	10)1 Timothy 11)2 Timothy 12)Titus 13)Philemon

3A The Promised Blessing for God's Children

• "The promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. Scripture does not say 'and to seeds,' meaning many people, but 'and to your seed,' meaning one person, who is Christ." （Galatians 3:16）

• God promised Abraham, ***"All nations on earth will be blessed through your offspring" (Genesis 22:18).*** Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and all who believe in Him receive the blessing of salvation. This is God's promise.

3B The Joy of Unity

• "So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith. For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to the promise."(Galatians 3:26–29)

1. **The Disappearance of Distinctions:** When we are baptized into Christ, the greatest human distinctions—race, class, wealth, and gender—disappear in Him.
2. **The Joy of Unity:** What remains is the "oneness" we share in Christ, and the joy of being united.

You foolish Galatians!

• "You foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? Before your very eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed as crucified. I would like to learn just one thing from you: Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law or by believing what you heard? Are you so foolish? After beginning by the Spirit, are you now trying to finish by the flesh? Have you suffered so much in vain—if it really was in vain?"(Galatians 3:1–4)

• Love rebukes deeply, and among all of Paul's letters, this is one of the most severe confrontations. The word anoētos means "not-knowing," a negation placed before the verb "to know." Most English translations render it "foolish," but the Chinese translation "無知" captures the original nuance even more closely. Paul asks the Galatians: Do you not even know how you were saved? I preached the pure gospel to you and set Jesus Christ before your eyes as crucified, yet no sooner had I left than you were led astray and turned aside from the truth. Are you really this ignorant? You received the promised Holy Spirit by faith (3:14). Having begun by the Spirit, are you now trying to be perfected by the flesh? You were justified by faith in Christ, yet now you abandon Christ and turn to the law. Are you truly this foolish?

You foolish Galatians!

• Who are the “foolish Galatians”? Many Christians do not know Jesus Christ, do not follow Jesus Christ, and do not love Jesus Christ. Their hearts are attached to something else, they follow something else, and they pursue knowledge of something else. They refuse to be crucified with Christ and will not allow Christ to live in them. They have itching ears when listening to sermons and feel bored when reading Scripture. They appoint teachers for themselves and listen only to what they like to hear. Because they do not read the Bible, they do not know what the Jesus of the Gospels is truly like. They claim to believe in the Lord without having Jesus, and though far from Christ, they still call themselves orthodox. With Calvinism, speaking in tongues, health and wealth, political positions, ideologies, singing hymns, attending services, and maintaining a familiar church routine, they assume they are genuine Christians. Paul calls such people **“foolish Galatians.”**

• Brothers and sisters, let us not be foolish Galatians. Let nothing take the place of Jesus Christ. Christ is our only Savior and our only Lord. You must acknowledge Christ, love Him alone, and follow Him with an undivided heart.

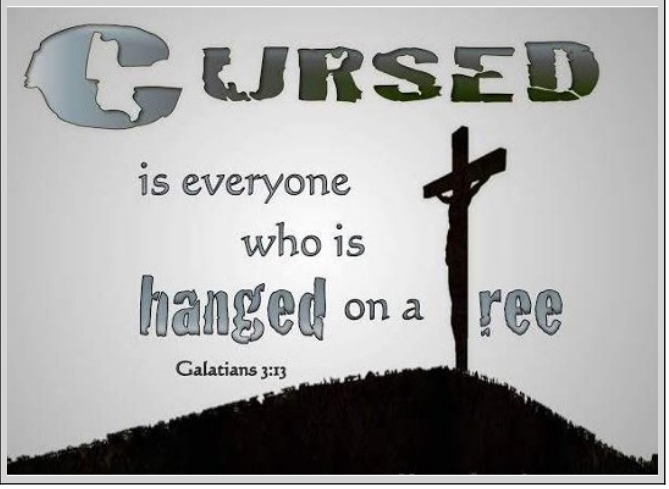
Children of Abraham

• "So understand that those who rely on faith are the children of Abraham. Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: 'All nations will be blessed through you.' So those who rely on faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith." (Galatians 3:7–9)

• The Jews took great pride in considering themselves God's chosen people, the descendants of Abraham, enjoying a special status among all nations. Paul says that the era in which one's relationship with God was determined by bloodline has passed. In Christ, the determining factor is not ancestry but faith. Anyone who believes in Jesus Christ is a descendant of Abraham.

• When "God's chosen people" is mentioned, many Christians immediately think of the Jews but not of themselves. Brothers and sisters, let us not be foolish Galatians. We must know that ***"those who rely on faith are the children of Abraham"*** and are also God's chosen people (1 Peter 2:9). Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness. We believe in Jesus Christ, and it is likewise credited to us as righteousness. Like Abraham, we establish our relationship with God by faith and follow the Lord by faith. We are God's chosen people, the descendants of Abraham—never forget this.

He Became a Curse on the Cross

• *“Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: ‘Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree.’ He did this so that the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus, so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit.” （Galatians 3:13–14）*	

He Became a Curse on the Cross

• The cross is Christ's suffering and our redemption; the cross is Christ's curse and our blessing.

• Scripture says, ***"Anyone who is hung on a tree is under God's curse" (Deuteronomy 21:23).*** Paul quotes this verse to explain the power of the cross: on the cross, Christ bore the curse that we sinners deserved, so that the blessing of Abraham ***("All nations will be blessed through you," 3:8)*** might come to us.

• Christ loves me and gave Himself for me—this is the message of the cross. Christ was cursed, and I receive blessing—this is the effect of the cross. I follow Christ, deny myself, and save others—this is the mission of the cross.

Receiving the Promised Spirit by Faith

• ***When you believe in the Lord, you receive the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit dwells in you as the guarantee of your inheritance until Christ returns and God's people are redeemed.(Ephesians 1:14)***

• You receive the Holy Spirit simply by believing in the Lord. You do not need to speak in tongues, fast and pray, or have any special experience. As long as you believe in Jesus, you will receive the Holy Spirit. All who believe in the Lord **"begin by the Spirit" (3:3),** meaning that from the very moment you believe, you receive the Holy Spirit. There is no believer who does not receive the Holy Spirit, and anyone who has not received the Holy Spirit has not yet believed in the Lord.

