

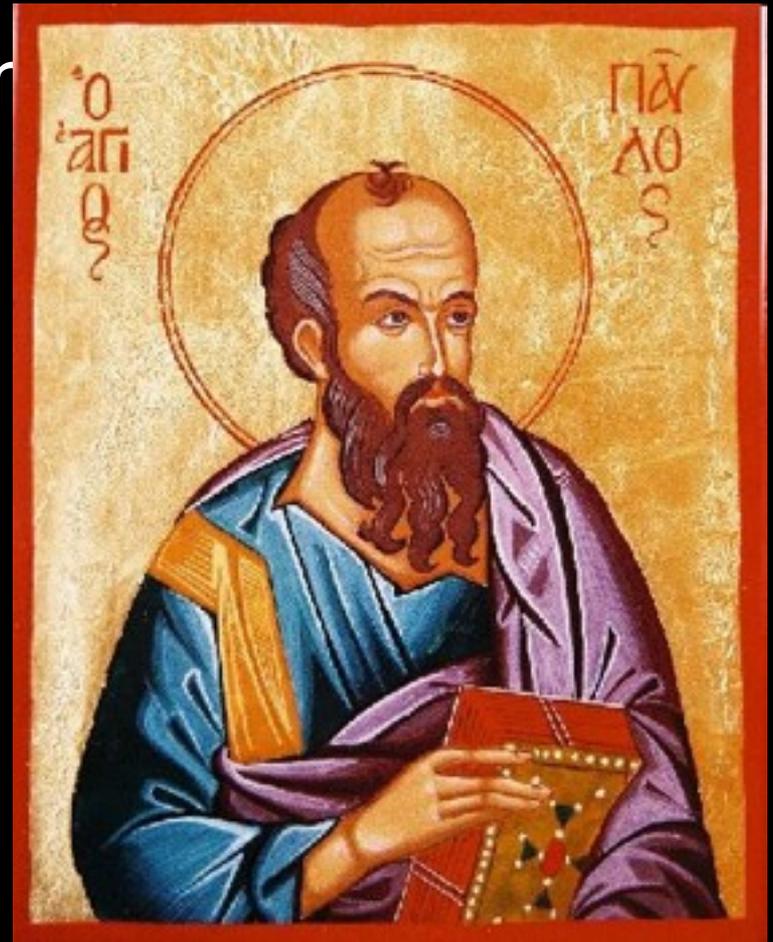
New Testament—10th Bible

Unit 3: Paul's Letters to the Church

Lesson 1: Paul's Life, Letters and Theology

I. Paul: An Overview

- A. Most outstanding apostle and missionary ever
- B. influenced the course of history through spreading of the story of Jesus



C. preached the gospel for around 30 years

1. throughout the Mediterranean area,

2. perhaps as far as Spain

3. established many churches.



D. Dramatic transformation



1. from fanatic persecutor of Christianity to champion of Christianity
 - a) murderer to missionary
2. no excuses made for his previous life, he did a complete 180
3. He experienced the deep forgiveness of sin

E. God's grace through Jesus who is the Christ

1. Grace is known and accepted only through the gift of faith
2. Through the death and resurrection of Christ, we have died to sin and been raised to a new life.
3. We are no longer slaves to sin but are set free in Christ.
4. This freedom expresses itself in love of God and our neighbor.

5. The Spirit renews and transforms us so we begin to look like Christ.

a) in inward character

b) in outward action

6. God's grace tears down the walls of separation between us

a) there is "neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female"

F. Keeping in contact

1. Paul kept in contact with his converts through:

a) messengers,

b) visits,

c) and letters,

(1) of which thirteen are in the New Testament.

