



Littleton Bible Chapel

A Statement to the Congregation from the Elders

(This document is based on Dave's public sermons pre-resignation and drafted prior to the April 26th, Sunday Meeting)

Dave Anderson served this assembly as a teaching elder for many years, and we are thankful for him and his heart for ministry. It is with real sorrow that we address what this letter must address. Over the last several years a theological divergence has developed between the framework now governing his reading of the New Testament and especially Paul's letters impacting the understanding of justification, faith, and the covenants that faithful interpreters across the centuries have drawn from those same texts. That divergence, and our responsibility to this church given by Paul in Titus 1:9, is what we seek to explain.

How This Assembly Handles Doctrinal Questions

LBC is an elder-led church. That is not simply a governance preference; it reflects a conviction about how Scripture is to be handled and how the teaching ministry of the church is to be protected. The New Testament places doctrinal oversight in the hands of a plurality of elders, under the supreme authority of Christ and His word. This structure exists to ensure that doctrinal development happens through sustained, collective engagement with Scripture as led by the Holy Spirit, not as the accumulated fruit of one person's private study. (Titus 1:9, Act 16:)

This principle carries particular weight for the primary preaching role. Week after week, the primary teacher shapes the theological mind of the church, what people see when they open their Bibles, what questions they bring to the text, and what answers they expect to find. That responsibility belongs to the elder body collectively. When the framework guiding the primary teacher has shifted substantially in ways the elders cannot reach consensus on, the congregation is effectively receiving a different theology from the pulpit than we have discerned and endorsed.

This does not mean every elder must hold identical views on every question, or that serious theological inquiry is unwelcome. There is broad room for differences on secondary matters, but the historic doctrines of this church are not inventions of this eldership, they are the faithful deposit of twenty centuries of Spirit-guided reflection on Scripture, handed down to us as a trust (2 Tim 2:2). That deposit is not subject to revision by any single teacher, however gifted. Where genuine questions arise, they are to be brought before the collective discernment of the eldership and tested against that long inheritance, not introduced quietly and gradually through the preaching ministry of one man over an extended period of time, before the congregation has any awareness that a shift is underway.

The elders who served this assembly before the present team also share in this responsibility, as will those long after this team. After extended engagement with Dave's reasoning and the scholarship he has drawn on, our discernment has not produced a consensus for change. It has produced the opposite. We have studied these questions carefully and at length. We cannot affirm this framework as the basis for the primary teaching ministry of this church, and integrity requires saying so plainly.

Three Categories of Doctrinal Error

The church has long distinguished three categories of doctrinal departure.

Heterodoxy departs from a tradition's standards without departing from the gospel itself, a complementarian moving to egalitarian, for example. Serious, but it does not alter how a sinner is declared righteous. The response is correction.

Serious error is the middle category. This is teaching that does not explicitly deny the gospel but functionally undermines it by redefining its essential terms, relocating its ground, or obscuring the assurance it produces. This is where we place the issues described in this paper. Dave's teaching does not deny Christ, but we believe it impacts the objective ground on which these convictions rest.

Heresy is the explicit denial of a doctrine essential to Christianity, the deity of Christ, the bodily resurrection. Galatians 1:8 territory. This is not applied here. Dave's affirmations preclude it.

Why It Took So Long to Gain Clarity

The shift did not arrive announced. It emerged gradually, in content, in how key terms were characterized, in the scholars Dave drew on, in the questions he brought to familiar texts. Phrases like "righteousness of God", "faithfulness of Christ", and concepts related to the works

of the law began to carry different meanings. Because the vocabulary remained recognizable, and Dave continued to affirm grace and the finished work of Christ, it took considerable time before we could say precisely what the error was. We were recognizing the change only by accumulation.

Dave's theology was still in active development as we engaged it. At several points what he believed about a given question became clearer to him in conversation than it had been before. Until recently, it has been difficult for Dave to give a fully settled account of what he believes on key areas of doctrine, and thus, it was very difficult to determine a collective response.

This left us going back to the original sources recommended to the elders by Dave himself. We worked through N.T. Wright's positions, E.P. Sanders's historical claims, Matthew Bates's work on faith and allegiance, and related scholarship. The theology had arrived embedded in sermons and readings of specific texts, and its full shape had to be pieced together from the outside. The framework uses familiar words in different ways and offers no easy entry points for direct challenge.

The Pivotal Moments: Romans, Samuel, Galatians, and Acts

The concern first became acute during the Romans series. It became increasingly clear that the framework represented a substantial shift in how justification was being described, in what the righteousness of God was said to mean, and in what faith itself involved.

LBC's preaching schedule followed Romans with 1 and 2 Samuel to give the elders time to study Galatians together in private before returning to the New Testament. We were concerned that if Dave were to preach Galatians at that point it would be very different from how it has traditionally been taught at LBC. Most concerning was Dave's admission that he believed we had been reading Galatians wrong.

The Galatians study confirmed how deeply Dave's new scholarship had been absorbed in his mind. One example of that was significant debate over Galatians 2:16 which has long served as one of the clearest expressions of justification by faith alone. That text reads: "a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ." Dave's new view of that passage had been significantly impacted. If even that text was going to be substantially reread, the elders needed to understand what was at stake before it was preached.

Additionally, Dave had introduced the word 'Allegiance' from the pulpit, by his own admission, drawing on Matthew Bates's *Salvation by Allegiance Alone*, and it generated real confusion about whether something beyond trusting Christ was being required. Both the book and its author have drawn serious public criticism by those in Conservative Evangelicalism. Dave was

urged by the elders to stop using the word, and he agreed. The word was set aside for a time, but the underlying framework remained and even the word and its new definition would arise again soon as evidenced by his later public remarks.

The Scholarly Framework

It is our confident assertion that Dave's primary theological framework is that characterized by "The New Perspective on Paul". This assertion is born of Dave's book recommendations to the elders and others, quotes and definitions in his public preaching and, importantly, by his own admission to all of the elders and many others during the period discussed. For the reader's benefit we seek to offer a brief summary of that school of thought here.

The New Perspective on Paul (NPP) began in the church with E.P. Sanders's *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* (1977). Its foundational historical claim was that the Reformation misread the Judaism of Paul's day. First-century Jews, Sanders argued, understood themselves to be in God's covenant by grace, and law-keeping was the pattern of life for those already included rather than the ladder by which they earned a place.

