

Paul to the Galatians 48AD

‘Christ gave himself to set us free’(1:4)

Key theme:

A Reflection on Human Freedom

We must stop putting boundaries
on the action
of God’s liberating and life-giving
Spirit.



33 Jesus is crucified

34 Paul's Encounter with Christ (Acts 9:1-19)

'I received the Gospel through a revelation of Jesus Christ' (Galatians 1:12).

'God called me through his grace and was pleased to reveal his Son in me, so that I might proclaim him among the Gentiles' (Galatians 1:15-16).

'Have I not seen the Lord' (1 Corinthians 9:1).

'He was seen also by me' (1 Corinthians 15:8).

34-37 In 'Arabia' (The Nabataen kingdom) (Galatians 1:17-18; Acts 9:20-25)

37 Paul escapes from Damascus (Acts 9:25)
and pays a short visit to Jerusalem
'to speak with [historêsai] Cephas' (Galatians 1:18)
then leaves for Tarsus (Galatians 1:16-21; Acts 9:26-30)

'Proclaiming the faith' (Galatians 1:23)

45 Barnabas gets Paul to join him in Antioch (Acts 11:25-26)

34-48?

46 Paul visits Jerusalem (during the 'fourteen year' period, Galatians 2:1)
with Barnabas and Silas
and confers with Peter, John & James
concerning conditions for accepting Gentiles
into the Christian community (Galatians 2:1-10; Acts 11:27-30)

47-48 Missionary Journey to Cyprus and Southern Galatia

Acts 13:1-4

In the church at Antioch there were prophets and teachers ... While they were worshipping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, “Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.” Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off. So, being sent out by the Holy Spirit, they went down to Seleucia; and from there they sailed to Cyprus.

Acts 13:4-14

‘Barnabas and Saul left Antioch and sailed to Cyprus ... Paul and his companions set sail from Paphos and came to Perga ... and to Antioch.’

Acts 14:1-6

Iconium ... Lystra ... Derbe.

Acts 14:21-26

‘They returned to Lystra, then on to Iconium and Antioch ... Perga ... From there they sailed back to Antioch.’



Acts 13:39

Paul's words in the synagogue of Antioch (in Galatia).

‘By this Jesus everyone who believes is set free from all those sins from which you could not be freed by the law of Moses.’

Acts 15:1

Problem

‘Certain individuals came down from Judea and were teaching the brothers, ‘Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.’

The Galatians know that they can fall back and lose the freedom they experienced in the Christian community.

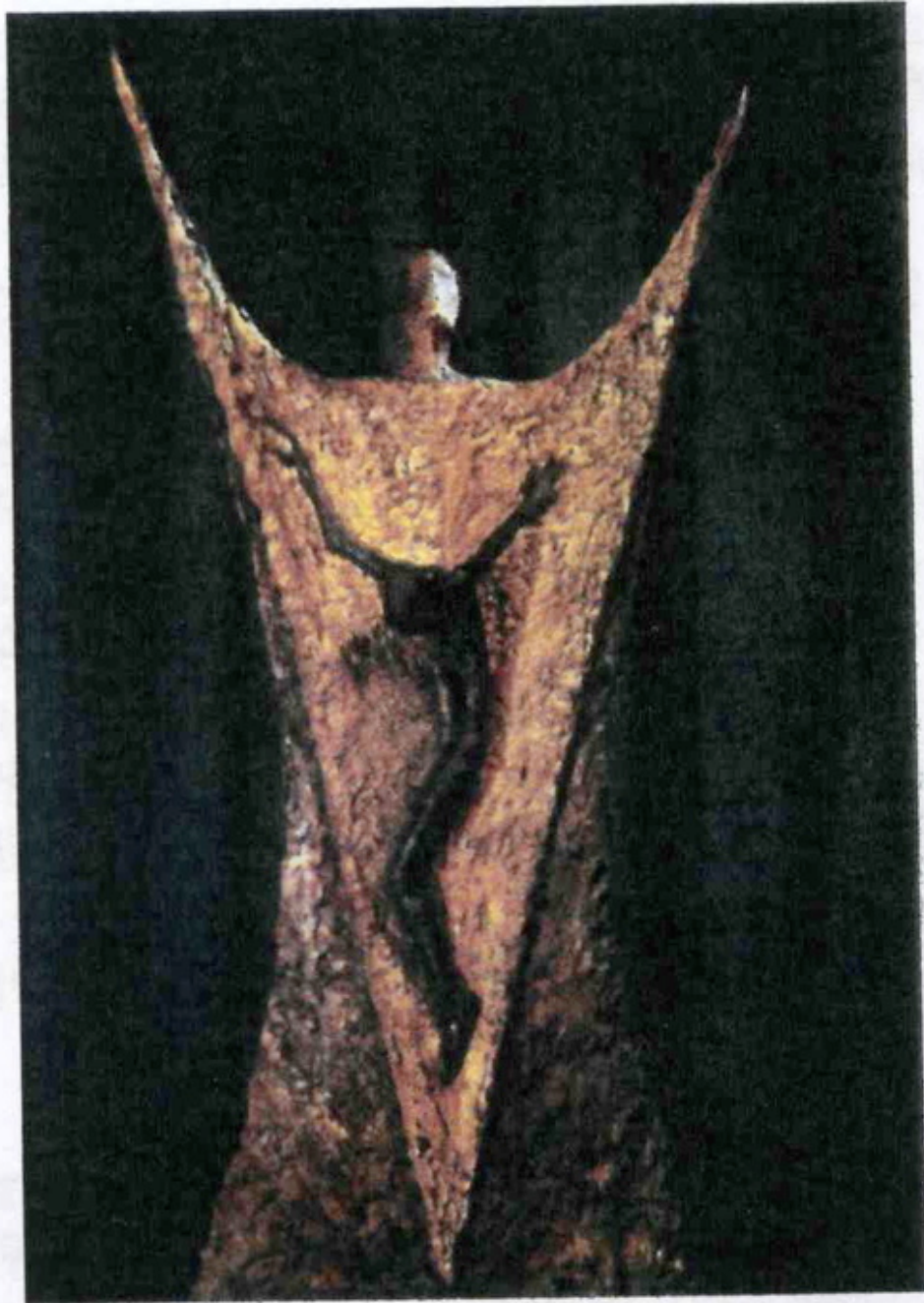
The circumcision group had strong arguments to persuade them to obey God's will as found in the Law (= become a Jew)

