

Galatians:
The Biblical Precept

of

Freedom

Tim James

Galatians:

The Biblical Precept
of

Freedom

by
Tim James

Galatians:
The Biblical Precept
of
Freedom

by
Tim James

Grace-eBooks.com Publications
2018

Copyright © 2018 by Tim James

ISBN 978-0-359-38211-8

Contents

Foreword.....	9
Introduction.....	13
The Author of Paul's Gospel	
Galatians 1:1.....	17
Paul's Gospel	
Galatians 1:3-5.....	21
The Poison Gospel	
Galatians 1:6-7.....	27
A Gospel Salvation	
Galatians 1:12-24.....	31
Freedom	
Galatians 2:1-3.....	37
False Brethren	
Galatians 2:4-5.....	43
The Subtlety of the Enemy	
Galatians 2:6-13.....	49
The True Issue	
Galatians 2:14.....	55
What Believers Know	
Galatians 2:15-16.....	61
Legalism's Consequence	
Galatians 2:17.....	67
Destruction	

Galatians 2:18.....	73
Dead to The Law	
Galatians 2:19.....	79
Contrast	
Galatians 2:20.....	85
Truth and Consequence	
Galatians 2:21.....	89
Foolish Believers	
Galatians 3:1-5.....	95
Believing Abraham	
Galatians 3:6-9.....	101
By Faith	
Galatians 3:10-12.....	107
Redeemed from the Curse	
Galatians 3:13.....	113
Proof	
Galatians 3:13-14.....	117
Two Covenants	
Galatians 3:15-18.....	121
Wherefore Then Serveth The law	
Galatians 3:19-22.....	127
The Schoolmaster	
Galatians 3:23-25.....	133
Heirs	
Galatians 3:26-29.....	139
The History of Heirs	

Galatians 4:1-3.....	143
Until Christ	
Galatians 4:4-7.....	149
Believers Warned	
Galatians 4:8-11.....	155
A Personal Plea	
Galatians 4:12-15.....	161
Zealously Affected	
Galatians 4:16-18.....	167
Paul's Zeal	
Galatians 4:19-20.....	173
Hear The Law	
Galatians 4:21.....	177
Allegory	
Galatians 4:21-31.....	181
Allegory II	
Galatians 4:24-27.....	187
As Isaac Was	
Galatians 4:28-31.....	193
Liberty	
Galatians 5:1.....	197
Profit or Loss	
Galatians 5:1-5.....	203
The Work of Faith	
Galatians 5:4-6.....	209
False Teachers	

Galatians 5:7-10.....	215
The Offence of the Cross	
Galatians 5:11.....	221
Spiritual Life	
Galatians 5:12-15.....	227
In the Spirit	
Galatians 5:16-18.....	233
Works	
Galatians 5:19-21.....	237
Fruit	
Galatians 5:22-23.....	245
The Flesh Crucified	
Galatians 5:23-24.....	249
Live and Walk	
Galatians 5:25-26.....	255
Defining Fruit	
Galatians 6:1-5.....	261
The Flesh and the Spirit	
Galatians 6:6-10.....	267
Glorying	
Galatians 6:11-14.....	273
Salvation Is of the Lord	
Galatians 6:14-18.....	279

Foreword

Many years ago, on the Cherokee Indian Reservation in western North Carolina, a woman approached a young man and asked, “Are you the new pastor of the Sequoyah Church?”

He replied, “Yes, I am.”

She then enquired, “What seminary did you attend?”

He answered, “I have not attended a seminary.”

Curious, she then asked, “Has your lack of seminary training made a difference in your ministry?”

He responded, “Actually, I believe it helped!”

The young man’s name was Tim James, and to this day, he continues as Pastor of the Sequoyah Sovereign Grace Baptist Church.

Tim was born November 2, 1946 in Winston-Salem, North Carolina and was blessed to be raised in a godly home by faithful parents. The lives of all four of their children are evidence that they were “the salt of the earth.”

