

CHAPTER 3: THE PLACE OF GRACE IN PAUL'S THOUGHT

Chapter three asks the question; how did Paul see grace as answering the situation of the letter? The previous chapter of the thesis investigated the situation to which Paul was responding. It concluded that Paul was addressing two main interwoven issues, the Galatians' abandonment of gospel, and whether or not Gentile believers are required to submit to the *Torah* in order to receive the blessings promised to the children of Abraham. This part of the investigation will examine Paul's use of the concept of grace in his response to the situation. BAGD defines χάρις ('grace') as "a winning quality or attractiveness that invites a favourable reaction; a beneficent disposition toward someone, practical application of goodwill; exceptional effect produced by generosity; response to generosity or beneficence."¹ BAGD defines the verb Χαρίζομαι as "to give freely as a favour; to cancel a sum of money that is owed; to show oneself gracious by forgiving wrongdoing."² Grace, in its basic meaning as a noun, is a gift or favour bestowed. It is usually given freely without compulsion. In the context of the discussion of this thesis, grace is a free gift, or gifts, from God to either individual humans or to mankind as a whole. Sometimes grace is used as a general all-inclusive term to describe all that God gives. At other times, individual gifts are singled out and their divine origin discussed. In addition, within the Pauline literature, the term 'grace' can sometimes be used as shorthand for a particular act of grace (*i.e.* for the work of Christ in Titus 2:11). It can also be used as an abstract noun referring to the act of giving, or even to the disposition or character of God the giver.³ Sometimes it is difficult to say with absolute certainty which of these are meant. However, these nuances should not influence the investigation of this thesis; the part justification by faith plays within that grace. While 'grace' is often been used as a synonym for 'gift,' 'grace' is a much more subtle and sophisticated word. One aspect of grace that will have a bearing on the investigation of this thesis is the reciprocal expectations of the giving of the gift. The word 'grace' can also refer to thanks or gratitude given back to the giver.⁴ This reciprocal expression is an expected and integral part of the concept of grace.⁵

¹ BAGD. pp. 1079-1081.

² BAGD. p.1078.

³ Wright, *What Saint Paul Really Said*, p.61.

⁴ Conzelmann, 'χάρις κτλ', p.376.

⁵ J R Harrison, *Paul's language of Grace (χάρις) in its Graeco-Roman Context*, PhD, Macquarie University, Sydney, p. 1ff.

In Galatians Paul used the noun *χάρις* eight times (although one of those times is a prepositional use which sheds no light on the investigation) and he used the verb *χαρίζομαι* once. These uses are each now examined in detail.

Galatians 1:3 *χάρις ὑμῖν καὶ εἰρήνη ἀπὸ θεοῦ πατρὸς ἡμῶν καὶ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ*

Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ⁶,

Galatians 1:3 and 6:18 are part of the epistolary prescript and postscript. According to the patterns of apologetic letter writing their significance within the flow of the apologetic logic was minimal. However, although this part of the letter was less significant than other parts in the accepted structure of the day, Paul raised its significance above what its apologetic rhetorical structural position would suggest. All of Paul's letters, both the agreed and the disputed letters, contain a reference to grace in their greetings and also in their closing comments. While there are many features of the openings and closings of his correspondence that do match the standard literary protocol of his day, Paul's greetings using variations of "grace to you and peace" and his farewells using variations of "grace to you" also have noticeable differences. Lieu convincingly takes to task the line of scholarship that has stressed how Paul's letters are in the conventional pattern of the day.⁷ Her article points out that if there was a standard greeting word used in the correspondence of the day it was the infinitive *χαίρειν*.⁸ However, Paul never used that. His distinctive and consistent greeting of *χάρις ὑμῖν*, while obviously playing on the standard *χαίρειν* greeting found within Greek literature, has no extant comparison outside of the scriptures and later Christian correspondence.

The origin of Paul's *χάρις ὑμῖν* greeting is not found in the Semitic greetings of the day nor in any Old Testament example. The standard keyword in Semitic greetings or

⁶ There is some textual doubt about whether the grace and peace are "from God our Father and Lord" or "from God our father and the Lord Jesus Christ." Both have manuscript support, the latter is more natural, is consistent with most of Paul's other letters, and most significantly, it flows logically with the following verse.

⁷ Judith M Lieu, "'Grace to you and Peace': The Apostolic Greeting", *BJRL* 68, 1985-1986, p.162.

⁸ Lieu, 'Grace to you and Peace', p.163. The standard use of *χαίρειν* can be seen in the Jerusalem correspondence in Acts 15:23 and in James 1:1.

farewells was “shalom” [שלום]. This was usually translated into Greek as εἰρήνη which also appears as a standard word in Paul’s greetings. Paul’s greetings are a combination of the standard Semitic ‘peace’⁹ plus a distinctive use of ‘grace’. There is precedent for the Semitic ‘peace’ combined with other words in greetings, but not with ‘grace’. The word χάρις is not significant in the Septuagint. Mercy (ἔλεος) is far more significant, and is the key word in Hebrew blessings.¹⁰ Yet Paul chose “grace and peace” as his standard greeting.

Moffatt argues that this particular greeting is a unique Pauline invention.¹¹ Whether or not he is right about that, he is probably right in saying that Paul used this distinctive greeting to make a theological point.¹² Paul was not just borrowing or inventing a literary formula. Mullins suggests that interjections within greetings are personality signatures.¹³ It could likewise be argued that the form which greetings take, also tell us something about the letter’s author and his thought. By using χάρις instead of χαίρειν Paul was revealing key aspects of his thoughts to the reader. More than that he was deliberately imparting significant chosen content into a prominent place in the letter, his greeting. The fact that the grace and peace are “from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ” shows that a deeper theological content was implied than the normal customary greeting in a letter.¹⁴ This divine origin of the grace and peace emphasizes the specifically Christian nature of the grace to which it refers.¹⁵

By choosing ‘grace’ instead of ‘mercy’ in his greeting he was highlighting the theological emphasis, which was to prevail throughout the rest of his letter. The use of grace in Paul’s greeting highlights that at the core of Paul’s writings is his understanding of the

⁹ Lieu (‘Grace to you and Peace’, p.168) argues that the use of ‘peace’ in this way in Greek correspondence was also distinctive. By using εἰρήνη Paul was making a deliberate connection with the Old Testament concept of peace as a blessing from God.

¹⁰ This is the standard translation for the Hebrew “חַסֵּד” which is the key Old Testament concept in blessings. It expresses God’s steadfast faithfulness toward Israel (Lieu, ‘Grace to you and Peace’, p.168).

¹¹ J Moffatt, *Grace in the New Testament*, Long and Smith, New York, 1932, p.137.

¹² Moffatt (*Grace in the New Testament*, p.135) expresses it very well when he says, “In such phrases we have a compressed allusion to beliefs which lay at the heart of the writer’s gospel.” He later (p.140) adds, “This opening phrase is therefore an emphatic pregnant summary of nearly everything the Apostle has to say in the course of his instructions and appeals.”

¹³ T.Y Mullins, ‘Greeting as a NT form’, *JBL* 87, 1968, p.422.

¹⁴ Longenecker, *Galatians*, p.6.

¹⁵ Bruce, *Galatians*, p.74.

shift from the Old Testament emphasis on God's law and God's long suffering mercy toward a sinful Israel, to a new emphasis on the revelation of God's grace to all nations through the gospel of Jesus Christ (e.g. Rom 1:1-4, Gal. 1:1-4).¹⁶

It is also significant that all Paul's letters not only begin but also end with a farewell that is built around χάρις. This was even more unusual for the correspondence of Paul's day than his greeting. Paul's introduction of χάρις into the farewells in a totally radical way, is further evidence of the centrality of grace to Paul's thought.¹⁷ He went a step further, not only introducing a new greeting based on the standard greeting but with a much stronger theological content, but also a radical farewell which incorporates that same strong theological content; and using both at once. This is not just a literary idiosyncrasy. He made the concept of grace into an *inclusio*, which encompasses the whole letter. It is a literary reflection of his theological understanding that whatever the specific needs of his readers in each individual situation, it was all encompassed within the overarching concept that what all Christians need is God's grace. The concept of God's grace pervades all of Paul's letters. Even where the words χάρις or χαριζόμεαι are absent or scarce otherwise, they are stand out to be noticed in the grace *inclusio*. Grace was the dominant concept in the framework of his thinking. The grace *inclusio* is an example of the framework of his thinking manifesting itself in the content of his letters.

In all the Pauline letters, except Galatians, having just passed the grace greeting the reader is again immediately struck with another grace based word, εὐχαριστέω.¹⁸ It means much more than the English word 'thanks'. At the centre of its meaning is the concept of giving thanks as an act of reciprocal grace in return for the initial act of grace given. Part of the

¹⁶ Gottfried Quell, 'The concept of law in the OT', in *TDNT Vol. II*, Eds Gerhard Kittel & Gerhard Friedrich, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1964, p.174. The introductions to these two letters have been quoted as examples because in these two letters Paul used the introduction to raise content, which he would later expand upon in greater detail. In many of his introductions little or no hint of the later content of the letter was given. Wherever he did expand on the introduction, it was the gospel of Jesus Christ that was the content.

¹⁷ The protocol of the day for farewells allowed for variations of personal preference. The more common farewells were *υγιαίνειν* (a wish for "good health") or *ἐρρῶσθαι* (literally "be strong" in the sense of healthy). Lucian in his satire on the protocol of the day, quotes as a rare example, Ptolemy Lagus, the king of Egypt, once reversing the greeting and farewell, beginning his letter with *ἐρρῶσθαι* and ending it with *χαίρειν* (Moffatt, *Grace in the New Testament*, p.142).

¹⁸ It will later be argued that although in Galatians the thanksgiving is missing, grace is still given exactly the same prominent place.

concept of grace is the obligation of the one receiving grace to return grace in the form of thanks and honour to the initial giver.¹⁹ Paul's letters not only begin and end with grace, but the opening greeting together with the thanksgiving form a double salvo of grace right at the start of his letters that reinforces the concept as central to the framework of Paul's thought. Grace is the doctrine which in Paul's thought was the basis for interpreting all other doctrines.²⁰ Koenig states that the centrality of grace to the theological reflection of the New Testament is so well known that it does not need documentation.²¹ This is especially true of Paul. If there is any lens through which Paul's letters must be read to understand Paul's thought, it must be the lens of the concept of 'grace'.²² For unless our reading lens is a concept that dominates Paul's thought, our findings will be a distortion of Paul's thought.

The first, second and final occurrences of grace in Galatians (Gal. 1:3, 1:6 & 6:18) are consistent with Paul's general use mentioned above. His use of grace in Galatians as an *inclusio* and a first note of the letter, which he utilized in all his letters, highlights the key position of grace in his theology.²³ In Paul's thought the grace of God lies behind all the Lord does and says and also behind his call to Christians to respond. However, a closer look is needed to see how Paul blended his standard emphasis on grace into the specific message of Galatians, in particular into his introduction in Galatians 1:1-5. For in Paul's letters, as was common in the literature of the day, there is often a strong correlation between the preface and the body of the letter. It is here in the introduction that the dominating theological tendencies and the purpose of the letter can be observed emerging for the first time.²⁴

In the introduction (Gal. 1:1-5) the two interrelated themes of Paul's apostleship and deliverance through faith in Christ alone are both raised. The theme of Paul's apostleship is not grammatically linked to the word grace here, but will be later in Galatians 1:15 and 2:9.

¹⁹ Conzelmann, 'χάρις κτλ', p.374.

²⁰ Darrell J Doughty, 'The priority of χάρις', pp.168, 172, 178, 180.

²¹ John Koenig, 'Occasions of Grace', pp.562.

²² Guthrie (*Galatians*, p.59) says of grace, "There is no Pauline concept more expressively comprehensive of the essence of the gospel." However, the priority is the other way around. Paul sees the gospel as the expression of grace.

²³ Guthrie, *Galatians*, p.59.

²⁴ Betz, *Galatians*, p.37; Duncan, *Galatians*, p.3.

Paul was content to point out in Galatians 1:1 that his Apostleship was given to him directly through Jesus Christ and God the Father. He waited until later in the letter to show that the grace of God was the driving force behind him being given the post of Apostle. The second theme of the gospel of Jesus Christ (Gal. 1:6-7) is not only raised in the introduction (Gal. 1:4), it is inseparably tied to the greeting of grace and peace.

Galatians 1:4 carries on from Galatians 1:3 with τοῦ δόντος, which is grammatically dependant on the final χριστοῦ from 1:3. “Giving himself” not only describes what Christ did, but also emphasizes that the act of Christ giving of himself was an expression of grace which flowed from his character.²⁵ The mention of “our sins” establishes that grace was needed. Christ’s giving himself was not just a nice thought, because of our sins Christ needed to give himself to provide a means of righteousness that was by grace alone (Gal.2:21). Paul’s use of ἐξαίρέω stands out because it is such an unusual word for Paul.²⁶ It does not occur anywhere else in his writings. Yet ‘deliver’ is a word that is consistent with the idea of ‘grace’, as Paul uses it throughout his letters.²⁷ There is no hint of the individual’s own actions here in the idea of Christians “being delivered.” The present evil age is something from which people who are “slaves to those which by nature are no gods” need delivering (Gal. 4:8). In this verse Paul uses ‘deliver’ as a grace word. The long addition to the grace greeting in Galatians 1:4 ends with the words “according to the will of our God and Father.” This further highlights the grace aspect of Christ’s gift of himself and our deliverance. God planned it and decreed it; it was no accident. It was a premeditated act of grace to a people under his wrath and enslaved to the present evil age.²⁸ Not only did Paul begin his letter with a grace greeting, but he elaborated on the specific nature of the grace he had in mind, tying in that grace with themes developed later in the letter. In observing that the content of the grace of God is Christ giving himself, delivering his

²⁵ Ridderbos, *Galatians*, p.43.