Building on Sanders, James D.G. Dunn, and N.T. Wright drew out what this meant for reading Paul. If first-century Jews were not trying to earn God's favor through law-keeping, Paul could not have been correcting that impulse. His arguments about "works of the law" must have addressed something different, specifically the 'Jewish identity markers' (circumcision, dietary restrictions, Sabbath) that functioned as dividing lines between Jew and Gentile. Paul's concern was ethnic barriers keeping the nations out, not people trying to earn their way to God. Wright is the most comprehensive representative of this tradition, and his work appears to have shaped Dave's reading substantially as we quote him directly

"Recent scholarship has done a good job and a convincing job explaining that works of the law, that phrase, are specific to Jewish boundary marker laws. Again, things like circumcision, kosher laws, Sabbath. Paul's saying they are not saved, we are not saved, no one's saved by works of the law. We are made righteous because of the faithfulness of Jesus."

— Dave, *Romans 14:1–12* ("Weak and Strong, pt. 1")

"Since the Reformation with Luther and his dispute with the Roman Catholic Church, we've tended to read passages like this through that lens, anachronistically you could call it... Someone might come to a verse like this and think, oh, the Jews are legalistic law keepers and they're trying to accumulate enough good works to earn God's grace. But respectfully, I don't think that's what's going on here."

— Dave, *Romans 10:1–10* (“Goal of the Law”)

Where Dave’s Position Becomes Distinctive

Most NPP scholars, including Wright, either say the church has inherited what was promised to Israel or read those promises as fulfilled in the body of Christ. Dave follows neither path. His firm belief in a literal future for ethnic Israel leads him to affirm that God’s promises to the Jewish people are irrevocable and will be literally fulfilled. On this question Dave and LBC are thoroughly non-supersessionist.

What Dave draws from related scholarship is a reading of the Mosaic covenant as continuing to be relevant for Jewish believers, a framework in which Jewish believers in Christ retain ongoing obligations to Torah observance as an expression of their continuing calling. This produces an unusual hybrid: NPP interpretation combined with the eschatology of dispensationalism. The result does not fit cleanly into any standard tradition, which made it harder to engage and harder to name.

The Central Question

Reading Paul’s letters carefully, a single question drives everything else: What is Paul actually trying to address? The answer determines how every passage is read, what the key terms mean, and what the letters finally say to the person sitting in the pew.

Reading these letters plainly, as faithful interpreters across many centuries have read them, the problem Paul is responding to is this: human beings are guilty before a holy God, and nothing they do can secure their standing. Every attempt to establish one’s own righteousness, by moral effort, religious performance, or covenant identity, falls short. Paul’s answer in *Romans* and *Galatians* is the forensic declaration of justification: God pronounces the ungodly righteous solely on the basis of Christ’s righteousness credited to them through faith alone.

Dave has come to read these letters as responding to a fundamentally different problem. In Dave’s construct, Paul is addressing not primarily human guilt before God but ethnic and social division within the covenant community: how Gentile nations are included in Abraham’s family, and what role the boundary markers of Second Temple Judaism played in keeping them out.

The first-century Jewish context of Paul’s letters is real and matters. Dave’s engagement with it has brought some things into sharper focus, particularly around God’s faithfulness to Israel and the covenantal texture of Paul’s thought. The concern is what happens when the problem being addressed is reidentified at the root. When the presenting question becomes ethnic inclusion rather than human guilt, everything downstream follows.

At the foundation of this reidentification lies a particular historical claim about Second Temple Judaism: that first-century Jews did not, by and large, believe they were earning their standing with God through law-keeping. The Pharisees' problem, on this account, was not moral credit but ethnic and covenantal pride. Dave has stated this directly:

“They’re not, I don’t think, proto-Pelagians trying to be good enough to earn their way to heaven. That’s not what Paul’s rebuking here. They’re stubborn and prideful and unwilling to see that God has provided a phenomenal messianic achievement in Jesus.”

— Dave, Romans 10:1–10 (“Goal of the Law”)

“The Pharisees believed that salvation, I think they believed it largely came from ethnic separation. They were saved by keeping themselves clean from any contamination from unbelievers or sinners. It wasn’t so much salvation by law keeping, salvation by legalism or salvation by good works, but salvation by separation from Gentiles and staying pure from contamination.”

— Dave, Mark 7:14–23 (“Heart of the Matter”)

This historical reconstruction remains genuinely contested. A substantial body of careful scholarship has argued the picture is far more varied. Second Temple Jewish literature does, in places, reflect something much closer to the idea that human obedience contributes to one's standing before God. The historical claim drives the interpretive one: if first-century Jews were not trying to earn God's favor through moral effort, Paul cannot have been addressing that impulse, and the entire argument of his letters must be about something else. But if the historical premise is contested, so is the interpretive conclusion built upon it.

The Nature of Faith and the Ground of Justification

When the problem is understood as human guilt before a holy God, a particular account of saving faith follows. Faith is trust, the believer's receptive, resting confidence in Christ. It is directed entirely outward toward Christ as its object. It does not contribute to the standing it receives. Abraham believed God and it was credited to him as righteousness: the believing and the crediting are distinct acts, with the righteousness coming entirely from outside the believer.

When the problem is redefined as ethnic boundary-crossing, a different account of faith follows. If the issue is not human guilt but covenantal exclusion, the response the text calls for is not so much a receiving of an alien righteousness as a pledging of loyalty to the King who has broken down the dividing wall. Dave has taught this directly: our response must not just be mere belief

but allegiance and loyalty, fidelity to Jesus Christ. Saving faith, in his framework, is covenant fidelity to Jesus as King, with ongoing visible expression in the believer's life.

The concern is not with the genuine instinct that real faith is not merely intellectual and produces a life of devotion to Christ, that is true and we hold it fully. The concern is what happens when allegiance becomes the defining category for faith itself rather than its fruit. Dave himself affirms that our allegiance is not the basis of our salvation, that the basis is Christ's faithfulness. We take that affirmation seriously. The concern is that the framework as a whole leaves an unresolved tension between the stable affirmations of grace alone and the working definition of saving faith as loyalty with ongoing visible expression. The framework provides less resolution than the text itself does.

"We are saved not because of our faith. We are saved by the faithfulness of Jesus. And our response must not just be mere belief. Our response is to be allegiance and loyalty, fidelity to Jesus Christ."

— Dave, Romans 9:6–13 ("Not All Israel Is Israel")

"How do you know if you're elect? You're faithful to your Lord. Your allegiance has shifted from yourself to Jesus as King. From faithfulness to faithfulness. The righteous will live by their faithfulness and allegiance to their king."