• Paul says that because Christ became a curse for us on the cross, the blessing of Abraham can come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus, so that we may receive the promised Spirit by faith. "Receiving the Holy Spirit" and "being in Christ" are synonymous—they both describe our position after believing in the Lord. By faith in Christ, we become those who have received the Holy Spirit. By faith in Christ, we are ***"rescued from the dominion of darkness and brought into the kingdom of the Son He loves."(Colossians 1:13)***

No Distinction

• "So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith. For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to the promise." （Galatians 3:26–29）

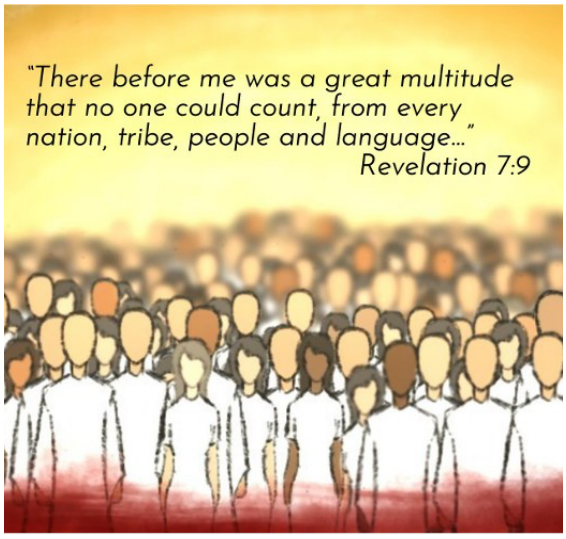
• "No distinction" is the mark of Christians. Society divides people by race, nationality, class, status, wealth, and gender, but in Christ there is no such division.

No Distinction

• Jews who believe in the Lord become children of God. Gentiles who believe in the Lord also become children of God. Free people who believe in the Lord become children of God, and slaves who believe in the Lord also become children of God. Men who believe in the Lord become children of God; women who believe in the Lord also become children of God.

• In those days, **“son”** meant **“heir.”** A man who believed in the Lord was a son of God, and a woman who believed in the Lord was also a son of God. Whoever believes in Jesus Christ—no matter who they are—becomes a child of God, a descendant of Abraham, and an heir according to the promise.

No Distinction



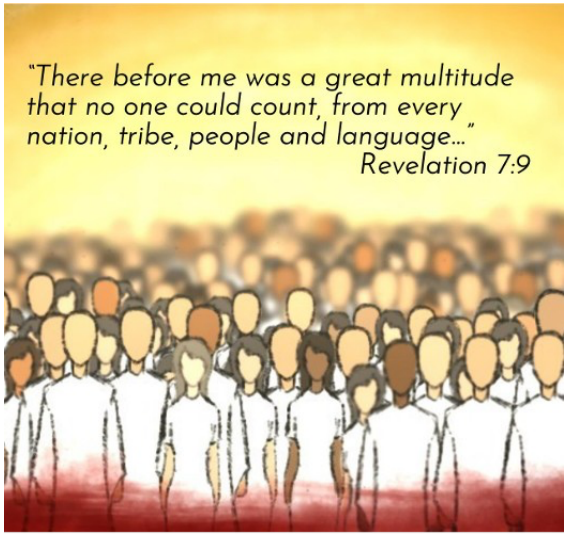
• Such a level of “no distinction” was unheard of in those days. It was shocking and difficult for people to accept. Yet those who believed in the Lord gladly received it and put it into practice, becoming a beautiful testimony.

• Do you accept “no distinction”? No matter how different someone is from you, can you receive them with equality—without discrimination, exclusion, or unequal treatment? White, Black, Asian—no distinction in race. Free or slave, wealthy or poor—no distinction in social class or financial status. Male or female—no distinction in gender. Democrat, Republican, DPP, KMT, pro-China, pro-America—no distinction in political stance. Can you practice “no distinction” toward those who differ from you?

• Paul says that in Christ there is no distinction. Whatever differences may appear from a human perspective, in Christ all are brought together as one. The gospel is for all peoples, and God loves every person in the world. If we want to follow Jesus, we must have the mind of Christ. If the Lord makes no distinction, then neither should I. Even if we have not fully achieved this, we must strive toward it.

Every Nation, Tribe, People, and Language

• "After this I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. And they cried out in a loud voice: 'Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!'"(Revelation 7:9–10)



• Revelation tells us that when we stand before God's throne in the future, we will look out and see people from every nation, tribe, people, and language. All of them are accepted by God, all of them shout praises, giving glory to the One who sits on the throne and to the slain Lamb. If anyone is in Christ, there is no distinction on earth, and there is no distinction in heaven.

4A God's Children Are No Longer Bound by the Law

• ***"When we were children, we were in slavery under the elemental principles of the world. But when the set time had fully come, God sent His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship."(Galatians 4:3–5)***

• **Christ sets us free:** The Judaizers wanted Christians to keep the law, but Jesus Christ came to free us from the law. One is a religion of rule-keeping; the other is a faith of freedom.

• **The weak and worthless elementary principles:**

- ***"But now that you know God—or rather are known by God—how is it that you are turning back to those weak and worthless elementary principles? Do you want to be enslaved by them all over again? You are observing special days and months and seasons and years. I fear for you, that somehow I have wasted my efforts on you."(Galatians 4:9–10)***
- A rule-bound, legalistic religion—with its strict regulations and rituals—is called by Scripture "the weak and worthless elementary principles."

4B Walking in Freedom Under the Law

• ***"My dear children, for whom I am again in the pains of childbirth until Christ is formed in you… Now you, brothers and sisters, like Isaac, are children of the free woman."(Galatians 4:19, 31)***

• **Christ formed, freedom lived:** Where Christ is present, there is freedom. Those who are not free are those in whom Christ has not yet been formed.

