

Galatians: The Letter that Saved the Church

# The Cross that Justifies



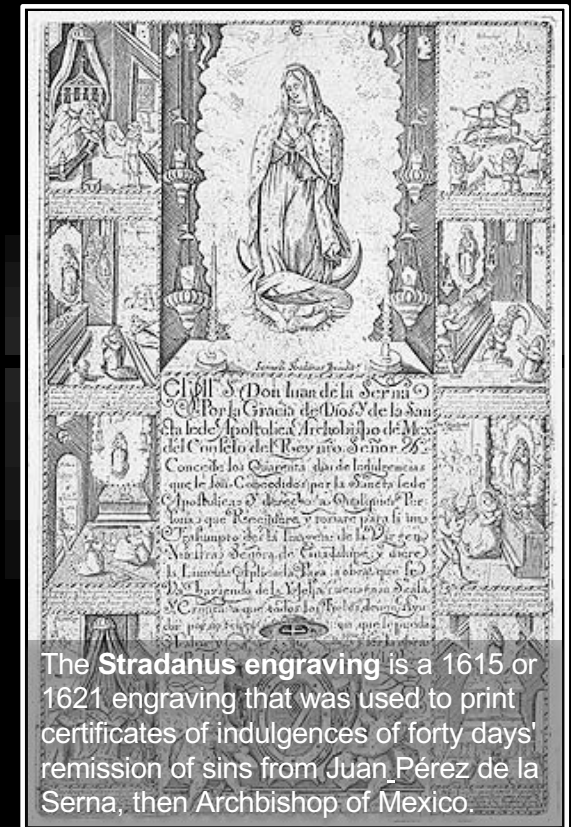
Galatians 2:15-21

Blackhawk Church 2021

# Justification and the Reformation

## Medieval Roman Catholicism

- We are saved by grace.
- Our sins require punishment via time in purgatory.
- We can decrease our stay in purgatory via certain Church-authorized activities.
- The Church can reduce our time in purgatory by transferring the credit of the saints to individual sinners (Acts of penance, visiting relics, purchasing indulgences, etc.).



The **Stradanus engraving** is a 1615 or 1621 engraving that was used to print certificates of indulgences of forty days' remission of sins from Juan Pérez de la Serna, then Archbishop of Mexico.

# The Reformation



Martin Luther (1483-1546)

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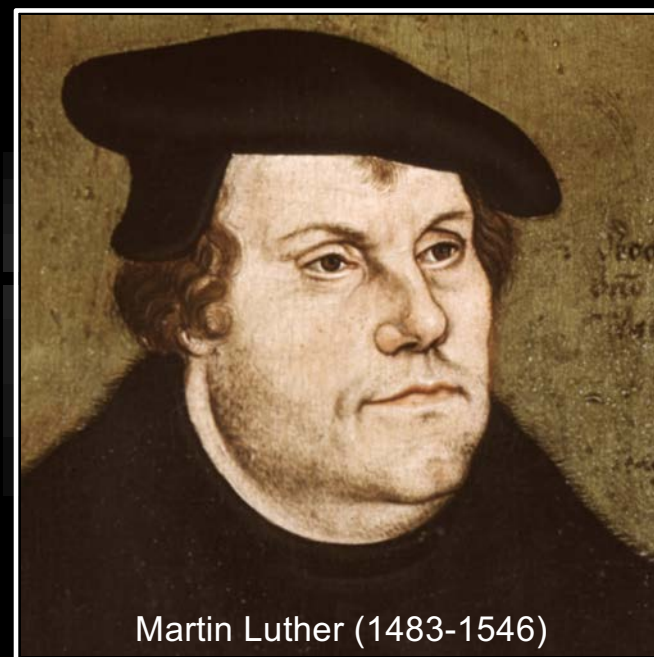
## The Reformers

- We are saved by grace
- There is no purgatory
- The Church has no such power. Rather, God has transferred Jesus's credit to us (**imputation**). Thus, we are **justified** (or declared righteous/not guilty).
- Salvation is by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone

# Common Distortions to the Bible

Reformers projected their situation into their reading of the Bible: Reformers vs. Roman Catholic Church. Paul vs. Jewish Christians

- Distortion of the beliefs of the Jewish Christian leaders in the Jerusalem Church
  1. 1<sup>st</sup> Century Judaism teaches a person must do good works to earn salvation.
  2. “Works of the law”: Working to earn salvation by doing good works.
  3. The Old Testament is all about law. The laws in the OT show us the impossibility of earning salvation before God.