— Dave, Romans 9:6–13 ("Not All Israel Is Israel")

How the Reframing Works: Key Terms and What They Carry

Once the presenting problem is reidentified, specific interpretive decisions about key terms follow as a natural consequence. The terms are symptoms; the prior decision is the root. The reframing uses familiar words with new definitions. It is this redefining of familiar terms that causes many in our conversation to ask 'why didn't I hear it in his preaching until now?' In the section that follows, we will deal specifically with areas we believe Dave has restated, reframed and reinterpreted key doctrines from the pulpit.

Works of the Law

The phrase *erga nomou*, "works of the law", appears at the most concentrated points of Paul's argument about justification: Romans 3:20, 3:28, Galatians 2:16, 3:2, 3:5, 3:10. In the traditional reading, the phrase refers to obedience to the Mosaic law as a whole, considered as a basis for standing before God. Paul's point is that no human moral performance can justify a sinner. In the NPP reading Dave has adopted, the phrase narrows to a specific subset: the Jewish identity

markers, circumcision, dietary observance, Sabbath, that functioned as boundary markers separating Jew from Gentile. Paul's point becomes that these ethnic distinctives do not determine covenant membership.

Dave has taught this redefinition directly and repeatedly:

"The works of the law were not just general works, and I think it's important to note that. The works of the law were specific boundary marker laws. Circumcision would be one of the main ones. So circumcision, but also Sabbath-keeping and kosher food laws, those specific works of the law were particular to Jewish identity. And in a sense, they kept the Gentiles out."

— Dave, Romans 9:25–33 ("Don't Stumble Over the Stone")

"These Gentiles do not need to take on the works of the law, like circumcision, Sabbath, kosher laws. These works of the law were parts of the law that delineated Jew and Gentile, the boundary marker laws. Those boundaries, the dividing wall of hostility, Paul says, are now gone."

— Dave, Romans 14:1–12 ("Weak and Strong, pt. 1")

"The Jews, however, pursued a righteous status based on Jewish identity. Works of the laws, we've learned, is tied up with Jewish identity... you guys, my fellow Jews, have held up the law as a badge of membership."

— Dave, Romans 10:1–10 ("Goal of the Law")

"It wasn't so much an elimination of the law wholesale, but the elimination of the law as a means for covenant standing or of righteousness... Rather, it's the eradication of works of the law as a means for membership and salvation."

— Dave, Romans 10:1–10 ("Goal of the Law")

When "works of the law" narrows to primarily ethnic boundary markers, Paul's statement that no one is justified by works of the law no longer addresses the universal human problem of self-righteousness. It addresses a first-century question about who belongs to the covenant community. The same redefinition operates across Romans 3:20, 3:28, and Galatians 3:10–11. If the boundary-marker reading governs, none of these texts address the universal human condition before God; they become statements about the terms of covenant membership in a particular historical moment.

The exegetical evidence against this narrowing is substantial. In Romans 3:20, Paul's reason that no one is justified by works of the law is "for through the law comes knowledge of sin", a function the law performs universally, not as an ethnic marker. In Romans 4, Paul moves directly from "works of the law" to "works" simply, contrasting Abraham's faith with works as such, not with ethnic markers (Rom 4:2–6). In Galatians 3:10, the curse falls on "all who rely on works of

the law,” grounded in Deuteronomy 27:26: “Cursed is everyone who does not abide by all things written in the Book of the Law.” The curse is failure to keep the whole law, not failure to bear the right ethnic identity.

“Works of the law” names what justification by faith is set in contrast to. When the contrast is sinner’s faith against sinner’s moral performance, the doctrine speaks directly to every human conscience. When the contrast becomes ethnic markers against new-covenant membership, the doctrine speaks to a first-century social problem most people in a pew today are not facing. The text’s pastoral reach narrows precisely where the framework redefines.

The Faithfulness of Christ (Pistis Christou)

The phrase *pistis Christou* appears at decisive moments in Galatians 2:16, Galatians 3:22, Romans 3:22, Romans 3:26, and Philippians 3:9, and can be translated “faith in Christ” or “the faithfulness of Christ.” In the traditional reading, the believer’s faith in Christ is the instrument by which Christ’s righteousness is received. In the NPP reading Dave has adopted, the phrase tends toward Christ’s own faithfulness as the ground of justification.

When “faith in Christ” becomes “faithfulness of Christ,” the instrument disappears from the text. The verse no longer describes what the believer does to receive righteousness; it describes what Christ did to provide it. The ground remains Christ, but the instrument by which a sinner lays hold of that ground has vanished. A question opens that Paul’s letters were written precisely to close: if faith is no longer the receiving instrument, what is?

“There are seven or eight times in the New Testament when the combo words pistis and Christou are used together... Is it a subjective genitive? Is this Christ’s faith or faithfulness? Or is it an objective genitive? Is it my faith in Christ?... We are saved not because of our faith. We are saved by the faithfulness of Jesus. And our response must not just be mere belief. Our response is to be allegiance and loyalty, fidelity to Jesus Christ.”

— Dave, Romans 9:6–13 (“Not All Israel Is Israel”)

The Righteousness of God

The phrase “righteousness of God,” introduced at Romans 1:17 and woven throughout, follows the same pattern. If Paul is answering the guilty sinner’s need, the phrase points to a righteousness God provides and credits to the sinner’s account: an alien righteousness received through faith. If Paul is instead telling the story of God’s covenant faithfulness coming to its climax in the Messiah, the phrase shifts to God’s own covenant reliability now demonstrated in Christ. Dave’s preaching moves consistently in the second direction:

“The big theme of Romans is the righteousness of God. Well, what is the righteousness of God? Dikaiosune theou is the Greek phrase that is highly debated. But I agree with this definition: God’s righteousness is God’s faithfulness to his covenant promises, his faithfulness to the Jew first and also to the Gentile.”

— Dave, Romans 9:1–5 (“To the Jew First”)

“God’s righteousness is God’s faithfulness to his covenant promises... God is totally reliable to the promise he made to Abraham. The righteousness of God is a shorthand phrase. And it seems to capture the whole gamut of his loyalty and faithfulness. The righteousness of God finds its crescendo in Jesus.”

— Dave, Romans 10:1–10 (“Goal of the Law”)

“The story of Israel reaches its climax in the Messiah. The goal of Israel has arrived in Jesus. The faithfulness of God, the righteousness of God, God’s faithfulness to his covenant promises has been revealed in Jesus.”