The Law as Our Guardian

• "Before this faith came, we were held in custody under the law, locked up until the faith that was to come would be revealed. So the law was our guardian, leading us to Christ so that we might be justified by faith."(Galatians 3:23–24)

• Before the Faith came

• The law can only make people aware of sin (Romans 3:20); it cannot remove sin. Only Jesus Christ can take away sin. The law is our tutor, giving us basic instruction about God, telling us what we may do and what we must not do, temporarily disciplining us while we waited for Christ to come. Now that Jesus has come and the gospel of justification by faith has been proclaimed, why do some people still remain under the law and refuse to come out? Even more puzzling, some who have clearly come out—having accepted Jesus Christ as their Savior—return to the "law's detention room," lock the door themselves, and live as though they are imprisoned again.

Under the Guardianship of the Elementary Principles for a Time

• "What I am saying is that as long as the heir is underage, he is no different from a slave, although he owns the whole estate. He is subject to guardians and trustees until the time set by his father. So also, when we were children, we were in slavery under the elementary principles of the world."(Galatians 4:1–3)

• The Hard Days of the Young Master

• In ancient wealthy households, family discipline was strict, and children were rigorously supervised and educated from a young age. In the Roman era, many "tutors" were officially slaves—nobles, philosophers, and learned men from other nations who had been captured in war and enslaved. The master's children were educated under their authority, disciplined and corrected by them, and the young master had to obey. But this was only temporary. When the time set by the father arrived and the young master underwent the coming-of-age ceremony, he was freed from the tutor's authority and no longer under such restrictions.

• Paul says that the law is this "tutor," while we are the rightful heirs. When we were still spiritual children, we were under the tutor's discipline. But now that the time set by the Father has come, we are no longer under the elementary principles of the world.

The Fullness of the Time

• ***“But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship.”(Galatians 4:4–5)***

• God works according to His appointed time

• After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God: “The time has come. The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!”(Mark 1:14–15)

• “To bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Christ, according to His purpose, when the times reach their fulfillment.”(Ephesians 1:10)

• “Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in. And in this way all Israel will be saved.”(Romans 11:25–26)

• “But about that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.”(Matthew 24:36)

The Weak and Worthless Elementary Principles

• “But now that you know God—or rather are known by God—how is it that you are turning back to those weak and worthless elementary principles? Do you want to be enslaved by them all over again? You are observing special days and months and seasons and years. I fear for you, that somehow I have wasted my efforts on you.”(Galatians 4:9–11)

• **The “weak and worthless elementary principles” (NASB)** refer to religious rules—here specifically the regulations of Judaism, such as observing special days or following restrictions about what may or may not be eaten or handled. These rules become chains that bind people, making them slaves to religion.

• God’s power is found in Christ. The pure gospel tells us that Christ is fully sufficient; nothing needs to be added or sought elsewhere. Some abandon Jesus Christ to pursue these “elementary principles,” not realizing that such teachings and regulations have no power at all. Their observance is futile and produces no effect.

The Weak and Worthless Elementary Principles

• "Since you died with Christ to the elemental principles of the world, why, as though you still belonged to the world, do you submit to its rules: 'Do not handle! Do not taste! Do not touch!'? These are all destined to perish with use, because they are based on merely human commands and teachings. Such regulations indeed have an appearance of wisdom, with self-imposed worship, false humility, and harsh treatment of the body, but they lack any value in restraining sensual indulgence."(Colossians 2:21–23)

• **The weak and worthless elementary principles:** In modern Christianity, anything that draws attention away from Christ and places greater emphasis on other teachings, rules, principles, or practices becomes a "weak and worthless elementary principle." Examples include psychology, sociology, success formulas, declarations of faith, the power of words, speaking in tongues, dietary or fitness regimens, seeking divine favor, sowing seeds for wealth and health, elaborate rituals, asceticism, fasting, exalting certain individuals, certain theological positions, political stances, or ideologies. Anything that pulls people away from Christ or diminishes Christ becomes a weak and worthless elementary principle.

Until Christ Is Formed in You

• ***“My dear children, for whom I am again in the pains of childbirth until Christ is formed in you.”(Galatians 4:19)***

• Paul explains that the purpose of his labor is **“that Christ may be formed in you.”** Some people labor for church growth—more people, bigger buildings, larger offerings. Some labor for their own reputation. Some labor for performance and results. Some labor to increase their influence, becoming the “big brother,” the “senior deacon,” or the “chief elder” in the church. Some labor because of denominational positions, political positions, or theological positions. Paul says he endures the pains of childbirth again—laboring with the anguish of a mother giving birth—so that a clear image of Christ may be formed in the hearts of believers.

Until Christ Is Formed in You

• ***“My dear children, for whom I am again in the pains of childbirth until Christ is formed in you.”(Galatians 4:19)***

• Paul labored for the Lord, and in his labor there was only Christ, not himself. His hope for the Galatians was not that they would repay him, but that they would clearly know the Lord—so clearly that Christ would be formed in their hearts, no longer vague, no longer fading. Brothers and sisters, this should be the purpose of every disciple’s ministry—not for oneself, not even for one’s own church, but for Christ in the hearts of believers. When Christ is present in the hearts of believers, their fellowship and their church will resemble Christ, becoming the best fellowship and the best church.

5A God's Children Are Not Bound by the Desires of the Flesh

• ***"So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want." (Galatians 5:16–17)***

• **The second kind of freedom:** The first bondage for God's children is the bondage of the law, and the first freedom is freedom from the law. The second bondage is the bondage of the flesh, and the second freedom is freedom from the flesh—that is, although everyone has fleshly desires, I am no longer enslaved by them.

5B Walking in Freedom by the Spirit

• ***"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit."(Galatians 5:22–25)***

• Submitting to the Spirit: The Spirit and the flesh are in conflict. Which one wins depends on your will. If you submit to the Spirit, the Spirit wins; if you submit to the flesh, the flesh wins.

