

Galatians: The Letter that Saved the Church

# The Gospel of Grace



Galatians 5:1-12

Blackhawk Church 2021

# The Letter So Far

1:11-2:14

- My gospel is superior. It is directly received from Jesus Christ. Theirs come from Jerusalem leaders. They have problems.

2:15-21

- The Torah can't fix what's wrong with us and the world; only faith in the faithfulness of Jesus can make (justify) us right. By our faith we enter into a union with Christ.

3:1-18

- Abraham was defined by his faith in God's plan to make a multicultural kingdom, and those who share this faith are the true children of Abraham.
- The Torah comes with a curse, the curse of exile, but Jesus, as the faithful Jewish Messiah, lived out the mission of Israel and bore the curse. He thus becomes the new Israel, the "one seed" of Abraham, through whom we all become children of Abraham.

# The Letter So Far

3:19-4:11

- The Torah was given because of “transgressions” (unclear in Galatians), but its main function was to be a guardian for the Jews with elemental principles serving the same role for the Gentiles.
- Now that time of the Torah is over, God’s people have reached maturity in our union with Christ. The result is a new people without group privileges adopted as sons and daughters.

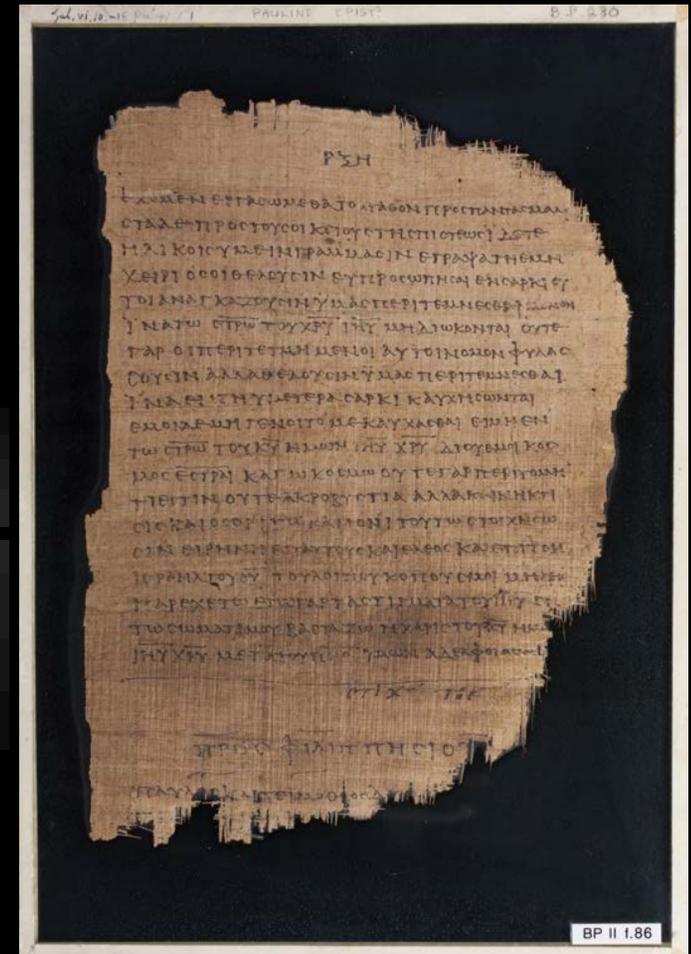
4:12-31

- When we were adopted, we became family, but those people who came in didn’t care about this. They tried to break us apart. I’m going to tell you the truth even if it hurts.
- If we read Sarah and Hagar allegorically, you line up with Sarah. You are the children of divine promise. You are the true children of Abraham.

