

Galatians 5:1-12

5 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.

2 Mark my words! I, Paul, tell you that if you let yourselves be circumcised, Christ will be of no value to you at all. 3 Again I declare to every man who lets himself be circumcised that he is required to obey the whole law. 4 You who are trying to be justified by the law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace. 5 For through the Spirit we eagerly await by faith the righteousness for which we hope. 6 For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love.

7 You were running a good race. Who cut in on you to keep you from obeying the truth? 8 That kind of persuasion does not come from the one who calls you. 9 'A little yeast works through the whole batch of dough.' 10 I am confident in the Lord that you will take no other view. The one who is throwing you into confusion, whoever that may be, will have to pay the penalty. 11 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 abolished. 12 As for those agitators, I wish they would go the whole way and emasculate themselves!

Luke 4: 16 - 20

16 He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. He stood up to read, 17 and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written:

18 "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, 19 to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." [f]

20 Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him. 21 He began by saying to them, "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing."

Paul is a missionary - which is latin for SENT

The greek for send is Apostolos - apostles.

The Jesuits first used it about people they were sending to teach, or found school.

The Holy Spirit and the Church SENT him out.

Missionaries don't go on their own idea, and don't go on their own - they are sent by a church to somewhere.

Acts 13

1 Now in the church at Antioch there were prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen (who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch) and Saul.

2 While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." 3 So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off.

On Cyprus

4 The two of them, sent on their way by the Holy Spirit, went down to Seleucia and sailed from there to Cyprus. 5 When they arrived at Salamis, they proclaimed the word of God in the Jewish synagogues. John was with them as their helper.

6 They traveled through the whole island until they came to Paphos.

So - a Synagogue isn't really a building, like a church, it's the people, but it's also a building - it's a group of at least 12 Jewish men. And if they weren't a building, they'd been by the river on a Sabbath.

And wherever he went Paul started with the Jews in that place..

So we hear

Acts 13: 14 From Perga they went on to Pisidian Antioch. On the Sabbath they entered the synagogue and sat down. 15 After the reading from the Law and the Prophets, the leaders of the synagogue sent word to them, saying, "Brothers, if you have a word of exhortation for the people, please speak."

16 Standing up, Paul motioned with his hand and said: "Fellow Israelites, listen to me!

Or

Acts 14: 1. At Iconium Paul and Barnabas went as usual into the Jewish synagogue. There they spoke so effectively that a great number of Jews and Greeks believed. 2 But the Jews who refused to believe stirred up the other Gentiles and poisoned their minds against the brothers.

Acts 16: 13 In Philippi -

On the Sabbath we went outside the city gate to the river, where we expected to find a place of prayer. We sat down and began to speak to the women who had gathered there. 14 One of those listening was a woman from the city of Thyatira named Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth. She was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul's message.

15 When she and the members of her household were baptized, she invited us to her home. "If you consider me a believer in the Lord," she said, "come and stay at my house." And she persuaded us.

When he spoke to Jews he would say things like -

Acts 13 -

The God of the people of Israel chose our ancestors; he made the people prosper during their stay in Egypt; with mighty power he led them out of that country; 18 for about forty years he endured their conduct[a] in the wilderness; 19 and he overthrew seven nations in Canaan, giving their land to his people as their inheritance. 20 All this took about 450 years.

"After this, God gave them judges until the time of Samuel the prophet. 21 Then the people asked for a king, and he gave them Saul son of Kish, of the tribe of Benjamin, who ruled forty years. 22 After removing Saul, he made David their king. God testified concerning him: 'I have found David son of Jesse, a man after my own heart; he will do everything I want him to do.'

23 "From this man's descendants God has brought to Israel the Savior Jesus, as he promised.

But often the Jews did not receive him, so he went to the Gentiles, or sometimes there were also Gentiles who believed in God.

Acts 14

8 In Lystra there sat a man who was lame. He had been that way from birth and had never walked. 9 He listened to Paul as he was speaking. Paul looked directly at him, saw that he had faith to be healed 10 and called out, "Stand up on your feet!" At that, the man jumped up and began to walk.

11 When the crowd saw what Paul had done, they shouted in the Lycaonian language, "The gods have come down to us in human form!" 12 Barnabas they called Zeus, and Paul they called Hermes because he was the chief speaker. 13 The priest of Zeus, whose temple was just outside the city, brought bulls and wreaths to the city gates because he and the crowd wanted to offer sacrifices to them.

14 But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard of this, they tore their clothes and rushed out into the crowd, shouting: 15 “Friends, why are you doing this? We too are only human, like you. We are bringing you good news, telling you to turn from these worthless things to the living God, who made the heavens and the earth and the sea and everything in them. 16 In the past, he let all nations go their own way. 17 Yet he has not left himself without testimony: He has shown kindness by giving you rain from heaven and crops in their seasons; he provides you with plenty of food and fills your hearts with joy.”