Martin Luther (1483-1546)

# Recovery of the 1<sup>st</sup> Century Context



- World War II and the Holocaust
- Investigation into 1<sup>st</sup> Century Judaism

## First Century Jewish Understanding of Righteousness

### Wisdom of Solomon (Alexandria)

<sup>15:1</sup> But you, our God, are kind and true, patient, and ruling all things in mercy. <sup>2</sup> For even if we sin we are yours, knowing your power; but we will not sin, because we know that you acknowledge us as yours. <sup>3</sup> For to know you is complete righteousness, and to know your power is the root of immortality. <sup>4</sup> For neither has the evil intent of human art misled us, nor the fruitless toil of painters, a figure stained with varied colors, <sup>5</sup> whose appearance arouses yearning in fools, so that they desire the lifeless form of a dead image. <sup>6</sup> Lovers of evil things and fit for such objects of hope are those who either make or desire or worship them.



This is a depiction of the famed Pharos, or lighthouse, at Alexandria, one of the Seven Wonders of the ancient world



## First Century Jewish Understanding of Righteousness

Wisdom of Solomon (Alexandria)

11:9 For when they were tried, though they were being disciplined in mercy, they learned how the ungodly were tormented when judged in wrath.

<sup>10</sup> For you tested them as a parent does in warning, but you examined the ungodly as a stern king does in condemnation.



This is a depiction of the famed Pharos, or lighthouse, at Alexandria, one of the Seven Wonders of the ancient world

# Recovery of the 1<sup>st</sup> Century Context



- World War II and the Holocaust
- Investigation into 1<sup>st</sup> Century Judaism
- Covenantal Nomism
- “Works of the Law”: Following the Torah, especially circumcision, food laws, and Sabbath-keeping as Jewish ethnic boundary markers.
- The Old Testament is NOT a book of rules that nobody can follow. It’s the story of God’s righteous actions toward restoring a rebellious world. The God of the OT is a God of grace.

# The Context of Galatians

- *Situation:*

After Paul left Galatia, Jewish Christians (likely from Jerusalem) came to these churches and taught the Galatians that to be truly part of the KOG and become children of Abraham, they needed to embrace Jewish ethnicity by following some key elements of the Torah, in particular, circumcision, Sabbath, and food laws. These Jewish Christians also attacked Paul's authority as an apostle (not connected to Jerusalem), labeling him as a people-pleaser who avoided teaching the hard parts of the gospel (e.g., circumcision).