Tim and I met in 1966 when my father moved our family to Winston-Salem to pastor a church near the church attended by Tim’s family. We quickly became dear friends, and now, more than fifty years later, we are still dear friends and our families remain in close fellowship.

Tim and I both became preachers, but sadly, the both of us were lost, even as we occupied the pulpit. However, by God’s grace and at His appointed time, the

Lord confronted and saved both of us at the same place and time in June 1975.

Three years later, in 1978, Tim sold his butcher shop in Ogburn Station, a village in the north of Winston-Salem, and moved with his wife, Debbie, to Cherokee, North Carolina to pastor Sequoyah Sovereign Grace Baptist Church. He is now in his forty-first year as their pastor.

I have heard Tim preach and, on many occasions, have had him preach to churches I have pastored. I tell you truthfully – and all gospel believers who have heard Tim preach will vouch for what I say: Tim James preaches the gospel of God’s free and sovereign grace boldly, truthfully, and simply, and he faithfully expounds the Holy Scriptures—highly exalting his Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

For many years, Tim has preached expositively through books of the Bible. His handwritten notes are bound in large, three-ring binders and placed in a bookcase. He has made no attempt to have them published, but visitors to his house have seen them.

Drew Dietz, Pastor of Sovereign Grace Church in Jackson, Missouri, did much more than merely see Tim’s notes. While preaching through Paul’s Epistle to the Galatians, Drew requested Tim’s permission to use them in his studies. Tim copied them and sent them to Drew.

Not only thoroughly impressed, but also thoroughly blessed by Tim’s sermon notes, Drew shared them with another dear friend, who, after reading the sermons, became equally excited and interested in publishing the

notes as an exposition of Galatians. Tim graciously gave his permission to do so.

You now hold in your hand a published copy of those notes, titled, *Galatians: The Biblical Precept of Freedom*. The first paragraph of Tim's introduction to the commentary thoroughly explains what is meant by the sub-title, and I heartily encourage you to read it very soon. If you are blessed by what you read in that first paragraph, be assured the blessing will be greatly amplified as you read further.

Rejoice as you read of the glorious faith and work of the Lord Jesus Christ for God's elect. Be comforted in reading of Christ's fulfillment of God's law in behalf of the elect. Read of their justification through His imputed righteousness and of the glorious liberty and freedom He has obtained for them.

In doing so, you will be well-prepared for the onslaughts against this freedom by legalists and Judaizers who preach "legal justification" and "progressive sanctification," and those who teach that our freedom from the law wrought by Jesus Christ leads to antinomianism and licentiousness.

After reading the manuscript for this book, I am more convinced than ever—Tim spoke truth when he said, "I believe it helped!"

Daniel E. Parks
23 January 2019

Introduction

In this study we will look at the Biblical precept of *freedom*. Freedom is a large principle and an even greater idea. If one were to look up the word in a dictionary, he would find an abundance of definitions. For the sake of our study, we will narrow the field of definition to that of *being totally released from bondage*. Freedom, for the purpose of this study, will engage us in the concept of *being made free* from bondage. Freedom, for the purpose of this study, will be viewed as *the result of the work of Christ* on behalf of the elect in specific reference to the law.

The *law*, for the purpose of this study, will be defined as any and all restrictions or promises that are conditioned upon personal obedience exercised for the attainment of personal merit or righteousness in the sight of God. The law that is particularly referenced in the Epistles of Galatians and Colossians is the law handed down to Moses at Sinai, which established Judaism as the religion of the twelve tribes of Israel. No Gentile was ever given that law because they were excluded from God's religious dealings with humanity. Nevertheless, the principles of the law were part and parcel of the conscience of *every* man, Gentiles included (Rom. 2:14-15). Both Jew and Gentile alike were condemned, not by the law of Moses, but by the law of Eden, which was broken by the federal head of all humanity, our earthy father Adam.