— Dave, Romans 9:1–5 (“To the Jew First”)

“Remember, the righteousness of God is His faithfulness to the covenant. Well, the result of God’s faithfulness is what? Faith. Or maybe better yet, faithfulness... It results in a loyalty and an allegiance to the Lord and obedience.”

— Dave, Romans 9:6–13 (“Not All Israel Is Israel”)

The exegetical evidence for the traditional reading runs through the same chapters. When Paul introduces the phrase in Romans 1:17 he immediately quotes Habakkuk, “the righteous shall live by faith”, pointing toward the individual’s standing before God received through trust, not toward God’s covenant track record. In Romans 3:21–22 the phrase is followed by “through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe.” In Romans 4, Paul’s argument about Abraham unpacks what the phrase means: a righteousness credited to someone who does not and cannot work for it. When the phrase is read instead as God’s covenant faithfulness to Israel, those contextual anchors have to be set aside.

Notice how the redefinition operates in Romans 10:3, where Paul says Israel “being ignorant of the righteousness of God and seeking to establish their own, did not submit to God’s righteousness.” In Dave’s framework, Israel’s failure is that they sought a status based on Jewish identity. On the traditional reading, Israel’s failure is that they sought to establish their own moral standing rather than submitting to a righteousness God credits to those who believe. The first reading addresses an ethnic mistake; the second addresses the universal human instinct to establish one’s own righteousness.

Why the Definition of God’s Righteousness Matters

We slow down here because this is the root from which most other concerns grow. Dave said from this pulpit: “*The righteousness of God is God’s faithfulness to His covenant promises, His faithfulness to the Jew first and also to the Gentile.*”

The first instinct may be: *who could argue with that?* Is God faithful? Absolutely. Does He keep His promises? Yes. The issue is not whether God is faithful. The issue is whether His faithfulness to His promises is the center, the primary and governing meaning of what it means for God to be righteous.

In Isaiah 6, what Isaiah encountered was not primarily a God who keeps promises. He encountered a God of such overwhelming moral perfection that the seraphim had to cover their faces. What they cried was not “*faithful, faithful, faithful,*” though He is. What they cried was “*holy, holy, holy.*” The threefold repetition is the strongest emphasis available in Hebrew. Of all the things that are true about God, this is the truest.

Intrinsic holiness means God is not righteous because He chooses to act rightly or consistently keeps His word. He is righteous because moral perfection is what He essentially and unchangeably is. His covenant faithfulness, love, mercy, and wrath flow from His holiness. Get the center right and everything else falls into place. Move the center, even slightly, and everything that depends on it shifts.

This determines our soteriology. If righteousness means primarily promise-keeping, the cross is the fulfillment of a promise, beautiful, but not necessarily a *necessity*. If God’s righteousness means He is intrinsically holy, that His very nature cannot coexist with unaddressed sin, then the cross was the only possible resolution. Romans 3:26 says Christ was put forward “*so that he might be just and the justifier.*” Both. Simultaneously.

Dave has said in recent writing that he holds both definitions together. We receive that charitably. But the nature of a center requires a single definition. When covenant faithfulness becomes the primary lens, the intrinsic holiness that makes the cross a *necessity* rather than a gesture is quietly displaced. That displacement has consequences for how salvation is understood and how the troubled conscience is counseled. This is one of the central critiques men like John Piper and D.A. Carson, scholars Dave himself has cited with appreciation, have leveled against the NPP.

The Package and the Cost

All four redefinitions, *pistis*, *pistis Christou*, righteousness of God, and works of the law, follow from the prior choice about what problem Paul is solving. They form a coherent package because they serve the same framework. The concern is that together they redirect what the text says to the person who needs it most. When *pistis* tends toward allegiance, *pistis Christou*

toward Christ's faithfulness rather than the believer's trust, righteousness of God toward covenant reliability rather than imputed righteousness, and works of the law toward ethnic markers rather than moral performance, the individual standing before God with nothing of their own to offer finds in these passages a less direct word than the text is written to provide. Dave's affirmations of grace alone do genuine work, holding the framework inside the evangelical tradition. The concern is that the framework itself provides less resolution than those affirmations intend.

The doctrine of imputation requires three things in the text at once: an alien righteousness to be transferred, an instrument by which it is received (faith), and a recipient to whom it is credited. Paul demonstrates these fitting together across Romans 3:21–4:25 and Galatians 2–3, culminating in Romans 4 where Abraham's believing is counted as righteousness and Paul applies this explicitly to every believer: "the words 'it was counted to him' were not written for his sake alone, but for ours also" (Rom 4:23–24).

When *pistis Christou* shifts to Christ's faithfulness, the instrument of transfer disappears. When the righteousness of God shifts to covenant reliability, the thing being transferred disappears. When works of the law shifts to ethnic markers, the foil against which justification is set disappears. Three of the four required elements are no longer present in the passages that have historically established imputation. What is left is a valid statement about God's faithfulness vindicated in the Messiah, but not a mechanism by which that faithfulness becomes the individual sinner's possession. The ingredients of the gospel remain recognizable. What has changed is whether the text still delivers them to the reader.

What Is Galatians Actually About?

Galatians provides the sharpest test case. Everything hinges on a single prior question: What problem is Paul writing this letter to solve?

On the reading we find most consistent with the plain sense of the letter, Paul is responding to a crisis simultaneously pastoral and theological. The Galatian churches were being told that to fully belong, or perhaps to be fully justified, they needed to observe the practices of the Mosaic covenant, circumcision above all. Paul's response goes to the root of what it means for any human being to stand before God: no one, not Jew, not Gentile, not anyone with every covenantal advantage, is justified by works of the law. Paul says we, including Jewish believers who know the law from the inside, have concluded that no one is justified by works of the law. The scope is not ethnically limited.

Dave reads the letter with a different presenting problem. The incident at Antioch, Peter withdrawing from table fellowship with Gentile believers, is the interpretive key. Peter's error was

ethnic and social. When Paul moves immediately to his declaration in 2:16 that a person is not justified by works of the law, Dave reads that primarily about ethnic boundary-crossing, not a universal claim about how any human being stands before God.

We read the same passage and find a different logic. Paul addresses his statement in 2:16 to “us,” Jewish believers, those with every covenant advantage, who know by experience that even they are not justified by works of the law. The Antioch incident does not limit that statement; it occasions it. The principle Paul draws is not ‘Gentiles do not need the boundary markers’ but ‘no one is justified by works of the law.’ When Paul unfolds his argument in chapter 3, citing Abraham’s faith before circumcision, the curse on all who rely on law-performance, the promise given four hundred years before the law, he is building a case about the universal human condition before God.