G. Paul's letters were for teaching, encouraging, and correcting the churches he planted.



II. Paul's Life and Work

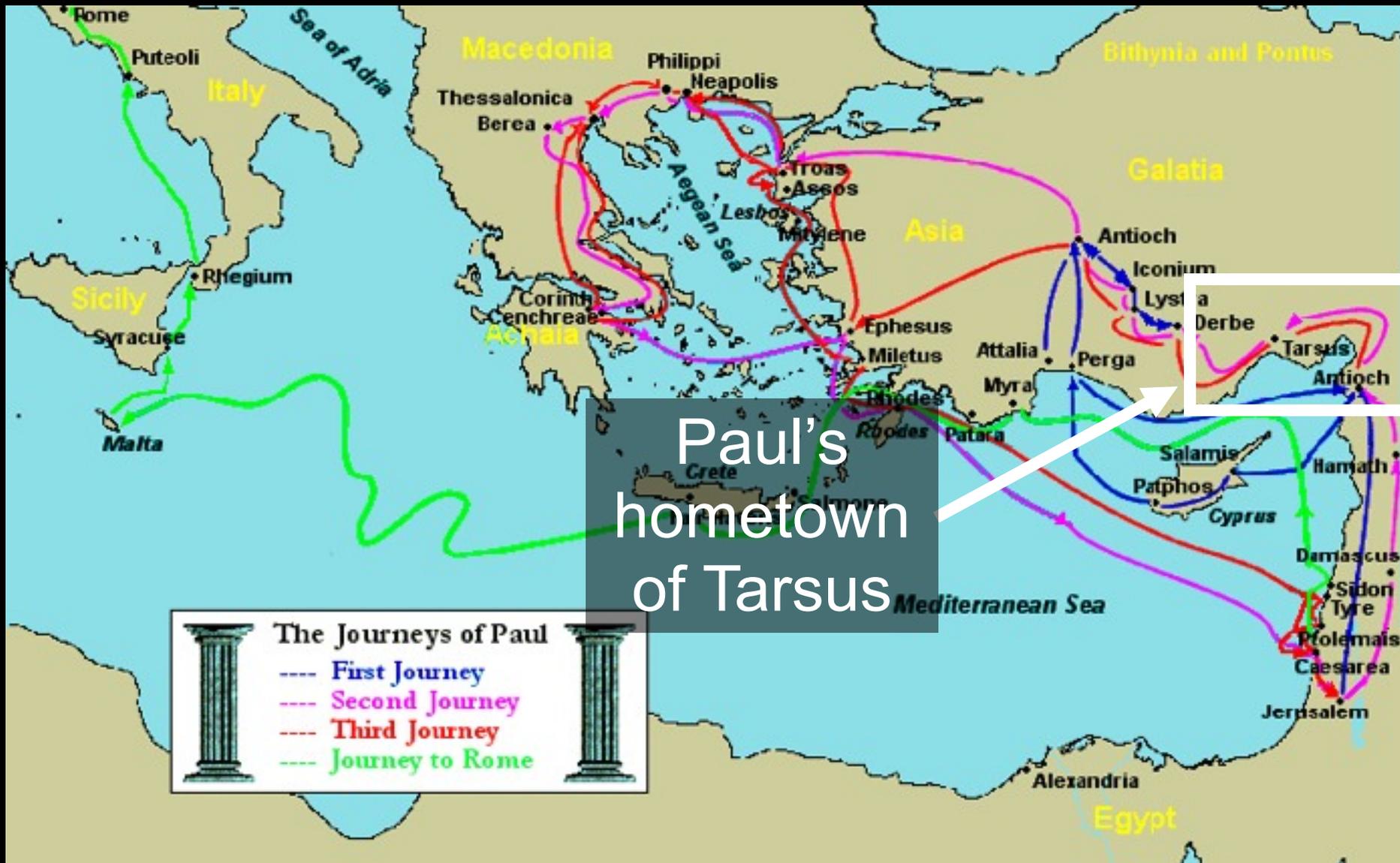
A. Most of the information regarding his life and work comes from the book of Acts

1. additional biographical info is spread throughout his letters.

B. Bio

1. A tent-maker by trade (Acts 18:3),
2. Paul was born in Tarsus of Jewish parents.

Paul's Hometown - Tarsus



- a) Tarsus was no ordinary city (Acts 21:39).
- b) The principal city in East Cilicia (northeast corner of the Mediterranean) and a center for Hellenistic culture,
- c) It was an important trade centre.
- d) It was known for its linen industry

e) and the manufacturing of other materials, such as *cilicium*, woven from goat's hair,

(1) from which were made coverings designed to give protection against cold and wet.

(2) He probably made tents from this material.