As time progressed, the offspring of Adam proved that they were, indeed, his seed as they delved deeper and deeper into the nature of their depravity. They proved themselves rebels of the most wicked sort. The judgment of the world by water did not change the heart of men nor their nature. God, in His wise counsel and purpose, eyed Noah in grace and saved his household from destruction, But the language employed by God to describe humanity before the flood and immediately after the deluge did not alter (Compare Gen. 6:5 and 8:21).

The destruction of all humanity except for eight souls did not change the nature and practice of men. They were yet breakers of the law of God. By the time the law was given at Sinai, it was nothing but a more precisely defined reminder of what Adam had done in the Garden. It was not given to make men better but rather to show men that they were hopelessly lost and ruined (Rom. 4:14-15; 5:20; Gal. 3:19; 1 Tim. 1:9). Since the law of Moses was a broadening of the definition of the disobedience of Adam, we who are not Jews by lineage may *not* disavow its application to us or the punishment due us as transgressors of it. All that is revealed about the depraved heart and nature of men by the law of Moses was first revealed by the law given to Adam, the transgression of which was the condemnation of humanity.

Men have erred, not knowing the Scriptures or the power of God, by believing and thus using the Mosaic law as a *way out from under* the condemnation that ensued from Adam's sin. Using the law to escape that

condemnation is nothing more than employing a broader concept of sin to undo sin. The law never made men righteous in the sight of God (Gal. 3:21). In the Garden and on Sinai men and their actions were utterly condemned.

When Paul wrote the Epistles to the churches in Galatia and Colosse, he spoke of freedom from the law. He referred to the law as bondage from which Christ had made men free (Gal. 5:1). The bondage to which he referred was the evil practice of employing the law of Moses as a means of achieving the righteousness that God required in order to be accepted. Men are not, by nature, free of that law. Paul's argument was that they were *freed* from the law by the fulfillment of the law by and in Christ.

In Galatians, Paul sets forth his argument on several levels. He condemns those who seek to apply the law to the believer to any degree (Gal. 1:8-9). He rebukes the believer who is bewitched by those who would bring him under the law for righteousness (Gal. 3:1). He shows that the law and the gospel are two *different* covenants with dissimilar and opposing results (Gal. 4:21-26). He reveals that God forbids any glory in anything or anyone other than Christ for righteousness and acceptance (Gal. 6:14-15). He shows that for a believer to give in to the teachings of the legalists (which can happen) reveals a state of immaturity (Gal. 4:1-3). He reveals that the freedom under which the believer lives has little or nothing to do with license. In fact, this freedom has made the believer, for the first time in his life, free to do that which is right and good (Gal. 5:22-23).

Finally, Paul, writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, shows that the believer is free from the law. He is free, having been rescued and delivered from its bondage by the blood and righteousness of Christ. He shows that the believer is free from the rule of the law because he is ruled by a higher and more glorious principle (Gal. 5:5-6). The letters to the churches in Galatia and Colosse are great proclamations of emancipation from the slavery of the law and sin.

It is my desire for you, as well as for me, to enter into this blessed estate of understanding. If we but catch a glimpse—if we but touch the hem of the garment of this unsearchable richness of life, we will mount on the wings of eagles and soar in the ether of absolute liberty without fear of those who would clip our wings if ever we descended to their realm of operation. Freedom and liberty, the bane of the law-monger, is the prize of the graced — believer. *“Stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free.”*

The Author of Paul's Gospel

“Paul, an apostle, (not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead...)”

Galatians 1:1

Our text for this study is the parenthetical expression found in verse 1 “(not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead...)” But before we look at that, let us consider the salutation of Paul to the churches in Galatia.

After identifying himself, Paul asserts that his office is that of an apostle. Paul often identified himself as such, because his right to claim that office was often the target of his enemies. Once a persecutor of the church, his former dealings were not forgotten by many (Acts 9:13). He was the twelfth apostle, the one who took the place of Judas Iscariot. Though the other apostles had held a business meeting, complete with a vote (casting of lots, Acts 1:23, 26), and had named Matthias as the 12th apostle, God's purpose proved to be otherwise. On the road to Damascus, our Lord settled the issue forever, and Saul of Tarsus, that mean and angry despiser of “that way,” was created anew and made to be the apostle who was responsible for the establishment of the church from Asia to Europe (v. 21-24). Though he was, as it were, “one born out of season,” he was the apostle of God's choice.

