

Different kinds of churches

Law



“God is Holy”

Be sure that everyone believes and behaves properly

Grace

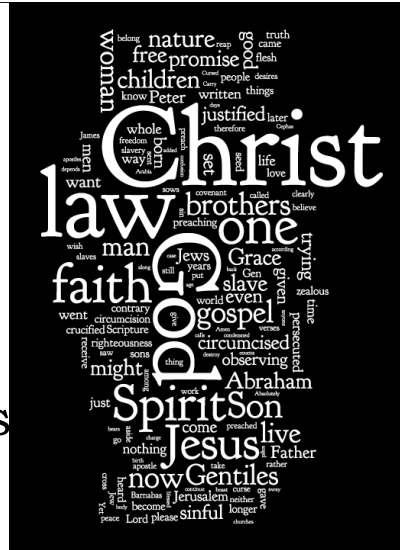


“God is Love”

Be sure that everyone shows grace and mercy

Great tensions in Christian tradition

How are faith and good works related?



Four views

1.

Good works
do not need
Faith

Faithfulness
is the only
thing that

Judaism

2.

Good works
are the same
as Faith

Faithfulness
is essential to
true Faith

Roman
Catholicism

3.

Good works
are the sign of
Faith

Faithfulness
is a necessary
indicator of

Reformed
Protestantism

4.

Good works
are the fruit of
Faith

Faithfulness
is distinct from
true Faith

Radical
Grace

What would Paul have said about these views?

1:1-5

GALATIANS

THE GOSPEL OF CHRISTIAN FREEDOM

Paul on the dock

The early church

Under
the Law



From a Jewish sect to a Gentile Church

Hebrews



Hebraists
(Hebrew culture) -
Christianity is a
reformed Judaism.

Free from
the Law



Greeks

Hellenists
(Greek culture) -
Christianity is without
obligation to many
Jewish Law and
traditions (circumcision,
ceremonial, moral).

Tensions in the early church

1. **The Jewishness of Jesus** - In what ways and to what extent was Christianity distinct from Judaism?
2. **The Gentiles** - By the third century Gentiles were dominating the church. What was expected of Gentiles in becoming Christians?
3. **The Law of Moses** - How are the Old Covenant and New Covenant related?

Paul was and is controversial in his relationship to the Christian faith.

1. Christianity as we know it comes through the teaching of Paul.
2. Paul's emphasis is on the Cross and Resurrection of Jesus not Jesus' teaching.
3. Paul took a hard line stand against legalism and the Law of Moses as a Covenant of works righteousness.

Paul the apostle faced four barriers that he needed to overcome.

1. He was not one of the original 12 apostles.
2. He spent much of his early life persecuting Christians.
3. He received a revelation of "the mystery" of the Gospel that no one else had received.
4. He lacked charismatic appeal - not an engaging speaker, not physically attractive.

Paul's authority is still challenged today.

1. He is seen as **inventing Christianity** - creating a Christ of faith, apart from the Jesus of history.
2. He is seen as **distorting Judaism** - picturing it as a legalistic religion rather than a covenantal community.
3. He is seen as **a product of his environment** - confusing traditional ancient culture with timeless Kingdom principles (gender roles, sexual ethics, etc.)

Galatians 1

“¹ Paul, an apostle (not sent from men, nor through the agency of man, but through Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised Him from the dead), ² and all the brethren who are with me, to the churches of Galatia:

Paul begins his letter with a confident claim to special spiritual authority.

1. Paul is an apostle sent directly from God.
2. Paul is not one of “church apostles.”
3. Paul is not alone in his authority.

“Apostle” (one who is sent)

1. Christ is the ultimate Apostle.
Hebrews 3:1
2. Christ appointed 12 Apostles.
Luke 6:13, Acts 1:22
3. Christ's church sent out several apostles. Acts 14:4,14

Paul's witness

1. He eventually won the support of the whole Apostolic community and the early church.
2. His letters bear witness to his Godly character - suffering, insight, humility, confidence, etc.
3. His unlikely personal testimony and history bear witness to his credibility.
4. Without his teaching Christianity would have been but one of many Jewish sects or lost in history.

Galatians 1

“³ **Grace** to you and **peace** from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ, ⁴ who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us out of this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, ⁵ to whom {be} the glory forevermore. Amen.”

Points of tension with Paul's message.

1. The grace of God is the root, and the peace of God is the fruit.
2. Grace and peace are from God not man or this world.
3. Grace and peace are linked to the Cross.
4. Christianity is not primarily called to reform this world.

1 Corinthians 15:1-2

“¹ Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, ² by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain. ³ For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that **Christ died for our sins** according to the Scriptures, ⁴ and that He was buried, and that **He was raised on the third day** according to the Scriptures, ⁵ and that He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. ⁶ After that He appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom remain until now, but some have fallen asleep; ⁷ then He appeared to James, then to all the apostles; ⁸ and last of all, as it were to one untimely born, He appeared to me also.”

The implications of Paul's Gospel are challenging.

1. Christ's sacrifice was **for our sins** not an unfortunate martyrdom or moral example.
2. This **present age is evil** not ripe for reform.
3. We are **delivered from this world** not called to rescue it.

So is this all that needs to be said?

Are we called to reform or reconcile?

How is Christianity distinct from other religions?



The Gospel of Grace



calls us to
the Crucified
and Resurrected
Christ

calls us away
from Jewish Law
and this evil
age.