# Galatians 5:7-12

**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.

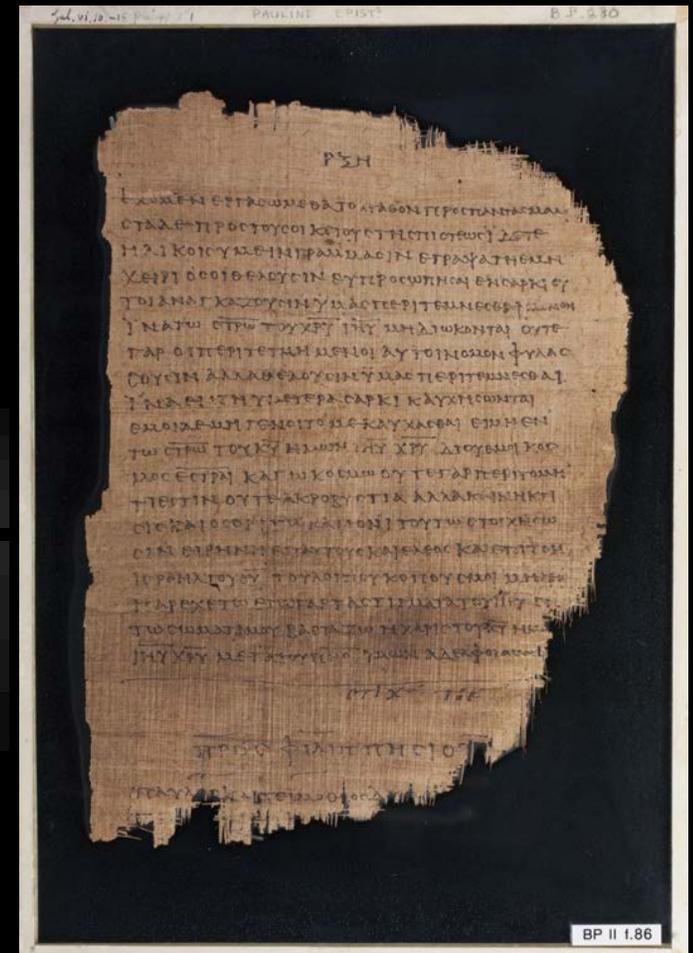
**11** Brothers and sisters, if I am still preaching circumcision, why am I still being persecuted? In that case the offense of the cross has been abolished. **12** As for those agitators, I wish they would go the whole way and emasculate themselves!



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## Jewish Status as *Religio Licita*

“Rome kept the peace by means of military might, crushing dissent and resistance with ruthless efficiency.... The official Roman religion was normally imposed on local areas. Perceiving that the Jews would rather die *en masse* than offer pagan worship, the pragmatic Romans permitted them instead to sacrifice to their own god on the emperor’s behalf. (Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God*, 154).”

According to Josephus, this accommodation began with Julius Caesar (*Antiquities* 14:213-16).

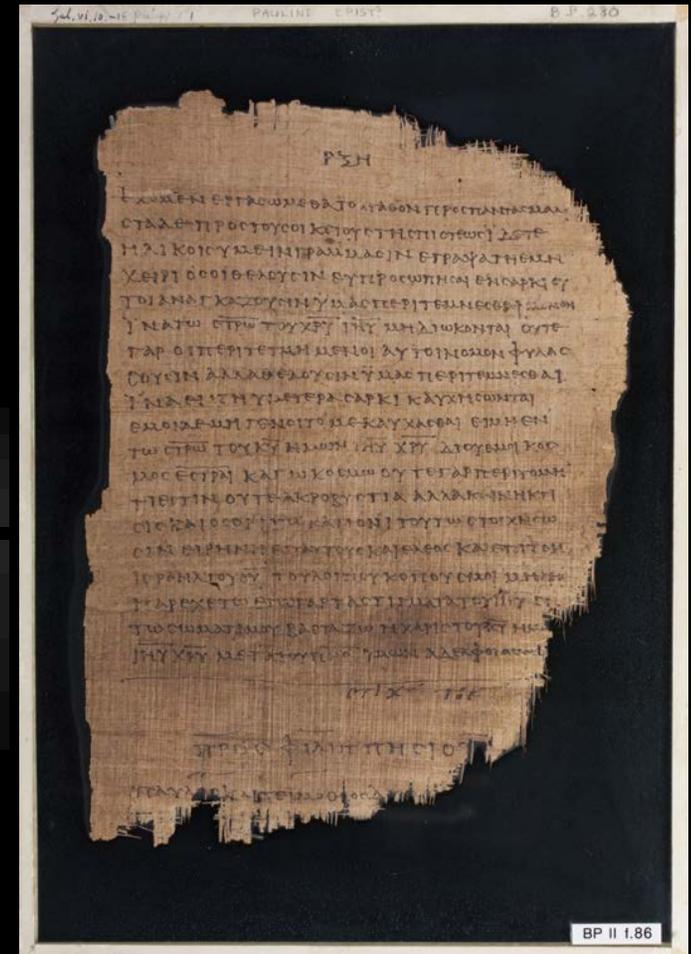


The Temple of Vesta and the House of the Vestal Virgins.