The verse itself makes the stakes unmistakable: *“a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, so we also have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law, because by works of the law no one will be justified.”* Paul contrasts works of the law with faith in Christ three times in a single sentence. The Reformers understood this as a deliberate foreclosure: faith is the instrument of justification, and nothing else is. When “works of the law” narrows to ethnic boundary markers and *pistis Christou* shifts to Christ’s faithfulness, the verse becomes a statement that Jewish identity markers do not determine covenant membership. The doctrine of justification by faith alone loses the text from which it was most clearly drawn.

If works of the law means only Jewish ethnic markers, Paul’s statement that no one is justified by works of the law has nothing direct to say to the person not struggling with circumcision but struggling with whether their own moral effort contributes to their standing before God. That is the question every human being eventually brings to the text.

The word “we” in 2:16 deserves attention. Paul addresses Jewish believers, people with every covenantal advantage. When he says “we know that a person is not justified by works of the law,” the force is precisely that it includes them. If even those most qualified under the law cannot be justified by it, no one can. When works of the law narrows to ethnic boundary markers, that universal force disappears.

Jesus and the Law: What Did He Come to Fulfill?

The same prior question shapes how Matthew 5:17 is read. Jesus says he has come not to abolish the law but to fulfill it.

Dave has taught that “fulfill” means to bring the law to its fullest and deepest expression, to complete its meaning and intensify its demands rather than bring its governing function to an end. The new covenant writes the law on the heart by the Spirit, internalizing rather than terminating it.

We read Matthew 5:17 differently. When Matthew uses fulfillment language throughout his Gospel, in the formula quotations running from chapter 1 through the passion narrative, he consistently means something specific: Jesus is the one to whom the Old Testament was always pointing, the goal and destination of its promises, patterns, and demands. To fulfill the law is not to extend it as a governing system but to be the One it was always about. The antitheses of Matthew 5 do not present Jesus as a more rigorous Torah teacher. They present him as the one who speaks with an authority the law itself never claimed. Paul’s statement in Romans 10:4 that Christ is the telos of the law, his description in 2 Corinthians 3 of the Mosaic ministry as a fading glory now surpassed, and Hebrews 8’s language that the old covenant is obsolete, all point toward fulfillment as completion, not continuation and deepening.

If fulfillment means the law is deepened and continues, Jewish believers remain under its covenantal structure. If fulfillment means the law has reached its appointed end in Christ, Jewish believers, like all believers, stand under the new covenant rather than the Mosaic one, free from it not because it was bad but because Christ has completed what it pointed toward.

“The Law hasn’t been abolished... The hostility has been demolished. The law of commandments expressed in the ordinances that excluded Gentiles has been abolished. The dividing wall is gone. But it’s going too far to suggest that the Law itself has been abolished. If the Law was entirely abolished, then the Jerusalem Council doesn’t even make sense.”

— Dave, Acts 15 Sermon

What This Means for Romans

Read as Paul’s response to human guilt before a holy God, Romans 1–4 lays the foundation: universal condemnation of Jew and Gentile, the total inability of moral effort to secure right standing, and the gracious declaration of righteousness received through faith in Christ alone. Imputation is the mechanism.

Dave’s reading gives greater weight to the covenantal and corporate dimensions. The “righteousness of God” is understood primarily as God’s covenant faithfulness rather than righteousness credited to the believer’s account. The story Romans tells is God’s faithfulness to Israel reaching its climax in the Messiah, with the Gentiles grafted in. Romans 9–11, the future

of ethnic Israel, the continuity of God's covenant faithfulness, these are themes LBC has always held dear, and Dave's teaching has deepened our appreciation of them.

The concern arises when this framework is brought to bear on justification and final vindication. Dave has taught that Spirit-enabled works of faithfulness play a visible role in the final vindication of God's people. We do not dispute that Scripture addresses the judgment of works, nor that genuine faith produces fruit. The question is whether those works are part of the grounds of God's final verdict, or whether the ground remains entirely Christ's righteousness credited through faith, with works as evidence. Dave's framework has not provided the precision this question requires.

The Ongoing Role of the Law in the Life of Jewish Believers

Dave has taught, with evident pastoral care, that Jewish believers in Christ retain an ongoing covenantal obligation to Torah observance as an expression of their irrevocable calling. His reading of 1 Corinthians 7 leads him to conclude that Paul has one rule: those with the marks of circumcision do not remove them, those without do not seek them. Jews remain Jews in Christ; Gentiles remain Gentiles. The Jewish people's calling and election, which may include ongoing dietary and covenantal distinctives, has not been revoked.

"I don't think Paul was law-free. He was circumcision-free, conversion-to-Judaism-free, but he wasn't law-free, and that's a huge difference."

— Dave, Romans 14:1–12 (*"Weak and Strong, pt. 1"*)

"The notion that Jews in Christ just stop with the Law is nowhere to be found in the New Testament. Paul continued to practice his Judaism in Christ, even after coming to faith in Christ. He continued at the temple. He even made sacrifices."

— Dave, Acts 15 Sermon

We share Dave's conviction that God's promises to ethnic Israel are irrevocable, and that the church has no license to absorb or erase Israel's identity. The disagreement is whether the Mosaic covenant's specific obligations carry forward as present requirements for Jewish believers in the new covenant age. The New Testament resists this. Galatians 5 warns against submitting again to a yoke of slavery and declares circumcision now counts for nothing, addressed to people with Jewish heritage being pressured to reaffirm those markers. Ephesians 2 describes Christ as having made the two one by abolishing the law of commandments in ordinances, creating one new man in place of two. These texts resist the conclusion that the

new covenant preserves two theologically distinct streams of covenant obligation within the one body of Christ.

The Relationship Between the Old Covenant and the New

Dave draws a thoughtful distinction between the law itself and the law as a means of covenant membership. What ended in Christ, on his account, is not the law as such but the era in which Torah observance defined who belonged to the people of God. Christ is the telos of the law. The new covenant writes the law on hearts by the Spirit. Fulfillment is not the same as abolition.

Dave has also argued that the dividing wall demolished in Ephesians 2 is specifically Torah's function as a barrier excluding Gentiles, not the law itself. In his reading of Acts 15, the apostolic decree establishes a new ordinance for mixed communities, assuming Jewish believers will continue to hear Moses read every Sabbath and live accordingly.