²⁶ The common response is to explain it as Paul borrowing from an earlier tradition.

²⁷ Several commentaries from the early 1900’s, while translating it correctly as ‘deliver’ or ‘rescue,’ begin to talk of the concept of redemption for ἐξαίρέω (e.g. Duncan, *Galatians*, p.12). However, the word is not ‘redemption.’ Post-reformation scholars have sometimes been accused of reading Luther into Paul. One wonders whether those who read redemption into this verse are not reading Schweitzer into Paul? Certainly redemption is a connected concept. Release from slavery and freedom is a big theme in Galatians. But it is wrong to equate the concepts.

²⁸ Guthrie, *Galatians*, p.60.

people, and fulfilling the will of God, it become clear that these gospel concepts are subsumed under the overarching framework concept of the grace of God.

Galatians 1:6 Θαυμάζω ὅτι οὕτως ταχέως μετατίθεσθε ἀπὸ τοῦ καλέσαντος ὑμᾶς ἐν χάριτι [Χριστοῦ] εἰς ἕτερον εὐαγγέλιον,

I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel;

By going to the Galatians' abandonment of the gospel first, Paul singled that out as the prime problem to which he would return and on which he would focus. Structurally this sentence introduces the statement of the cause of the letter, the reason he wrote to them.²⁹ Although his authority and credibility as an Apostle come first in the order of the logic and need to be dealt with early in the letter, he was determined to begin with the real central issue which was the gospel.

Paul began the body of his letter with "I am amazed" (Θαυμάζω), a conventional expression often found in Greek rhetoricians and correspondence.³⁰ However, he was not just using a rhetorical device for stylistic reasons, it is an expression of passion not just art.³¹ The opening remark of astonishment, with its implied rebuke, sets a tone that conveys a sense of urgency which is carried through the rest of the letter. The key point Paul was trying to convey, was the cause of his astonishment; the Galatians' inappropriate response to the grace of God. He was astonished that the Galatians were

²⁹ Betz, 'The literary composition', p.359.

³⁰ G Bertram, 'Θαυμάζω κτλ', in *TDNT Vol. III*, Eds Gerhard Kittel & Gerhard Friedrich, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, p.40. According to the literary pattern, Paul then followed it with an explanation for the reason he was "amazed." While the basic meaning of the word is 'amazement,' used in this way more than simple amazement was implied. The specific nature of what else was implied is disputed. Some see it as more of a rebuke than an expression of astonishment (T.Y Mullins, 'Formulas in New Testament epistles', *JBL* 91, 1972, p.385). Others see it as reflecting agitation and indignation (Longenecker, *Galatians*, p.13). While the rest of the letter gives reason to support these views (e.g. Gal. 5:12), it would be wrong to let the use of a conventional formula detract from the basic meaning of the word as 'astonishment felt.' The use of "so quickly" within the reason given reflects astonishment much more than upset. Longenecker (*Galatians*, p.14) quotes Mussner (*Galaterbrief*, p.53) suggesting that Paul was alluding to LXX references to the children of Israel quickly turning away from the Lord (Ex 32:8, Judg. 2:17). The irony in this is striking: by turning to the law, the Galatians, rather than pleasing the Lord, are behaving just like the children of Israel who angered the Lord. Questions asked by Paul later in the letter also reflect astonishment (Gal 3:1ff. ; Gal 5:7).

³¹ Dunn (*Galatians*, p.39) points out that this is not just rhetorical style (*contra* Betz, *Galatians*, p.47).

“deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ” (Gal.1:6).³² The verb “deserting” (μετατίθημι) was used of military revolts and of changing one’s thoughts.³³ The substantive participle (ὁ μεταθέμενος) was used of philosophers who changed their school of thought.³⁴ This is a very vivid word for the situation. Grace when given establishes a relationship in which there is an expectation of an appropriate response to the giver of the grace. They were not simply abandoning a theoretical theological position; they were abandoning a personal God who had shown them great grace through his Son.³⁵ ‘Deserting’ implies that they were betraying the one who gave the grace. Note the words, “you are so quickly deserting *the one who...*” This μετατίθημι is to be understood as a middle, not a passive. They were turning themselves away. They could not blame another. They were spurning the relationship established by the giving of grace. They were not responding with appropriate thankfulness. This theme echoes throughout the letter (Gal. 3:1; 4:21; 5:4; 6:17). Paul’s amazement was exacerbated by the fact that their desertion was happening “so quickly” (οὕτως ταχέως). The question is - so quickly after what? Does it mean after the Galatians’ conversion, or after hearing the Agitators ‘gospel’?³⁶ The end meaning is the same.³⁷ The Galatians were deserting “the one who called” (τοῦ καλέσαντος) them - God. In all of Paul’s letters God is the one who calls.³⁸ Throughout the letter to the Galatians Paul wanted to link the work of the grace of God the Father with the work of Christ.³⁹ That is what he was doing here.

³² Although the terms ‘grace of God’ and ‘grace of Christ’ are not identical, Paul uses them synonymously in this letter. The grace of God is an umbrella term including all that God has graciously done for those who believe in him. It is a genitive describing God as the source of the grace. The grace of Christ is a more specific term referring to either the blessings which flow from Christ, or to Christ and his gospel as the gift bestowed (note how the writer of Titus 2:11, referring to Jesus and/or the gospel says “the grace of God has appeared”). In this context Paul can use the terms synonymously because the grace of God he is discussing is manifest in the gospel and in its object: Jesus Christ.

³³ Betz (*Galatians*, p.47) claims this is political term. Meeks (‘Review of Galatians’, p.304) correctly questions whether Paul really intended the term to be taken so technically.

³⁴ Christian Maurer, ‘μετατίθημι’, in *TDNT Vol. VIII*, Eds Gerhard Kittel & Gerhard Friedrich, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1972, p.161; Longenecker, *Galatians*, p.14; Lightfoot, *Galatians*, p.75.

³⁵ Cole, *Galatians*, p.38.

³⁶ If it is referring to a time after their conversion, “soon” could be years after. It all becomes relative when speaking of matters of life allegiance.

³⁷ Lightfoot (*Galatians*, p.75) claims it could mean ‘rashly.’ This is not the natural meaning. It seems he is intent on this meaning to support his North Galatian Theory.

³⁸ Burton, *Galatians*, p.20.

³⁹ Grammatically it is also possible to link this genitive phrase in apposition with Χριστοῦ and translate it as “Christ who called you” (Luther, *Galatians*, p.47; John Calvin, *The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians and Colossians*, Trans T H L Parker, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1965, p.12-13; and many others]. This translation understands the Χριστοῦ as held over to the end of the clause for emphasis. While this is possible, it is not the natural flow, especially considering that the sentence doesn’t end there but continues on.

The phrase ἐν χάριτι Χριστοῦ can be taken a few ways.⁴⁰ It could be taken as a locative dative. Burton makes the point that ἐν with καλέω almost uniformly marks the sphere or state in which one is called. The meaning then would be that the call of God takes place within the sphere of operation of Christ's grace. This brings out the royal grace theme which drove the Galatians' calling. The Galatians were stepping out of the sphere of his grace.⁴¹ They were abandoning the position of grace they had in Christ.⁴² It could also be taken as an instrumental dative.⁴³ That would mean the grace of Christ was used to call them to God. Here that needs to be lined up with "the gospel of Christ" in Gal 1:7. This brings out the gospel as the channel of their calling.⁴⁴ Either of these two options is possible. While common usage favours a locative use, the context of the letter to the Galatians favours an instrumental use. The call of Paul in Galatians 1:15 clearly has grace as the channel (διὰ) of Paul's calling. The Agitators would have agreed that grace was driving the call of the Galatians, but the issue at Galatia was, what was the channel of that grace; the law or the gospel?⁴⁵ The most convincing reason for understanding it as an instrumental dative, emphasizing the grace of Christ manifest in the gospel, is the very next phrase and the next verse, for these contrast the phrase in question (ἐν χάριτι [Χριστοῦ]) with the Galatians turning to a different gospel.

Paul's concern was that the Galatians were turning from the God who called them by the grace of Christ to "a different gospel." The implication of both ἄλλος and ἕτερος is a different *kind* of Gospel.⁴⁶ Although one is hard pressed to find a distinction between these

⁴⁰ Two of these ways are not worth serious consideration. Fung prefers ἐν taken as similar to εἰς (Fung, *Galatians*, p.44). But this is a forced reading and less likely (Guthrie, *Galatians*, p.62). Ridderbos (*Galatians*, p.47) takes this as expressing the purpose of the calling. It is not clear what he means by this, or what type of dative he understands would give this meaning.

⁴¹ Guthrie, *Galatians*, p.60.

⁴² Burton, *Galatians*, p.21.

⁴³ A J M Wedderburn, 'Some observations on Paul's use of the phrases "in Christ" and "with Christ"', *JSNT* 25, 1985, p.86.

⁴⁴ Longenecker, *Galatians*, p.15.

⁴⁵ The variant readings effect the interpretation here. If the reading without "of Christ" is the correct reading, then the emphasis falls on grace as the character of God which moved him to call them. This word highlights that their salvation was of grace; originating in God's call rather than their seeking. However, if the reading with "of Christ" is correct, the emphasis moves more to the grace of Christ as the channel through which God's calling grace was made effective. Either way the central significance if grace is maintained.

⁴⁶ Friedrich Buchsel, 'ἄλλος κτλ', in *TDNT Vol. 1*, Eds Gerhard Kittel & Gerhard Friedrich, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1964, p.264; F Blass & A Debrunner, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other*

two word in Koine Greek,⁴⁷ in this context Paul appears to have used them to make a distinction.⁴⁸ Whether or not this distinction is to be pressed, the point he was making is clear. The gospel which the Galatians were turning to was of a different kind altogether from his. It was in fact so different as not to be a gospel at all. This was in contrast to the gospel of the Jerusalem Apostles which he would later discuss as a different gospel from his, though of the same kind. Both Paul's and the Jerusalem Apostles' gospels were gospels of Jesus Christ. The Agitators' 'gospel' was a gospel of law.

In conclusion, Paul's introduction, or *exordium*, emphasizes that this letter is all about two gospels. One is really the gospel; the other is not the gospel at all.⁴⁹ One is of grace; the other is not. One has Christ at the centre; the other does not. In contrast with the normal pattern of other Pauline letters, it stands out that this is Paul's only letter in which he has no word of thanksgiving.⁵⁰ Yet the echo of the normal pattern is that a grace note is still struck. Even where Paul had no reason to give thanks, the grace of God was not allowed to slide into the background. While being called by God in the grace of Christ highlights the divine initiative and power in the salvation of the Galatians, there is another aspect of grace which also is implied. Knowing that part of the essence of grace is thanks and commitment to the one who bestowed the grace, Paul was amazed not only at the speed of their turn, but at their inexcusable abandonment of the God who had shown them this great grace in Christ.⁵¹ The pain he was expressing was not primarily for himself personally feeling betrayed but for the Christ whose grace they were snubbing and trampling underfoot. In turning away from Paul's gospel to this other gospel, they were turning their backs on the grace of Christ. Grace was central to the whole issue at Galatia. Either they stood by Paul's

Early Christian Literature, Trans. Robert W Funk, University of Chicago, Chicago, 1961 (9th), pp.160-161 (306).

⁴⁷ Trench (*Synonyms of the New Testament*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1953 (9th ed, 1880), pp.357-361) does make a distinction between these words. However, as is often his tendency, he fails in this case to allow for differences in use between Classical and Koine Greek. It seems that here Paul is calling on remnants of a knowledge of the distinctions within Classical usage that still existed among Koine speakers (Henry George Liddell and Robert Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon*(9th ed.), Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1940, pp.70 & 702).

⁴⁸ Longenecker, *Galatians*, p.15; James Keith Elliot, 'The use of the word εἴτερος in the New Testament', *ZNW* 60, 1969, pp. 140-141.

⁴⁹ Betz (*Galatians*, p.49) says, "the other gospel is not a gospel because ... it lacks grace as its content."

⁵⁰ Bruce (*Galatians*, p.80) suggests that if this was Paul's first letter then it is possible that the pattern for his greetings had not yet been established. While it probably was his first letter, this is an unlikely explanation. The content dictated the form of the introduction. He was too upset for nice comments (Cole, *Galatians*, p.38).

⁵¹ Harrison, *Paul's Language of Grace*, p.202; Moffatt, *Grace in the New Testament*, p.286.

gospel of the grace of Christ, or they abandoned it and with it the grace of Christ. Paul was clear. How anyone could turn to rely on anything else except the grace of God in Christ was beyond his comprehension, and was, in his view, an abandonment of the true gospel.⁵² The obvious response Paul was seeking, was that the Galatians return to the grace of God by returning to the true Gospel of Jesus Christ.

In the third and fourth occurrences of grace in Galatians (Gal. 1:15 & Gal. 2:9) Paul saw the grace of God as establishing his credentials as an Apostle.