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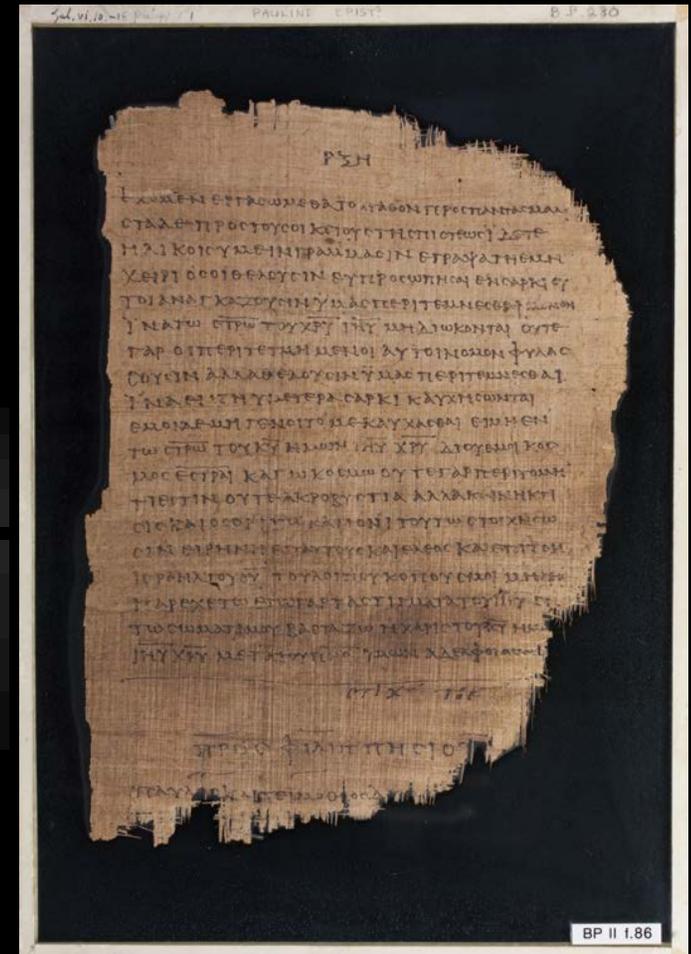
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# Galatians 5:1-6

**1 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 obligated 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.**



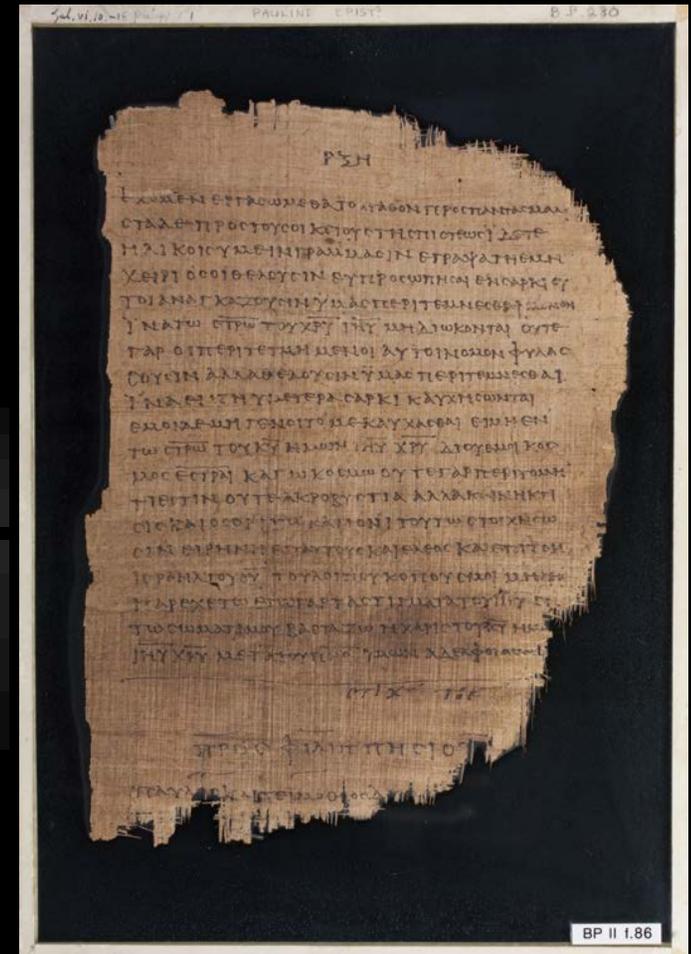
# “Slavery” in Romans

6:6 For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body ruled by sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be **slaves to sin**—

16 Don't you know that when you offer yourselves to someone as obedient **slaves**, you are **slaves** of the one you obey—whether you are **slaves to sin**, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness? 17 But thanks be to God that, though you used to be **slaves to sin**, you have come to obey from your heart the pattern of teaching that has now claimed your allegiance.