Our concern is where this leads when pressed. Hebrews, 2 Corinthians, and Paul's letters consistently show that Christ is the end of the law in the sense of both its fulfillment and the termination of the Mosaic administration as a covenant system. What the Spirit writes on the heart is not the ceremonial and civil law of Israel as a nation, but the righteous requirement of God that the moral law always pointed toward. Hebrews 8 calls the old covenant obsolete and ready to disappear. Second Corinthians 3 contrasts the fading glory of the Mosaic ministry with the surpassing and permanent glory of the new covenant. These are not descriptions of a covenant that has had its boundary-marking function adjusted while its substance continues unchanged.

"It wasn't so much an elimination of the law wholesale, but the elimination of the law as a means for covenant standing or of righteousness. There is a termination of the law in the sense of using the law as covenant membership. As if to say the only way to have a relationship with God is by becoming Jewish. That era has come to an end."

— Dave, Romans 10:1–10 ("Goal of the Law")

How We Read Acts: Descriptive Narrative or Prescriptive Pattern?

The question is straightforward: when Acts records what the early believers and Paul did, are those actions describing what happened in a specific moment of redemptive history, or prescribing what Jewish believers in Christ are required to do in every age?

The hermeneutical distinction is not in dispute. Dave has articulated it from the LBC pulpit himself:

“Bible interpreters called this descriptive and normative readings of Scripture. And our passage this morning is a great case in point. What’s merely descriptive? What should be normative?... An example of something descriptive would be like in chapter 1 in Acts, where the apostles pick a new apostle after Judas killed himself, and they did it through casting lots. We don’t have apostles today, not in the same way at least... Some of them are things we should implement and reform back to and practice. And other things describe just a unique situation in the early church.”

— Dave, Acts 1:1–8 Sermon

Dave applies this principle without controversy to Acts 2:44–45, Luke is describing Spirit-produced generosity in a specific moment, not prescribing communal ownership as a binding model. The disagreement is which mode applies to the conduct of Jewish believers and to Paul’s behavior in specifically Jewish settings.

How Dave Reads Paul’s Conduct in Acts

Across the Acts series and reaching back into Romans, Dave has read Paul’s Jewish conduct, continued temple worship, Nazirite vow, circumcision of Timothy, participation in the purification rites of Acts 21, statement in Acts 28 that he has done nothing against the customs, as establishing a covenantal pattern binding Jewish believers to ongoing Torah observance:

“James says of Paul, thus all will know that there’s nothing in what they’ve been told about you, but that you yourself also live in observance to the law. Notice that statement. You yourself live in observance to the law. So Paul’s a Torah observant Jew to the very end. This is huge.”

— Dave, Romans 14:1–12 (“Weak and Strong, pt. 1”), on Acts 21 and 28

“Paul is a Torah observant, law observant Jew until the day he died. His disciples were Torah-observant Jews. And we Gentiles have been brought into this family.”

— Dave, Romans 14:1–12 (“Weak and Strong, pt. 1”)

Dave is not simply observing that Paul and the Jerusalem believers continued in Jewish practice. He is concluding that their conduct establishes a continuing covenantal obligation, a

prescription for Jewish believers in every age. Narrative is being read as theological requirement.

The Decisive Hermeneutical Choice: Dave's Own Framing

What makes the divergence sharp is that Dave himself has explicitly named the two interpretive options, weighed them, and chosen against the reading we believe the text requires. In his Acts 16 sermon (prior to the content being removed at the request of an elder), working through Paul's circumcision of Timothy, Dave acknowledged the standard scholarly reading, held by Darrell Bock, N.T. Wright, and "most scholars", that explains Paul's conduct as missionary pragmatism in line with 1 Corinthians 9:19–23:

"Option #1—Paul is being pragmatic. Bock: 'This act prevents Timothy from becoming an issue to the Jews to whom he would minister. Even though Paul holds a view of freedom regarding the law, he is sensitive to how it works in a mixed community and in the context of the gospel (1 Cor. 9:19–23).' N.T. Wright would argue the same. Most scholars would agree with this."

— Dave, Acts 16 Sermon

Dave then named the second option and chose it:

"Option #2—Paul's negative use of the law applies to Gentiles, not Jews... The problem of saying that Paul is just being pragmatic and deferential, is that circumcision was a lot more than just tweaking your diet. It was all of the law... If Israel's election hasn't been superseded, maybe there's some room for flexibility here?... Did Paul himself follow his own rule? I think he probably did. And this, for me, makes better sense of the tensions."

— Dave, Acts 16 Sermon

Dave made the same choice in Acts 15, directly engaging the missionary-flexibility reading and dismissing it:

"Some argue this is just theater and a desire to evangelize. Paul was no doubt flexible, but I think that's the word. He was flexible, but we can't in good conscience take him to mean the exact opposite of what he repeatedly declares later on in Acts."

— Dave, Acts 15 Sermon

The divergence is not whether Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 9 exist or whether Bock and Wright proposed the flexibility reading. Dave knows it. He named it, attributed it to its leading proponents, and chose against it. The disagreement is which of the two readings the text actually warrants.

Why We Read Paul's Conduct as Descriptive Strategy

Acts is a historical narrative. The careful interpretive task is to distinguish what is being described from what is being prescribed. Narrative instructs differently from Paul's theological argument in Romans or Galatians. On the principle Dave teaches when handling Acts 1 and 2, the narrative of Paul's conduct in Jewish evangelistic contexts is best read as descriptive of how he exercised his missionary freedom in line with 1 Corinthians 9. The hermeneutical key is Paul himself:

"To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews. To those under the law I became as one under the law (though not being myself under the law) that I might win those under the law... I have become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some."

— 1 Corinthians 9:20–22

This is the apostle's own theological commentary on his missionary practice, written in epistolary mode, the mode that, on Dave's own principle, ought to govern how the narrative is read.

First, Paul explicitly says that when he became as one under the law, he was *not himself* under the law. The parenthetical is not incidental. The behavior was real; the covenantal standing it normally expressed was not.

Second, the passage is organized around a single explicit purpose: *that by all means I might save some*. Every accommodation is in service of this evangelistic aim. The principle is missiological flexibility, not covenantal identity.

Third, the passage immediately follows Paul's extended argument in 1 Corinthians 8–9 about food offered to idols and the rights of the strong. The pattern is voluntary self-limitation in the service of others, categorically different from ongoing covenantal obligation.

When Paul's own explanation governs the reading of his narrative conduct, the pieces fit. Paul died to the law as a covenantal obligation because he had died with Christ. He voluntarily inhabited Jewish practice in specific contexts because doing so removed obstacles to the gospel. He was all things to all people, the freedom of one no longer under law but under grace.