- *Content:* The letter is Paul's response to the situation

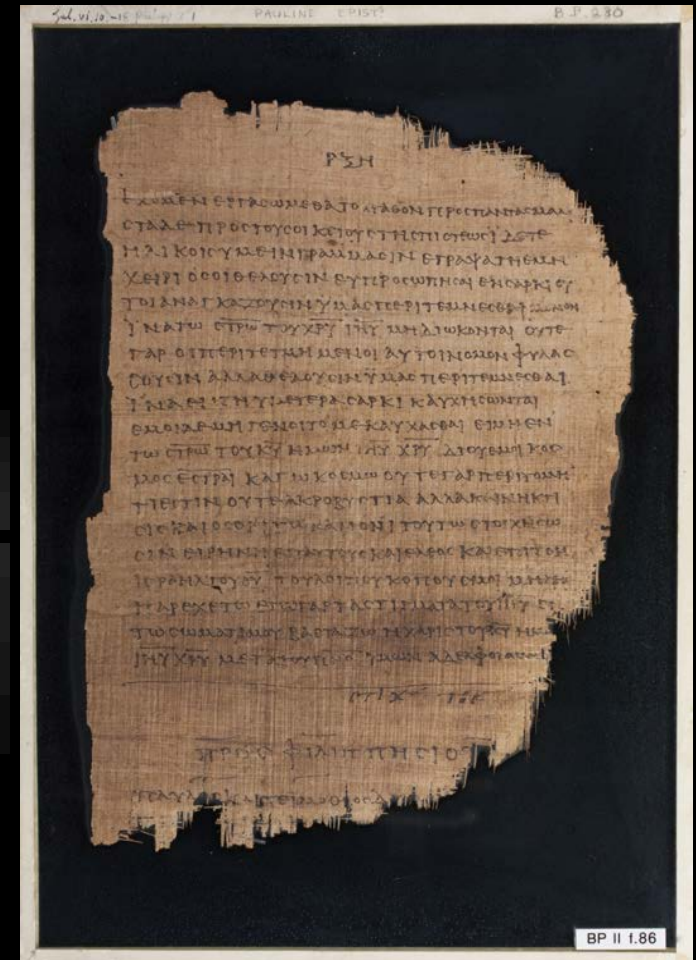
# The Context of Galatians

*Gal 1:11-2:14:*

- Paul's gospel is superior. It is directly received from Jesus Christ.
- It's not connected to Jerusalem. But Jerusalem confirmed it.
- "Those guys" get their authority from the Jerusalem leaders.
- The Jerusalem leaders are hypocrites who are teaching things they know are wrong.

# Galatians 2:15-16

15 “We who are Jews by birth and not sinful Gentiles 16 know that a person is not justified by the works of the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law, because by the works of the law no one will be justified.



# Galatians 2:15-16

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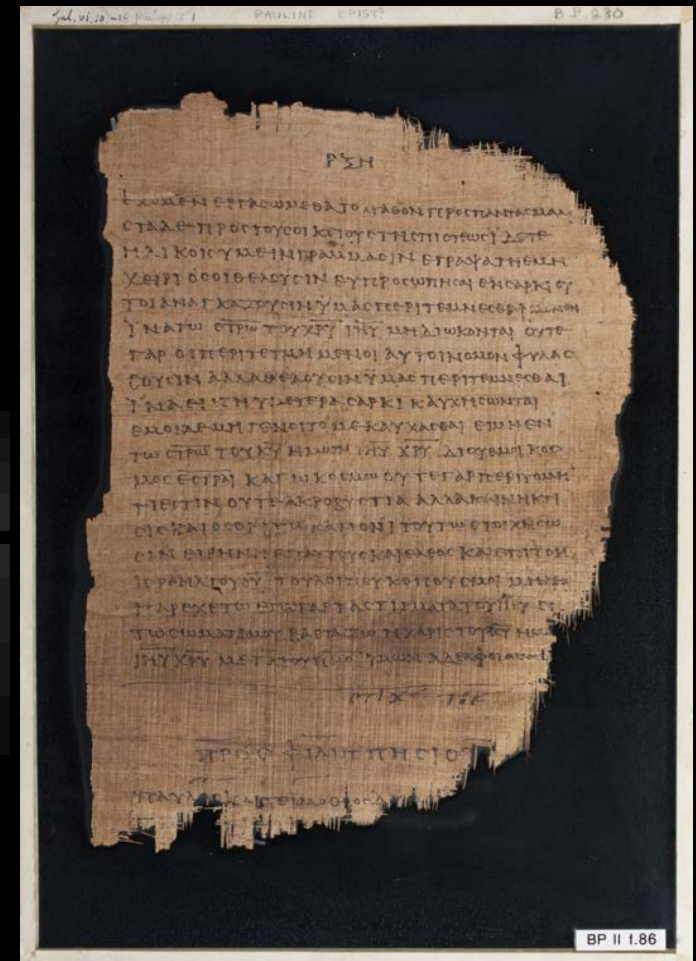
(b) but by faith in Jesus Christ.

(c) So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus

(b') that we may be justified by faith in Christ

(a') and not by the works of the law,

(a'') because by the works of the law no one will be justified.