In the Scriptures, salutations are not merely the proper way to open a letter. When they are recorded in the word of God, they are inspired by God and are thus “profitable for doctrine reproof, correction and instruction that the man of God might be thoroughly furnished unto all good works” (2 Tim. 3:16-17). This letter is not only from Paul but is seen as a word from all the brethren that are with him. This is not to say that these other brethren are inspired, but that the words written by Paul are words that are held also by those with Paul. They are called brethren to set forth the idea of *family* that runs throughout this letter (4:6-7).

The letter is specific to the churches of Galatia because Paul is addressing a situation that has divided the churches there. The situation is that many in the church were succumbing to the influence of legalists and their legalism (3:1-3). What follows in the salutation sets the theme for the whole of the letter. Grace is not merely a desire of Paul for the churches but is the singular cause of the salvation of their souls and the only remedy for the assault under which they have fallen. The only way to know what is false is for the heart to be established with the truth.

The second thing declared in the salutation addresses the situation in which the churches find themselves. It is the grace of God that saves men and the result of that grace is peace. It is painfully evident that there is little peace in the churches addressed, so the reason must be that the grace of God is not being declared and embraced. Since this grace is from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, then any wavering

from these principles is tantamount to denying the God who has saved them and casting aspersion on the effectiveness of the sacrifice of Christ. So, the tone is set for the words that will follow. This letter is about *grace* and *peace*—the cause and result of the *freedom* of the believer from the Law.

The subject of this lesson is *the source of Paul's gospel*. Though it is the gospel of God, Paul refers to it as his gospel (Rom. 16:25; 2 Tim. 2:8). Paul not only owns it as such but also declares it to be the means of the deliverance of the churches in Galatia (v. 6, 8, 9).

The parenthetical expression in verse 1 is a very demonstrative phrase. Paul declares that his apostleship (his personal calling to preach the glories of Christ) had a source. It was authored by someone. Paul, himself, was *not* the author of it, so he did not take this office of his own volition. Though he was happy to have it, he did not ask for it.

First, Paul declares the office he received was “not of men.” The plural here probably signifies three things. First, men (the counsel of the Sanhedrin) had sent him out to destroy the church. No such group was involved in his authority to preach the gospel. Secondly, the church had not cast lots on him. He was not chosen or ordained by the church to be an apostle of Christ. Thirdly, he did not confer with men to sanction the ministry with which he had been entrusted (vv. 16-17). He is declaring that his calling was not the result of anything *on* this earth, and therefore, he was not beholding to anyone but the One who had put him in

the ministry. Consequently, his words were not his own but were the words of Him who had called him.

Secondly, Paul says that his apostleship was not *by* man. Again, this means more than one thing. First, it means that man was not the cause or means of his appointment. This includes Paul, himself. Who and what he is (an apostle) was not by any man. Second, it means that, though he was attended by the brethren, they were not what undergirded his ministry. The authority for what he did was not given by man. He was a student of one of the most respected teachers of his day: Gamaliel. Yet that man had nothing to do with his apostolic ministry (vv. 11-12). As to the preaching of it, the anointing of it, and the results of it, a man is not at all involved in it.

Paul's gospel was from *the* man, the Lord Jesus Christ, and God the Father, and was established by the resurrection of Christ. The resurrection sets Christ in a different light than mere man. Christ was and is a man, even the most glorious of men. But Paul is asserting that his apostleship—his calling to preach the gospel as an apostle of Christ—is not from men or a man, but from above—from God, Himself. With these inspired words from heaven, Paul declares the deity of Jesus Christ and declares Him to be the sole author of his apostleship and the gospel that he preaches. In this salutation Paul asserts that what the Galatians are about to receive are nothing less than the words of God's mouth and are, therefore, worthy of their absolute and unquestioned attention.