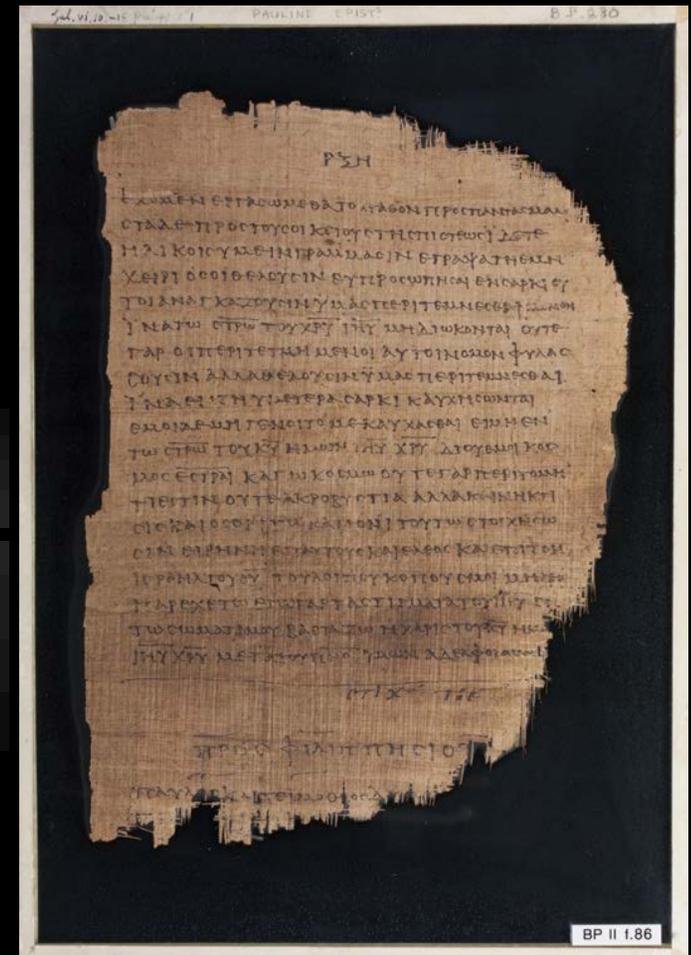
20 When you were **slaves to sin**, you were free from the control of righteousness.

22 But now that you have been **set free from sin** and have become **slaves of God**, the benefit you reap leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life.