3. His Hebrew name was Saul (Acts 13:9) but he preferred to use his Latin name for the sake of the spread of the gospel.

4. Paul had Roman Citizenship through his father (Acts 22:28).

a) We don't know how his dad obtained this citizenship

b) it would have made the family a member of the social elite of Tarsus

c) During his journeys, Paul appealed to his rights as a Roman citizen a number of times:

(1) in Ephesus, after he received a beating without a proper trial (Acts 16:37)

(2) in Jerusalem, to spare himself a flogging (Acts 22:26).

5. Jewish Heritage

- a) Saw his Jewish heritage as more important than his Roman citizenship.
- b) He was never ashamed of his Jewish heritage (Acts 22:3; 2 Corinthians 11:22)
- c) Deeply loved his fellow Jews (Romans 9:1-4; 10:1)

d) Philippians 3:6--he was "circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee."

e) Born the son of a Pharisee (Acts 23:6), Paul was raised in a strictly orthodox Jewish home.

f) Language spoken in the home was Aramaic, and not Greek (probably)

(1) evident from the fact that he addressed the Jews in Jerusalem in Aramaic (Acts 21:40; 22:2),

(2) the voice he heard on the road to Damascus spoke to him in Aramaic (Acts 26:14).

g) Extremely smart and well educated

(1) Raised in Jerusalem, he was "trained in the law of our fathers" by the famous Gamaliel (Acts 22:3)

(2) "according, to the strictest sect of our religion" (Acts 26:5),

(3) "was advancing in Judaism beyond many Jews of my own age and was extremely zealous for the traditions of my fathers (Galatians 1:14).

h) Leader in Jerusalem by age 30

- (1) again, this speaks to both his intellectual ability and his charisma
- (2) zealously persecuting the followers of Jesus,
- (3) convinced Christians were heretics and had to be exterminated (Acts 22:4-5; 26:9-11).

i) We don't know whether or not Paul was married.

(1) Nowhere in his letters does he mention a wife.

(2) Some think Paul's wife may have left him when he became a Christian.

(only a guess)

6. Conversion

a) By divine intervention,
Paul was converted
to Christianity
(*Acts* 9; 22; 26;
1 *Corinthians* 9:16-17).



C. Early Ministry

1. He spent approximately three years in the area of Damascus and Arabia in order to be reshaped and prepared for his task.
2. His life having been threatened, Paul escaped from Damascus during the night, and went to Jerusalem to get acquainted with Peter.

3. He stayed with him for fifteen days and saw only James,

a) who appeared to be the leading elder in the church in Jerusalem (Galatians 1:19).

4. Fearing for his life, however, "the brothers took him to Caesarea and sent him to Tarsus" (Acts 9:30).

5. He worked in his hometown and the region of Syria and Cilicia for a number of years

6. Eventually, along with Barnabas, Paul became a leader in the church in Antioch (Acts 11:25-26).

D. First Missionary Journey

1. Paul and Barnabas sent from Antioch on their first missionary journey,
2. Began on Cyprus and traveled to several cities in Asia Minor.
3. After about two years, Paul and Barnabas returned to Antioch and “reported all that God had done through them and how he had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles” (Acts 14:27).

Paul's Missionary Journeys



E. Second and Third Missionary Journeys

1. Through Asia Minor and into Greece, as far as the cities of Corinth and Athens
2. Wherever Paul went, he boldly preached the gospel of redemption and salvation by grace through faith in Jesus Christ.
 - a) He preached to both Jews and Gentiles
 - (1) Remember almost all of the Christian church at this point is Jewish.

Paul's Missionary Journeys



b) Some Jews hated him and followed him around stirring up trouble

(1) beatings

(2) jail

(3) riots

(4) deaths of friends

F. House Arrest (the 1st imprisonment)



1. Eventually he was arrested in Jerusalem and sent to Rome to be sentenced by the emperor.

2. He was treated very leniently in Rome:

a) He lived in his own house

b) Allowed to receive whomever wished to visit him

c) Always had a soldier guarding him

3. Most likely wrote his letters to the Colossians, Ephesians and Philippians, and to Philemon during this period.

4. Approximately two years after his arrival in Rome, Paul was released from house arrest

Paul's Missionary Journeys



G. Ministry between imprisonments

1. Once again, he visited some churches in Asia Minor,
2. putting Timothy in charge of the church in Ephesus (1 Timothy 1:3)
3. leaving Titus on the island Crete to continue the missionary work there.
4. According to tradition, Paul traveled as far as Spain before he was imprisoned again in Rome.