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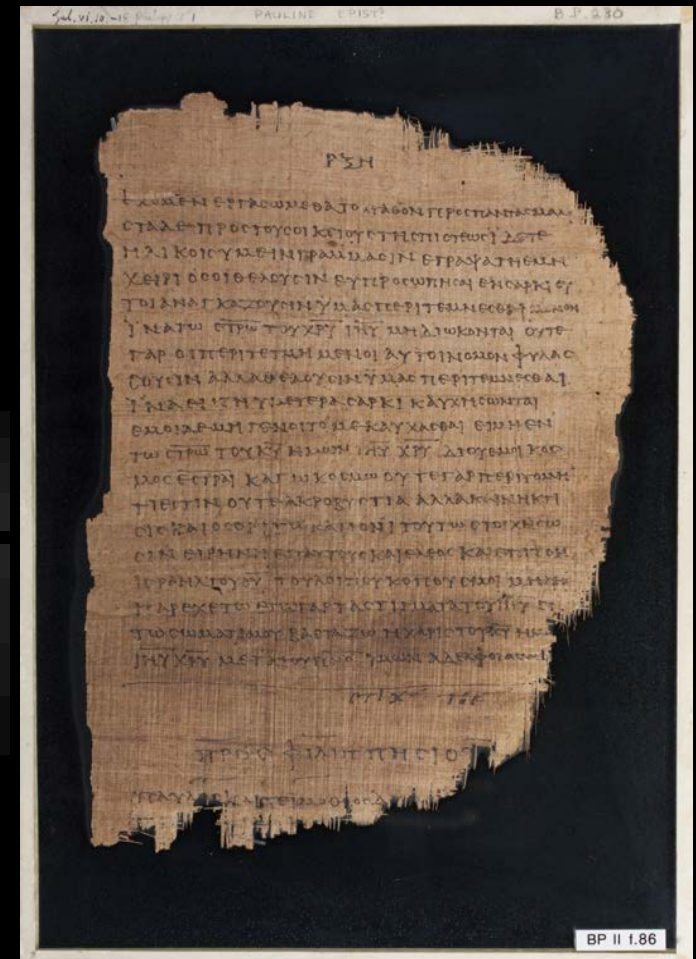
(a'') because by the works of the law no one will be justified.

• We Jewish Christians know two things:

1. Torah does not justify us.

2. Faithfulness of Jesus does justify us.

• Therefore, we have put our faith in Christ Jesus.



# Understanding “Justified”

δικαιόω (dikaioō)

קִדְּם (šdq)

“to make/be right”

δίκαιος (dikaios)

צַדִּיק (šadiyq)

“righteous”

δικαιοσύνη (dikaiosynē)

צֶדֶק/צִדְקָה (šedeq/šedāqâ)

“righteousness”

ABD, “Righteousness”: *šedeq* means right order; it is concerned ‘with a situation that in fact is as it ought or must be.’”

Job 31:6 Let God weigh me in honest (*šedeq*) scales and he will know that I am blameless—



# Understanding “Justification”



## The story of the Bible

1. God creates a world for the humans to rule
2. The humans rebel. (falling under the dominion of Sin/Satanic Realm)
3. God establishes a covenant people to help him re-establish his reign on earth.
4. This people rebel against God, so God sends them into exile.
5. God re-makes a people of God via Jesus.
6. God uses this new people of God to establish his rule on earth.
7. God will vindicate this people against all others at the end of time.

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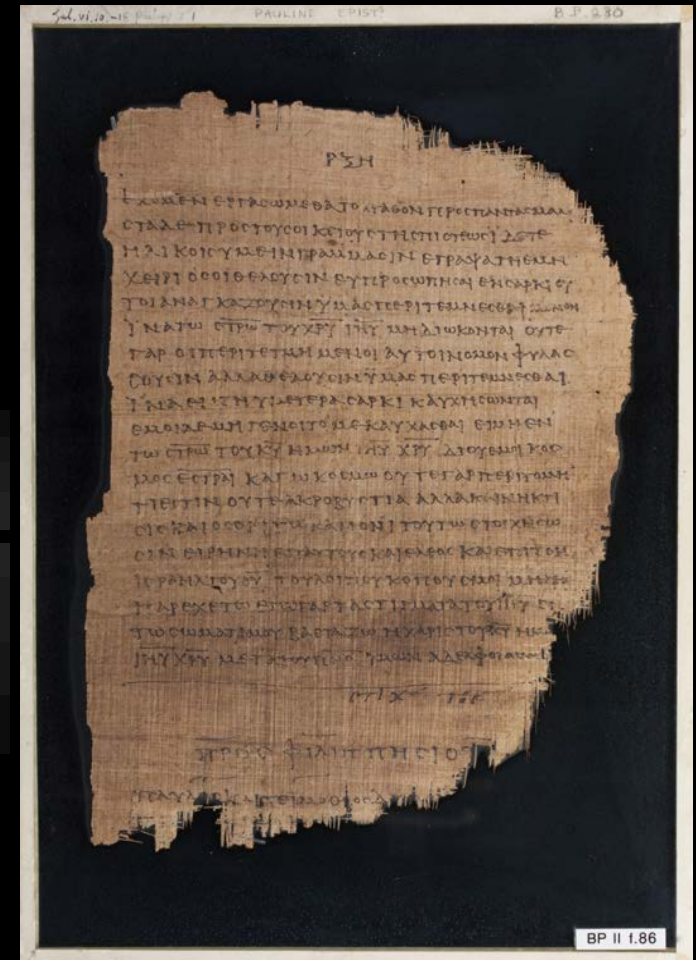
## What does it mean to be “justified” at #5 and #6 of this story?