Galatians 1:15 ὅτε δὲ εὐδόκησεν [ὁ θεὸς] ὁ ἀφορίσας με ἐκ κοιλίας μητρὸς μου καὶ καλέσας διὰ τῆς χάριτος αὐτοῦ

But when He who had set me apart, *even* from my mother's womb, and called me through His grace, was pleased

This verse (Gal 1:15) and Galatians 2:9 both fall within the *narratio*, the purpose of which was to briefly and plausibly present the facts which support the defense.⁵³ Therefore, even before the place of grace within the flow of logic in the *narratio* was established, the very fact of Paul's choice to include it within the bare facts of the *narratio* marks it out as significant.⁵⁴

Paul's choice to deal with the issue of his apostolic authority only within the *narratio* signals that for him it was a secondary issue; it served as a foundation for the first issue, which was, which gospel is the one to believe and obey? The true Apostle has the true gospel. The third occurrence of grace (Gal. 1:15) is in a section that begins in Galatians 1:11. It refers to how Paul received his gospel - through a revelation from the Lord (Gal. 1:12). Galatians 1:15 expands on that. The purpose of this section was to refute the accusations of the Agitators which were undermining Paul's apostolic authority and casting doubt on the divine origin of his gospel. One of the problems scholars have with this part of the epistle is that it omits so many historical details that would be helpful to

⁵² Allan, *Galatians*, p.29.

⁵³ Betz, 'The literary composition', p.364.

⁵⁴ This is especially so when it is considered that he chose its inclusion above many other pieces of information scholars which he could have included.

know. However, although this section is historical, Paul's purpose was not to recount history but to give facts necessary to refute the charges made against him.⁵⁵ This makes the place of 'grace' in this account even more significant, for it shows that he considered God's acts of grace central to the facts.

Establishing his status as an Apostle was imperative as a base on which Paul's gospel and his refutation of the Judaizers was to be accepted. Having clearly stated that he was an Apostle, Galatians 1:1-2, 1:11-24 and particularly 1:15-16 fill in the details of what he understood the nature of his apostleship to be. Understanding what Paul meant by an Apostle is central to understanding his answer to the Agitators' attacks. It was Paul's intention to make clear to the Galatians what he meant when he called himself an Apostle, so that they would grasp the authority of his message.⁵⁶ The main thrust of his argument was to show that his authority as an Apostle of Jesus Christ was a gift directly from God. The basic meaning of the word 'Apostle' was 'one who was sent.'⁵⁷ This was the common Greek meaning.⁵⁸ As a technical term it meant one commissioned to have the authority of the one who sent them. Within Paul's writing the term is found used two ways. Firstly, it is used of representatives of churches sent out by that church. In this sense it is used almost as a synonym of *shaliah*,⁵⁹ or as the Christian equivalent of the Jewish term. Secondly, the term 'Apostle' is used as a designation for the special officers of Jesus Christ, personally commissioned by Christ as his witnesses to the gospel message; witnesses who speak with the authority of Christ.⁶⁰ When used in this context the meaning is much closer to that of the Old Testament prophet.⁶¹ It is on this very point that Paul came under attack. Was he an Apostle of Jesus Christ in the likeness of the Old Testament prophets, or was he an Apostle of the church in Antioch in the likeness of the Jewish *shaliah*? The Agitators claimed the

⁵⁵ Betz, 'The literary composition', p.366.

⁵⁶ Morris, *Galatians*, p.32.

⁵⁷ Guthrie, *Galatians*, p.56.

⁵⁸ Longenecker, *Galatians*, p.2.

⁵⁹ There are some similarities between the New Testament use of ἀπόστολος and the Jewish office of *shaliah* who could speak and act with the authority of the one who sent them (Karl Heinrich Rengstorf, 'ἀπόστολος', in *TDNT. Vol. 1*, Eds Gerhard Kittel & Gerhard Friedrich, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1964, p.414; Bring, *Galatians*, p.19). In some contexts in the New Testament the two appear to be used as synonyms (e.g. John 13:16). Yet there were also significant differences between the terms. *Shaliah* was temporary, and it was not a religious office (Longenecker, *Galatians*, p.3; Rengstorf, 'ἀπόστολος', p.415). The Rabbis never used the term *shaliah* of a prophet of God (Rengstorf, 'ἀπόστολος', p.420).

⁶⁰ Bruce, *Galatians*, p.72.

⁶¹ Rengstorf, 'ἀπόστολος', p.423; Longenecker, *Galatians*, p.3.

latter, Paul claimed the former. It must be remembered it would have been very easy to criticize Paul,⁶² but Paul turned around his lack of time with Christ on earth and with the other Apostles to highlight the grace of God. He turned what could be said against him into positive points to make his case that the origin of his apostolic appointment and of his reception of the gospel was in the grace of God.

Having made the bold statement about the divine origins of his apostolic appointment and gospel in Galatians 1:11-12, Paul began to give evidence for his claims (γάρ) in 1:13f. In 1:13-14 Paul recounted his former actions in destroying the church. Then in Galatians 1:15-16 he explained how God by his grace intervened in his life. The contrast between Galatians 1:13-14 and 1:15-16 was deliberate. In verses 13-14 the subject is the repetitive use of “I.” It was all Paul acting in his own works. In verses 15-16 the subject becomes “God.” God called Paul by his grace.⁶³ Some scholars have debated the force of the δέ, at the beginning of Galatians 1:15, stating that it is not meant to be a contrasting connective.⁶⁴ They argue it is a continuation for verse 14 not a contrast. While it is definitely a continuation, it is hard to see how this is not also meant to be a ‘before’ and ‘after’ contrast, as well as a contrast between Paul’s actions and God’s intervention. God brought this about. It was not Paul’s idea.⁶⁵ The “but when” translation of ὅτε δέ is justified as it appropriately brings out the change which Paul was saying the grace of God effected in his life. The impact of the grace of God in the personal life of Paul at this point should not be underestimated.⁶⁶ Many Pharisees were converted to faith in Jesus Christ, but few (if any others) were impacted in the way the Apostle Paul was.⁶⁷ This personal encounter with the grace of God (Tit. 2:11) was influential in shaping his whole understanding of the place of grace and the gospel of Jesus Christ within the purposes of God.⁶⁸

⁶² As mentioned earlier Paul was a latecomer to the faith. He had been an opponent of the gospel and did not walk with Jesus when he was on earth (Bruce, *Galatians*, p.36). He had spent very little time with the Jerusalem Apostles and even had a dispute with Peter.

⁶³ Stott, *Galatians*, p.32; Dunn, *Galatians*, p.62.

⁶⁴ Burton, *Galatians*, p.49; Duncan, *Galatians*, p.26.

⁶⁵ Morris, *Galatians*, p.54.

⁶⁶ Dunn (*Galatians*, p.vii) believes that the Antioch incident is insufficiently exploited to open up and understand the development of both Paul and Christianity itself.

⁶⁷ E I Bosworth, ‘The influence of the Damascus vision upon Paul’s theology’, *BS* 56, 1899, p.293.

⁶⁸ Donaldson, ‘Zealot and convert’, p.676.

Although “was pleased” (εὐδόκησεν) is often held over to the end of the verse in English translations for grammatical stylistic reasons, it actually is first in the Greek. This emphasis on the pleasure of God highlights that God’s free choice to set Paul apart and call him was an act of grace.⁶⁹ Even though “God” (ὁ θεός) is a disputed text, there can be no question that he is to be understood as the subject.⁷⁰ For clearly he was the one who set Paul apart from his mother’s womb. His setting apart from his “mother’s womb” has connotations of the call of the Old Testament prophet Jeremiah.⁷¹ Just as Jeremiah was a reluctant messenger, so Paul also needed to be persuaded. In the light of the opposition from the Agitators, there is perhaps even an intended parallel that the Jews did not accept Paul’s message or his divine appointment just as they did not accept that of Jeremiah. The calling from the mother’s womb is also referred to in Isaiah 49:1-6 in the calling of “the servant of the Lord.” In Isaiah 49:6 this ‘servant of the Lord’ was called to be a light to the Gentiles.⁷² These allusions show that Paul understood his call as an Apostle to be more in the vein of an Old Testament prophet than of a Jewish *shaliah*.⁷³ This is a significant answer to those who were calling the validity of his apostleship into question. His apostleship was a real apostleship from God, like the Old Testament prophet, not an apostleship from men, like the Jewish *shaliah*. Describing his call in this manner emphasizes the theocentric nature of it and thus highlights his understanding of the place of grace in his apostolic appointment.⁷⁴

⁶⁹ P T O’Brien, *Consumed by Passion: Paul and the Dynamic of the Gospel*, Lancer, Homebush NSW, 1993, p.9. Although the balance of the participles and prepositions within the structure of the Greek sentence favours taking the διὰ τῆς χάριτος with the calling alone, not with both the calling and the setting apart, there is still a sense of dependency on the grace of God that pervades the setting apart as well.

⁷⁰ Bruce M Metzger, *Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (2nd ed.), German Bible Society, Stuttgart, 1994, p.521.

⁷¹ Ridderbos, *Galatians*, p.63.

⁷² Cf. Acts 26:18 “that the Gentiles might turn from darkness to light.” Duncan (*Galatians*, p.27) refers this quote to Israel. Bruce (*Galatians*, p.92) refers it to the servant. O’Brien (*Consumed by Passion*, p.12) refers it to the servant of whom Christ is the fulfilment and of whose ministry Paul’s is a continuation.

⁷³ Longenecker, *Galatians*, p.30. Rengstorf (‘ἀπόστολος’, p.423) quotes Paul’s use of the term ‘Apostle’ in other letters to make the same point.

⁷⁴ Paul could not fulfill that purpose for which the Lord had set him apart until he had been called. “Set apart” and “called” are a couplet of substantival participles exegetically explaining the Lord’s divine initiative in Paul’s life. The Lord’s calling of Paul did not come ἐν χάριτι as the Galatians’ calling did (Gal. 1:6) but he was called διὰ τῆς χάριτος. The διὰ picks up the prepositions of Galatians 1:1, highlights the divine initiative (cf. 1 Cor. 1:1; 2 Cor. 1:1; Eph. 1:1; Col. 1:1) and points to both the motive and the means of God’s calling of Paul (Guthrie, *Galatians*, p.69; Ridderbos, *Galatians*, p.63). It explains that the motive of his call was purely of God’s pleasure, there was no appeal in his actions to motive the Lord’s calling. It explains that the means of Paul’s calling was totally an act of God’s work; he was destroying the church of Jesus Christ at the time. His calling by the grace of God and his lack of consultation with “flesh and blood” (Gal. 1:16) and with “those who were apostles before me” (1:17) ties in with the credentials he mentioned in the introduction where he said he was “not sent from men” (i.e. Apostles in Jerusalem) but was commissioned directly from God. (J Greshen Machin, *Machen’s notes on*

The Lord's setting apart of Paul was not complete without a calling, or a purpose. The purpose of the calling by grace, to reveal Christ (Gal. 1:17), was inseparably linked to the calling itself. Note that the calling and purpose are placed side by side in the sentence to logically run them together even though ἀποκαλύψαι is grammatically dependent on εὐδόκησεν. This calling by God's grace, while no doubt including reference to his conversion, was not the main intention of the remark.⁷⁵ The emphasis is on the purpose of the calling not that he was called.⁷⁶ In the same way in Galatians 1:16 the prepositional phrase "in me" in the expression ἀποκαλύψαι τὸν υἱὸν ἐν ἐμοί, could refer to the internal revelation of Jesus Christ to Paul, but is better understood as emphasizing Paul's being the instrument of revelation to the Gentiles (Cf. Acts 9 & 26).⁷⁷ The link between Paul and Old Testament prophets is that both are bearers of revelation. This thought returns to and reinforces the idea raised in Galatians 1:1 that God revealed Christ directly to Paul, not through men. For Paul, the grace of his own calling through the revelation of Jesus Christ and the message of the revelation of Jesus Christ he was to bear, were inseparable.⁷⁸

In conclusion, the main thrust in Galatians 1:15-16 was Paul showing that the challenges to his authority were ungrounded. His authority was by the grace of God. Normally, he assumed his recipients knew what an Apostle was; but in Galatians he spelt it out. His apostleship was given, and its authority stood, on an act of the grace of God. Paul understood his personal experience of the grace of God in Jesus Christ to be the basis of his commission.⁷⁹ Direct appointment by the grace of God put him on an equal par with the other Apostles appointed directly by Christ. It also made the point that he was different from an Apostle of the churches (2 Cor. 8:23, Phil. 2:25). He was sent from Antioch, but he

Galatians, Ed. John H Skilton, Presbyterian and Reformed, Nutley (N.J), 1972, p.13). It was imperative that the Galatians understand on what authority Paul spoke. An Apostle was not an independent person; they acted on the authority given to them by another and his status was dependant on the status of the one who sent him (Guthrie, *Galatians*, p.56). It was God who sent him not the Apostles in Jerusalem (not through men plural).

⁷⁵ Fung, *Galatians*, p.63.

⁷⁶ Ridderbos (*Galatians*, p.62) disagrees and states that the emphasis is on the sovereignty of the divine grace.

⁷⁷ Fung (*Galatians*, p.62) follows the NEB in translating this expression as "chose to reveal his son to me and through me." This translation tries to incorporate both translation options. In a similar way, Cole (*Galatians*, p.52) says that what began as a revelation to Paul became a revelation in Paul. Which ever way it is taken, it describes a divine act of grace of which Paul is the recipient (Bornkamm, 'The revelation of Christ to Paul', p.94).

⁷⁸ Bornkamm, 'The revelation of Christ to Paul', p.97.

⁷⁹ Bornkamm, 'The revelation of Christ to Paul', p.92.

was more. He was set apart from birth and called by God to preach Christ among the Gentiles. This account of receiving of his apostleship direct from God was a direct answer to those who were trying to discredit him as a second rate Apostle who was not in accord with the Jerusalem Apostles.