So to Gentiles - God shows himself by healing, in nature, and sometimes the things they already worship -

In Athens -

Acts 17

Then they took him and brought him to a meeting of the Areopagus, where they said to him, “May we know what this new teaching is that you are presenting? 20 You are bringing some strange ideas to our ears, and we would like to know what they mean.” 21 (All the Athenians and the foreigners who lived there spent their time doing nothing but talking about and listening to the latest ideas.)

22 Paul then stood up in the meeting of the Areopagus and said: “People of Athens! I see that in every way you are very religious. 23 For as I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: to an unknown god. So you are ignorant of the very thing you worship—and this is what I am going to proclaim to you.

24 “The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by human hands. 25 And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything. Rather, he himself gives everyone life and breath and everything else.

In Corinth

18 After this, Paul left Athens and went to Corinth. 2 There he met a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, who had recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had ordered all Jews to leave Rome. Paul went to see them, 3 and because he was a tentmaker as they were, he stayed and worked with them. 4 Every Sabbath he reasoned in the synagogue, trying to persuade Jews and Greeks.

5 When Silas and Timothy came from Macedonia, Paul devoted himself exclusively to preaching, testifying to the Jews that Jesus was the Messiah. 6 But when they opposed Paul and became abusive, he shook out his clothes in protest and said to them, “Your blood be on your own heads! I am innocent of it. From now on I will go to the Gentiles.”

7 Then Paul left the synagogue and went next door to the house of Titius Justus, a worshiper of God. 8 Crispus, the synagogue leader, and his entire household believed in the Lord; and many of the Corinthians who heard Paul believed and were baptized.

Paul also preached in people’s houses.

Acts 20

7 On the first day of the week we came together to break bread. Paul spoke to the people and, because he intended to leave the next day, kept on talking until midnight. 8 There were many lamps in the upstairs room where we were meeting. 9 Seated in a window was a young man named Eutychus, who was sinking into a deep sleep as Paul talked on and on. When he was sound asleep, he fell to the ground from the third story and was picked up dead. 10 Paul went down, threw himself on the young man and put his arms around him. “Don’t be alarmed,” he said. “He’s alive!” 11 Then he went upstairs again and broke bread and ate. After talking until daylight, he left. 12 The people took the young man home alive and were greatly comforted.

Judaism was not then, and is not now, a proselytising faith.

In other words, they don't try to convert people. People are born into Judaism, and if you're interested and want to become a Jew you can - but they won't hand out flyers saying come to our synagogue, or try and persuade you in the supermarket that their God is the right one. They are interested, then and now, in discussing Scripture, in thinking about what this all means, and they are keen on prophecy or what God is saying now. It's not a static faith - think how it's developed from being slaves in Egypt and wandering in the desert, to rooting themselves to a land, then led by Judges, to appointing a king, and, the last few hundred years, to looking for a Messiah.

But Paul wanted them to know about the Messiah. So he tried to explain it to them. But when they said no, he went to the Gentiles - that they might know God.

So what did he say to them?

That there was a man sent from God called Jesus, who by his death and resurrection set people free from sin.

They could be free from sin - even though they may not know what sin was.

They could know God, through Jesus, through the Holy Spirit.

And that the Holy Spirit was the power of God that would help them live.

I think all religions, all faiths have the same 3 things -

Something to connect you to the divine

And they deal with guilt.

A way to live

So Muslims have lots of rules to live by, which like all religions comes down to Be Nice

Muslims have prayer 5 times a day and the Mosque - to connect them

And they deal with guilt by repenting and asking Allah for forgiveness.

So Paul presented a way to live, to not cheat, lie, be greedy etc.

He said that God had connected us by Jesus and the Holy Spirit to God

And that our guilt, our separation has been dealt with once and for all.

in a way he preaches the Nazarene Manifesto -

to proclaim **good news to the poor.**

He has sent me to proclaim **freedom for the prisoners**

and **recovery of sight** for the blind,

to **set the oppressed free,**

to proclaim **the year of the Lord's favor.**"

Good news - you can know God,

Freedom - from sin and guilt and shame

Sight - to see the world and yourself differently

No more oppressed by trying to make life meaningful or distractions of money, food etc

The year of the Lord's favour - YES - God is smiling on us, we do enjoy his favour, we don't have to earn it, we just have to enjoy it!!

And because of all these churches, round the med, and the fact that soon more gentiles were believers than Jews, Christianity grew and spread, and took over the roman empire, and then the world.

Thank you Paul - tirelessly working on our behalf, to keep us free and in a place to receive God's grace. On Sept 7th, when I'm back, we'll look at Paul's personal life.