Paul's Gospel

“Grace be to you and peace from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ, Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father: To whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.”

Galatians 1:3-5

Having established that the gospel he preaches came from Jesus Christ, God incarnate, Paul asserts that what he is about to say is based upon the gospel from God's mouth. He declares that this is the word that Jesus Christ, Himself, taught him on the backside of the desert. So, as Paul proclaims the gospel that was delivered to him personally by Christ, it should be received as if Christ were rehearsing in our ears the facts of what He accomplished (v. 3). Thus, the basis of the argument that follows is the foundation that God has laid. To challenge it is to challenge God Himself!

It would seem that such a small phrase would be insufficient to address the huge dilemma that faces the churches in Galatia. However, what is contained in these words of verses 4 and 5 covers every possible base that the legalizers might touch. If what is said in these verses is true, then it is simply impossible to make a reasonable argument for human merit having a role in the salvation of the elect

The basis of our salvation is summed up in a three-word question, “Who did it?” If the One who took upon Himself the task of saving our souls is God, then the outcome can never be in question and the glory for it can never be shared or appropriated to anyone else. Paul begins this wonderful, foundational declaration by identifying Who it is that saved us. Our Lord Jesus Christ is He “who gave Himself.”

The value of this salvation, the assurance of this salvation, and the unqualified success of this salvation cannot be up for debate without denying the ability of God to perform His intent. Though the elect are recipients of this great work of grace, it is God's salvation (Luke 2:29-30). Being God's salvation, those who are its targets *must* be saved or else the terminology is, at best, misleading or, at worst, untrue. It is not salvation if any one for whom it is intended is not saved. It may bear the name of “effort” or “trying” or “offer” or “possibility,” but the glorious nomenclature of “*salvation*” can never apply to the un-saved. *Who* did it is what gives power to *what* was done! He Who did it is none other than the King of Kings, the magnificent despot, the Lord Jesus Christ—very God of very God.

He who accomplished salvation did so in an act of love, grace, and mercy. What He did was the manifestation of the supreme sacrifice. He “gave Himself.” This is superlative language. He did not give the world or a thousand worlds, though they were His to give. He gave *Himself*. In doing so, He put Himself in the forefront of the fray. He left the armies of heaven behind, laid aside the glory of His deity, and stepped alone into

the breach to suffer disgrace via the agony of experiencing the wrath of divine justice that rightfully was due us. His soul—*His soul!*—was made an offering for sin. (Compare Isaiah 53:10; Jeremiah 32:38-42; Romans. 6:5; Ephesians 2:5-6.) I cannot fathom the concept of the soul of God, but when I read that He gave Himself, I can, by faith, rejoice to believe it. God has invested His whole soul in the salvation of the elect. There are no words available to the finite mind that can express the awe and worship that this truth engenders.

He gave himself “for our sins.” For centuries, religion has spent a great amount of energy in an effort to assign blame for the death of Christ. From the arguments they use, one would think that they want to escape blame themselves. Often the Jews are the ones who catch the brunt of the blame. The Jews blame it on Rome, and in so doing, they act like every other group that shirks responsibility. Furthermore, they are avoiding the plain declaration of Scripture. As far as humanity's guilt in the attempted homicide of Christ is concerned, the crime scene was covered with the fingerprints of the entire human race (Acts 4:27). Both Jews and Gentiles and their respective governments were culpable in the crucifixion of our Lord.

However, to blame them for His death is to curse second causes. The following verse (Acts 4:28) makes it clear that the venom and vitriol expressed toward Christ by the human race, even though it was the product of their own depravity, was governed and guided by the hand of sovereign omnipotence to this appointed end: “[He] gave Himself for our sins.” Though humanity was

used and was allowed to express the general hatred of the creature for its Creator, Christ gave Himself for *our* sins. Thus, the *sins of the elect* are the true cause of Christ's sacrificial demise (Isa. 53:4-6, 8, 12; 1 Cor. 15:1-4).