H. Prison and death

1. This time, however, his imprisonment was much worse:

- a) in chains in a cold dungeon with no hope of release (2 Timothy 1:16; 2:9; 4:6-8; 13).

2. He was executed in Rome in late 66 or early 67 AD

a) possibly beheading—according to church tradition



I. Paul was the greatest missionary who ever lived

1. He planted churches in strategic centers in Asia Minor, Macedonia and Greece.
2. His foresight led him to prepare young workers to carry on his ministry after him.
3. It was primarily through his ceaseless efforts that the church spread quickly throughout the non-Jewish nations
 - a) Also, Christianity was freed from legalism

J. Physically

1. Paul was "unimpressive" (2 Corinthians 10:10).
2. He was afflicted by "a thorn in his flesh" (2 Corinthians 12:7).

- a) Many disagree about what this 'thorn' actually was
- b) Some think it was a physical problem: like his eyesight
- c) Some think it was the people who followed him around causing trouble
- d) Some think it was simply a demon who would not leave

3. He endured untold hardships for the sake of the gospel:

a) frequently in prison,

b) severely flogged five times,

c) exposed to death several times,

d) beaten with rods three times,

e) stoned once,

f) shipwrecked three times.

g) He was constantly on the move, in danger from rivers, bandits, his own countrymen, and Gentiles; he knew hunger, thirst, sleeplessness and cold (2 Corinthians 11:23-27).

K. Personality

1. From what we gather from his letters he was pretty complex.

2. He seems to embody polar extremes:
 - a) bodily weakness and tremendous power,
 - b) a keen intellect and profound mysticism,
 - (1) he used excellent logical arguments but also embraced the supernatural
 - c) strongly attracting and furiously repelling people.

3. Intellectually,

- a) he was a man of outstanding ability, one of the world's greatest thinkers.
- b) He grasped truth at its full value and logically worked out its implications.
- c) But his subtlety of intellect was combined with practical good sense.

4. He was a man of strict integrity, ever careful to maintain a good conscience.

- a) characterized by a love of the truth, which did not allow him to alter his message even when times got tough
- b) Having understood his duty, he followed it unflinchingly, undeterred by possible consequences to himself
- c) He gave himself wholly to his work

5. He was warm-hearted and affectionate, longing for and making strong friendships.
6. He was humble, sincere, and sympathetic.
7. Religion dominated his life and activities.
 - a) both as a Jew and even more as a Christian.
8. For Paul, everything came down to accepting the love of God for us and responding to God by loving him back.

L. A Chronology of Paul's Life and Work

1. Pre-Christian life: Acts 21:39; 22:3; Galatians 1:13-14; Philippians 3:5-6
2. Conversion: Acts 9:1-19; 22:1-21; 26:2-3; Galatians 1:11-12
3. Early missionary activity: Acts 9:19b-31; 11:19-30; 12:25; Galatians 1:17-24; 2:1-10
4. First missionary journey: Acts 13:1 - 14:28
5. Journey to the Jerusalem council: Acts 15:1-35

6. Second missionary journey: Acts 15:36 - 18:22
7. Third missionary journey: Acts 18:23 - 21:16
8. Caesarean imprisonment: Acts 21:17 - 26:32
9. Journey to Rome: Acts 27:1 - 28:16
10. Roman imprisonment: Acts 28:17-30
11. Fourth missionary journey: 1 & 2 Timothy; Titus

III. Paul's Letters (The Epistles)



A. Earliest writings of the New Testament

B. Paul's 'gospel' and 'scripture'

1. Paul's "gospel" is the good news of redemption and salvation through faith in Jesus Christ.

2. "Scripture" refers to the sacred writings of *Israel*

a) not the New Testament or the sayings of Jesus

b) Scripture to early Christians was the Old Testament writings.

