



The Epistle to the Galatians #1

by: Ronald L. Dart

Hello everyone, welcome back. We've just passed into the merry month of May here in Tyler, and we're in the last weeks of the nicest time of year. The azaleas and dogwoods are gone, the trees are all leaved out, and the temperatures have not become unbearable—yet. As of now, it looks like the studio move will take place the week of June 16th. You can mark that on your calendar, and we'll try to have a useful sermon from the archives up to fill this gap while Gary is moving his studio over there and while Allie and I are on vacation. We're thinking about going up to Branson for a week. We may have a Bible study or a Meet the Teacher session up there somewhere. So, you want to keep in touch and we'll let you know what we're doing.

I have some questions this week but I decided to put them at the *end* of the study rather than the beginning. I had several suggestions from you on where we might go next with the Weekend Bible Study and, after giving it some thought, I decided on the Book of Galatians. It is such a *problematic* epistle and has been so *abused* in proof-texting arguments. I don't know how many people actually sit down and read it from cover to cover. Most of the time they go into it to find their proof-texts and go sailing off somewhere else. But when I looked at this, I felt like going back and laying some groundwork. I have seen things now. I've taught this book many times, but the book *Law and Covenant* brought some issues to me in a different light. And I thought we all might profit from a *fresh* look at the letter to the Galatian church. But before we do, there is some important foundation to be laid for a correct understanding of the Book of Galatians, and that is where we're going to start. So get yourself organized—be sure you have everything you need—and will begin after this quick break.

It was Peter who gave us, I think, the most often cited quotation about Paul and how hard he is to understand. He was finishing up the last of his two letters we have in the New Testament. In 2 Peter 3, verse 15 he said.

2 Peter 3

NIV

¹⁵ Bear in mind that our Lord's patience means salvation, just as our dear brother Paul also wrote you with the wisdom that God gave him.

¹⁶ He writes the same way in all his letters, speaking in them of these matters. His letters contain some things that are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort, as they do the other Scriptures, to their own destruction.

¹⁷ Therefore, dear friends, since you have been forewarned, be on your guard so that you may not be carried away by the error of the lawless and fall from your secure position.

That's an interesting way of putting it, here. When you really look at this, he actually gives us the key to what the danger is—it has to do with the *lawlessness*. And that is the common abuse of the Book of Galatians—to argue that the Law's been abolished, therefore no one needs to keep the Law anymore. Now, there's an interesting thought connected to this, as Paul put it himself. He said he was sent to the Gentiles and James, Peter, and John were sent to the circumcision. So, it is a fair assumption that Peter

wrote his two letters to those Christians who were of the circumcision—in other words, Jews. The comment that Paul makes is found in Galatians 2, verse 9:

Galatians 2

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⁹ [A]nd when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship that we should go unto the Gentiles, and they unto the circumcision.

So, that being the case, you have to think for a moment about who Peter was writing to—Jews—and why he had to warn them not to misunderstand what Paul was saying. Now, the particular areas where Paul seems to be misunderstood *commonly* have to do with the Law, and it's *easy* to see how Paul could be viewed with suspicion by some, completely misunderstood by others. Peter speaks of the error of lawless men and he plainly *exempts* Paul from that description. We need to keep this caution in mind, as well as the fact that Peter's caution was directed to Jewish Christians, not Gentiles. From the get go, I have realized that Paul was not saying in any of his letters that the Law of God had been abolished. But I will confess to having to do some fancy footwork dealing with some of the proof-texts that are commonly cited—especially those from Galatians. And it's only in the past couple of years that I've come to grips with what the *real* problem was.

The first thing that's important to know about Galatians is where these churches were located. There are two theories about the Galatians churches (and, by the way, it's not just *a* church in Galatia—it's Galatian churches). There are two theories: the Northern Galatia theory, the Southern Galatia theory. I think the North Galatian theory was hatched by some scholar who was on a quest for something new to write about, because we are told in the Scriptures *nothing* about *any* northern Galatian churches in either Acts or in Paul's letters. I think they live in the imagination of this doctoral candidate. But we are told, in the *plainest* terms, the name of three or four churches in *southern* Galatia: Antioch in Pisidia, Derbe, Lystra, and Iconium. I think these are the churches toward which this letter was written and dispatched. Another reason I think this is true is because Galatians was, for the most part, a *failure*. We never hear of these churches again; there was no second letter to the Galatians; there was never, ever, as far as we know, a visit to the Galatians churches again by Paul or anyone else.