1. Your sins are forgiven, and you are declared “not guilty.” Your relationship with God is restored (forensic).
2. You are added to the new covenant people of God (communal).
3. You are delivered from slavery to Sin (cosmic).
4. You are empowered to accomplish the mission. (transformation).
5. You will be among those vindicated against all others at the end of time. (forensic, future/eschatological).

# The Torah does not Justify

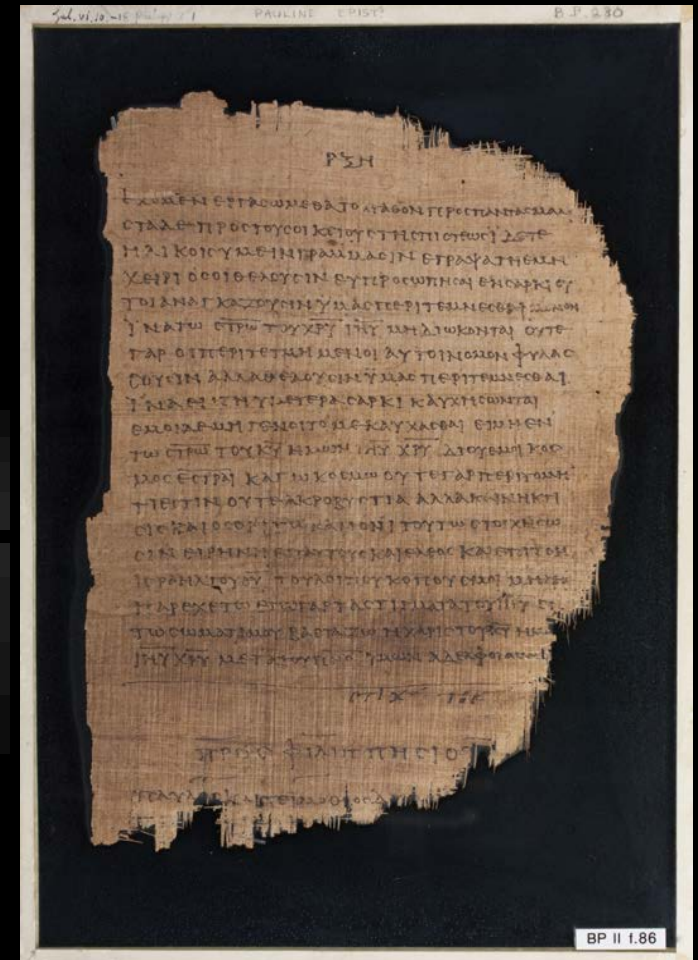
15 “We who are Jews by birth and not sinful Gentiles<sup>16</sup> know that a person is **not justified by the works of the law**, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be **justified** by faith in Christ and **not by the works of the law**, because **by the works of the law no one will be justified**.

- We Jews know the Torah does not justify because we (of all people) know the story of the Old Testament.



# The Faith in/of Jesus Christ

15 “We who are Jews by birth and not sinful Gentiles” 16 know that a person is not justified by the works of the law, but by **faith in Jesus Christ**. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by **faith in Christ** and not by the works of the law, because by the works of the law no one will be justified.



# T “The Faith in Jesus” or “The Faithfulness of Jesus”

πίστεως	Ἰησοῦ	Χριστοῦ
pisteōs	Iēsou	Christou
Faith/faithfulness	Jesus Christ	

English translations:

1. KJV: “faith of Jesus Christ”
2. NIV, ASV, RSV, NRSV: “faith in Jesus Christ”
3. NET, ISV, NIV 2011 footnote: “the faithfulness of Jesus Christ”

Option #1 provides no interpretation, but brings the ambiguity into English.

Option #2 fits the Reformed tradition of emphasizing our faith in Jesus Christ.

Option #3 is grammatically likely for two reasons:

- \* Internally, option #2 creates a redundancy in the verse.
- \* In the Pauline corpus, if a genitive follows pisteōs, it is always a subjective genitive.

