

1 Theological Carjacking

- Galatians 3:1-5, 4:6-10

2 Scripture

- You foolish Galatians!
- Who has bewitched you?
- Before your very eyes, Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed as crucified.
- I want to learn just one thing from you:
 - Did you receive the Spirit by observing the law, or by believing what you heard?
- Are you so foolish?
- After beginning with the Spirit, are you now trying to attain your goal by human effort? (Galatians 3:1-3 NIV)

3 Scripture

- Have you suffered so much for nothing — if it really was for nothing?
- Does God give you his Spirit and work miracles among you because you observe the law, or because you believe what you heard? (Galatians 3:4-5 NIV)

4 Scripture

- For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value.
- The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love.
- You were running a good race.
- Who cut in on you and kept you from obeying the truth?
- That kind of persuasion does not come from the one who calls you.

- "A little yeast works through the whole batch of dough." (Galatians 5:6-9)

5 Introduction

- Carjacking has become a serious epidemic, especially in our larger cities, where thieves suddenly "cut in" on innocent lives, stealing
 - not just vehicles
 - but also people's peace and security.
- Studies show that carjacking rates in major U.S. cities increased by 93% from 2019 to 2023, with overall motor vehicle theft rising by 105% during the same period.

6 Introduction

- In cities like Washington, D.C., where carjackings increased a staggering 547% between 2018 and 2023, the per capita rate remains among the highest, with over 1,150 motor vehicle thefts per 100,000 residents in 2024, many involving violent carjackings.
- Baltimore, Memphis, and Chicago have also been hard-hit; in Chicago alone, nearly 3,000 robberies, often including carjackings, were reported in the first half of 2025.

7 Introduction

- Nationally, violent crime trends from May 2024 to April 2025 show a 6.6% decrease, with robberies down 13.3%, but carjackings continue to plague urban centers, contributing to a sense of vulnerability.
- Beyond the immediate danger, the economic toll is profound.
- Auto theft, including carjackings, costs the U.S. billions of dollars annually—in 1985, it was estimated at \$6 billion, and today, with inflation and rising incidents, the figure is likely far higher.

8 Introduction

- In one state alone, such as Colorado, increased motor vehicle theft led to \$277 million in higher insurance premiums in a single year, amounting to \$239 per household, or nearly \$20 per month.
- This ripple effect drives up car insurance costs nationwide;
 - premiums are projected to rise by 7% to an average of \$2,472 for full coverage by the end of 2025,
 - partly due to theft-related claims and broader economic pressures.

9 Introduction

- Insurers in high-risk areas, such as D.C., have seen premiums soar as they account for potential losses from carjackings and thefts.
- This not only burdens families financially but also damages community trust—
 - parents fear for their children's safety,
 - drivers hesitate at night, and
 - the overall economy is hurt by decreased productivity, job losses, and slowdowns in the retail and transportation sectors.
- It's alarming how quickly someone can "cut in," derailing your journey in an instant, and the costs—emotional, physical, and financial—linger long after.

10 Obeying God's Commandments

- The key verse in our Scripture reading today for me is the following:
 - For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through "agape" love. (Galatians 5:6)
- The Apostle Paul basically says the same thing to the Corinthian church when he says:

- Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing. Keeping God's commands is what counts. (1 Corinthians 7:19)
- So then, does "agape" love fulfill the commands of God?

11 Obeying God's Commandments

- Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for he who loves his fellowman has fulfilled the law.
- The commandments, "Do not commit adultery," "Do not murder," "Do not steal," "Do not covet," and whatever other commandment there may be, are summed up in this one rule:
 - "Love your neighbor as yourself."
- Love does no harm to its neighbor.
- Therefore, love is the fulfillment of the law. (Romans 13:8-10)

12 So then, what is Love?

- Love is patient, love is kind.
- It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud.
 - It is not rude,
 - it is not self-seeking,
 - it is not easily angered,
 - it keeps no record of wrongs.
- Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth.
- It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. (1 Corinthians 13:4-7)

13 Why is Love so Important?

- If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love. (John 15:10)
- In other words, when we abide in Jesus' commands, we abide in him and he in us.
- And when this happens, the following verse comes true;
 - If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me, you can do nothing. (John 15:5)
- Moreover,
 - If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given to you. (John 15:7)

14 Why is Love so Important?

- Here is another promise that comes when we abide "in Christ."
 - Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who [really] loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him." (John 14:21)
- So then, when we become disciples of Christ,
 - We will know God and his good, pleasing, and perfect will.
 - We will abound in all kinds of virtue, Christ likeness, and spiritual fruit.
 - We will see and experience answers to our prayers.
- So then, if we claim to be a disciple of Christ, let him/her show it by their love for one another.

15 Why is Love so Important?

- The Apostle John says it this way, in 1 John 2:9-11:

- Anyone who claims to be in the light but hates a brother or sister is still in the darkness. Anyone who loves their brother or sister lives in the light, and there is nothing in them to make them stumble. But anyone who hates a brother or sister is in the darkness and walks around in the darkness. They do not know where they are going, because the darkness has blinded them.
- This repeats the crucial concept of spiritual enlightenment:
 - The knowledge of God does not come through scholarship, ceremonial righteousness (circumcision, dietary restrictions, sabbath-keeping, etc.), or through the principles and practices of mysticism, but through obedience to His word.
 - Those who have this illumination from the Holy Spirit intuitively and instinctively understand how to keep themselves in God's grace so that they can keep themselves on the path of life and see answered prayer.
 - Those who lack this spiritual discernment fall to the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. (Ephesians 4:14)

16 What Happened to the Galatians?

- They were theologically carjacked!
- Someone came into the church and "cut them off" from following the truth!
- Basically, they told them that "following the teachings of Christ" wasn't enough and that they should become disciples of 1st-Century Rabbinic Judaism and follow Jewish religious rituals and customs.
- In other words, they were told that all Gentiles must become Jews and be circumcised, and observe their special religious holidays! (See Galatians 4:10)
- So, instead of riding in their lovely new car (faith) that was going somewhere,
 - they were told to get out of the vehicle and
 - start walking by foot all over again, and

- put religious forms over and above riding, abiding, and knowing God, which comes through obeying Jesus' commands.