The Christian Declaration of Freedom

• ***"It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery."(Galatians 5:1)***

• Galatians 5:1 is the Christian "Declaration of Freedom," containing two important proclamations. **First, Christ has already set us free so that we may live in freedom.** The chains on your body have fallen off, the prison door has been opened, and there is no bondage left on you. You need only step out of the cell, breathe the fresh air outside, and enjoy the freedom under the blue sky and white clouds. No iron chains of the law, no ropes of the flesh, no cages of religion, no nets of theology, no political dungeons, no blindfolds of prejudice, no visors of discrimination. There is only Christ and those who are free in Christ.

The Christian Declaration of Freedom

• "It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery."(Galatians 5:1)

• **The second important declaration is this: stand firm and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.** The first declaration proclaims that you are a free person; the second declares that you are a free person who is no longer subject to bondage. The first proclaims your freedom in Christ; the second proclaims your immunity in Christ—those whom Christ has set free now have the strength to resist every temptation and will no longer return to slavery under anyone.

The Christian Declaration of Freedom

• "It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery."(Galatians 5:1)

• The first time you were a slave, others confined you and forced you into bondage. The second time you become a slave, it is because you choose it yourself. There are many people in this world swinging their ropes, ready to lasso unsuspecting Christians, bind them again, and take them to the slave market for sale. Why stretch out your neck for someone to snare you? Why allow yourself to be bound again? Paul says, brothers and sisters, be watchful, stand firm, and never again let yourselves be burdened by a yoke of slavery.

The Offence of the Cross

• ***“Brothers and sisters, if I am still preaching circumcision, why am I still being persecuted? In that case, the offence of the cross has been removed. As for those agitators, I wish they would go the whole way and emasculate themselves!” (Galatians 5:11–12)***

• The Sufficiency of the Cross: The doctrine of justification by faith declares that the cross has fully paid the debt of sin. By believing in Jesus, one is justified—there is nothing more to add.

• The Offence of the Cross: Religion, however, insists on adding many rules and regulations on top of Jesus. Religion dislikes the cross and is offended by it, because the cross declares the futility of religion and leaves it with no place to stand.

Do Not Use Freedom to Indulge the Flesh

• "You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love."(Galatians 5:13)

• The word "flesh" is **sarx** in the original language, referring to our physical human nature. This flesh experiences emotions—joy, anger, sorrow—and carries human desires. At times it is greedy for money, at times lustful, at times craving reputation and praise. At times it forms factions and stirs up conflict; at times it covets, at times it despises; at times it becomes angry, at times delighted; at times it acts secretly, at times openly; at times selfish, at times selfless.

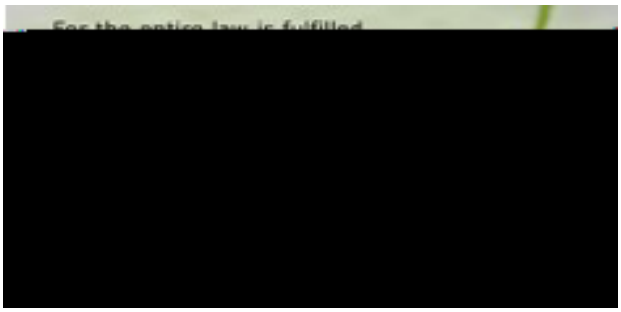
Do Not Use Freedom to Indulge the Flesh

• Paul says that Jesus Christ has called us so that we may live in freedom. You must not use the freedom you have in Christ as an opportunity to indulge the desires of the flesh.

• What does it mean to indulge the flesh? It is not only about unrestrained sexual behavior, but about allowing all human emotions and desires to run unchecked. For example, someone may say, “I just speak my mind. He was wrong, so I scolded him!” It sounds noble—perhaps you are very upright, or perhaps you are simply indulging the fleshly desire to lash out and rebuke others.

• Another person may say, “Everything I do is for the Lord, not for people to see.” It sounds noble—perhaps you are very devout, or perhaps you are indulging the fleshly desire to appear pious. Whether it is so or not, you yourself know.

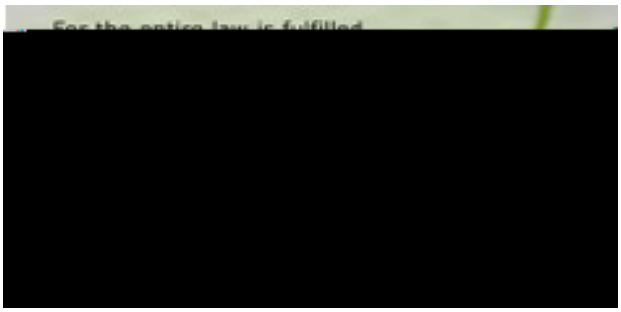
The Entire Law Is Fulfilled in “Love Your Neighbor as Yourself”



• ***“For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ If you bite and devour each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other.”(Galatians 5:14–15)***

• The remedy for indulging the flesh is not asceticism, but “loving your neighbor as yourself.” It does not mean abandoning affection, fasting and praying, or gritting your teeth in harsh self-discipline, as though such practices alone would prevent indulgence of the flesh. Rather, it means considering others, being willing to restrain yourself for the good of others, refusing to act merely according to your own desires, and not “biting and devouring” one another. This is what it truly means not to indulge the flesh. The greatest damage caused by indulging the flesh is not merely personal integrity—though that is affected—but the far greater harm done to the community. This is Paul’s main concern.

The Entire Law Is Fulfilled in “Love Your Neighbor as Yourself”

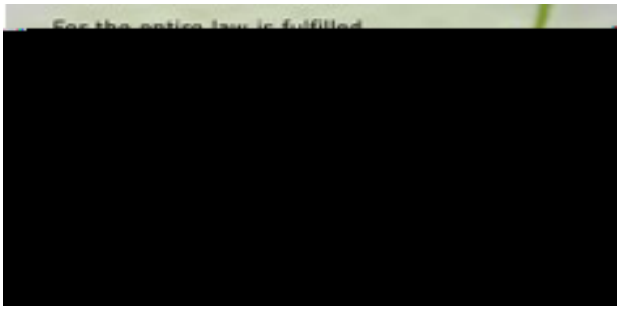


• “For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ If you bite and devour each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other.”(Galatians 5:14–15)

• This does not mean, “Since Christ has set me free, I can do whatever I want—who can tell me otherwise?” Rather, it means that for the sake of loving others, I will discipline my own words and actions.