T

## “The Faith in Jesus” or “The Faithfulness of Jesus”

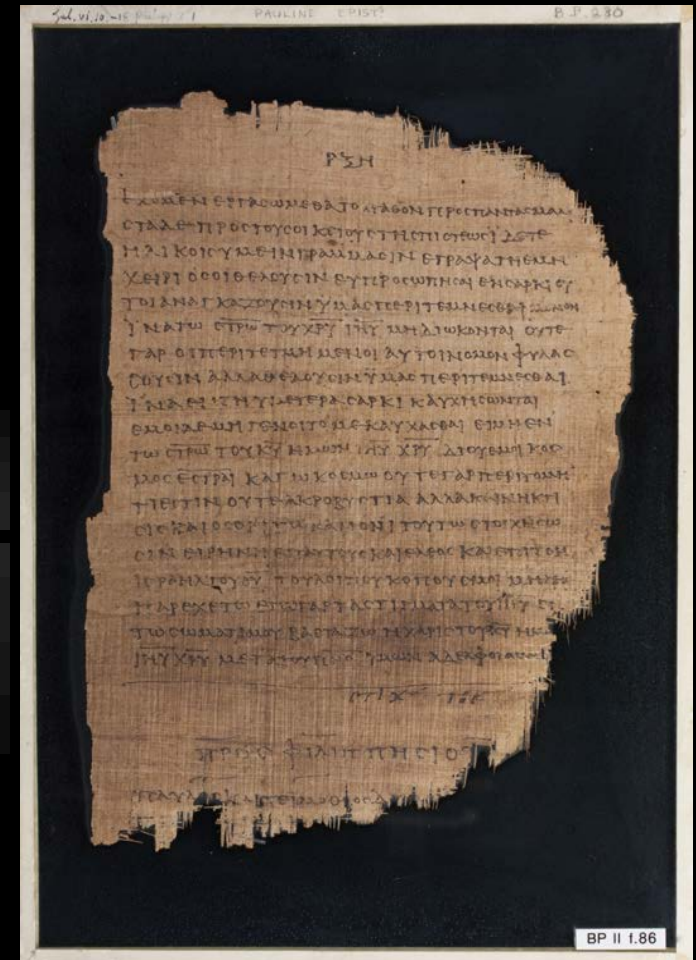
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<sup>15</sup> “We who are Jews by birth and not sinful Gentiles <sup>16</sup> know that a person is not **justified** by the **works of the law**, but by **faith in/of Jesus Christ**.

<sup>21</sup> I do not set aside the grace of God, for if **righteousness** could be gained through **the law**, **Christ died for nothing!**”

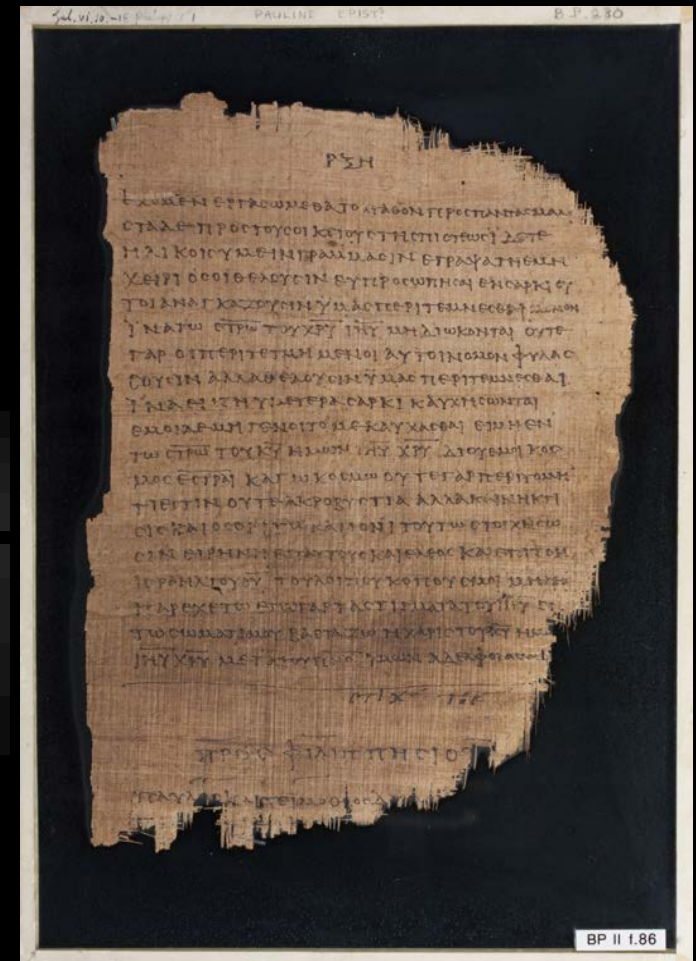
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# Who's the real sinner?