Grammatically “by his grace” refers strictly to Paul’s calling. However, the revelation of Jesus Christ to him, his setting apart and the purpose of his calling to reveal Christ were inseparably dependent on that same grace. Grace was both the motive and the means for Paul to preach Christ.⁸⁰ The mention of grace set a tone of humility. His apostleship was not of himself. At the same time it set a tone of authority. God had appointed him and expected him to use the gift of apostleship responsibly to do the job given. He would be negligent of the grace given to him if he did not preach the gospel of Jesus Christ. Without the grace of God, there would be no Apostle Paul, apostle to the Gentiles. The grace of God verified his apostolic office and gospel. Although the validity of his apostolic authority was not the core issue of the letter, the fact that grace is key to this secondary issue is significant.

Galatians 2:9 καὶ γνόντες τὴν χάριν τὴν δοθεῖσάν μοι, Ἰάκωβος καὶ Κηφᾶς καὶ Ἰωάννης, οἱ δοκοῦντες στῦλοι εἶναι, δεξιὰς ἔδωκαν ἔμοι καὶ Βαρναβᾶ κοινωνίας, ἵνα ἡμεῖς εἰς τὰ ἔθνη, αὐτοὶ δὲ εἰς τὴν περιτομήν·

and recognizing the grace that had been given to me, James and Cephas and John, who were reputed to be pillars, gave to me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, that we *might go* to the Gentiles, and they to the circumcised.

In Galatians 1:15 Paul explained the way God by his grace had called him to be the Apostle to the Gentiles. In 2:9 he told how the Jerusalem Apostles recognized the grace of God that had been given to him. Galatians 2:9 builds on 2:7. The phrase “recognizing the grace given” in v9 is parallel to “seeing that I had been entrusted with the gospel to the Gentiles” in 2:7.⁸¹ Some believe that “saw” in 2:7 and “recognized” in 2:9 are synonymous and that

⁸⁰ Ridderbos, *Galatians*, p.63.

⁸¹ Ridderbos, *Galatians*, p.89.

the distinction between them cannot be pressed.⁸² However, they are not equal statements. Rather they explain each other. Paul never unnecessarily repeated himself. There is a logical sequence. Verse 7 is what they “saw” (ιδόντες); that he had been entrusted (by God) with the gospel to the uncircumcised. Verse 8 is why they saw it (γάρ), because God had been at work in Paul just as he had been in Peter (though in different racial spheres). Verse 9 is what they concluded from what they saw; they “knew” or “recognized” (γινόντες), that Paul had the grace of God upon him. This needed a stronger word than “saw.” Having seen, they now recognized or perceived.

Although “the grace” does not have “of God” attached to it, this is understood throughout the passage. Paul did not go into detail as to the content of that grace. The natural assumption is to take that grace as the grace of the calling to the apostleship which he explained in Galatians 1:15. However, these two uses of ‘grace’ do not reflect an identical content; the content of one (Gal. 1:15) is Paul’s calling to his gospel ministry, the content of the other (Gal. 2:9) is the fruit he was granted in his gospel ministry. Galatians 2:8 gives what the Jerusalem Apostles saw as evidence of that grace. The evidence was the plain fact of the power of God working through his preaching of the gospel and the fruit of Paul’s ministry as seen in the harvest of Gentiles converted.⁸³ This was not evidence of his calling but rather of God’s blessing upon his gospel and his ministry.⁸⁴ The two were linked together and Paul rightly assumed the latter proves the former, but they are not identical. In Galatians 2:9 both Paul and Barnabas received the right hand of fellowship to go to the Gentiles, but the grace was recognized only in Paul. In doing this, the Jerusalem Apostles acknowledged that Paul’s role was different to Barnabas’. Barnabas was an Apostle of the church in Antioch, given the mission by that church; Paul was an Apostle of God appointed directly by Christ. By recognizing this grace in 2:9, the Jerusalem Apostles were by default

⁸² e.g. Guthrie, *Galatians*, p.82. If this were the case Paul would be simply be using different words for literary variation.

⁸³ Allan, *Galatians*, p.38; Cole, *Galatians*, p.69. Burton (*Galatians*, p.95) understands the grace as the grace of God, or Christ, including especially the gospel, but not excluding its results.

⁸⁴ Longenecker (*Galatians*, p.56) comments that the articular use of χάρις demonstrates that he was thinking of the divine grace in particular. However, the use of the article to signify that the grace was divine grace would be an unusual use. Rather, it is picking up a previous reference to God’s grace in Galatians 2:7 where the grace is mentioned but not given the name ‘grace.’ Here the article is giving definition to that grace which had been previously ‘seen’ but not ‘recognized.’

also recognizing the grace of Paul's calling to the apostleship in Galatians 1:15.⁸⁵ Paul has structured his recounting of the two incidents in this way, to imply that if his gospel and mission were accepted then his apostleship was too.⁸⁶ It is designed this way to act as a blow to the Agitators' claims. The recognition of the grace in 2:9 builds on the "seeing that [Paul] was entrusted" in 2:7, further highlighting his divine enabling. God had not only given the task, he had blessed it with fruit to verify that it was his work, given to Paul, and he was now working through Paul. The whole logic underlying Galatians 1:11-2:10 is not an attempt to give an autobiographical account of Paul's conversion, but to explain his calling as an Apostle (1:11-24) with the ultimate aim of proving the validity of his apostolic message (2:1-10).

In conclusion, the content of the grace in Galatians 2:9 is not identical to the content of the grace in 1:15. In 1:15 the content of the grace is the call and commission of Paul. In 2:9 it is the blessing of fruit on Paul's gospel ministry. This difference further highlights the centrality of grace to Paul's entire argument in Galatians. While discussing different aspects of God's work and while using different content to answer the situation at Galatia, the grace of God always remains the overarching factor. The focus of the argument changes but the framework remains the same. In using 'grace' in Galatians 2:9 Paul was referring to the blessing God gave his gospel ministry among the Gentiles; a ministry to which God had

⁸⁵ Paul's specific mention of the inner circle, James, Peter and John, strengthens the recognition he was given by the Jerusalem Apostles. James was mentioned first as the head of the church in Jerusalem, Peter second as the head Apostle, and John third as the one whom Jesus loved. 'Pillars' was probably a respectful term applied to them by the Agitators comparing them to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob who were called 'pillars' in the Talmud (Exod. Rab 15:7) (Duncan, *Galatians*, p.50). This was meant by the Agitators to show they were the recognized leaders on whom the church was founded. By highlighting their position as 'pillars' the Agitators probably meant to diminish Paul beside them (Longenecker, *Galatians*, p.58).

⁸⁶ Cole, *Galatians*, p.69. 2:7-10 not only shows that the Jerusalem Apostles recognized his gifting for ministry, but also places him on an equal level with Peter the "head" Apostle. He was recognized as the head of the mission to the Gentiles, as Peter was the head of the mission to the Jews (Ridderbos, *Galatians*, p.89). This was no small thing (Bruce, *Galatians*, p.118). The rebuke at Antioch (Gal. 2:11ff), follows logically as an illustration that his authority was recognized as equal to Peter's. When he called them those "who were reputed to be pillars" in Galatians 2:9, it was not a cynical or derogatory remark to undermine their reputation or their authority (Ridderbos, *Galatians*, p.89), for he had already acknowledged them to the Galatians in 1:17 (Stott, *Galatians*, p.44) and the account of the right hand of fellowship does not match with a derogatory remark. Rather he was making the point that those whom the Judaizers claimed to be the heads of the church recognized him as an equal and recognized his teaching. Most likely the Judaizers who had come to Galatia were claiming authority from these three in Jerusalem in their opposition to Paul and his teaching. He was countering their claims, turning the Agitators' claims against them by bringing out the significance of who it was that was agreeing with him (Guthrie, *Galatians*, p.83). At the same time the comment is worded in such a way to have the effect of making their recognition of Paul a secondary concern beside his direct appointment by the Lord. Any tone of derogatory cynicism which is present was directed against the Agitators for overemphasizing the importance of the 'pillars' at his expense.

previously called him. Paul could easily have said they recognized his ministry. In fact it would have been more natural, but Paul chose to use the more pregnant word 'grace' to highlight the centrality of the grace of God in this. That Paul's apostleship and ministry was not dependent on any human source, not even the Apostles in Jerusalem, is central to the whole argument of Galatians 1-2. Paul's explanation of the work of the grace of God in his life and of the recognition of it by the Apostles in Jerusalem totally destroys the credibility of the Agitators' accusations against his apostleship and lays the groundwork for his main aim which was to vindicate his gospel against their 'gospel'. From Paul's letter the Galatians should have been in no doubt that Paul was a genuine Apostle of Jesus Christ, not under any authority from Jerusalem, but receiving his orders direct from Christ. The way in which Paul has done this in Galatians 2:1-10, and continues in 2:11-21, skillfully brings out the inter-relationship between his apostleship and his gospel. In 2:1-10 not only has Paul answered any doubt that may have existed about his apostleship and God given mission, but also shown that his gospel ministry was a manifestation of the grace of God. He has laid a solid foundation to move on to talk about the true gospel of grace.

Three of the remaining four uses of grace are central to Paul's argument about the nature and content of the true gospel which he was warning the Galatians not to abandon.

Galatians 2:21 οὐκ ἄθετῶ τὴν χάριν τοῦ θεοῦ· εἰ γὰρ διὰ νόμου δικαιοσύνη, ἄρα Χριστὸς δωρεὰν ἀπέθανεν.

I do not nullify the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the Law, then Christ died needlessly.

The position of this verse in the logical flow of the letter is of the utmost significance. Galatians 2:21 is the conclusion to the incident that began in 2:11, but it is much more than just the conclusion of a section that is one among the many that make up the letter. The question often debated is, how does 2:15-21 fit into the flow of the letter? Is it part of Paul's address to Peter, carrying on from Galatians 2:11-14, or is it the beginning of the theological section which continues in 3:1? While the thought in 2:14 is incomplete without the thoughts of 15ff, 2:11-14 is probably to be distinguished from 2:15-21.⁸⁷

⁸⁷ It needs those verses to complete Paul's dialogue with Peter.

Galatians 2:11-14 is an historical case in point; 2:15-21 is a theological answer to the historical situation. Betz's structural analysis of the book of Galatians is most helpful at this point.⁸⁸ The flow of the logic of Paul's argument within his *propositio* fits within the flow of the rhetorical structure. 2:14 states the presenting issue, "How is it then that you compel the Gentiles to live like Jews?" 2:15-16 gives the beliefs agreed upon by all parties; that all men Jews or Gentiles are justified by faith not by works of the *Torah*. 2:17-20 deals with the contended point, which is the place of the *Torah* in the life of the believer. 2:17 presents the charge against Paul, that justification by faith in Christ apart from the *Torah* leads men to be sinners like lawless Gentiles. 2:18-20 begins the refutation of the charge by arguing that the life lived in Christ by faith is a life dead to the *Torah* but it is also a life dead to sin. 2:21 is the summary sentence to the section (Gal. 2:15-21). It summarizes the refutation by stating that seeking righteousness through the *Torah* nullifies the grace of God, which was delivered through justification by faith. Structurally, 2:21 serves several important functions within the flow of the letter.⁸⁹ Firstly, it is a bridge between the historical and the theological sections of the letter. Secondly, the wording of 2:15-21 is not a direct quote of Paul's original rebuke of Peter as 2:14 is, but is a reworking of the theological content of his Antioch answer for a more specific application to the Galatian situation.⁹⁰ It gives the theological basis underlying Paul's main historical argument about why Gentiles shouldn't be expected to live like Jews (2:14), which is the key issue the letter is addressing. Thirdly, it states the main proposition that the letter is defending; a proposition, which the *probatio* of the letter (3:1-4:10) will go on to prove.⁹¹ Fourthly, and most significantly, 2:21 serves a double function. Not only is it the summary of the *propositio*, it also functions as a statement refuting the charges brought against Paul. Therefore it is necessary to put 2:21 into the context of the issue raised in 2:14; the propositions within the section (2:15-21) that it is summarising; and the charge made against him (2:17).

⁸⁸ Longenecker (*Galatians*, p.80-81) also sums it up well.

⁸⁹ Barrett (*Freedom and Obligation*, p.18) calls this "a couple of paragraphs where history shades into theology." It is a summary of the theological content of the historical address to Peter, and at the same time lays down theological issues to be unpacked in Galatians 3:1ff.

⁹⁰ Allan, *Galatians*, p.43.

⁹¹ Or Galatians 3:1-4:31. The debate on where the *probatio* ends and the *exhortatio* commences does not concern this thesis.

Galatians 2:11-14, the last part of the *narratio* leading into the *propositio*, recounts a real historical event where the same issues had arisen which were now present in Galatia. Paul used this incident here because the answers he gave at Antioch were the same answers needed in Galatia.⁹² This section tells about a time where Peter was “not acting in an upright way consistent with the truth of the gospel.”⁹³ The issue at stake was whether or not it was right to “compel the Gentiles to live like Jews” (Gal. 2:14). Paul used his question to Peter as the key question to the Galatians. It was in response to this issue that he would eventually conclude in 2:21, “I do not nullify the grace of God; for if righteousness *comes* through the Law, then Christ died needlessly.”

Galatians 2:15-20 is primarily discussing the gospel contrast between justification by faith and justification by works of the law. The term ‘grace’ is not mentioned. However, as part of the section which concludes with a most significant statement about grace, it is very relevant for understanding the place of grace in Paul’s thought.

In Galatians 2:15-16, although the quote of what Paul originally said to Peter at Antioch is ended here and the *propositio* has begun, the transition is seamless,⁹⁴ for as Paul started the *propositio* he still had his rebuke to Peter in mind.⁹⁵ Because the theological principle underlying both was the same, the words were probably similar enough to be

⁹² Longenecker (*Galatians*, pp.73-75) understands the Antioch incident to be meant as a parallel situation to that in Galatia and has a good section on how they can be understood to be parallel while not being equal. Barrett (*Freedom and Obligation*, p.18) says Paul believed the Antioch incident to be relevant to Galatia.