• From the Old Testament to the New, the “neighbor” in “love your neighbor as yourself” refers to the person near you—the one beside you in worship, in fellowship, in your community, and on the street. When I attend worship, for the sake of the neighbors present, I will be orderly and careful with my behavior. In fellowship, for the good of my neighbors, I will not act as though no one else exists or insist on my own way. I will treat my neighbors in the community and on the street in the same way.

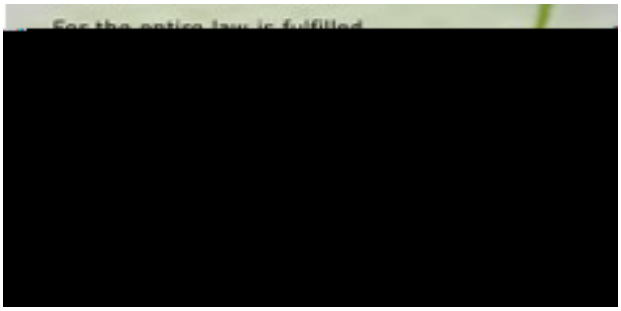
The Entire Law Is Fulfilled in "Love Your Neighbor as Yourself"



• Paul says, **"For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: Love your neighbor as yourself."** This is the best summary of the entire Old Testament. Thirty-nine books, over nine hundred chapters, more than twenty thousand verses—all of it can be summed up in four words: "love your neighbor as yourself." This is the pinnacle of God's revelation, the central message of Scripture, and the governing principle of Christian living.

• If you believe in Jesus, yet the more you believe the less love you have in your heart, then you know something is wrong with your faith. If you believe in Jesus, yet the more you believe the more you dislike others, the more you resent certain people, reject certain people, or attack certain people—then you know something is wrong with your faith.

The Only Thing That Counts



• Faith expressing itself through love

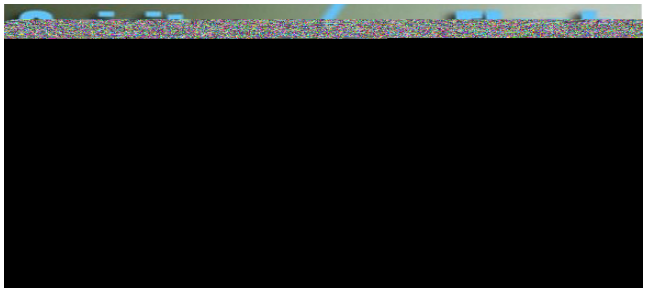
• "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love." (Galatians 5:6)

• A verse that stands alongside 5:14 appears in 5:6. Circumcision counts for nothing, the law counts for nothing, and all religious rituals and regulations count for nothing. In Christ Jesus, the only thing that has any effect—the only thing that truly matters—is faith expressing itself through love.

• Not rigid doctrine or stiff, lifeless belief, but faith expressed through love—gentle, kind, and good.

The Battleground

• ***“So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want.”(Galatians 5:16–17)***



• The heart of every child of God is a battlefield. The Holy Spirit urges you to do what pleases God, while the flesh urges you to do what displeases Him. The decisive factor is your personal choice—whichever side you lean toward, that side wins.

• Paul says that if you choose to follow the Spirit, you will not indulge the flesh. Brothers and sisters, you see, we are actually making choices every day. If someone habitually chooses the Spirit, that person often walks in victory. If someone habitually chooses the flesh, that person frequently falls.

The Acts of the Flesh

	Categories		Categories
1.	sexual immorality	9.	fits of rage
2.	impurity	10.	selfish ambition
3.	debauchery	11.	dissensions
4.	idolatry	12.	factions
5.	witchcraft	13.	envy
6.	hatred	14.	drunkenness
7.	discord	15.	orgies
8.	jealousy		

The Acts of the Flesh

• Many people assume that the desires of the flesh refer only to sexual or immoral behavior, but this is a misunderstanding. The scope is much broader. It includes sexual sins, but it is not limited to them.

• The longings of the flesh arise from human sinfulness and manifest in many forms: sexual immorality is a work of the flesh, but so is hatred; debauchery is a work of the flesh, but so is anger; impurity is a work of the flesh, but so is jealousy; idolatry is a work of the flesh, but so is discord; heresy is a work of the flesh, factionalism is a work of the flesh, and drunkenness and wild partying are all works of the flesh.

• Where is the battleground between the flesh and the Spirit? It is within you. The flesh seeks to produce the fruit of sin in your life, while the Holy Spirit seeks to produce the fruit of the Spirit in you. Whichever side you lean toward—that side wins. If you lean toward the flesh, you will bear impurity, debauchery, anger, and discord. If you lean toward the Spirit, you will bear love, joy, peace, kindness, and so on.

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* The Fruit of the Spirit

The Fruit	Characteristics	The Fruit	Characteristics
1	love	1	goodness
1	joy	1	faithfulness
1	peace	1	gentleness, meekness
1	forbearance, long suffering	1	self-control
1	kindness		

1. It is the fruit of the Spirit, not your fruit; it is the outflow of God's life, not the result of your own effort.
2. It is one fruit with nine (or more) characteristics; it is the richness of God's life manifested in impoverished human nature.
3. God's life is manifested in individuals, and even more so in the body of Christ.

Love — Agape

• In Greek, there are four words for love:

1. ***Eros:*** romantic love between a man and a woman. This is not a negative word; it expresses attraction and passion between lovers or spouses.
2. ***Philia:*** the love of friends and close companions, the warmth and joy you feel when seeing family or friends.
3. ***Storge:*** parental love, referring specifically to the love between parents and children.
4. ***Agape:*** the love of Christ—love that goes beyond emotion and enters the realm of the will, a love willing to sacrifice for the good of the other.