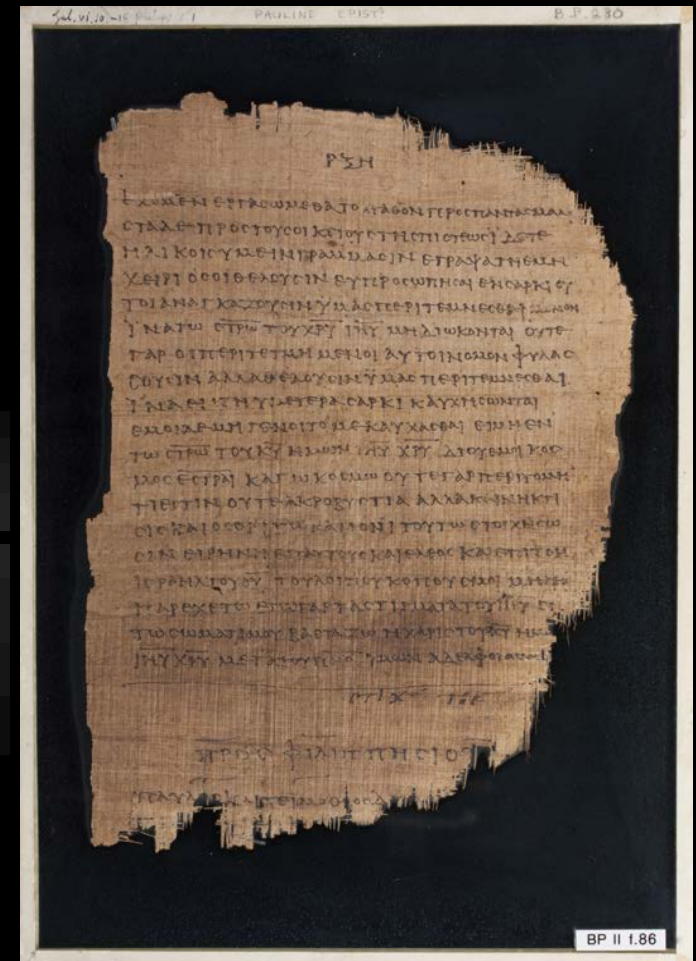
17 “But if, in seeking to be justified in Christ, we Jews find ourselves also among the sinners, doesn't that mean that Christ promotes sin? Absolutely not! 18 If I rebuild what I destroyed, then I really would be a lawbreaker.





# Union with Christ

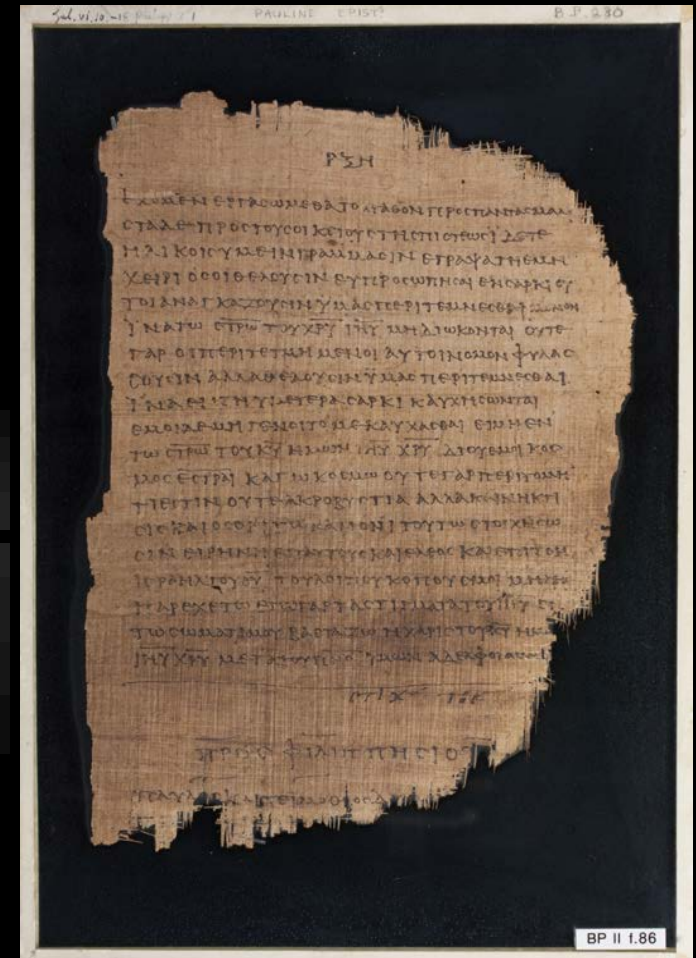
19 “For through the law I died to the law so that I might live for God. 20 I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. 21 I do not set aside the grace of God, for if righteousness could be gained through the law, Christ died for nothing!”