⁹³ Galatians 2:11 begins ‘when’ not ‘then,’ which is how each new event had begun in the historical narrative of Paul’s struggle up to that point. Some have seen this as indicating that it is out of place historically. But that is forcing the natural flow of the text (Bruce, *Galatians*, p.128). The most likely time for this to have occurred is after the first missionary journey, while they were in Antioch with the disciples (Acts 14:26-28) but before the Council of Jerusalem (Longenecker, *Galatians*, p.71). For Barnabas to have been swayed to follow Peter, whatever influenced them must have been very convincing. For Paul to use the word “fear” of Peter’s motivation, it could not simply have been a fear of offending Christian Jews who did not share their gospel convictions. That had not bothered Peter in Acts 11 when he was even on the Jews’ home ground. There was more to it. Unfortunately we don’t know what that more was (Betz, *Galatians*, pp.109-110). Several suggestions have been put forward. Several are quite reasonable. The most convincing being that Peter feared that the Jewish Christians, by freely mixing with Gentiles, were putting the Church in Jerusalem in a danger of being attacked by militant Zealots (Jewett, ‘The Agitators’, pp.204-206; Bruce, *Galatians*, p.131; Longenecker, *Galatians*, p.75; Morris, *Galatians*, p.79; and others). However, with the lack of definite internal evidence to support these theories, a healthy skepticism must be maintained. The significant detail here is that Peter acted out of fear not conviction.

⁹⁴ Betz (*Galatians*, p.368) points out that one of the two functions of the *propositio* was to provide “an easy transition to the *probatio*.”

⁹⁵ Burton, *Galatians*, p.117.

interchangeable.⁹⁶ His use of the word “knowing” (εἰδότες) comes as no surprise in this part of the *propositio*. As was usual for the first part of the *propositio*, Paul started by stating in 2:15-16 the beliefs held in common between himself and those against whom he was contending. In this case that was the gospel content accepted in all the churches. However, he was referring to more than just common knowledge. The word also implies a personal acquaintance such as would be possessed by a Jewish Christian.⁹⁷ However, while 2:15 is referring to the birth status of Jews under the *Torah* as common accepted knowledge,⁹⁸ Paul was not using this knowledge the same way as his opponents would have. When combined with 2:14 and 2:16 it becomes apparent that Paul was using this common knowledge with a sense of irony before moving to undermining the worth of the Jews’ birth status toward being justified before God.⁹⁹ The plain meaning of the verse is, ‘we Jews were born under the *Torah* and not born outside the *Torah* like the Gentiles.’ The non-Christian Jew would have taken pride in that birth status under the *Torah* as a position of privilege. They believed that the Gentiles, being born outside the *Torah*, were, therefore, automatically *Torah* breakers and unable to receive God’s grace, understood as being dispensed through the *Torah* in Covenant blessings. The Christian Jew would accept those presuppositions about being born under or not under the *Torah*. They would even accept that the Gentiles were *Torah* breakers or sinners. However, the irony is that while the Jews took that as common knowledge and adopted an attitude of condescension toward the Gentiles viewing them as excluded from God’s grace, the Christian Jews realized that they themselves were also sinners, even though they were by nature Jews born under the *Torah*. Paul’s logic is based on an interchange of different meanings of the term ‘sinners’ here. The Judaizers’ definition of ‘sinner’ was ‘one living outside the *Torah*’ and was seen as a synonym for ‘Gentile’. The Pauline definition was “one who

⁹⁶ When in Galatians 2:16 Paul said, “even we”, to the extent that the Antioch discussion was still in his mind, the “we” would refer to Peter and himself. For both Paul and Peter, this was no abstract theological issue; it was an intensely personal issue. As a result of his Damascus road experience Paul had turned from the *Torah* to justification by faith as the source of God’s blessing. As a result of his experience with Cornelius, Peter had come to see that God justified Jews and Gentiles the same way, by faith. It is fair to assume that those in Galatia would have known enough of these two significant events to comprehend what Paul was implying. To the extent that Paul was bridging to the main theological section, the ‘we’ can be taken as all Christians. If this was not agreed they could not in all conscience claim to be Christian.

⁹⁷ Rudolf Bultmann, ‘γινώσκω κτλ’, in *TDNT Vol. 1*, Eds Gerhard Kittel & Gerhard Friedrich, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1964b, pp.703-708.

⁹⁸ Betz (*Galatians*, p.368) suggests he may even have used the language of his opponents but moulded it to his own message.

⁹⁹ Longenecker, *Galatians*, p.83; Lightfoot, *Galatians*, p.115.

falls short of the glory of God” (Rom.3:23) and included all mankind whether Jew or Gentile. This has led many commentators to comment that the Judaizers’ definition of sin was deficient. Further to that, the Christian Jews believed that both Jews and Gentiles alike needed, and had access to, the same grace of God, which was no longer dispensed through the *Torah* but through Christ by faith (Gal. 2:16). While among different sub-groups there were divergences of opinions on the details, Rabbinic Judaism generally was expecting that in the age of the Messiah, the Messiah would bring a new law, which was also consistent with the *Torah*.¹⁰⁰ Where Paul and the Judaizers differed was that Paul insisted that continuity between the new and old law was in the area of prophecy and fulfilment in Christ, while the Judaizers insisted the continuity was in the ongoing applicability of the old *Torah* for righteousness.

If Betz’s rhetorical structure theory is correct, and the plain reading of the text suggests it is at this point, then both Paul and the Galatians accepted that no one is justified by the works of the *Torah* and that one is only justified by faith in Christ Jesus. That was not the issue on which the Galatians were wanting to leave Paul’s teaching and adopt that of the Agitators’. They all agreed that entry into Christianity was on the basis of faith in what God had done in Christ, not on observance of works of the *Torah*.¹⁰¹ The issue on which they were departing from Paul’s teaching was that of the ongoing place of the *Torah* in the life of one who has placed their faith in Christ. The point Paul was going on to make was that, like Peter in Antioch, if they submitted to the *Torah* in any way, they would not be acting in accordance with the truth of the gospel which they at first accepted.¹⁰² This would of course mean not acting in accordance with the grace of God, for any submission to a requirement to keep the *Torah* is a denial of the grace of God.¹⁰³ The intrinsic nature of law

¹⁰⁰ WD Davies, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism*, pp.72-73.

¹⁰¹ Whether the questionable phrase, πίστει ἰησοῦ χριστοῦ, is taken as a subjective or an objective genitive makes little difference, it still places the focus on what Christ has done for the believer and not on what the believer has done. In these verses (Gal. 2:15-16) Paul placed the focus of our entry into the people of God; upon the grace of God in Christ received by faith, and he allowed the *Torah* to play no part in that. He assumed Peter and all other Christians agreed with him.

¹⁰² Whether or not Dunn (*Jesus, Paul and the Law*, p.191) is right about what Paul meant by “works of the law” is irrelevant here. Paul’s point applies to any use of the *Torah*.

¹⁰³ Räisänen (‘Legalism and salvation by the law’, p.72) says, “grace, faith promise, and Spirit are, according to [Paul], something diametrically opposed to the law. The entirety of Paul’s argument is, indeed, little more than a constant reiteration of this axiom.”

is that it must be ‘done’, believing or having faith is not enough. It is this need for ‘doing’ it that Paul saw as negating grace.

Studies on Judaism (Davies, Sanders etc) make much of the fact that Judaism saw grace and *Torah* as harmonious. However, at the same time they neglect to make the important distinction between grace and *Torah*.¹⁰⁴ The harmonious nature of any two concepts does not make them compatible at all points. Paul was pointing out where these two concepts are incompatible. This does not mean he misunderstood their aspects of compatibility.¹⁰⁵ Many of those who have unfairly criticized Paul for failing to understand the relationship of *Torah* and grace in Judaism have themselves failed to comprehend the subtlety of his logic at this point.¹⁰⁶ From the works of Davies and Sanders (whatever their shortfalls) we have seen that 1st century AD Judaism generally did not hold grace and works as incompatible. It is important to understand that this tension which Paul addressed may not have been the result of the direct teaching of the Judaizers. It may have been only the indirect consequence of their teaching. They may not have seen that their teaching, which elevated the *Torah* to the position that Christ alone, and faith in him must hold, was driving the wedge between grace and works. On the other hand, it is clear from the numerous Old Testament texts which required obedience to the *Torah*, if life and blessing were to be enjoyed, then works were always bound to be an essential part of the form of Jewish soteriology.¹⁰⁷ In Paul’s view obedience to the *Torah* was the path that the Judaizers pursued seeking justification (whether consciously or naively by implication is not relevant) and it was contrary to the grace of God in the gospel of Jesus Christ.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁴ Paul sums up this distinction well in Romans 11:6, “But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works, otherwise grace is no longer grace.”

¹⁰⁵ One needs to be extra sure of themselves before presenting a theory that proposes that they, as a modern scholar two millennium after the event and from a different culture, have a better understanding of Judaism than Paul who was both a contemporary and a former devotee. Even if he was a former member of one divergent sect of Judaism, as some claim, caution is still needed before claiming to understand his contemporaries better than he did.

¹⁰⁶ Not to mention the uncertainty of the assumption, which some scholars in studies on Judaism make, that the Judaizers Paul was writing against, had the same beliefs as those who wrote the Jewish literature that they have studied. This is a big assumption to make when scholars who are experts on the book of Galatians cannot agree to whom it was written.

¹⁰⁷ Westerholm, ‘Law, grace and the “soteriology” of Judaism’, p.67.

¹⁰⁸ Räisänen, *Paul and the Law*, pp.162-64. Räisänen actually makes this comment about the Jews. It needs to be adapted it to the Judaizers, because as stated above Paul was writing against the Judaizers in Galatia, not Jews in general.

Galatians 2:17-20 forms a unit as the second half of the *propositio*, which lays out the points of difference between Paul's gospel and that of the Agitators. These differences were concerning the place of the *Torah* in the lifestyle of the believer.¹⁰⁹ The discussion has moved from the agreed point of entry to the Christian faith (2:15-16) to the disputed place of the *Torah* in the lifestyle of the believer (2:17-20). This unit begins in 2:17 where Paul was denying the charge against his gospel that seeking righteousness in Christ made one a 'sinner'. Whether it was an actual charge made or one Paul anticipated from his many years of debating different Jews and Judaizers is difficult to say.¹¹⁰ Either way, Paul used the charge as a spring board to expound how seeking justification by faith apart from the *Torah* leads to a godly, holy, moral life, or in the terminology of Paul, to a life led by the Spirit not by the flesh.¹¹¹ Although these verses spring out of, and probably still have in mind, the actions of Peter and the Jews at Antioch, their place in the *propositio* was as a general statement of a spiritual principle whose primary relevance was the situation at Galatia.

As Paul moved into Galatians 2:18ff, the "I" he used was not primarily personal, he used it as a representative "I."¹¹² The truth he spoke applied to himself, but it equally applies to all Christians.¹¹³ As he moved to the area of contention between himself and the Agitators, the discussion moved away from the foundational issue of how one enters Christianity, to the ethical or lifestyle issue of how the Christian lives in relation to the *Torah*. His line of reasoning was that to go back to the *Torah* as a lifestyle after having done away with the *Torah* for justification is to establish one's self as a lawbreaker. Schneider goes as far as to say that it is the person who re-establishes the *Torah* who makes himself a sinner.¹¹⁴ The reason why Paul could say that going back to the *Torah* actually makes one a lawbreaker is because to return to the *Torah* is not to rely on the grace of God but to try to establish one's own righteousness through the *Torah*. Longenecker makes the point that it has to do with

¹⁰⁹ To understand this second half of the *propositio* as still discussing the believers' status before God, is to not pick the movement from the foundational entry point issue to the lifestyle issue.

¹¹⁰ Betz, *Galatians*, p.119.

¹¹¹ Note the parallel with Romans 6:1 & 6:15 where Paul also used μή γένοιτο to counter claims that the grace of God encourages sin. In those verses he also went on to refute their claims by explaining how those alive to God live holy lives, dead to sin.

¹¹² Bruce, *Galatians*, p.142.

¹¹³ Longenecker, *Galatians*, p.91.

¹¹⁴ Johannes Schneider, 'παραβαίνω κτλ', in *TDNT Vol.V*, Eds Gerhard Kittel & Gerhard Friedrich, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1967, p.741.

not just breaking a specific commandment but with setting aside the *Torah's* real intent.¹¹⁵ The intent of the *Torah*, as revealed through the gospel of Jesus Christ, as agreed on in 2:16, and as later shown from the *Torah* itself in the *probatio*, was that the believer's righteousness was to come through the grace of God, rather than through their own keeping of the *Torah*.

Galatians 2:19 makes a simple statement about the passing of the applicability of the *Torah* for the Christian's life.¹¹⁶ The Christian has died to the *Torah* to live for God. This is not an option; it has happened "in Christ." Having been crucified (perfect passive) was something done to us as an act of grace in which we are to trust. To revert then to the *Torah* for Christian living is to go against the intent of the *Torah*. The purpose of the *Torah* was that the believer should die to the *Torah* (διὰ νόμου νόμῳ ἀπέθανον). The believer is no longer under its jurisdiction. In order to exercise trust in Christ the believer needs to put into practice their death to keeping the *Torah* as something they do to obtain righteousness. Speaking of legalism, Burton says that subjection to the law prevents the life being totally devoted to God because it interposes law in place of God.¹¹⁷ In particular, the law replaces Christ as the object of our faith (Paul later expanded on this in Galatians 5:4). Yet again, although the word 'grace' was not used the contrast between *Torah* and grace was the dominant component of the of the framework of Paul's thought which is driving the logic of the verse.