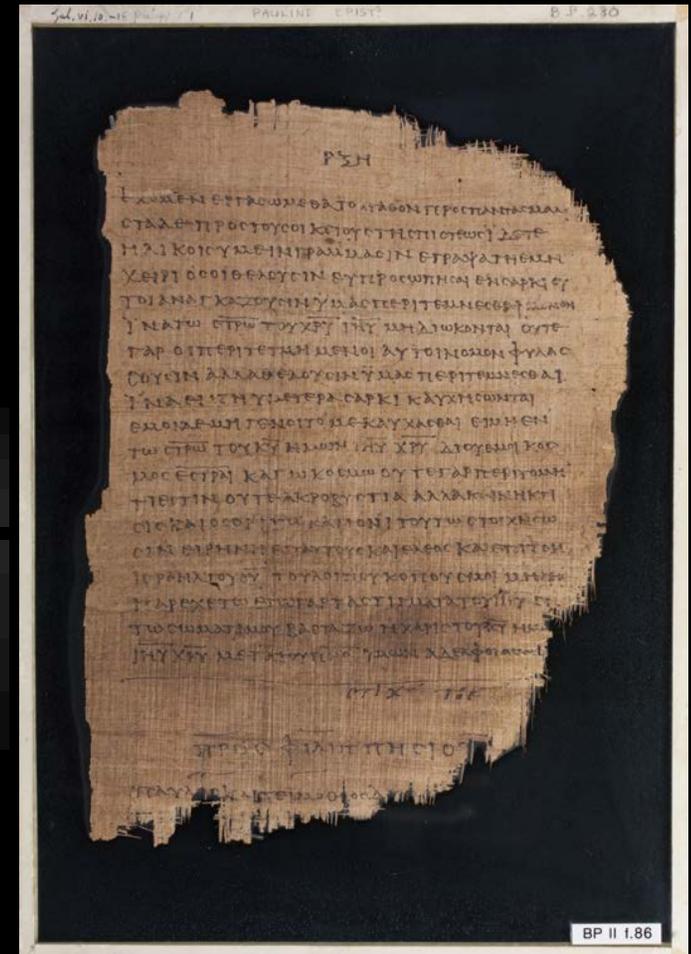
# Slavery in Galatians

2:4 This matter arose because some false believers had infiltrated our ranks to spy on the freedom we have in Christ Jesus and to make us slaves.<sup>5</sup> We did not give in to them for a moment, so that the truth of the gospel might be preserved for you.



# Slavery in Galatians

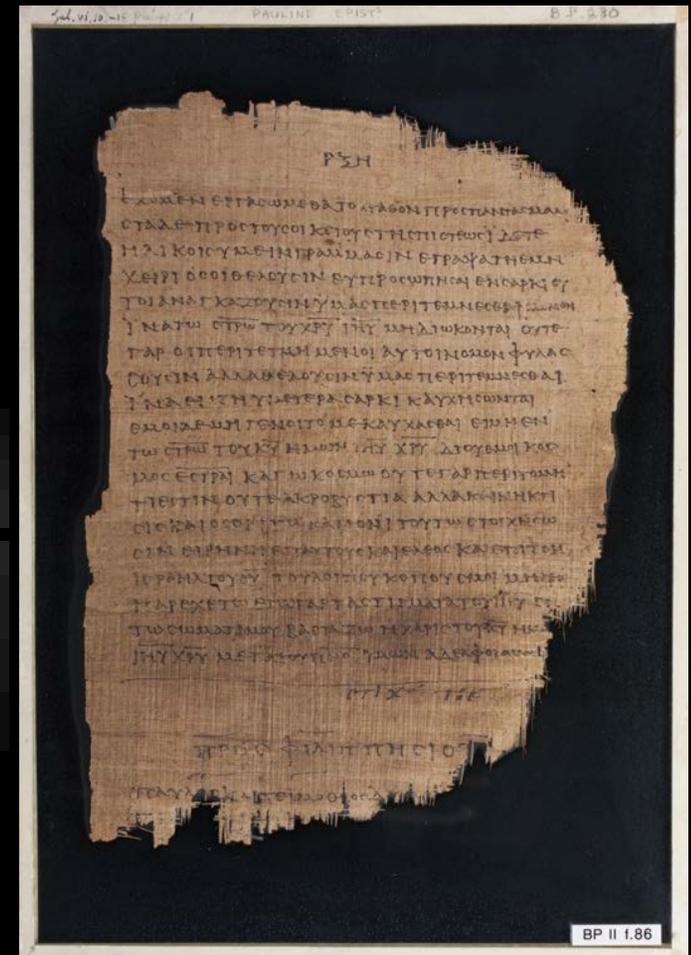
3:22 But **Scripture has locked up everything under the control of sin**, so that what was promised, being given through faith in Jesus Christ, might be given to those who believe. <sup>23</sup> Before the coming of this faith, **we were held in custody under the law, locked up** until the faith that was to come would be revealed.



# “Slavery” in Galatians

4:1 What I am saying is that as long as an heir is underage, he is no different from a **slave**, although he owns the whole estate. <sup>2</sup> The heir is **subject to guardians and trustees** until the time set by his father. <sup>3</sup> So also, when we were underage, we were in **slavery** under the elemental spiritual forces of the world. ...