# Union with Christ

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1. You are added to the new covenant people of God (communal).
2. Your sins are forgiven, and you are declared “not guilty.” Your relationship with God is restored (forensic).
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4. You will be among those vindicated against all others at the end of time. (forensic, eschatological).

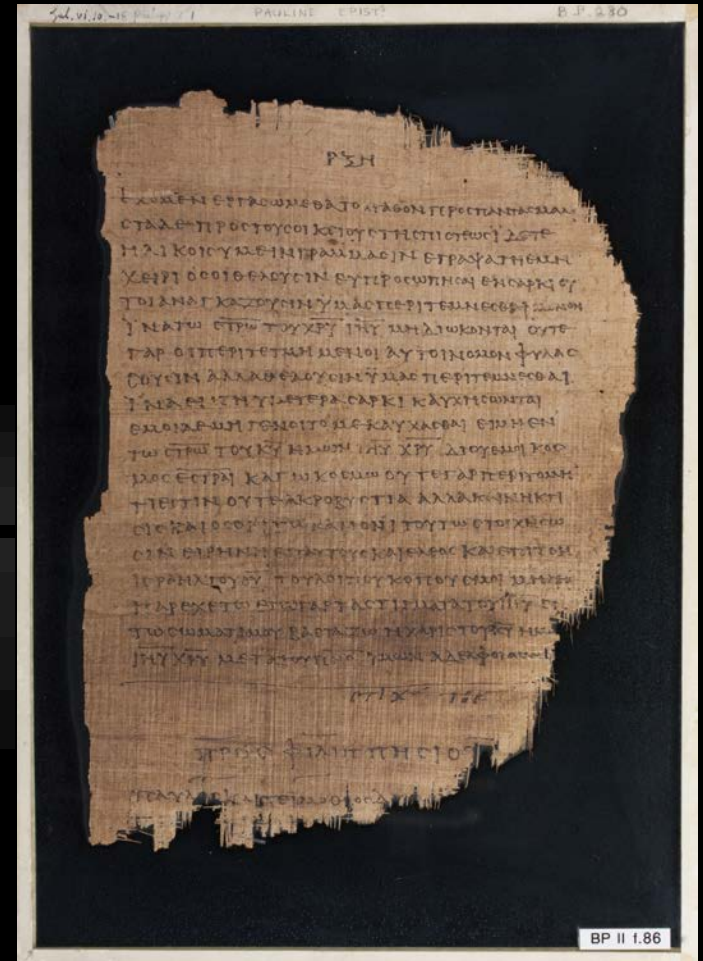




# A Conversation (Gal. 3:1-18)

Paul: Are you stupid? You already got the Holy Spirit. You already got the blessings of Abraham. You have the proof that you have been justified (made right). You got it through faith not by following the Torah!

Galatians: But Paul, Abraham's children got circumcised. They followed the Torah. You know that!



# A Conversation (Gal. 3:1-18)

Paul: This is where you're wrong. You're not reading the story right. Abraham wasn't defined by following the Torah. Abraham was defined by faith. He believed.

Not to mention, God's call to Abraham was always intended to create a multicultural Kingdom of God with faith being the only requirement. That was God's plan all along.



# A Conversation (Gal. 3:1-18)

Paul: Following the Torah just gets you cursed. Have you not read the Torah? The last chapters in Deuteronomy? The Torah comes with a curse, the curse of exile. Look at the Jewish people. They are in exile. Do you want to live under that curse?

The amazing thing is, Jesus, as the faithful Jewish Messiah, lived out the mission of Israel. He bore the curse on the cross. He is now the New Israel. He's the "one seed" of Abraham, through whom we become children of Abraham.