Galatians 2:20 points out the positive way life is to be lived now the *Torah* has passed. Even where the believer is alive, it is not their life but Christ's life in them. Having said "I have been crucified with Christ", it would be natural for him to say "I now live with Christ." But he did not. He said he no longer lives. The only place in Galatians 2:17-20 that the emphatic pronoun "I" is found is where Paul said, "I prove myself to be a transgressor", "I died" and "I no longer live." This new life was completely of God; all Paul had done was die, and he could not even do that on his own. He could only do it through Christ. Paul's wording was very carefully chosen here to highlight that his new life as a Christian was of

¹¹⁵ Longenecker, *Galatians*, p.91.

¹¹⁶ This verse must be considered in parallel with Romans 6:14, "For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law but under grace."

¹¹⁷ Burton, *Galatians*, p.134.

grace through the work of Christ for him. While Paul did use the pronoun “I” frequently in these two verses, and concentrated on his own ethical, experiential life, they do not give the message that any credit should go to Paul. He had died; been crucified (perfect passive) with Christ. This was done to him by God. He lived because Christ lived in him. Christ had done it. He then lived trusting the one who gave himself for him and lived within him. Christ did it and continued doing it; Paul just trusted. Paul was describing a state of being which, while he was active within it, was fully reliant on and thankful for the grace of God in Christ. Grace is at the core of the new life “in Christ.” The dead to self, alive to Christ motif that dominates these verses communicates that this was not just a religious part of his life, while he lived according to the world’s patterns in other parts of life. It was his whole life. His whole life was dependant on Christ. The grace of God in Christ guided and empowered his whole life. To live by *Torah*, pushes Christ aside as the guiding life force.¹¹⁸

Even where talking about how the Christian is to live Paul could not help but inseparably tie it to the acts of grace which have been done for the Christian. Galatians 2:20a says, “I have been crucified with Christ.” This is a perfect passive. It was done by God. Galatians 2:20b says, “I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and delivered himself up for me.”¹¹⁹ Again the Christian is the passive recipient of the grace of Christ. At the end of Galatians 2:20, although Paul’s use of “I” is still inclusive of all people, the sense of Paul’s personal response of gratitude to the grace given cannot be denied.¹²⁰ Going back to the *Torah* would have seemed absurd for Paul after his Damascus road experience.¹²¹

It is undeniable that these verses (Gal. 2:17-20) show that the “in Christ” concept was important to Paul’s understanding of the grace of Christ. Yet precisely what he meant by “in Christ” is not as clear. The grammar leaves so many options that its interpretation in any one situation cannot be determined grammatically.¹²² With the many and varied uses of the phrase “in Christ” throughout Paul’s writings, in many situations with different

¹¹⁸ Bruce (*Galatians*, p.144) says, “The risen Christ is the operative power in the new order, as the law was in the old.”

¹¹⁹ This picks up the theme of the Christian’s deliverance in Christ, which was first raised in Galatians 1:4.

¹²⁰ Bruce, *Galatians*, p.146.

¹²¹ Cole, *Galatians*, p.81.

¹²² Wedderburn, ‘Some observations’, p.87.

meanings, it is not likely to be a formula statement. However, this lack of clarity in the meaning of the term is not an issue for this thesis.¹²³ What is clear is that the “in Christ” and “with Christ” language (whether locative datives, instrumental datives and datives of accompaniment) together with the “in Abraham” language suggests that both Christ and Abraham were seen as representative figures through whom God acts towards humanity. Humanity is “caught up” with them in God’s divine initiatives of Grace.¹²⁴ The concept of “in Christ” was part of the framework of Paul’s thought, but it was subsumed under the dominant frame work concept of grace.

The Agitators’ concern at this point was, if the believer is not under the *Torah*, what is to stop immorality and total abandonment of God’s ways? This was a valid question needing a good answer. Paul gave that answer. He answered that the Christian is to live by faith in the Son of God. This is not a removal from the jurisdiction of the *Torah* leaving the believer in a moral vacuum. It places the believer in submission under the lordship of Christ. Faith in the gospel of Jesus Christ does not lead to sin because it leads to death to the old man and a whole new life lived for God in Christ. This new life is “lived by faith” (Gal. 2:20b). This is also a grace focused view. The focus is on being given a new life of righteousness in Christ. This is the grace which Paul would not nullify by going back to (rebuilding) the law. In summary, the answer to fears of trespassing before God is not found in trying to be justified by the *Torah* but the opposite, the answer is the grace of God; a death to sin and a new life in Christ. Paul would not abandon this grace.

Galatians 2:21, the final part of the *propositio*, is the flat refutation of the charge and a summary explanation of that. The charge was probably that his gospel nullified the grace of God by nullifying the *Torah*.¹²⁵ He replied that, on the contrary, to place yourself under the *Torah* is to nullify the grace of God. Nullify (ἀθετέω) is a strong word. In the New Testament, and in Paul in particular, it generally means, ‘to invalidate a matter’, or ‘to declare it invalid.’¹²⁶ In the LXX it implied more the repudiation of an institution or person.¹²⁷ In this context the charge could have either of those shades of meaning; either an invalidating or a repudiation of the grace of God by invalidating the *Torah* (declaring

¹²³ Although it does raise the question, how it could be accepted as a ‘core term’ to Paul’s thought (as is done by Wrede, Sanders and Wright) when it is hard to know what it means?

¹²⁴ Wedderburn, ‘Some observations’, p.91.

it no longer valid for Christians, or teaching that Christians need have nothing to do with it). The charge against Paul mirrored in Galatians 2:17 confirms these likely meanings.

Longenecker believes that in this charge the Judaizers were picking up on ‘grace’ as a favourite term of Paul’s and using it against him to say that by omitting the *Torah* he was denying the grace of God in the *Torah*.¹²⁸ While the text supports his understanding of the nature of the charge, it is impossible to say categorically whether or not they were picking up on Paul’s term and using it against him. On the one hand, the concept of grace is contained within all of 2:14-21, and the term ‘grace’ appears in the refutation statement. On the other hand, the term doesn’t appear in 2:14, the issue raised with Peter. Nor does it appear in 2:15-16, the agreement part of the *propositio*; nor in 2:17-20, the contentious part of the *propositio*. While it seems unlikely that they used it; whether the Agitators used the word in their charge against him or not, it is clear that Paul in his own thinking understood their charge and the answered it in terms of the grace of God. If Christ is living in us (Gal. 2:20) and we have died with Christ (Gal. 2:19), then all Christ has done for us and is doing in us is flowing from the grace of God. This is the expression of the grace which Paul said in Galatians 2:21a that he would not nullify.

For Paul, nullifying the grace of God would occur because of the mutual incompatibility between receiving the grace of God through faith in Christ and seeking righteousness through the *Torah*. The claims of scholars, such as Davies, that reading a tension between grace and law in Paul “is a distortion of Paul,”¹²⁹ are hard to sustain in the light of verses such as Galatians 2:21. When scholars such as Davies make comments that, “There is little doubt that for him [Paul] the *Torah* was an expression of divine grace”, they are half right.¹³⁰ This would have been an accurate statement before his Damascus Road experience. Davies’ view fails to take into account the radical shift that took place in Paul’s

¹²⁵ Boers (*The Justification of the Gentiles*, p.56) understands Galatians 2:21 to mean, “I do not nullify the grace of God by the gospel as proclaimed by me.”

¹²⁶ Longenecker (*Galatians*, p.94) prefers to understand it as having strong legal overtones and quotes several examples to support his view.

¹²⁷ Christian Maurer, ‘ἀθετέω’, in *TDNT Vol. VIII*, Eds Gerhard Kittel & Gerhard Friedrich, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1972, p.158.

¹²⁸ Longenecker, *Galatians*, p.94.

¹²⁹ Davies (‘Paul and the law’, p.95) says, “the opposition of law to grace which has marked so much of Protestantism ... is a distortion of Paul.”

¹³⁰ Davies, ‘Paul and the law’, p.118.

view of the *Torah* and righteousness.¹³¹ Paul still saw the *Torah* as an expression of divine grace, but now he saw it as an expression whose purpose was fulfilled in Jesus Christ (Rom 10:4). Now that Christ had come, to see the *Torah* as the means of appropriating the grace of God was a rejection of Christ as the fulfilment of all to which the *Torah* had pointed, and thus, a rejection and nullifying of that grace to which to *Torah* pointed.

Paul had worded his refutation in such a way that it also flung back a charge at the Agitators.¹³² The clearly intended implication was that the Agitators were themselves nullifying the grace of God through their seeking of righteousness through the *Torah*. This Jewish view of grace appropriated through the *Torah* was not just inadequate, it was blasphemous to Paul in the light of the death of Christ.¹³³ It totally misunderstood and diminished the significance of the death of Christ as a necessity for those who are under the curse of the *Torah* and can not justify themselves because of their total inability to keep the whole *Torah* perfectly (Gal. 3:10f.). Paul constantly juxtaposed three key words; law, sin and death.¹³⁴ The *Torah* cannot bring life. In fact Paul went on to prove that the *Torah* does not bring a blessing but a curse (Gal. 3:10). To place oneself under the *Torah* places oneself in a position of cursing, not a position of blessing and therefore undoes the work of Christ. To seek justification through the *Torah* is to abandon Paul's gospel of Christ crucified (Gal. 3:1) and snub the grace which God has provided in Christ.¹³⁵

Torah was expected to be obeyed or "done" (Lev 18:5 quoted in Gal. 3:12).¹³⁶ Because *Torah* needed something to be "done" by people, Paul could not see it in any way other

¹³¹ Clowney, 'The biblical doctrine', p.19; Donaldson, 'Zealot and convert', p.664; Heikki Räisänen, 'Galatians 2.16 and Paul's break with Judaism', *NTS* 31, 1985, pp.543-553.

¹³² Barrett, *Freedom and Obligation*, p.21.

¹³³ Thus Paul who was a Jew himself found himself polemically opposed to Jewish teaching. The polemic polarity was not a racial polarity, but a polarity between those who, with Paul had made a complete theological break with Judaism and those who had not. This interpretation of the passage stands in contrast to that of Stendahl (*Paul among Jews and Gentiles*) who takes the view that Paul remained theologically one with Judaism and was not 'converted' but was 'commissioned'.

¹³⁴ Fitzmeyer, 'Saint Paul and the law', p.29.

¹³⁵ Bruce (*Galatians*, p.31) compares this verse to the letter to the Hebrews where the writer warns that merging with Judaism would be apostasy from the living God.

¹³⁶ Westerholm, 'Law, grace and the "soteriology" of Judaism', p.69. Both *Torah* and Paul's use of *Nomos* included the whole aspect of the Old Testament scriptures, not just the legal requirements (Davies, 'Paul and the law', pp.92-95). However, it should be noted some scholars, such as Gutbrod and Kleinknecht ('νόμος κτλ', p.1070), while agreeing that *Nomos* is much wider than the Pentateuch, still restrict it to God's legal requirements within the scriptures.

than as contrary to the grace of God. Now that the grace of God had replaced the “doing” of the *Torah*, grace was now the key that held the people of God together as one in the way the *Torah* once had. The *Torah*, or rather observance of it, had once been the key to defining the people of God. Now grace, or rather trusting in the gracious provision of God in Christ, had become the defining key to the people of God. This made grace the all important doctrine in Paul’s thought. No other doctrine or theological concept could be said to replace the *Torah* in this way.

In conclusion, this examination of Galatians 2:21 has shown us that to understand this verse it needs to be seen as the summary or climax of 2:14-21. Paul’s repudiation of the charge that he was nullifying the grace of God must be seen in the light of both the agreed point that justification by faith is how one enters the people of God (Gal. 2:15-16), and especially in the light of the points of disagreement over the ethical issue of the place of the *Torah* in the life of the believer (Gal. 2:17-20). The Agitators who were trying to lead the Galatians away from the gospel were saying that faith in Christ would lead to sin, because it nullifies the grace of God received through the *Torah*, which is his gracious provision for righteousness. Paul countered that by saying that he did not nullify the grace, for the grace of righteous does not come by the *Torah*, it comes by Christ. In fact the opposite to their charge is true. Those who seek righteousness by the *Torah* nullify the grace of God in Christ. He would not nullify that grace in Christ by turning to the *Torah* which will not give the grace of righteousness. In Paul’s concept of justification by faith, ‘faith’ was not intended as a parallel basis for justification in the same way ‘works’ were in the Agitator’s Jewish construct. Paul did not see faith as attaining justification in the same way as the Agitators saw works as attaining justification.¹³⁷ In fact he did not see faith as meriting justification in any way. It is rather the means by which the justification, based on the merit of Christ’s work, is received.

Grace was at the centre of Paul’s theology because it is the framework within which God relates to people; within which God justifies those who believe. It was also at the centre of

¹³⁷ The phrase ‘meriting justification’ has been deliberately avoided, for, contrary to the traditional Reformed view, there is no concrete evidence that those in Galatia were teaching this. If the view that these Agitators were in the same mould as the Jews in Acts 15:1 is correct, then they may have taught that justification could be merited by observance of the law. But however much this seems probable, it remains a theory like the others, without concrete evidence.

his personal experience of God; firstly, in his conversion (Gal. 15-16), or call, on the Damascus road. Secondly, it was at the centre of how he lived life (Gal. 2:17-20). Grace was central to Paul both for the Christian's entry into the people of God and also for their lifestyle as a Christian. The secondary frame work concept of 'in Christ' also featured in these verses. That Paul used the term 'grace' as the core of his repudiation of the charge against him (Gal. 2:21) which summed up the *propositio* shows what a dominant part it played in the framework of his thinking. In this verse this dominant concept of his framework surfaces to also be at the centre of his focus.