But there's more than that to think about. There was something about the relationship of the early church to Judaism that I should have known but didn't. Where I finally came to grips with it was in a book by Jacob Neusner entitled *Judaism When Christianity Began*. I did grasp the ambiguity of the term "Judaism". I knew there were several "Judaism"s when Christianity began, but I didn't know as much about them as I thought I did. I had heard of the Talmud which Adin Steinsaltz calls the "central pillar of Judaism", but I only had the *vaguest* notion of what that meant. I knew that the Judaism of the beginning of the first century was *sectarian*. We all learned in our Introduction of the New Testament classes about the Pharisees, the Sadducees, the Essenes, and some other small sects. I gather from history there were any number of them—including some that we'd only qualify as being on the lunatic fringe of Judaism. But the dominant Judaism of the day was that of the Pharisees and the sages—the progenitors of what we today call "Rabbinical Judaism"—and I know that Jesus found himself in *continual conflict* with Pharisees, Sadducees, scribes, and lawyers and, for the most part, it was with these progenitors of today's rabbinical Judaism that he found himself at odds.

But not having a complete grasp of what they stood for, I overlooked a vital key to understanding the New Testament. Now, the best way for me to explain this to you is to key on a series of events that emerged out of Antioch in Syria. The church at Antioch originally was established by some Jews who had had to flee Jerusalem in a persecution that took place. (You'll find it described in Acts 8.) And they were Cypriot Jews, I believe, and they ended up over in Antioch and they begin to talk to the Greeks there, and ended up converting an awful lot of them to Christianity in the process. It was in Antioch where they were first called "Christians". Paul came to be in Antioch because Barnabas went up there

and then having established and seen what was going on, he went up and got Paul from Tarsus and brought him back. And so he, Paul, and a number of the other elders or what have you, in Antioch were in prayer—fasting and learning. Well the Holy Spirit came along and said:

Acts 13

KJ2000

² [...] Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.

And so, after they fasted and prayed, they laid hands on them and sent him off on their first missionary journey. And I expect they also financed them as they went out of town. I won't go into the details of their visits to Cyprus, Pisidian Antioch, Derbe, Lystra, and Iconium. I'll leave that for you to go in and read from Luke's account, because they're fascinating and there are a lot of small things worth knowing in them. But in sum, when they went from town to town they went to the synagogue and were, by and large, rejected by the Jews and *lionized* by the Gentiles. Make a note—a mental note—they apparently made *hundreds* of converts among the Gentiles on this journey. Well, they hadn't really expected that, but it happened and they returned to Antioch with the good news and there was just general rejoicing all around as a result of what God had done with them. In Acts 15, verse one we can pick up the story, though. Something happened.

Acts 15

KJ2000

¹ And certain men who came down from Judea taught the brethren, and said, Except you be circumcised after the manner of Moses, you cannot be saved.

Now, I don't know where these guys were when Peter came back from having baptized Cornelius—they apparently didn't get the message. And, of course, here was Paul—his mouth was open, I'm sure, when they came in with that idea because he'd gone all the way through Asia Minor preaching the gospel and, I presume, baptizing those people. And for all we know a couple hundred people who were Gentiles had been baptized and were in the faith. These guys say, "Oh no, unless they're circumcised they can't be saved."

Acts 15

KJ2000

² When therefore Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and dispute with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about this question.

³ And being brought on their way by the church, they passed through Phoenicia and Samaria, declaring the conversion of the Gentiles: [...]

Notice, declaring the *conversion* of the Gentiles.

Acts 15

KJ2000

³ [...] and they caused great joy unto all the brethren.

I mean, all of the ordinary people were happy as they could be about this.

Acts 15

KJ2000

⁴ And when they were come to Jerusalem, they were received of the church, and of the apostles and elders, and they declared all things that God had done with them.

⁵ But there rose up certain of the sect of the Pharisees who believed, saying, It is needful to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses.

⁶ And the apostles and elders came together to consider this matter.

And here lay an important key I had not really grasped until I read Jacob Neusner's book. Up until that point, I thought that there was universal agreement that term "law of Moses" referred to what was found, in its entirety, in the first five books of the Old Testament. Imagine my shock when I learned that among *observant Jews* that is simply not true. Nor is it correct to say that these same five books are synonymous with the word "Torah". Now, I think to a lot of Christian readers, they are. To observant Rabbinical Jews, they are not. Much to my surprise, I learned that the expression the "law of Moses" and the "Torah", to Jews, included both the written *and* the Oral Law. And this casts a *whole new light* on the controversy in Acts 15. The law of Moses and the Torah form—along with Mishna, Gemara, and the Talmud—what today is commonly called "Jewish law". It was this that the believing Pharisees wanted to impose on the Gentiles. It was not merely the Ten Commandments, with the Sabbath and the Holy Days—it was the entire package, which has been come to be called the Oral Law. And it was, in their view, *required for salvation*.