• The fruit of the Spirit has nine flavors, and the first is love (agape). First, your heart begins to change—you no longer respond to people with rejection or hatred, but with acceptance and goodwill. You do not harm others—that is the minimum. You are willing to pay a price for the good of others, giving money, effort, and labor without complaint. Even if others disappoint you, you do not change your intention; you still do not harm them and continue to do good to them.

Joy — Chara

• This is not earthly joy but heavenly joy—not the joy of winning the lottery, but the joy that comes from believing in God.

• "May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit." (Romans 15:14)

• "For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit." (Romans 14:17)

• "Fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God." (Hebrews 12:2)

• Joy is closely related to hope. Those who do not believe in God see the difficulties of life and feel sorrow, unable to rejoice. Those who believe in God see God in the midst of difficulties, and therefore have hope. Once hope fills the heart, joy naturally arises.

6A Bearing One Another's Burdens as God's Children

• ***"Brothers and sisters, if someone is caught in a sin, you who live by the Spirit should restore that person gently. But watch yourselves, or you also may be tempted. Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ."(Galatians 6:1–2)***

1. **Do not think only of yourself:** love your neighbor as yourself, and bear one another's burdens.
2. **Do not mistake nothing for something:** have a right assessment of yourself. If someone has nothing yet thinks he has something, he deceives himself.
3. **Do not neglect the one who teaches:** the one who receives instruction in the word should share all good things with the one who teaches.

6B Do Not Grow Weary in Doing Good

• "Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. Whoever sows to please their flesh, from the flesh will reap destruction; whoever sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life. Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers."(Galatians 6:7–10)

1. **What is doing good?** In this passage, doing good means sowing to the Spirit—that is, obeying the Spirit.
2. **Do not grow weary in doing good:** do not lose heart or stop simply because results are not yet visible.
3. **At the proper time there will be a harvest:** doing good is like sowing a crop—maturity takes time, and fruit requires patient endurance (see Luke 8:15).

The One Thing That Matters Most

"Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything; what counts is the new creation. Peace and mercy to all who follow this rule—to the Israel of God. From now on, let no one cause me trouble, for I bear on my body the marks of Jesus. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brothers and sisters. Amen."(Galatians 6:15–18)

• Galatians, a letter written to defend the truth, concludes with the theme of **"being a new creation."** Everything else is insignificant—circumcision is not important, keeping the law is not important. Or, to use the language of today's "other gospels," speaking in tongues is not important, receiving favor is not important, Calvin is not important. Only one thing matters: becoming a new creation.

• According to Galatians, a new creation has the following characteristics:

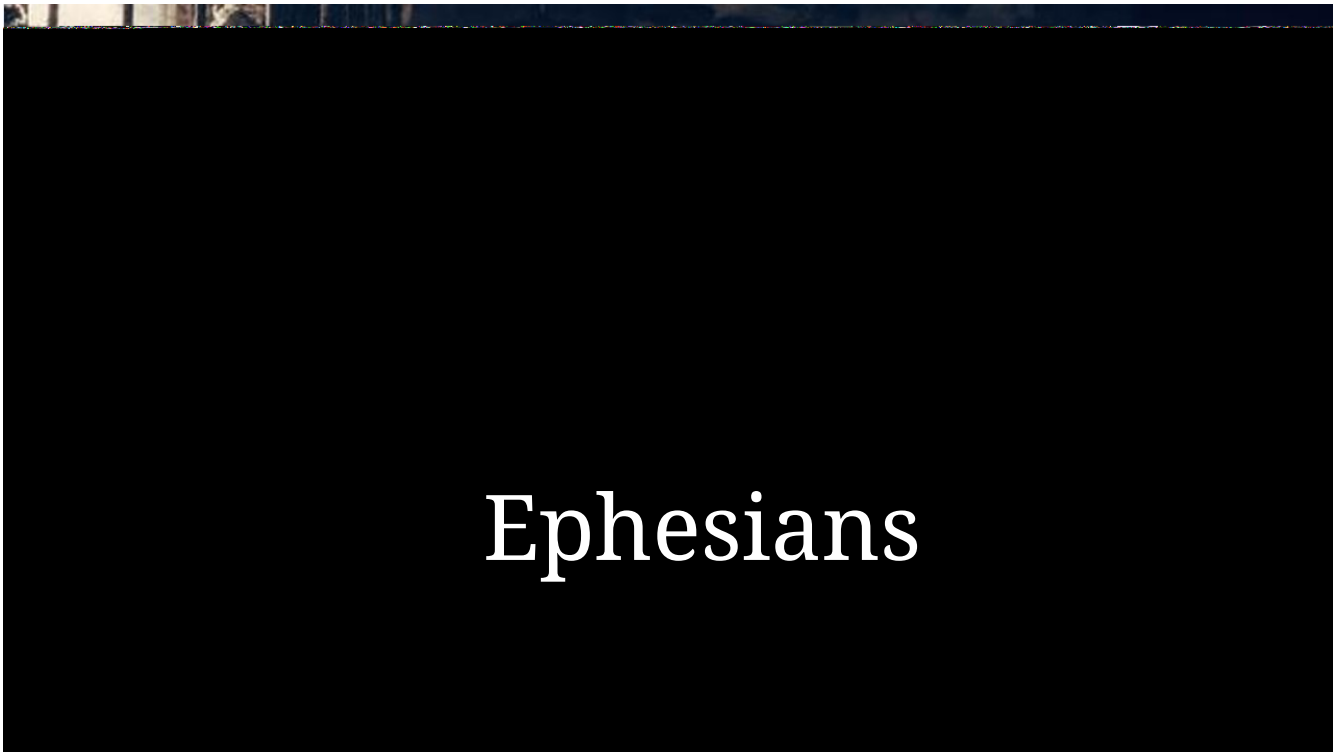
The One Thing That Matters Most

1. **Hearing and believing the true gospel:**
He did not believe through “another gospel,” but through the gospel Paul preached. Paul’s gospel is “Jesus Christ and Him crucified”—only Jesus Christ, with nothing added. No added circumcision, no added law, no added tongues, no added health or wealth, no added theology.