Acts 10 and Mark 7

Dave's reading of Acts 10 limits the vision's significance to the inclusion of Gentile people and denies any bearing on food law for Jewish believers:

"The application for Peter wasn't that he now gets to eat rodents and snakes and creeping things... The application is that God calls no people unclean or

common. I think we may go beyond what is written when we say the law is being overturned here. It's just not what the text says."

— Dave, Acts 10 Sermon

"If the Lord was teaching in Mark 7, which by the way is Peter's gospel, that all foods are clean, then apparently Peter didn't get the memo in Acts chapter 10."

— Dave, Mark 7:14–23 ("Heart of the Matter")

We agree the immediate occasion of Peter's vision is Cornelius. The vision authorizes table fellowship across ethnic lines. What we cannot follow is the conclusion that this exhausts the vision's meaning. The Lord did not say "The people I have made clean, do not call common." He said, "What God has made clean, do not call common," and the vehicle was a sheet of every kind of animal with the command to rise, kill, and eat. The image is not incidental; it is the message's medium. When Mark 7:19 records Jesus declaring all foods clean, and Acts 10 records a divine vision in which Peter is commanded to eat what was previously forbidden, the natural reading is that the ceremonial food laws are no longer binding for the church, Jewish believers included. This is how John Stott, D.A. Carson, and Thomas Schreiner have consistently read these texts.

Acts 15 and the Jerusalem Council

Dave's reading treats the Council as evidence the law remains covenantally binding for Jewish believers, treats the silence of the decree on Jewish observance as intentional affirmation, and treats the four prohibitions on the Gentiles as a permanent ordinance:

"Acts 15 IS the new ordinance. A new ruling... The question isn't whether the gifts and calling of Israel have been revoked, the question is whether or not Gentiles need to be circumcised like the rest of the Jews in order to be saved. And the answer is a resounding no!"

— Dave, Acts 15 Sermon

"Let's say what the prophets predicted happens in our day and there is a mass conversion of the Jewish people to Jesus. And LBC is flooded with Jewish believers in Jesus. And like Acts 21 says, they are all zealous for the law... Suddenly, these four prohibitions become immediately relevant."

— Dave, Acts 15 Sermon

The Council was occasioned by a specific theological crisis: men from Judea teaching that Gentiles needed to be circumcised and keep the law of Moses to be saved (Acts 15:1, 5). The Council's verdict is decisive: this is not so. Salvation, for Jew and Gentile alike, is by grace through faith in the Lord Jesus (Acts 15:11). That is the heart of the chapter.

The four prohibitions do not establish a permanent two-tier covenantal structure. They are practical measures addressing table fellowship in mixed communities. The decree removes the most acute occasions of stumbling into a workable charter for mixed assemblies. To read these four as a permanent ordinance implying Jewish believers must continue in full Torah observance loads a weight the verses do not carry. The Council's silence on Jewish believers and the law is not a silent endorsement of continued covenantal obligation. That question is taken up elsewhere, in Galatians, Hebrews, 2 Corinthians 3, Romans 7, and the answer is consistent: in Christ, both Jew and Gentile have died to the law as a covenantal administration and now serve in the new way of the Spirit.

Acts 16: Timothy's Circumcision as Missionary Strategy

Acts 16:1–3 records Paul circumcising Timothy because of the Jews in that region. Luke states the reason explicitly: it was for the sake of the evangelistic mission. Timothy's circumcision is the removal of an obstacle to gospel access, not the fulfillment of a covenantal calling. This is confirmed by the immediate context: the very same journey delivers the Jerusalem Council's decree exempting Gentiles from circumcision (Acts 16:4).

Titus, by contrast, was not circumcised (Gal 2:3–5). Paul refused to yield to pressure to circumcise him because Titus's case was a matter of theological principle. The Judaizers pressed for Titus's circumcision as a requirement; Paul refused. Timothy's circumcision was missionary strategy. The contrast is instructive: Paul's consistent principle is that circumcision is not required; his flexible practice serves the principle rather than contradicting it. Darrell Bock and F.F. Bruce both read Timothy's circumcision as the outworking of 1 Corinthians 9:19–23.

The Witness of Paul's Letters as the Interpretive Guide

The question reduces to which body of New Testament material should govern the other. When narrative description and theological argumentation come together on the same subject, the apostle's own theological explanation of his behavior is the more reliable guide.

Dave's framework reverses this order. It allows the narrative of Acts to fix the meaning of Paul's conduct in such a way that Paul's own theological explanation in 1 Corinthians 9 has to be re-read against itself. When Dave acknowledges the missionary-flexibility reading and then says "we can't in good conscience take him to mean the exact opposite of what he repeatedly declares later on in Acts," the order has been inverted: the narrative is being allowed to discipline the epistle rather than the other way around.

On the order of authority we believe Scripture itself requires, the convergent witness of Paul's letters produces a consistent conclusion: Paul was free from the Mosaic law as a covenantal obligation because he had died to it through Christ. He voluntarily inhabited Jewish practice in

specific contexts for the sake of the gospel. That principle is not covenantal obligation; it is the freedom of one no longer under law but under grace, using that freedom in love.

What Dave Has Consistently Affirmed

Before describing the pastoral stakes of the divergence, we want to acknowledge clearly and without qualification what Dave has consistently affirmed throughout his preaching. A fair account of where he is naming these affirmations plainly, because they are a genuine and repeated part of the record — and because the concern we will describe is not that Dave has denied any of these things, but that his framework sits in unresolved tension with them and in key doctrines undermines the Scripture used to reach them.

Dave has preached grace alone with force and frequency. He has stated repeatedly that no one is saved or justified by anything other than the work of Christ on their behalf — that we contribute nothing to our salvation, that no amount of boasting or law-keeping adds anything to the gracious and free gift of God in Jesus. He has returned again and again to the phrase ‘by grace through faith with the expectation of obedience,’ consistently placing the expectation of obedience as the fruit of grace rather than any condition for it.

Dave has also explicitly foreclosed the reading that our allegiance is itself the ground of our salvation. In the same sermons where he develops the allegiance framework, he states directly that the basis of salvation is not our allegiance but the faithfulness of Christ. He has preached substitutionary atonement plainly, naming it in closing prayer as the work Christ accomplished through his death and resurrection on the cross. He has affirmed the inerrancy and authority of Scripture, locating his ultimate authority in the text rather than in any interpretive framework.