Now the view being advanced by Peter and Paul on this occasion is not a novelty. It was firmly ensconced in the practice and the teachings of Jesus. It also been firmly demonstrated to Peter and to Paul, both, on separate occasions. The Sermon on the Mount provides a very good illustration of how Jesus approached this issue. In Matthew 5, verse 17 he said this:

Matthew 5

KJ2000

¹⁷ Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill.

¹⁸ For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.

Now, there are two "until"s in this verse, and people miss it, I think. Heaven and earth passing *will be* the *final* fulfillment, and until heaven and earth pass all has not been fulfilled. The verse in the NIV reads this way:

Matthew 5

NIV

¹⁸ For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth disappear, [...]

And I'll wait for a moment while you go look out the window and see if they're *still there*

Matthew 5

NIV

¹⁸ [...] not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished.

The really big question that arises here, though, is why Jesus said this *at all*. Why did he have to say, "Don't think I'm come to destroy the law and the prophets"? Now, note that the NIV speaks of the "smallest letter" or "least stroke of the pen". That is a *clear* reference to the Written Law and Jesus saying, "I'm not come to do away with the Written Law." In combining the phrases "the law" and "the prophets" it's clear he's talking about the Tanakh—what we call the Old Testament, the written word. Now, Jesus went on to say:

Matthew 5

KJ2000

¹⁹ Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

Which commandments? *The ones that are written*—the jots and the tittles.

Matthew 5

KJ2000

²⁰ For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.

Now, at this point his *intent* starts to become clear. He is saying, “You are going to have to do *better* than the Pharisees and the sages.” He, right now, starts to differentiate himself from these gentleman in *every way*.

One of the traditions of Rabbinic Judaism is the concept of *receiving and passing on*. I was struck by some examples in Jacob Neusner’s book of how a rabbi would answer a question. He would quote a series of rabbis of old in sequence to answer the question. It’s what formed their tradition—the teaching of the rabbis. He would say, “Well, Rabbi #5 said that Rabbi #4 said that Rabbi #3 said...”, and so on until finally he came down to the answer that he had derived from all these rabbis. Now listen for the distinction of what Jesus said here:

Matthew 5

KJ2000

²¹ You have heard that it was said by them of old time, You shall not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment:

²² But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, *Raca*, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, You fool, shall be in danger of hell fire.

Did you catch the difference? It lies in the simple phrase, “but I say unto you”. He didn’t cite a single rabbi. He just, basically, said, “You heard from all these people of all time”—and he’s referring to the rabbis all the way back to the Great Assembly—“So, you have heard them say this. But *I* say unto you...” Now, this was the source of a great astonishment in his audience who said that “he taught as one with authority” and totally apart from the sages and the scribes [Matthew 7:29]. Now, I won’t walk through the Sermon on the Mount today, but this is the principle of the way Jesus taught. He set himself *apart* from the Jewish sectarianism of his day; he *dismissed* the Judaism of the Pharisees and the sages. I’m sorry, he just did. He went on to say:

Matthew 5

KJ2000

²⁷ You have heard that it was said by them of old time, You shall not commit adultery:

²⁸ But I say unto you, That whosoever looks on a woman to lust after her has committed adultery with her already in his heart.

Now, this is what he meant when he said, “We have to do better than the Pharisees.” They were concerned *solely* about the letter of the law. They could look upon a woman, they could fantasize about a woman, they could lust after her, they could imagine themselves with her in bed—but they could always say, “I am righteous. I didn’t go to bed with her.” Jesus said, “No way, friend. If you’ve lusted

after her in your heart, you've already committed adultery with her." So, what Jesus is saying—you need to look at the *spirit* and the *intent* of the law.

Now, with all this in mind we can look at a specific encounter with the rabbinical establishment to get this distinction more clearly in mind. It's in Matthew 15, verse one:

Matthew 15

NIV

¹ Then some Pharisees and teachers of the law came to Jesus from Jerusalem and asked,
² "Why do your disciples break the tradition of the elders? They don't wash their hands before they eat!"