C. Arrangements of Paul's Letters

1. Paul's thirteen letters are arranged in two groups:
 - a) first, the letters to churches
 - b) next, the letters to individuals
2. Within each group, the letters are arranged in order of length.

3. Paul wrote some of his letters while actively engaged in ministry

a) (1 and 2 Thessalonians, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Romans, 1 Timothy and Titus).

4. The remaining ones he wrote while in prison

a) (Philippians, Philemon, Colossians, Ephesians, 2 Timothy).

5. Pastoral Letters

a) Titus, and 1 and 2 Timothy.

6. Gospel Letters

a) Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians and the letter to the Galatians

b) they contain the heart of his theology--justification through faith.

7. We also know Paul dictated several of his letters to a secretary

a) Romans 16:22; 1 Corinthians
16:21; Colossians 4:18

b) we don't know the reason why

D. The structure of each letter follows a typical pattern:

1. Letter opening

- a) Sender ("Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ")
- b) Recipient ("To the church of ... ")
- c) Opening greeting ("Grace and peace be to you ... ")

2. Thanksgiving ("We give thanks ... ")
3. Body of the letter (which contains a number of typical or formulaic expressions)

4. Letter closing

- a) Peace benediction ("May the God of Peace be with you")
- b) Final commands
- c) Closing greetings
- d) Grace benediction ("May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you")

E. Development of the New Testament Church

1. It is clear from the letters that conditions in the early church were not all that harmonious.

- a) tension based on differences in interpretations and life-styles
- b) resulting in serious factions within some of the communities

(1) church splits have been around since the beginning of the church

2. We will study Galatians, 1 Corinthians and 1 Timothy.

a) These letters represent three stages in the development of the New Testament church.

b) These letters deal with the range of questions to which the early church had to find answers.

3. The first stage (Galatians)

a) deals with salvation and Christians' relationship with the Jewish faith.

b) Must Gentiles become Jews in order to be saved?

(1) This was a question hotly debated in the early church and a difficult concept for the Jews to grasp.

(2) examples: Acts 10:1-11:18 and Acts 15:1-31

(3) compare with Galatians 2:11-21

4. The second stage (1 Corinthians)
 - a) deals with what it means to live as a Christian.
 - b) What are Christian principles and how are they to be applied to concrete issues of family life,
 - (1) such as food sacrificed to idols,
 - (2) marriage and sexual conduct,
 - (3) disputes and lawsuits,
 - (4) conduct during the worship services

5. The third stage (1 Timothy)

- a) presupposes a more institutionalized church
- b) deals with questions of heresy and true doctrine
- c) the role of office bearers such as pastors, overseers, and deacons.

IV. Paul's Theology

A. CAUTION!

1. We must be careful in creating theology from the epistles

a) They were written for particular occasions and situations:

b) They are not systematic theology but "task theology,"

(1) written to solve particular problems.

c) For example, we stress different aspects of the truth based on the situation at hand:

- (1) Divorce: to those whose lives are already broken by divorce we stress God's grace and restoration
- (2) To those who are contemplating divorce we stress the finality of vows they made when becoming married.

2. Situation is almost everything when eavesdropping in on a conversation of which we only hear one side.

a) We call this 'context' when reading the Bible

3. However, we do find Paul's Epistles loaded with Christian theology

a) but that was not their primary purpose.

b) it is always theology at the service of a particular need.

4. How to do theology from the Epistles

- a) the theology we pull from any one letter must be generalized and balanced with the theology we get from the other letters and the rest of Scripture

B. Jewish theology with a twist

1. Abraham

a) Like Jewish tradition, he presents Abraham as the beginning of God's answer to the problem of Adam;

(1) the beginning of God creating a covenant with humans to redeem a people for himself

b) Unlike Jewish tradition, Paul insists that the covenant promises to Abraham meant he would be "heir of the world" (Romans 4:13).

(1) the beginning of God's plan to redeem all of humanity not just the Jews

(2) it is also a redemption apart from the Torah not through the Torah

(a) Abraham believed God and it was credited to him as righteousness

2. The Torah

- a) Jews thought Torah marked them as the special people of God
- b) In Paul's writing, the purpose of Torah is to convict of sin and show the need for a savior
 - (1) This redemption happens through the death and resurrection of Jesus

(2) Israel's rejection of the Messiah opens the door for the gospel message to the rest of the world.