Galatians 3:18 εἰ γὰρ ἐκ νόμου ἡ κληρονομία, οὐκέτι ἐξ ἐπαγγελίας· τῷ δὲ Ἀβραάμ δι' ἐπαγγελίας κεχάρισται ὁ θεός.

For if the inheritance is based on law, it is no longer based on a promise; but God has granted it to Abraham by means of a promise.

This next verse where the term 'grace' appears is the only appearance of the term within the *probatio* of the letter. However, yet again it occurs in a significant position. Galatians 3:18 is the conclusion to the the third argument (3:15-18) of the *probatio*.¹³⁸ Not only is it the conclusion to the third argument, it springs out of and builds on the first (3:1-5) and second (3:6-14) arguments. It is the conclusion to the first half of the *probatio*.¹³⁹ Galatians 3:19 then takes the argument on a digression on the purpose of the *Torah*. When the fourth and subsequent arguments (3:26ff.) recommence, they take a new line of reasoning.

This verse also concludes the development of a new concept introduced into the argument of the letter at the end of the second argument; the concept of "promise."¹⁴⁰ The inheritance of the blessing of Abraham was given by means of a promise.¹⁴¹ Promise is a

¹³⁸ Betz, *Galatians*, p.154.

¹³⁹ Longenecker, *Galatians*, p.134. Betz does not recognize the connecting logic between these arguments the way Longenecker does. The conclusion of the second argument in 3:14 introduces the concept of promise, which the third argument then develops. Betz, by his strange silence on the connections between the arguments, appears see them as three unconnected arguments, of which he ranks the third as the weakest.

¹⁴⁰ Promise is the idea through which grace is developed throughout chapter 3. It occurs ten times in the letter, eight are in Gal.3.

¹⁴¹ For the purposes of the argument the content of the inheritance is not emphasized. It was whatever was promised.

grace word. It was an act of grace.¹⁴² Always it was God's will that the inheritance should be given as an act of grace. If the *Torah* were added to that grace as a means of obtaining the inheritance, it would cease to be of grace. The part of grace in this is perhaps best brought out by translating Galatians 3:18 as, "For if the inheritance comes from the law, it no longer comes from the promise, but God graced [the inheritance] to Abraham through the promise." This way of translating "χαρίζομαι" as "graced" may be an awkward unnatural translation,¹⁴³ but it brings out well the way the concept of grace is central to this argument in Paul's thought.

Paul started speaking of a covenant in Galatians 3:15 then moved to God's promises to Abraham. It is obvious that by promises he was referring to God's promises to Abraham when he made covenant with him (Genesis 12:2-3,7; 15:1, 4-5; 17:1-14). He was using the terms 'promise' and 'covenant' synonymously. Yet he chose 'promise' instead of 'covenant' to make his concluding statement to the argument developed so far, because 'promise' is more expressive of the concept of grace; 'covenant' has implications of being conditional upon *Torah* obedience, 'promise' does not. It is the divine gift aspect of grace, not the conditional aspect he wished to emphasise. The many debates scholars have about what type of covenant or will Paul was alluding to in the third argument are not relevant here, beyond that it is obvious he was referring to a will of some kind. The fact that he moved so quickly to promise and stuck with that shows that his point was not found in the type of will to which he was referring.¹⁴⁴ Rather his point was in the grace aspect of the covenant with Abraham and its irreversibility by acts of man (or by failures to obey *Torah*). Once a will or covenant has been ratified it cannot be ignored or added to without violating it. In this respect God's promises to Abraham were just like a human will - they cannot be ignored or added to without violating his promise (Gal. 3:15). The *Torah* came after the promise. It cannot be added to the promise as a means of obtaining the inheritance. The *Torah* cannot be later set up to override or replace the promise (Gal. 3:17). If you try to make the *Torah* a means of obtaining the inheritance you are no longer paying any attention to the promise. You have set up something very different to the original promise

¹⁴² Stott (*Galatians*, p.86) points out that in the promise God says "I will", in the *Torah* he says "you shall."

¹⁴³ Ridderbos (*Galatians*, p.137) claims that "χαρίζομαι without the object is a technical term from the law of inheritance: make a grant, deed, something by will."

¹⁴⁴ Roman, Greek and Jewish wills have all been suggested. The assumption that he was referring to a specific type of will may even be a wrong one.

(Gal. 3:18). It needs to be of grace. If it is not of grace it ceases to be a promise and an inheritance, but becomes a reward.¹⁴⁵ The opposing contrast of *Torah* and promise here justifies the use of “annul” and “make of no account” earlier. The inheritance of the blessing of God can only come one way - either it is from the *Torah* or it is from the promise. If it is from the *Torah* then it is not from the promise; if from the promise then the *Torah* has no part in it.¹⁴⁶ Nor can it come from the promise with the *Torah* added as an extra condition.

The Jews of Paul’s time believed that Abraham kept the *Torah*.¹⁴⁷ They had various explanations for how he knew the *Torah* before it was given to Moses.¹⁴⁸ Paul’s point was that Abraham could not have known the *Torah* and did not live by it.¹⁴⁹ It came 430 years after God’s promises to Abraham.¹⁵⁰ He lived by faith. It was on that basis that he was declared righteous. Paul stripped the *Torah* of any significance in the life of Abraham. He asserted that to give it any place would be to invalidate the grace of God expressed through the promise of God.

The simple flow of Galatians 3:14-18 is that the blessing of Abraham comes to the believer by promise not by *Torah*. 3:18 concludes that the inheritance of the blessing of God was based on the promise so it would be of grace. The implication is that God wanted it to be of grace. The simple fact of salvation history is that God gave it by a promise.¹⁵¹ Underlying Galatians 3-6 is an understanding on Paul’s part that the *Torah* was only ever meant as a temporary measure until the people of God should come to maturity. God’s intention right throughout the Old Testament was that he should relate to his people on the basis of the

¹⁴⁵ Ridderbos, *Galatians*, p.136.

¹⁴⁶ Burton (*Galatians*, p.185) says, “for if the law effects the promise at all, it annuls it.”

¹⁴⁷ Betz, *Galatians*, pp.158-59.

¹⁴⁸ For various references, see Betz, *Galatians*, p.158 notes 53-55.

¹⁴⁹ Again the polemic divide between Paul and his opponents is not a racial divide between Jew and Gentile, for Paul himself was a Jew. The divide was between those who had made a theological break with Judaism and those who had not.

¹⁵⁰ He took the number of years from Exodus 12:40. Some Scholars dispute the chronology here. However, the exact number of years is irrelevant for his point.

¹⁵¹ Bornkamm (‘The revelation of Christ to Paul’, p.95) says that Galatians 3-6 is concerned with salvation history and eschatology.

promise and grace.¹⁵² Paul could have chosen many people from the Old Testament as examples of his understanding that God's ways are of grace not *Torah*, but none would have been as good a choice as Abraham. He was the patriarchal father from whom all the others were descended, the one to whom the original promise was made; the promise which those following him inherited. As such he was the one to whom the Judaizers were appealing in support for their teaching. When Paul used *χαρίζομαι* in the perfect aspect he was signaling that a past event (covenant promise) still had an ongoing result (blessings to descendants), which supported his case that the promise is still in effect for the descendants of Abraham.¹⁵³ The way God related to Abraham and all his descendants in the nation of Israel throughout salvation history is still the way he relates to those who are children of Abraham by faith. By connecting Abraham and Christ, Paul had moved from the beginnings of God's salvation history to its completion and fulfillment in Christ and shown that it was all of grace. While salvation history emerges from this passage as a significant component of the framework of Paul's thought, grace remained the dominant concept of his framework.

Also underlying Galatians 3 and closely related to the concept of salvation history is the apocalyptic concept of the two ages. Paul understood that God had, by his grace through Jesus Christ, brought in a new age which he had always promised to do. His concern in Galatians was the place of the *Torah* and faith in the people of God in the new age. In the first half of the *probatio* (Gal 3:1-18) and in this verse in particular (Gal. 3:18) he was dealing with the continuity of the place of faith that spans both ages. His digression on the place of the *Torah* (Gal. 3:19-25) shows the place of the *Torah* in the old age and the discontinuity between the ages regarding the place of the *Torah* in the life of the believer.

¹⁵² The choosing of Abraham was an act of grace. Grace was exhibited when Abel was chosen not Cain. This was repeated when Isaac was chosen not Ishmael. Jacob received the promised blessing not Esau. Judah was graced with God's blessing for kingship not Reuben. David received the promises not Eliab. God gave (graced) Solomon the throne not Amnon. God dealt with them all by grace. Throughout the Old Testament the believers were pointed forward to the promises of God. The test was, would they trust God to keep his promise? Would Abraham trust God for a child and a land? Would Moses trust God's promise to lead them to the Promised Land? Would David wait for the crown and a house as a gift from God or try to take it himself? Could Isaiah and the prophets believe the messiah would restore fallen Israel, grant the new covenant and give the new Jerusalem and the new temple? The repeated message of the Old Testament was that sinful Israel could not atone for her sin. Righteousness for Israel could only come through God's gift to her. God must provide the sacrifice. He must raise up the judge. He must choose a king and priest. He must send the Messiah.

¹⁵³ Bruce, *Galatians*, p.174.

These eschatological concerns of Paul's suggest that an eschatological outlook was also a significant component of his theological framework, but again it did not hold the dominant place which grace did.¹⁵⁴

In conclusion, Galatians 3:18, the climax of the first half of the *probatio*, shows us that while eschatological concerns were part of the framework of Paul's thought, grace was the dominant concept because he understood that grace has always been God's way throughout salvation history. To expect to receive the promised inheritance through the *Torah* was to go against the very nature of the promise and thus against the grace of God.¹⁵⁵ The *Torah* had a distinct role for the people of God within the old age, a purpose which has now passed with the coming of Christ.

Galatians 5:4 κατηργήθητε ἀπὸ Χριστοῦ, οἵτινες ἐν νόμῳ δικαιοῦσθε, τῆς χάριτος ἐξεπέσατε.

Galatians 5:4 You have been severed from Christ, you who are seeking to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace.

Galatians 5:4 is located in a key structural position in the letter. The last section of the letter, the *exhortatio* (5:1-6:10), often called the ethical or hortatory section, deals with the Christian lifestyle. Paul addressed the incompatibility of grace and *Torah* for forensic righteousness in the first half of the *propositio* (2:15-16), then expanded on that in the *probatio* (3:1-4:31).¹⁵⁶ Then in the *exhortatio* (5:1-6:10) he expanded on the incompatibility of *Torah* and grace for righteousness in the Christian's lifestyle, which he

¹⁵⁴ The issue of Paul's eschatology is a complex one. His concept of the new age, manifest in its fulfilment in Jesus Christ, can rightly be described as part of his eschatology. However, in Galatians 5:5 it will also be seen that his eschatology also incorporated the concept of living by faith now "awaiting the hope of righteousness" (at the final judgement). That is why Käsemann said that Paul has a "double eschatology." Because in one sense the new age had already come in Christ, but in another sense it was yet to find its consummation in the final judgment.

¹⁵⁵ Longenecker (*Galatians*, p.134) says that promise and *Torah* are diametrically opposed when thought of in terms of acceptance before God. This is a good comment in terms of the entry point into the people of God. What Longenecker fails to add when discussing this verse in his commentary is that in the new age this diametric opposition also applies to the *Torah* and grace for the lifestyle of the people of God. He fails to make this addition because he understands the inheritance in terms of salvation (entry point) alone and does not appear to recognize the non-salvation aspects of the blessings promised to the children of Abraham (e.g. maturity through the Spirit, Gal 3:3; 3:14, 4:6).

¹⁵⁶ Though it must be noted that a good case can be made that many of the arguments presented in Galatians 3:1-4:31 (in particular 4:8-4:31 which some have included in the *exhortatio*) also have an application to the place of righteousness with the Christian lifestyle.

had raised at the end of the *narratio* (2:14) and addressed in the second half of the *propositio* (2:17-20). The *exhortatio* can itself be sub-divided into three sections (5:1-12, 5:13-24, 5:25-6:10).¹⁵⁷ The function of the first of these sections, where the verse under discussion occurs, is not straight forward. Betz' structural analysis has problems at this point. While 5:1-12 is introducing the exhortation to a Christian lifestyle, it is also summarizing the conclusions of the *probatio* as they apply to the Christian lifestyle.¹⁵⁸ It is best to understand Galatians 5:1-12, while being part of the *exhortatio*, as functioning as a transitory bridge section between the *probatio* and the *exhortatio*.

Paul's use of the term 'grace' within Galatians 5:4 is significant. Among each of the several possible ways of understanding this structural problem, the place of grace within this key structural position in the letter remains significant.¹⁵⁹ If Galatians 5:1-12 is simply the introduction to the *exhortatio*, then grace is part of the introduction to the section addressing how the Christian should live. If it is also a summary of the content of the preceding *probatio*, then grace is part of the summary of the arguments proving Paul's case. If it is a transitory bridge, then grace is part of the link between the arguments and the exhortation. It could also be seen together with the *propositio* (2:15-21) as an *inclusio* around the main theological section. In this case grace, which features in both sections, is a significant part of that *inclusio*. This would mean that grace is part of an inner *inclusio* within the wider greeting and farewell *inclusio*.