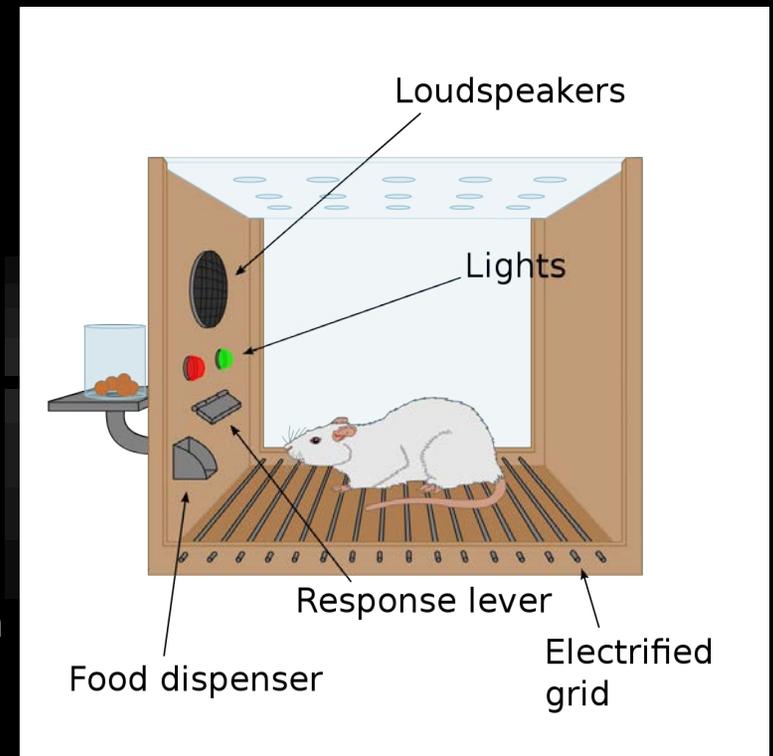
<sup>8</sup> Formerly, when you did not know God, you were **slaves** to those who by nature are not gods. <sup>9</sup> But now that you know God—or rather are known by God—how is it that you are turning back to those weak and miserable forces? Do you wish to be **enslaved** by them all over again? <sup>10</sup> You are observing special days and months and seasons and years! <sup>11</sup> I fear for you, that somehow I have wasted my efforts on you.



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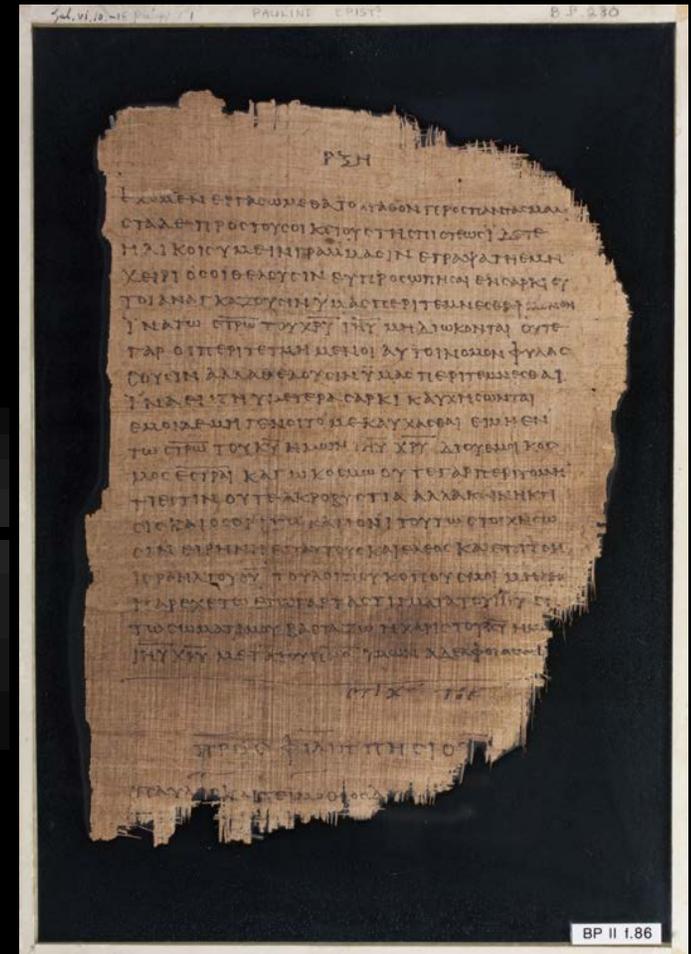
4:24 These things are being taken figuratively: The women represent two covenants. One covenant is from Mount Sinai and bears children who are to be **slaves**: This is Hagar. <sup>25</sup> Now Hagar stands for Mount Sinai in Arabia and corresponds to the present city of Jerusalem, because she is in **slavery** with her children. <sup>26</sup> But the Jerusalem that is above is **free**, and she is our mother....