(a) regardless of gender, race, and color.

(b) Paul flings wide salvation's door, to welcome the entire world

3. Paul takes the major Jewish symbols (temple, Torah, land and race) and changes them to include all humankind.

- a) You are the new temple, he says, individually and together as the church;
- b) Gentiles do not have to be circumcised or observe Jewish festivals (Galatians 3);

c) Jesus is the Savior of the *world* not just Jews.

(1) Therefore, there is no "holy land" any more

(2) and the "real" Israel is all who are obedient to God.

4. Exodus from Egypt and entry into the Promised Land

- a) Paul speaks of groaning under the slavery of sin and of the new life which resulted from the delivery from sin.
- b) The exodus is a story of liberation through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus.
 - (1) The Now: for believers
 - (2) The Not Yet: for all of creation

V. Prominent Themes in Paul's Writing

A. Justification by Faith

1. Justification means "being set right."

2. We are justified through faith in the work of Christ not through our own merit (faith not works)

- a) This is different than 'sanctification' which is the process of salvation
- b) We have been saved--Justification
- c) We are being saved--Sanctification
- d) We will be saved—When Christ comes again

3. Salvation is provided by God's grace and faith is the way we accept it (Acts 13:38-39).

a) Through Christ we are declared free from sin (Romans 4:6-8),

b) and restored to a new life in the Spirit, as if we had never sinned before (Galatians 5:24-25)!

B. Flesh and Spirit

1. Paul uses the word "flesh" to indicate our human nature,
 - a) Our human nature is broken/ twisted under sin and doomed to die.
 - b) "If you live according to the flesh [sinful nature], you will die" (Romans 8:13).

2. This is not the same as "body."

a) Paul makes distinctions between body and flesh,

(1) 1 Corinthians 6:15--"Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ himself?"

b) Although this body will die, at the resurrection we will get a new one (1 Corinthians 15:42-44).

c) The new body is still a physical body but the way we were meant to be

(1) It will not get sick

(2) It will be glorious and powerful (1 Corinthians 15:42-44)

(3) Mr. Busch will be able to dunk (1 Hezekiah 4:13)

(4) We will be able to use all of our brains not just 10%

3. "Spirit" is the opposite to "flesh."

a) The mind governed by the flesh is death, but the mind governed by the Spirit is life and peace. (Rom 8:6)

b) "So letting your sinful nature control your body leads to death. But letting the Spirit control your mind leads to life and peace." (NLT Romans 8:6)

c) Anyone who is in Christ is "in the Spirit,"

d) The Spirit in the believer is waging war against the flesh (sinful nature).

(1) In order to save you, the Holy Spirit is going to kill you. (no joke)

(2) It is in the process of sanctifying us.

(a) We partner in the process by yielding to His work in our lives.

C. Adam and Christ

1. Jesus restored what Adam distorted,
 - a) the relationship between God and humanity.
2. Adam "introduced sin and death into the world; Christ brought righteousness and life ... Adam stands for man's condemnation; Christ stands for the believer's justification" (Romans 5:12-21).

3. All humans must suffer death because of Adam; those who are "in Christ" will share in the resurrection and live forever (1 Corinthians 15:22).

D. Law and Grace and the Freedom of the Christian

1. No one is able to obtain salvation by keeping the law of God perfectly;
2. Salvation is always and only the free gift of God by grace, through faith.

3. The law is a tutor.

a) It condemns us

(1) it shows us how much we fall short of God's will (Romans 3:20)

(2) it shows our need for forgiveness.

b) It leads us to Christ so that we might be justified by faith in him (Galatians 3:24).

4. Those who are in Christ—

- a) have been freed from slavery under the law
- b) freed from the power of sin (Romans 6:14).
- c) meet the righteous requirements of the law because they live according to the Spirit (Romans 8:4; see also Romans 6:15-23).

d) have been set free in Christ (Galatians 5:1)

e) are able, with the help of the Holy Spirit, to obey the law by loving each other (Galatians 5:13-14).

(1) Remember Christ's command: Be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect.

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