Jesus just tossed that question aside. He said:

Matthew 15

NIV

³ [...] "And why do you break the command of God for the sake of your tradition?"

Now, when you look at this, one thing you need to understand is that when they speak of the "tradition of the elders", the "tradition of the fathers", the tradition of this or that—and what Jesus is saying here—he is talking about the rabbinical tradition that is derived from what *came to be called* the Oral Law. What many Jews hold as a belief—that God handed the Oral Law, spoke the Oral Law to Moses, who spoke it to Joshua, who spoke at other people, and they carried this on down through time. Jesus doesn't accept that. Jesus sees it as what it is. It is the accumulated judgment of Jewish sages over time which forms the tradition of the Jewish synagogue. "Why do you do this?" He said:

Matthew 15

NIV

⁴ "For God said, 'Honor your father and mother' and 'Anyone who curses their father or mother is to be put to death.'
⁵ But you say that if anyone declares that what might have been used to help their father or mother is 'devoted to God,'
⁶ they are not to 'honor their father or mother' with it. [...]"

Now, you need to understand the word "honor" as it's used here isn't actually referring...the word is also used like our word "honorarium" is—in other words, it's a gift of money or sustenance or help. And so here is mother and father, in need, and whom he might have helped. He said, "Well, I'd like to help you but I've devoted this money to God, so I can't give it to you." Well now, the Pharisees basically told him, "You don't have to do it." Then Jesus...and here's how he characterized what they were doing:

Matthew 15

NIV

⁶ [...] "Thus you nullify the word of God for the sake of your tradition.
⁷ You hypocrites! Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you:
⁸ 'These people honor me with their lips,
but their hearts are far from me.
⁹ They worship me in vain;
their teachings are merely human rules.'"

Now, that's Matthew, chapter 15, verse nine. And you may want to remember this: that traditions of these kind are nothing more than a bunch of rules taught by men, they *are not found* in Scripture. This is the way Jesus characterized what you today might call "Jewish law". These are not the only examples of this conflict, but they will do for now to establish the fact that Jesus was restoring the primacy of the Written Law over the Oral Law. And in Rabbinical Judaism, they basically have given the Oral Law primacy over the Written Law—that the Written Law can *only* be understood with the Oral Law, that you actually could obey God if you had nothing but the Oral Law. But if all you have is the Written Law, they say, you can't do it because it's too much stuff you don't know. But, you see, that's okay in their community, as they can make their own rules. But Jesus came along and said, "Your teachings are just rules taught by men. They have *no other authority*."

Now, you want to make a note of this. Whenever Jesus speaks of the "traditions of the elders" he is talking about what today is called the "Oral Law". I don't even know if that term was *in use* at this early date, because it is not found anywhere in the New Testament. If it *was* in use, then the refusal of Jesus and the others to use that expression is in itself significant because they did not consider the Jewish tradition of the Oral Law to be *true*. In any case, we can consider the Oral Law as the traditions of Judaism and *nothing more*. If you are a part of the community, the traditions of that community may bind you if they don't go contrary to the Written Law. And this is why Jesus said what he said in another place—Matthew 23, verse one.

Matthew 23

NIV

¹ Then Jesus said to the crowds and to his disciples:

Notice: *big* crowds of people—all of them Jews. Jesus said this to these people:

Matthew 23

NIV

² "The teachers of the law and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat.

³ So you must be careful to do everything they tell you. But do not do what they do, for they do not practice what they preach."

What Jesus is saying is, "You're a part of this religious community, and as long as you are part of a religious community you follow the traditions of that community—as long as they don't conflict with the Written Law. To do otherwise is to be divisive and to separate yourself from your brothers." It was Jesus' intent, though, for *his* community and *his* church to establish a *different* tradition based on his own interpretation of the Law as a rule of life. And that's what he's driving at when he talks to the disciples and says:

Matthew 18

KJ2000

¹⁸ [...] whatsoever you shall bind on earth shall be what has been bound in heaven: and whatsoever you shall loose on earth shall be what has been loosed in heaven.

This is important to understand that, for the church, once he said, "I will build my church, my assembly", he's talking about something very different from that one governed by the Pharisees and the scribes. We are not bound by their traditions, but we *are* bound by *Christian* traditions. Not only that, but Jesus would give the authority to bind and loose for the community the believers *to the apostles*. Their writings, then, form the basis for our traditions. Tradition is not a bad thing. Paul would later write to the Thessalonians, chapter two, verse 15:

2 Thessalonians 2

KJ2000

¹⁵ Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which you have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle.