Paul did not disagree with this, but he had come to see that the Law had come to its flowering in Jesus. To obey the Law = join themselves to the Christian community.

48 Paul writes from Antioch to Galatia

‘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 — and all the members of God’s family who are with me. To the churches of Galatia’(Galatians 1:1-2).

48 Letter to the Galatians



Galatians 1:3-5

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

Galatians 1:6-7

‘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 — not that there is another gospel, but there are some who are confusing you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ.’

‘Confusing’(tarassô) - introducing fear into their relationship with their Father.

Galatians 2:4

‘False believers secretly brought in, who slipped in to spy on the freedom we have in Christ Jesus, so that they might enslave us.’

Galatians 2:11-14

‘When Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood self-condemned; for until certain people came from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles. But after they came, he drew back and kept himself separate for fear of the circumcision faction. And the other Jews joined him in this hypocrisy [acting to please], so that even Barnabas was led astray by their hypocrisy.

But when I saw that they were not acting consistently with the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas before them all, “If you, though a Jew, live like a Gentile and not like a Jew, how can you compel the Gentiles to live like Jews?”

‘We have come to believe in Christ Jesus, so that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by doing the works of the law, because no one will be justified by the works of the law.’

Paul is reminding the Galatian Christians that they were brought by God into a love-union with God, not on the basis of being circumcised and becoming observant Jews, but on the basis of their union with Jesus. This is true of the Gentiles in the community – so they should not start looking to the law for their security. It is also true for the Jews. Their continued fidelity to the observance of the law as Jews is one thing. To base their security of salvation on this observance or to join with those who are attempting to frighten the Gentile members of the community into looking for their security in this way, is to pervert the gospel.



Galatians 2:19-20

‘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 the faith of the Son of God, loving me and giving himself for me.’

Galatians 3:26-29

‘You are all ‘sons’ of God through the faith that is in Christ Jesus. 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. And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s offspring, heirs according to the promise.’

Galatians 4:4-7

‘When the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, in order to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.

And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, “Abba! Father!” So you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son then also an heir, through God.’

Galatians 5:1

‘For freedom Christ has set us free. Stand firm, therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.’

Galatians 5:6

‘In Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything; the only thing that counts is faith working through love.’

Faith = opening to welcome grace, and to let grace produce its fruit in one’s life.