Dave has also been clear and consistent in his opposition to antinomianism. He has warned the congregation, repeatedly, against the error of disparaging the law, looking down on it, or ignoring it — holding law and grace together in a way that many contemporary evangelical pulpits do not. And he has preached a robust and genuinely premillennial eschatology, affirming without reservation that God has not abandoned Israel, that the church has not replaced Israel, and that the promises of God to ethnic Israel remain in force and will be literally fulfilled.

These affirmations are real, they are repeated, and they matter. Naming them clearly is not a hedge against the concerns we are about to describe. It is the foundation on which those concerns should be read. The question is not whether Dave has denied these truths — he has not. The question is how the framework that now shapes his reading of Paul interacts with them, and whether the framework and the affirmations can consistently produce the clarity Paul’s letters were written to provide. In some cases the framework itself undermines the affirmations Dave provides.

The Pastoral Stakes

This matters not academically but pastorally. It is the people sitting in the pews on a Sunday morning, and what they carry when they come.

The person who lies awake wondering whether their trust in Christ has been real enough, loyal enough, faithful enough to count, needs to hear something clear and unconditional: that Christ's righteousness is theirs fully, freely, and finally, without any admixture of their own performance. The ground of their assurance is not the quality of their allegiance. It is the finished work of Christ, received through faith, credited to their account, and sealed by the Spirit. That is what Paul's argument is designed to deliver, and what this assembly is committed to proclaiming.

D.A. Carson (*Justification and Variegated Nomism, Vol. 2*): Carson argues that the individual and forensic dimensions of justification, the declaration of righteousness and imputation of Christ's obedience, are not optional supplements but the very core of what makes the gospel "good news" for sinners. When a framework shifts the presenting problem from primarily personal guilt to ethnic covenant exclusion, the pastoral clarity the text was written to provide becomes harder to locate, not because anything false has been introduced, but because what the anxious soul most urgently needs has moved from the foreground to the background.

The pastoral implications become especially concrete in counseling. When someone comes carrying guilt or fear about their standing before God, the answer depends entirely on what the counselor believes justification is and how it is received. If justification is a forensic declaration grounded in Christ's imputed righteousness received through faith, the counselor can direct that person entirely outward, toward what Christ has already and irreversibly accomplished. If justification is framed primarily as covenant-membership declaration, and saving faith is defined as allegiance with ongoing visible expression, the counselor is left with a more complicated picture. The framework's internal categories make it harder to rule out the believer's own track record as relevant, precisely because the framework has defined faith in terms of ongoing fidelity. Dave's own affirmations, that the basis is not allegiance but Christ's faithfulness, that Christ will hold us fast, that there is no condemnation for those in the Messiah, can and should resolve that tension in the hands of someone who holds them firmly. But the framework does not do that resolution on its own, and the people most needing help are the least equipped to hold a framework in tension with itself.

A dual-track framework, in which Jewish and Gentile believers stand in meaningfully different covenantal relationships to the Mosaic law, creates pastoral complexity the congregation has not been prepared for. What does it mean for a Jewish believer and a Gentile believer sitting in the same room to be understood as living under different covenantal obligations? These questions arise in marriage, in shared households, in small groups. The New Testament's

insistence that in Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek, not as an erasure of identity but as a declaration of equal covenantal standing, exists precisely to address this.

Dave's engagement with these questions has come from a genuine desire to read Scripture faithfully and to do justice to passages that are genuinely difficult. He has worked honestly with hard texts and sought to reconcile dimensions of Paul's argument the Western church has sometimes underweighted. The concern is where the framework lands: in addressing questions the church has underemphasized, it has produced a structure that sits in unresolved tension with the very answers Dave himself continues to affirm.

Things that Scripture genuinely addresses, but that occupy the background of Paul's argument as its wider covenantal frame, have been brought into the foreground; things that stand at the center have been moved to the margins. The ingredients remain recognizable. What has changed is which ones are carrying the weight. In a pastoral context, what carries the weight is what people are actually being told to rest in.

A significant challenge arises when the pulpit adopts its different framework while the church's counseling ministry, Bible-study groups, and long-established culture continue to uphold the historic understanding of Paul. Some can't put their finger on it but find themselves unsure whether the gospel centers on their personal trust in Christ for right standing before God or on participation in the renewed covenant community through Christ's faithfulness. This inconsistency places added strain on pastoral staff who must navigate conflicting signals.

Where Things Stand

This letter is not a hasty reaction. The present elders have spent considerable time working through these questions with Dave directly, studying the passages together, listening to his reasoning, engaging the scholarship he has drawn on. The process began well before the current season and involved voices with deep history in this assembly.

In the earlier stages, David Lambert Jr, Damon Stage, and Adam Hebener, who served as elders alongside the present team, were engaged in the conversations. Alex Strauch was also involved. We have maintained consultation with these men as the situation developed. Their involvement establishes that this is not a conclusion reached in a narrow room.

Over these years it took a while before we could see what was developing in the teaching, and once we did, communicating those concerns in a way that allowed for the kind of mutual clarity that would have made earlier resolution possible proved genuinely hard. Some of that difficulty belongs to the nature of the framework itself, which is subtle and internally coherent. Some

belongs to the reality that when someone has engaged a body of ideas as seriously as Dave has, the distance between what is being heard and what is being meant can be considerable.

Dave has engaged this scholarship so thoroughly, and it has so completely shaped the lens through which he reads Paul's letters, that adjusting a few positions or adding qualifications is not the resolution. The framework is load-bearing. To teach from a different one would require him to teach against convictions he genuinely holds, and that is not something we would ask of him. At the same time, we cannot in good conscience affirm this framework as the basis for the primary teaching ministry of this assembly. Dave has responded to that reality with the grace and integrity we have come to expect of him.

Dave stepped back from his primary preaching role and eldership in the context of this recognition, a genuine and considered divergence, arrived at through serious engagement on all sides.

We remain committed to the understanding of Paul's letters we believe the text itself requires, not because we are closed to hard questions, but because after extended engagement we believe it is most faithful to Scripture as written, best answers the question people most urgently bring, and represents the faithful stewardship of what has been entrusted to this assembly.

Please reach out with further questions. We are glad to discuss any of the passages touched on here, Galatians 2–3, Romans 3–4, Romans 9–11, Ephesians 2, Hebrews 8, the Acts narrative, or to point you toward resources. More than anything, our prayer is that the Lord would keep this assembly unified, grounded in His Word, full of grace for different perspectives among believers, and marked by love for Christ and for one another.

Elders, Littleton Bible Chapel