So, the church had traditions, and we govern ourselves *to this day* by the teachings of Paul and Peter and James and, of course, our Lord Jesus Christ. But tradition can become *corrupted*. Jesus went on talking about the scribes and Pharisees.

Matthew 23

NIV

⁴ “They tie up heavy, cumbersome loads and put them on other people’s shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to lift a finger to move them.

⁵ Everything they do is done for people to see: They make their phylacteries wide and the tassels on their garments long;

⁶ they love the place of honor at banquets and the most important seats in the synagogues;

⁷ they love to be greeted with respect in the marketplaces and to be called ‘Rabbi’ by others.

⁸ But you are not to be called ‘Rabbi,’ for you have one Teacher, and you are all brothers.”

You know, it is utterly beyond me how any disciple of Jesus—be he Jewish, be he Gentile, or what have you—can ever bring himself to let men call him “Rabbi”. That’s Jewish tradition. It belongs over there. It’s okay over there, but Jesus said to his disciples, “Don’t you take that term”.

Matthew 23

NIV

⁹ “And do not call anyone on earth ‘father,’ for you have one Father, and he is in heaven.”

I don’t think he’s talking about your dad; he’s talking about in the *spiritual* sense.

Matthew 23

NIV

¹⁰ “Nor are you to be called instructors, for you have one Instructor, the Messiah.

¹¹ The greatest among you will be your servant.

¹² For those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.

¹³ Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You shut the door of the kingdom of heaven in people’s faces. You yourselves do not enter, nor will you let those enter who are trying to.”

Now, with all this in hand, I think we’re ready to go back to Acts, the 15th chapter and be in a position to understand what’s going on there. But we’ll talk about that next week. Right now, I’ve got some questions to answer, so grab another cup of coffee or perhaps a cup of hot chocolate, and I’ll be right back.

The first question this week comes from Bill Chappell of Stony Plain, Alberta. He says, “With Mother’s Day coming up, the history of it presents some questions. In the Catholic Church, the month of May is dedicated to Mary and the whole thing dates back to the worship of Mother Earth and other forms of early paganism and mother worship.” So his specific question is, “Would Jesus condone or observe Mother’s Day?” He says, “In my mind, I don’t think so. I’m also aware that expressing love to

wives and mothers is important. We need to make sure they know we appreciate them, but perhaps we should do it in ways that are not connected to the ways of the heathen.”

Well, it's true that in Scripture [Jeremiah 10, Deuteronomy 12] God says, “Don't learn the way of the heathen.” It's true it says, “You don't look to see how they worship their gods and use these methods to worship your God.” But, honestly, I don't see any connection between Mother's Day as it's observed here—I don't know about Canada—but in this country I just don't see any connection to the worship of Mary as the Mother of God or to pagan mother worship or the Earth Mother or anything of the kind. As far as I can see, all Mother's Day is about is the day—a *particular* day—to remind all of us (because some of us *will forget*) to honor our mother which is, after all, the Fifth Commandment, isn't it, along with dad? So, we got Mother's Day and Father's Day and I don't see anything wrong with this doing. It has to do not with Earth Mother or anything else, and you can get so far out in this radical anti-paganism that you can't even get up in the morning. After all, the pagans had breakfast and we're not prohibited from having that.

David Whitticum of England says, “How would you define marriage in our age, as in the dim past there were no churches, etc. If a couple lives with each other and do not go through a wedding service. How does one get married?”

Well, it's really not that difficult. I commend to you a chapter in the book *Law and Covenant*. I think I titled that chapter *The Oldest Covenant* and it's about marriage. The fact of the matter is that marriage involves a *commitment*. Now, in our society, in our circumstances, our state law in Texas, for example, has laws regulating marriage. They have a state marriage license, and what that marriage license then does is bring you into a marriage *contract* that is defined by the state. Now, what right does the *state* have to go defining marriage in this way? Oh, I think it has every right because, the fact is, the purpose of marriage in the Old Testament, the New Testament, in the old times, and today, is for the *sake of the children*. Because if a man and woman are going to climb into bed with one another guess what's going to happen sooner or later? There are going to be *kids* being born. And the state wants to regulate marriage because it has to do with the laws of inheritance, passing things on to kids, who gets the house if the two of you split up, and in order to keep social order going the state has its own deal.