Galatians 5:13-14

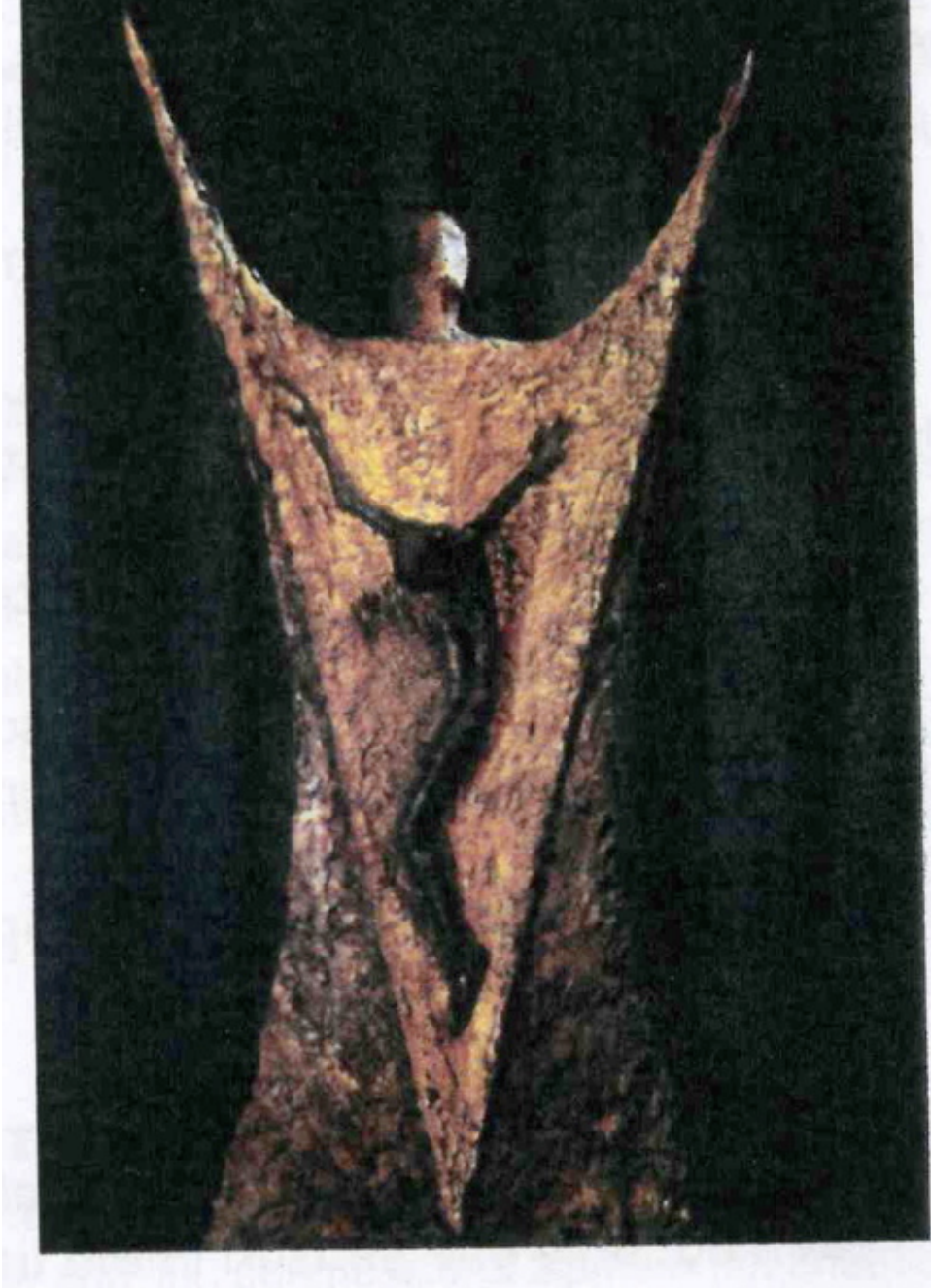
‘You were called to freedom, brothers and sisters; only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for self-indulgence, but through love become slaves to one another. For the whole law is summed up in a single commandment, “You shall love your neighbour as yourself.”

John 8:36

‘If the Son makes you free you are free indeed.’

John 10:10

Freedom to ‘live and to live to the full.’



‘He gave himself for us
to set us free’(Galatians 1:3)

‘If the Son makes you free
you are free indeed’(John 8:36)

According to the chronology which we are following, shortly after writing to the Galatians Paul went with Barnabas to the Assembly in Jerusalem.

The Assembly supported Paul's main contention, insisting that those who were troubling the Christians in Antioch (and Galatia) were not acting under instructions from Jerusalem (Acts 15:24). NB. Not used by Paul in Galatians!!

Gentiles could be welcomed into the community as Gentiles and would be saved, as would Jews 'through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ'(Acts 15:11).

Peter at the Assembly in Jerusalem 49

Acts 15:9

‘Cleansing their hearts by faith, God has made no distinction between them and us.’

Acts 15:12

‘We believe that we will be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, just as they will.’

However, the assembly ruled that when Gentiles and Jews came together to share communion around a common table, it was necessary for the Gentiles to observe the regulations of the law regarding what food could and could not be eaten (Acts 15:19-20, 28-29).

See also Acts 21:25 (James and the elders tell Paul of the Letter)

As stated in the Torah, these regulations applied not only to Jews but to Gentiles living with Jews.

Silas was one of the men sent from Jerusalem to Antioch to promulgate the decisions of the council. accompanied Paul on his next missionary journey

Acts 16:4

‘As they went from town to town, they delivered to them for observance the decisions that had been reached by the apostles and elders who were in Jerusalem.’

Part One of Mark's Gospel (1:21 - 3:6) focuses on liberation

1. Mentally disturbed man in synagogue
2. Simon's mother-in-law (for ministry)
3. Instrument of God's liberating power
4. A leper is embraced
5. Liberation of a man paralysed by sin
6. Eating with 'sinners and tax collectors'
7. Liberation from slavish conformity to ritual (fasting)
8. Liberation from narrow interpretation of the Law
 - 'Sabbath was made for man, not man for the sabbath'
 - Man with withered hand in the synagogue

'The Pharisees went out and at once began to plot with the Herodians against Jesus, discussing how to destroy him'(Mark 3:6).