<sup>28</sup> Now you, brothers and sisters, like Isaac, are children of promise. <sup>29</sup> At that time the son born according to the flesh persecuted the son born by the power of the Spirit. It is the same now. <sup>30</sup> But what does Scripture say? “Get rid of the **slave** woman and her son, for the **slave** woman’s son will never share in the inheritance with the **free** woman’s son.” <sup>31</sup> Therefore, brothers and sisters, we are not children of the **slave** woman, but of the **free** woman.

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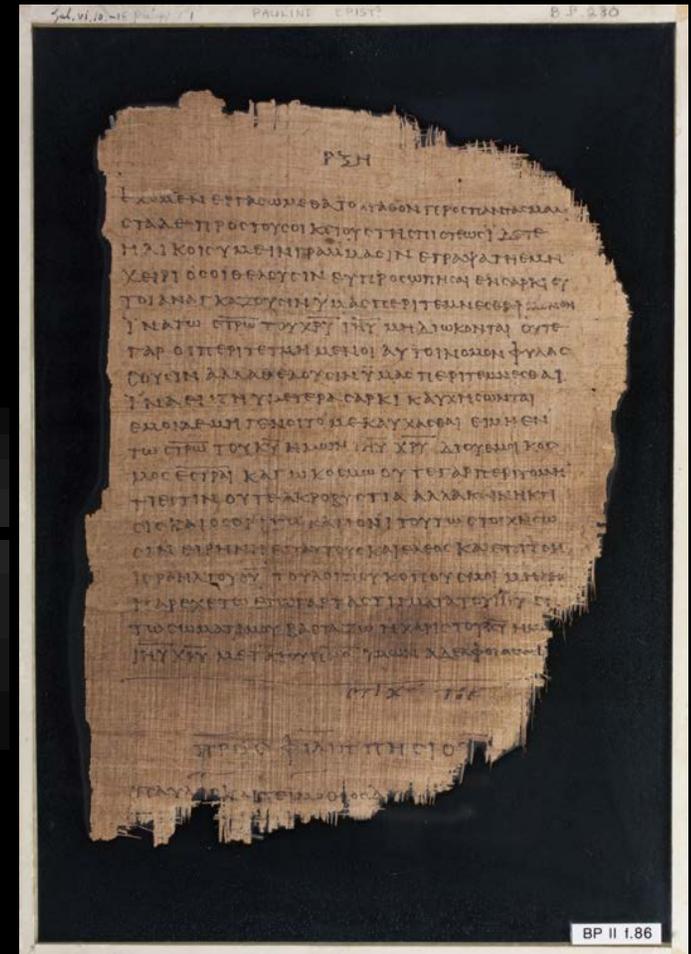
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## The Logic of Union with Christ in Galatians

2:20 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.

- Crucifixion: I'm dead
- Resurrection: Christ lives in me

6:14 May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.

- I'm dead to the world; the world is dead to me.