Now, you can do your own marriage contract if you want to—if you don't like what the state is doing. You can simply get together, maybe get a lawyer to help you do a *marriage contract*. In fact, I don't do marriages anymore, but when I did I had come to the place where I made up my mind I was not going to do marriages in the future unless they were a *covenant marriage*. And in *my* definition of a covenant marriage, you would have to go at least twice to a marriage counselor before I would do it, and you would need to come to me with a *marriage contract*, and then you would have to make vows in the *presence of witnesses* so that you are *legally bound* before these people. That's what marriage is all about. And in ancient times—whether it was done with a piece of paper, whether it was done before witnesses—marriage involved a *contractual* or a *covenant relationship*. And where there is no covenant, where there is no agreement, all you're doing is *shacking up*.

Now, it's true that people could get married without a minister in front of them pronouncing words. I am not so sure that it was true that they could get married *before God* without making promises, without having witnesses, and without having the relationship formalized. In our society today, it's formalized in the traditional way. I don't see any reason to fool around with it.

Final question today: Mark Marino. “We're very much enjoying your studies, particularly since we're going through some difficult times, right now. My wife wanted to know where do you get that nice music that's played at the beginning and the end of the study?” Well, Gary Gibbons subscribes to various and sundry music libraries which provide him with what we might call “bumper music”. There is short and long—whatever we might need. So he's able to select things from that library which we use. I think there may be a name for it. If so, we'll see if we can track it down someday and let you know. But it's pretty exclusive to us in usage; you probably will not hear that little tune anywhere else. Mark goes on to ask, “More importantly, she was asking, ‘When we pray, are we heard directly by the

Father or does Jesus relay the concern to the Father? Should we pray to the Father or to Jesus or does it matter in some way?"

Well, when the disciples came to Jesus and asked him

Luke 11

KJV

¹ [...] Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples.

² And he said unto them, When ye pray, say, Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. [...]

So, consequently, I don't know that there's any particular objection to *praying* to Jesus, but that isn't what he said to do. He said:

John 16

KJ2000

²⁶ At that day you shall ask in my name: and I say not unto you, that I will pray the Father for you[.]

Now, what does "in my name" mean? Well, we are in covenant with Jesus Christ, and because we are in covenant with him we can ask God *in his name*. When my wife and I got married, her name was "Driver". My name is "Dart". So when we got *married* she took my name. She now signs checks, signs contracts, signs documents, "Allie Dart". She can do all sorts of things *in my name*. So I think it does matter. But when you talk to the Father, Jesus is right there at his right hand. He makes *intercession* for us. And what I take that to mean is—in a simplistic way of putting it—we talk to the Father and say, "I really need this", and Jesus leans over to the Father and says, "I think they do. Why don't you go ahead and give it to them." I think, again, that's a far oversimplification. Jesus said:

John 10

KJ2000

³⁰ I and my Father are one.

And, therefore, I would certainly say that when I say, "Our Father who art in heaven", Jesus knows what I have said and receives the prayer in the same way the Father does. I think we're probably a little bit over our heads at this point. I think the simplest thing to do is... You know, there's an old saying we used to have in the Navy, "When all else fails, do as you're told." Well, Jesus said pray, "Our Father". So that's what I do; it's what I recommend.

Mark goes on to say, "We both would like to know how concerned we should be about the presidential race. We understand that one of the candidates has a Muslim background."

You're talking about Barack Obama, and I think his dad was a Muslim, I think he may have gone to a Muslim school at one time. But from all I can tell the man, when he claims to be a Christian, that he really is. But I'm a little disturbed by the church he decided he'd go to and the preacher who is his mentor but, I think, yeah, I think you *should* be concerned about it. I personally believe that we live in a country that is governed *by the people* and since we *are the people* then I think we are *accountable* for what this government does. I would like to at least be able to say, when God puts me up there and says, "Why did you, when your nation did this, that, and the other thing?", I can say, "Lord, I voted against it. I tried to do what was right." So I believe that, as Christians, we really should be concerned. I think we should pay attention. And I really think, from my perspective, the most important issue that's going to be coming up in this coming presidential election is what kind of judges is this person going to appoint to the courts. Because we're getting to the place where the *courts* are beginning to be a stronger

legislative force than Congress. That's not good—and it's contrary to what I think the Founding Fathers thought about for this country—but it's reality and I think we had better be careful with it.

Well, that's all I have for this week. I'll look forward to talking with you, next week, further about Acts, the 15th chapter. You might read it ahead of time and be ready to go. We'll see you then.

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