2. **Christ formed in the heart:**
The more he believes, the clearer the image of Christ becomes in his heart, and the more his words and actions resemble Christ. It is not that after believing for a long time, religion becomes clearer, political positions become clearer, but Christ becomes more and more blurry. A new creation bears the clear image of the One who created him.

3. **The fruit of the Spirit:**
A new creation has the Holy Spirit within. He begins by the Spirit and is perfected by the Spirit. The Spirit produces fruit in him—love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

• A new creation begins by hearing and believing the true gospel. The image of Christ becomes increasingly clear in his heart, and the Holy Spirit bears fruit in his life. Paul says: this is what truly matters—everything else is insignificant.



Ephesians

The Classification of Paul's Thirteen Epistles

• According to doctrine, Paul's thirteen epistles can be categorized into four groups in order: Soteriology (Salvation), Christology, Eschatology, and Ecclesiology.

Soteriology (Salvation)	Christology	Eschatology	Ecclesiology
5) Romans 6) 1 Corinthians 7) 2 Corinthians 8) Galatians	5) Ephesians 6) Philippians 7) Colossians	8) 1 Thessalonians 9) 2 Thessalonians	10)1 Timothy 11)2 Timothy 12)Titus 13)Philemon

The Prison Epistles

• Among Paul's letters, four are known as the "Prison Epistles," written while he was imprisoned: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon. Although 2 Timothy was also written by Paul during imprisonment, it has traditionally not been classified among the Prison Epistles but among the Pastoral Epistles.

• Paul was imprisoned multiple times, with the longest periods being in Caesarea and Rome. Most biblical scholars agree that Ephesians, Colossians, and Philemon were written during Paul's imprisonment in Rome, around AD 60. Scholars differ on the date of Philippians, but an increasing number believe that Philippians was also written during Paul's imprisonment in Rome.

The Prison Epistles

- **Ephesians**

- *"For this reason I, Paul, **the prisoner** of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles…" (3:1)*
- *"As **a prisoner** for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received." (4:1)*
- *"For which I am an ambassador **in chains**." (6:20)*

- **Philippians**

- *"Now I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that what has happened to me has actually served to advance the gospel. As a result, it has become clear throughout the whole palace guard and to everyone else that I am **in chains** for Christ." (1:12–13)*

The Prison Epistles

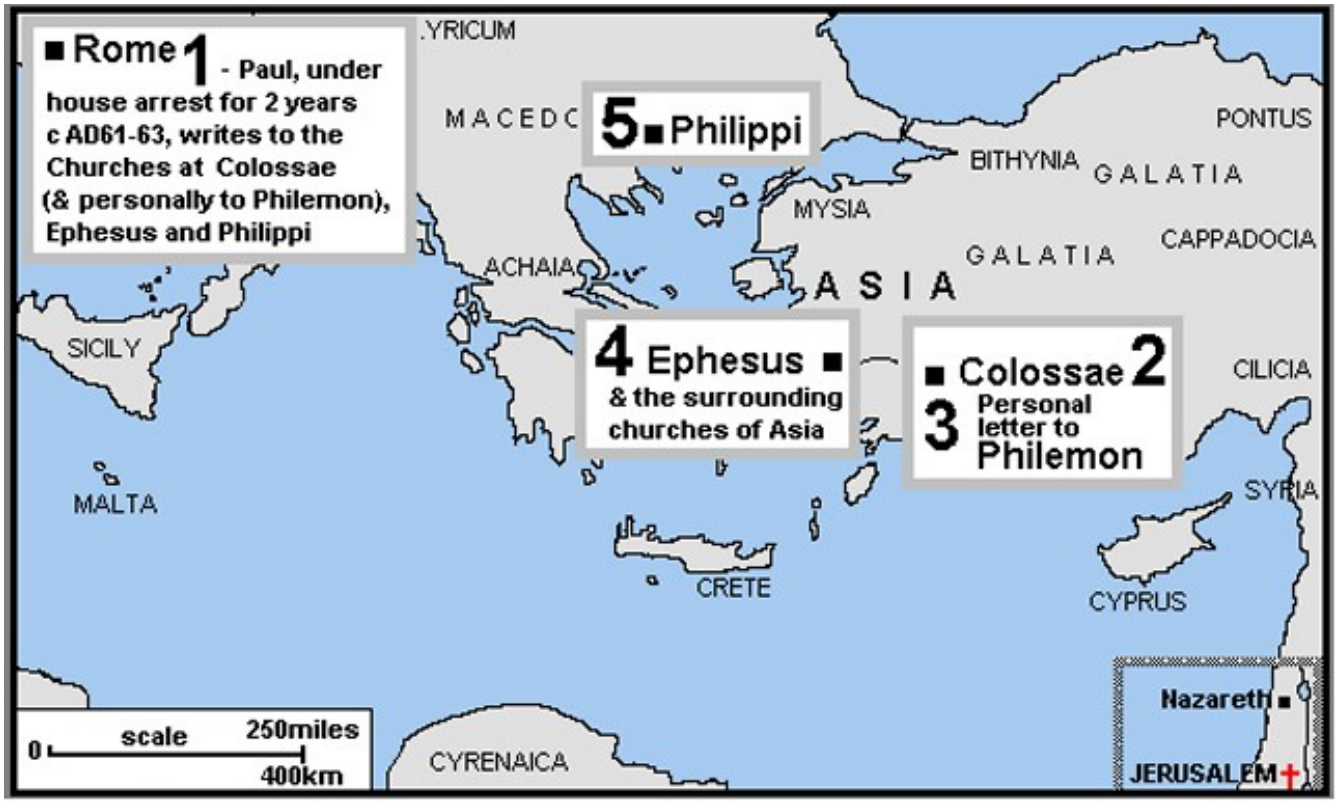
- **Colossians**

- *"My fellow **prisoner** Aristarchus sends you his greetings." (4:10)*
- *"I, Paul, write this greeting in my own hand. Remember **my chains**. Grace be with you." (4:18)*