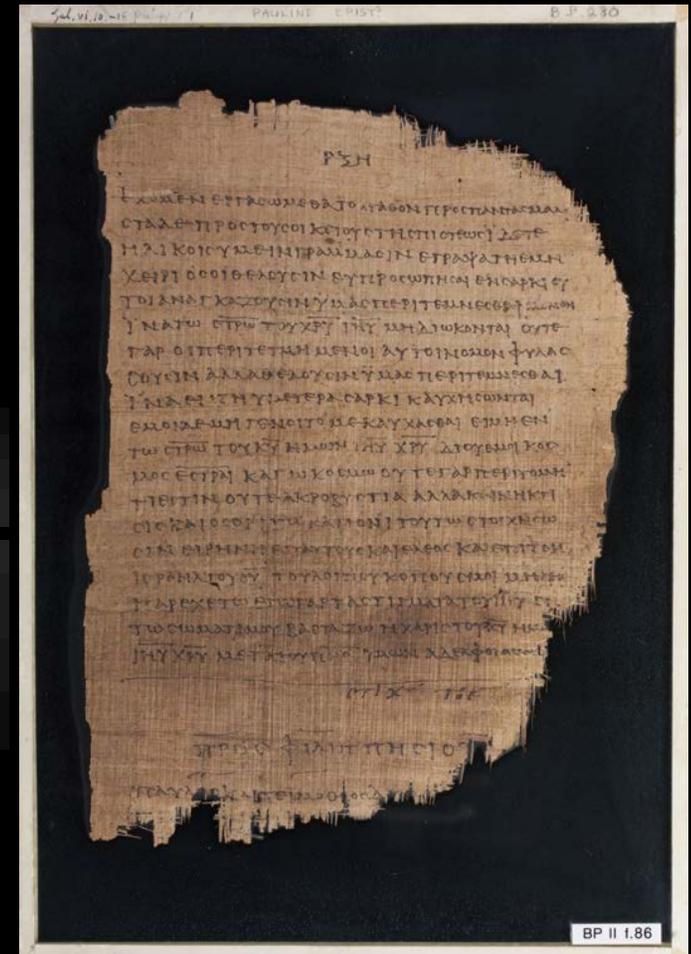


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## What does it mean to be “justified”?

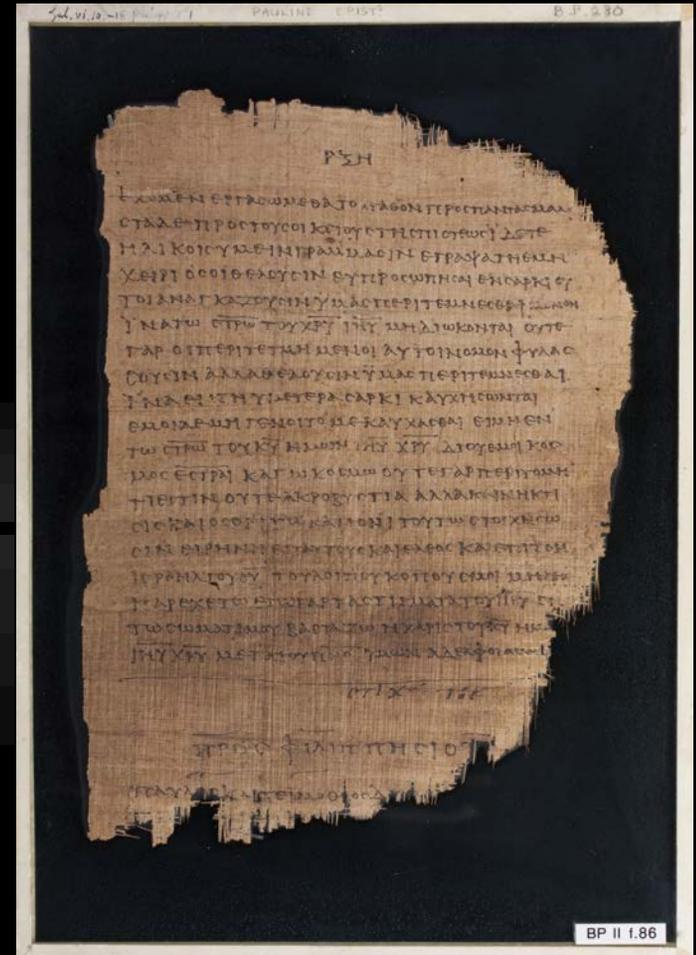
1. Your sins are forgiven, and you are declared “not guilty.” Your relationship with God is restored (forensic).
2. You are added to the new covenant people of God (communal).
3. You are delivered from slavery to Sin (cosmic).
4. You are empowered to accomplish the mission. (transformation).
5. You will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



# A Conversation (Gal. 5:1-12)

Galatians: OK, but what's the big deal, Paul? Why are you getting so upset? What's wrong with a little circumcision? What's wrong with observing Sabbath? No harm no foul, right?

Paul: Jesus the Messiah has ushered in this new age of freedom and Spirit. Circumcision is not just any ol' thing; it signals your desire to return to the guardianship of the Torah. This is not simply adding one little thing to the gospel, this is a rejection of the grace of Jesus Christ. Indeed, the nature of grace is such that when you add anything to grace (creating new requirements), you destroy grace. It becomes a different gospel. These people who pervert the gospel should be emasculated.



# A Conversation (Gal. 5:13-24)

Galatians: But Paul, without the Torah, how will people know how to live? This freedom thing would lead to all kinds of immorality and sin.

Paul: Did you forget that we are in the new age? We are in Christ and we are given the Holy Spirit. The Spirit gives us the ability to freely “enslave” ourselves to serve others. This Spirit transforms us and empowers us to live rightly without the written Torah. We develop characteristics (“fruit”) that are defined by the Spirit, and we move away from those characteristics defined by our broken humanity (“flesh”).