17 The Church of Corinth

- The Church of Corinth, founded by Paul around AD 50-51 in a lively but morally lax city, was a diverse Christian community.
- Paul's letters (1 and 2 Corinthians) reveal a church rich in spiritual gifts but lacking in love, which led to internal conflict and made it vulnerable to false teachers, the "super-apostles."
- In 1 Corinthians 1:4-7, Paul praises the Corinthians' wealth of spiritual gifts—wisdom, knowledge, prophecy, tongues, and more—likening the church to a body where each gift serves the whole (1 Corinthians 12:7-27).
- Yet, their enthusiasm fuels pride and factionalism, reflecting Corinth's competitive culture.
- Gifts meant for edification become sources of division, exposing spiritual immaturity.

18 The Church of Corinth

- Despite their giftedness, the Corinthians lacked agape love, which Paul exalts in 1 Corinthians 13:1-4 as essential for meaningful gifts.
- Lovelessness manifests in immorality (1 Corinthians 5:1-2), lawsuits (6:1-8), and chaotic worship (14:23).
- Rooted in Corinth's hedonistic ethos, this deficiency stunts their growth, leaving them worldly—mere infants in Christ (1 Corinthians 3:1) and vulnerable to deception.

19 The Church of Corinth

- By 2 Corinthians, false teachers—charismatic "super-apostles"—exploit the church's divisions, undermining Paul's authority with eloquent boasts and financial demands (2 Corinthians 11:5-13).
- The Corinthians, swayed by spectacle, question Paul's "weak" presence (10:10).
- Their lack of love-fueled discernment makes them prey to these deceivers, who peddle a "different gospel" (11:4).

20 The Church of Corinth

- The Church of Corinth's experience can be likened to a shiny, high-performance car—
 - a vehicle loaded with cutting-edge features, such as a powerful engine, advanced navigation, and a sleek design,
 - which represents the church's abundant spiritual gifts.
- The car's owner, proud of its capabilities, shows it off in a rough neighborhood, revving the engine and leaving it unlocked, oblivious to the need for vigilance or care.
- This mirrors the Corinthians' boastful misuse of their gifts without the grounding force of love.

21 The Church of Corinth

- Enter the carjackers—opportunistic thieves, much like the "super-apostles" in 2 Corinthians.
- They spot the unguarded car, dazzled by its flash but unimpressed by its careless owner.
- With smooth talk and cunning, they exploit the owner's naivety, slipping into the driver's seat and speeding off.
- Similarly, the super-apostles prey on the Corinthians' lack of discernment, capitalizing on their divisions and pride to hijack their loyalty and lead them astray with a false gospel.

22 The Church of Corinth

- Just as the car's advanced features are useless without a responsible driver, the Corinthians' gifts—prophecy, tongues, knowledge—are ineffective without love's guidance.
- Paul, like a mechanic who knows the car's true potential, urges the church to lock the doors with agape love, the key to safeguarding their spiritual riches.
- Only by prioritizing love can the church steer clear of spiritual carjackers and drive toward its God-given purpose.
- As Paul concludes in 1 Corinthians 13:13,

- And now these three remain: faith, hope, and love. But the greatest of these is love.
- Only when the church prioritizes this, the most excellent way, can its gifts glorify God and withstand the wolves in sheep's clothing.

23

24 Summary

- Why is this love so vital?
- Obeying Christ's commands keeps us abiding in His love, just as He abided in the Father's (John 15:10).
- Then we bear much fruit (John 15:5), receive answered prayers (John 15:7), and experience God's revelation: Whoever has my commands and obeys them loves me... I, too, will love him and show myself to him (John 14:21).
- True disciples know God's perfect will, abound in virtue and fruit, and see prayers fulfilled.
- Without love, we're impostors, walking in darkness despite claims of light (1 John 2:9-11).

25 Summary

- Just as many carjackings occur in bad neighborhoods, we must steer clear of spiritual "bad neighborhoods"—those preaching a different gospel, which proliferates on the Internet, TV, radio, and podcasts today.
- Scripture is replete with warnings about such false teachers, prophets, and apostles.
- Jesus Himself cautioned:
 - Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves (Matthew 7:15).
- Paul warned the Ephesian elders:
 - I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. Even from your own number, men will arise and distort the truth to draw away disciples after them.

26 Conclusion

- Heed these urgent admonitions!
- Ground your faith in agape love, obedience to Scripture, and the true Gospel.
- Avoid the "bad neighborhoods" of deceptive media teachings that twist truth for gain or popularity.
- A little yeast of falsehood corrupts the whole (Galatians 5:9),
 - but agape love locks the doors, guiding us to discern wolves and drive toward God's purpose.

27 Conclusion

- If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love,
 - I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal.
- If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love,
 - I am nothing.
- If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love,
 - I gain nothing. (1 Corinthians 13:1–3 NIV)

28 Conclusion

- Nothing you possess is more valuable than your faith!
- Yet many unscrupulous individuals want to carjack your faith and use it for themselves to exploit, prey upon, and benefit from.
- Don't let them, and grow in Christ by obeying His commands, not theirs.

- So let us stand firm, clothed in the armor of God, and know that God is love and whoever lives in love lives in God.
- In this way, our love/faith is made complete. [See 1 John 4:16-18]
- AMEN