- **Philemon**

- *"Paul, **a prisoner** of Christ Jesus, and Timothy our brother, to Philemon our dear friend and fellow worker…" (v.1)*
- *"Therefore, although in Christ I could be bold and order you to do what you ought to do, yet I appeal to you on the basis of love. I then, as Paul—an old man and now also **a prisoner** of Christ Jesus…" (v.8)*

The Prison Epistles: Letters written from Rome to Colossae, Philemon, Ephesus, and Philippi



The Seven Churches of Revelation

• In clockwise order:

1. Ephesus
2. Smyrna
3. Pergamum
4. Thyatira
5. Sardis
6. Philadelphia
7. Laodicea

Understanding “Church” — Ecclesia

• In ancient Greece, when a city needed to gather its citizens, heralds would go out and shout, **“Come out, the assembly is meeting! Come out, the assembly is meeting!”** Those who were called out and gathered together were the ecclesia.

• Those who hear the call of Jesus Christ, come out, repent, and believe unto salvation—when they gather together, they are the ecclesia.

• The church (ecclesia) is the gathering of believers. It is not a religious organization, nor a building, but a group of people who believe in Jesus Christ. Three or five believers gathered together form an ecclesia; thousands gathered together also form an ecclesia.

Understanding “Church” — Ecclesia

• In Scripture, “church” (ecclesia) refers purely to the gathering of believers, not a religious institution.

• ***“And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.” (1:22–23)***

• ***“His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms.” (3:10)***

• ***“To him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.” (3:21)***

• ***“Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.” (5:25)***

• ***“This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church.” (5:32)***

Key Verses in Ephesians

1. **The Church as the Body of Christ**
   • ***"The church is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way." (1:23)***
2. **Saved by Grace Through Faith**
   • ***"For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast." (2:8–9)***

Key Verses in Ephesians

3. **The Dividing Wall Destroyed**
   - ***"For he himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility." (2:14)***
4. **One Body**
   - ***"There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope… one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all." (4:4–6)***

Key Verses in Ephesians

5. **Building Up the Body of Christ**
   • ***"So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up." (4:11–12)***

6. **Christ Loved the Church**
   • ***"Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her." (5:25)***

Key Verses in Ephesians

7. **The Full Armor of God**
   - ***"Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes." (6:10–11)***

I. The Church as the Body of Christ

1A. Praise: The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ (1:3–14)

• "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ."

1. Election — Chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world
2. Predestination — Predestined in Christ to be adopted as sons
3. Grace — Redemption and forgiveness through his blood
4. Mystery — In the fullness of time, all things brought together in Christ
5. Inheritance — Sealed with the Holy Spirit as the guarantee of our inheritance

I. The Church as the Body of Christ

1B. Prayer: The God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Glorious Father (1:15–23)

• Paul prays that God would give believers the Spirit of wisdom and revelation so that they may truly know Him:

1. Calling — To know the hope of his calling
2. Inheritance — To know the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints
3. Power — To know the incomparably great power toward us who believe

I. The Church as the Body of Christ

• ***"And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way." (1:22–23)***

1. **Christ is the head over all things** — For the sake of the church, giving her rightful authority to carry out His mission.
2. **Christ is the head of the church** — The church is His body, the fullness of the One who fills all things.

II. The Church as God's Household

1. **Dead in Sin :** **"You were dead in your transgressions and sins."**

A. Following the course of this world — the world's control
B. Following the ruler of the air — the control of evil spirits

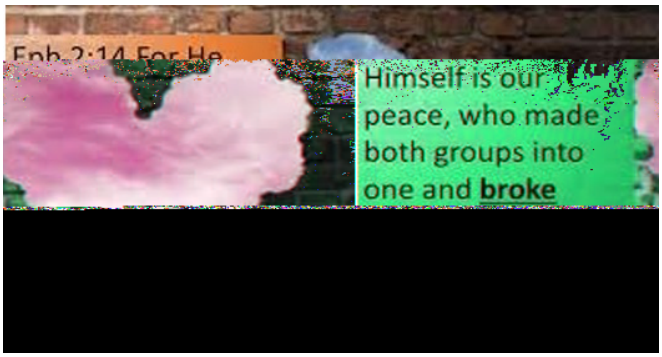
2. **Alive in Christ** : **"God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms."**

A. The way of salvation — By grace through faith
B. The purpose of salvation — "We are God's workmanship… created in Christ Jesus to do good works."

II. The Church as God's Household

1. Breaking Down the Dividing Wall

: "For he himself is our peace (The original text reads: "For he is our peace."), who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the dividing wall of hostility."

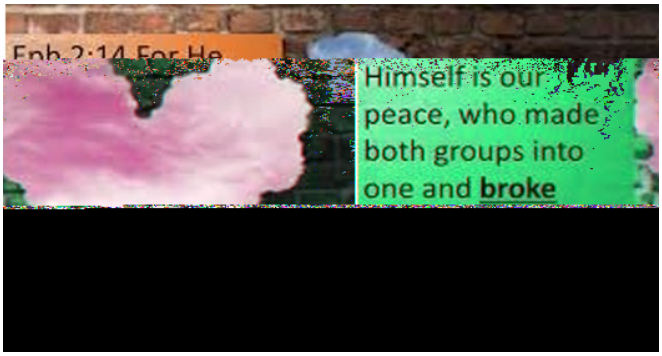


A. Breaking down the wall between Jews and Gentiles

B. Breaking down walls between people — race, culture, class, status, gender

II. The Church as God's Household

2. Made One in Christ



A. ***Through the cross*** **— Hostility put to death, both reconciled to God**

B. ***Through the Spirit*** **— Both have access to the Father by one Spirit**

II. The Church as God's Household

1. The church is God's household:"You are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God's people and also members of his household."

2. **The church is God's holy temple:"Joined together in him, every part grows into a holy temple in the Lord. And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling place in which God lives by his Spirit."**