Within the section Galatians 5:4 needs to be understood in the light of both what precedes and follows it. It is preceded by, and forms the conclusion to, the introductory exhortation not to submit to circumcision in the previous verse. But perhaps more importantly, it is followed by verses which highlight the 'in Christ' lifestyle. The "you", "we" contrast between Galatians 5:4 and 5:5 is stark. The two verses are juxtaposed for effect and, therefore, cannot be dealt with in a disjointed manner.

¹⁵⁷ Betz, *Galatians*, p.254.

¹⁵⁸ Meeks ('Review of Galatians', p.305) goes as far as to say, "The first part of chap.5 makes more sense as the conclusion of the argument that goes before than as the introduction to a different style. Paraenesis in the narrow sense only begins with 5:13."

¹⁵⁹ It is not the place of this thesis to resolve the issue of the structure of this part of the letter.

The section commences with a call to Christian freedom, then launches into an exhortation not to submit to circumcision. Paul had no problem with circumcision in itself (Gal. 5:6; Acts 16:3). The issue at Galatia and the reason for such strong words as are found in Galatians 5:2-4 was that the Galatians were being persuaded to make a commitment to live by the *Torah*, like Jews, as the way of access to the blessing of God. Circumcision symbolized a commitment to a whole way of life, to become a son of the *Torah*.¹⁶⁰ Paul saw a commitment to the *Torah* through circumcision as a dependence on the *Torah* for righteousness.¹⁶¹ It demands an all or nothing devotion.¹⁶² Not only did Paul see dependence on the *Torah* for righteousness as incompatible with dependence on the grace of God in Christ for righteousness, it also excludes Christ, who makes an equally all or nothing demand (Gal.3:1-10; 5:1-4).¹⁶³ The present aspect of περιτέμνησθε in Galatians 5:2 indicates an action in progress. This implies they had not yet submitted to circumcision. The past tense of the “have been severed” and “have fallen” shows that, although they had not yet submitted to circumcision, Paul considered the act of presently moving toward it as being an act of already not relying on the grace of God. Paul was against submitting to circumcision (a key issue for Paul) because he saw it as the opposite to living by relying on and receiving the grace of God.¹⁶⁴

In Galatians 5:5 and its partner verse the negative lifestyle action of seeking to be justified through the *Torah* (5:4) is contrast with the positive lifestyle action of eagerly awaiting

¹⁶⁰ Bruce (*Galatians*, p.230) states that submission to circumcision was accepting the principle of salvation by *Torah* keeping. His comments miss the mark because he understands the dispute in Galatia to be one of the way of salvation as a first issue. He fails to see that the first issue was whether or not the Gentiles should live as Jews, and that the issue of the way of salvation, while being foundational and relevant was not the presenting problem. The term ‘salvation’ does not occur anywhere in Galatians. However, he is right to point out that submitting to circumcision was an act of accepting beliefs about the efficacy of circumcision.

¹⁶¹ Whether Paul’s remark here reflects an accurate understanding of 1st century Judaism or not is irrelevant. He was stating his Christian understanding of what the *Torah* says (Longenecker, *Galatians*, p.227).

¹⁶² Longenecker (*Galatians*, p.226) says the fact that Paul pointed out the obligation to observe the whole *Torah* implies that the Agitators had not. However, this is not necessarily the case. In exhortation, stating the obvious and encouraging people to act (or not act) in accord with the known information is quite normal.

¹⁶³ As Cousar (*Galatians*, John Knox, Atlanta, 1982, p.113) says, “There is simply no way to tack circumcision on to the gospel of grace.”

¹⁶⁴ Comments such as that of Davies (‘Paul and the law’, p.95) that, “the opposition of law to grace which has marked so much of Protestantism ... is a distortion of Paul” are hard to sustain in the light of such passages.

righteousness by faith (5:5).¹⁶⁵ The contrast of “you” and “we” is “you who want to follow the Agitators” versus “we who trust in Christ.”¹⁶⁶ Thus Paul was laying before the Galatians the concept that the place in which they sought grace and righteousness determined whether they became part of the “you” or the “we.”

The Agitators had probably told the Galatians that by submitting to the *Torah* they were not going against the grace of God or the gospel of Jesus Christ. Paul informed them otherwise. He took as an agreed assumption that the blessing of God comes by God’s grace. Falling from grace equals failing to receive the promised blessing of God. The implication is that falling from grace was something that neither he nor the Galatians wanted to happen. For receiving that grace which consists of the promised blessing of God, sharing in the inheritance promised to Abraham, was what both he and the Judaizers were holding out to the Galatians. Having established in Galatians 5:3 that submission to the *Torah* is an all or nothing affair, he completed the logic by pointing out that to rely on *Torah* keeping is exclusive of relying on the grace of God and the gospel of Jesus Christ. He went further and stated it in the terms that pursuing righteousness through the *Torah* is to actively choose to cut yourself off from Christ and the grace of God as the source of God’s blessing of righteousness for the sons of Abraham.

In conclusion, in Galatians 5:5 Paul pointed out that for the one who lives by faith in Christ righteousness is an eschatological hope which is received as the fruit of living in the Spirit by faith. In this section, like in the section containing Galatians 3:18, Paul’s eschatological framework surfaces, yet within the section it remains dominated by the framework concept of grace. Grace is again structurally in a key position in the letter. Paul placed it logically at the centre of the introduction to his exhortation to a Christian lifestyle. Paul again has emphasized that the Christian is to live by grace not by *Torah*. Unless the believer is living through the Spirit eagerly expecting righteousness by faith, they have fallen from grace.

The question right through this letter is, how is the grace of God’s blessings appropriated? Both sides of this dispute knew that the blessing of God come by grace but the dispute was,

¹⁶⁵ Literally it reads “you who are being justified”, but the sense is best understood as that of trying to be justified (Morris, *Galatians*, p.156).

¹⁶⁶ Morris, *Galatians*, p.156.

how did they access that grace? The Judaizers were telling the Galatians that in addition to believing in Christ they needed to submit to the *Torah* as the path to God's blessing (Gal. 3:3). Paul was telling them that Christ alone is the path to God's blessing. Paul was telling them if they circumcised themselves they were then relying fully on keeping all the *Torah* of God (Gal 5:3). It was not that circumcision in itself severed them from Christ or made them fall from grace. Paul made that clear in Galatians 5:6, but rather what Paul was writing against was circumcision and keeping the *Torah* in general as an act expected to receive God's blessing. For when the blessing is expected from observing the *Torah*, apart from that really being a path to God's curse (Gal. 3:10), it is no longer being sought as a free gift in Christ. When it is not sought as a free gift in Christ, it is not of God's grace. For Paul, grace was central to the whole argument against the teachings of the Judaizers. His aim was to show them that Christ and not the *Torah* is where the grace of God is expressed as the source of blessing.

The last use of the term grace is in Galatians 6:18. This is the conclusion of the letter and is part of the *inclusio* which was covered when Galatians 1:3 was discussed.

The following conclusions can be drawn about the part that grace played in Paul's thought as he gave his answer to the situation at Galatia. The term 'grace' is present in every structural section of the letter, often in key places. The occurrence of the term 'grace' in the *inclusios* of all Paul's letters shows its place within his general presuppositions and attitudes to all issues he addressed; it was central to the framework within which he thought. He deliberately answered the situation at Galatia in such a way that his framework of grace was also explicitly obvious as a key component in his message. Where it occurred in the *exordium* (1:6), it reveals that in the Galatian situation, although they did not warrant any thanksgiving, grace still dominated that prominent place in his thought as he launched into what he saw as the key issue; the Galatians' abandonment of the grace of the gospel of Christ. Then in the *narratio*, where he was settling the secondary but foundational issue of his apostolic authority, the term has a central position in two accounts where Paul could easily have omitted the term. He chose to interpret both his call and appointment as an Apostle (1:15), then the recognition of his ministry by the Jerusalem Apostles (2:9) through the term 'grace'.

In the conclusion of the *propositio*, in the key sentence of refutation in the whole letter (2:21) grace is the central theological term. Grace is what Paul adamantly asserted he would not deny. The grace of Christ is the key to forensic righteousness (2:15-16). It is the key to living for God (2:17-20). In the *probatio*, grace only occurs once in a large section, but here again it is in a pivotal position at the conclusion of the first half of the *probatio*. Paul clarified some of the history of Abraham and the *Torah* to show that the way of grace (through promise in this case) has always been God's way. The coming of the *Torah* did not change that. In other parts of the *propositio* he complemented that message by pointing out the temporary nature of the *Torah* in the history of God's people. Grace was central to Paul's thought because it has been central to God's ways throughout salvation history. Salvation history does emerge here as a part of the framework of Paul's thought, but it remains subsumed under the dominant framework concept of grace. To a lesser extent the eschatological outlook of Paul's framework also emerges, but again it is dominated by the concept of grace.

In the *exhortatio*, where Paul exhorted the believers to a Christian lifestyle, he called submission to circumcision (the main action he is warning against) "falling from grace" (5:4). On the flip side to that, in the next verse (5:5) where he stated the appropriate positive response (*I.e.* how not to fall from grace or stay in grace) the emphasis was on the work of the Spirit in the believer and in their waiting by faith for God's gift of righteousness. An eschatological outlook emerges here as part of the framework of Paul's thought, but it plays a secondary role to grace by explaining how the believer avoids falling from grace through focusing on the eschatological hope of righteousness. As Paul introduced the essence of both the appropriate and inappropriate Christian lifestyle (5:1-6), which he would go on to expand into greater detail (5:7-6:10), he explained it around the concept of grace. Grace is also the key concept to living the Christian lifestyle. In none of the above sections was the use of the term 'grace' demanded by the situation, but Paul used it because it was central to both his theological framework and his thoughts about the gospel, which he saw as the answer to the situation at Galatia.

Paul was not anti-law. God inspired the *Torah*, but it had a distinct purpose for the Old Testament people of Israel. It was inappropriate in the light of the gospel, and the new covenant, to impose it on the New Testament church. The *Torah* went contrary to God's New Testament purposes. Paul was not anti-circumcision but all that could be said of the *Torah* could be said of circumcision. Some scholars have said that the letter to the Galatians is all about Christian freedom and not being enslaved to the *Torah*.¹⁶⁷ It is easy to see why verses such as Galatians 5:1ff. might lead to such views.¹⁶⁸ However, while freedom is a significant theme in parts of the letter, it is only in parts, and even there its place within the letter is best understood in the light of the central position of grace. The grace of God and a life of slavery to the *Torah* are incompatible.¹⁶⁹ Freedom in the Christian lifestyle is one of the main fruits of the grace of God; while slavery is one of the fruits of seeking the blessings of God through the *Torah*. When Paul exhorted the believers in Galatia to freedom he was again reiterating the *Torah* versus grace axiom but this time from the angle of the fruits they were pursuing.

Another way of viewing the place of grace in Paul's thought is to see that Paul answered the issues at Galatia in three ways; the historical approach (Gal 1-2:14); the doctrinal approach (Gal 2:15-4); and the pastoral approach (Gal 5-6). Grace appears as central to the answer in all three parts. Or alternatively, there are several levels of going into the letter; the general *inclusio* of all Paul said; the secondary issue of Paul's apostolic authority, the primary issue of the gospel, and the lifestyle issue of how they should then live. Again grace is central to all levels of the letter.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁷ Bring, *Galatians*, p.9.

¹⁶⁸ It is perhaps no coincidence that many of the commentaries that give freedom a prominent place in the letter are published around the 1960's when freedom was a social concern.

¹⁶⁹ The nature of the slavery to Christ is very different to that of the bondage to the *Torah*, which Paul described in Galatians. Bondage to the *Torah* was imprisonment with a pedagogue; like being the slave without an inheritance. Slavery to Christ doesn't fit those images. In Romans, where the slavery imagery was used, the issue was under whose authority the believer resided; Christ's or the law's?

¹⁷⁰ Betz (*Galatians*, p.30) uses another structural view again. Even though it also supports the thesis that grace is central to Paul's thought, it has been restricted to the footnotes because it does not spring naturally from the texts where the term 'grace' is used. Betz says that Paul has two main forms of argument. His main argument being from experience and his secondary argument being from scripture. His main argument from experience is summarized like this. What happened in Galatia should never have happened, but it did happen. Paul should never have preached in Galatia, but he did. The same applies to the Christian life in general. Salvation in Christ should never have happened according to normal Jewish standards. Paul's conversion to Christianity should never have happened. His gospel to the Gentiles should never have been accepted, but it was. Jewish Christians should never have had table fellowship with Gentiles, but they did.

That the blessings of God come by grace is never proved; it is assumed as a common understanding. What drove Paul's thought was his desire to explain the true nature of grace and the channel through which the blessings of that grace are to be received. While the gospel is the focus of Paul's argument, grace is the dominant concept of Paul's framework that regularly surfaces in the content. Grace is the lens through which justification must be examined.¹⁷¹

The next chapter will explore the focus of Paul's thought. His answer to the situation at Galatia is a message that manifests this focus. In particular, it will explore the place of justification by faith within his message.

The experience of grace is central to Paul's argument. He continually pointed them to the experience of the grace of God and asked them how could they act in a way that denies that experience.

¹⁷¹ Stott (*Galatians*, p.12) says that if we understand 'Apostle' and 'grace,' "we have grasped the two main subjects of the epistle." Betz (*Galatians*, p.48) says, "grace, [is] the essence of the Pauline message of faith." Boers (*The Justification of the Gentiles*, p.35) quoting van Dijk says that we all have a macro-structure which determines how we chose words and put together phrases, sentences etc. He calls this a grid into which we fit the sentences to form the whole of our message. For Paul, the grace of God in the gospel of Jesus Christ was that macro-structure, that grid.