This sacrifice had an intent and purpose: to “deliver us from [pluck us out of] this present evil world.” The “present evil world” refers to the trouble that is at hand. The reference is to the plight of the Galatians. This *evil* world is the world of *self-righteousness*, that is, the world of *human merit* earning salvation by the keeping of the law. The deliverance addressed is specific. Paul’s words do not refer to the general application of salvation; rather, they apply to the specific problem in Galatia. From this, we are led to conclude that that the salvation wrought by Christ applies to every individual aspect of salvation. It does not cover only the removal of sin and the bringing in of everlasting righteousness; it also addresses everything that Satan and his religion throws at the believer. The same sacrifice that delivered us from the penalty of sin also actively delivers us from any and every assault on the fullness and accomplishment of that sacrifice.

Finally, all this was done according to the “will of God.” What can withhold it? Who can disannul it? Who can change it? It is done! If God has willed the deliverance of the church from this present evil world, they are delivered (Dan. 4:35; Is. 46:9-10). If the triune Godhead has willed the salvation of His people, then saved they all shall be (Matt. 1:21; 2 Tim. 1:9; John 6:37-39). The final blow—the death knell to the legalist—

is verse 5. Who gets the glory? This is the foundation of the epistle to the Galatians.

The Poison Gospel

“I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ.”

Galatians 1:6-7

Having declared the singular and glorious gospel as the only means of salvation and the truth from which some of the Galatians have begun to err, Paul defines this error in the plainest of terms. In so doing, he defines the gospel and at the same time defines what is not the gospel.

Paul defines the gospel in a unique way in verse 6. He says that the gospel is a *person*. He does this with two prepositional phrases. He declares that the Galatians are removed “from Him” “unto another gospel.” He declares the gospel *is* Christ or, rather, God in Christ through grace (vv. 3-5). In asserting that Christ is the gospel, Paul, inspired by the Spirit, narrows the field of revelation to Christ’s Person and His work. One may preach the gospel *only* if he remains within the strict parameters of this Person and His work (1 Cor. 2:2; 9:16). To venture to any degree outside the established strictures inspired by God is to preach another gospel and, thus, incur the just punishment due to such deliberate error (vv. 8-9). Any or all who would dare to introduce anything that belongs to man

into the pure truth is condemned to eternal punishment without recourse.

It appears that Paul marvels—is astounded—not only that the churches of Galatia are removed from the gospel, but that they are removed from the gospel so shortly after their conversion—“so soon removed.” I don't think Paul is suggesting that it would be more probable that one might be removed after a long period of belief, though time and tide can and often do bring the believer to a state of apathy (Amos 6:1-6). The source of Paul's astonishment concerning the hasty removal of the Galatians to another gospel could be due to the fact that *first love* is so powerful that to be quickly seduced from it seems highly unlikely. Whatever is meant by the phrase “so soon,” it is clear that the enemies and perverters of the gospel were quick to pounce upon their prey. The legalistic Judaizers moved with lightning speed to do their evil deed. Nothing motivates the immediate response of the false teachers more than someone who believes the truth that is in Christ

Having called the false teaching of the enemies of the truth “another gospel,” Paul is quick to assert that what the legalist is preaching is not really a “gospel” at all (v. 7). The reason that it is not another gospel is that there is no good news in it. Anything added to the righteousness of Christ for acceptance with God is distinctly *bad* news. It destroys the doctrine of grace and removes the possibility of assurance. The cause of peace with God is changed from the accomplishment of Christ to the precarious efforts of man. Since man in his best state is altogether vanity, the best effort that man can

make to establish righteousness is completely empty. The Judaizer's "gospel" is, therefore, not another gospel but an effort of vain religionists to pervert the gospel of Christ. That other teaching, which is not the gospel, is *evil tidings* at every turn. There is nothing good in it or about it and there never can be. It is the product of men, is designed for the palate and glory of men, and results in diminishing the true gospel (1:1). That other teaching is evil personified.

The use the word "personified" is deliberate because of the manner in which Paul defines the gospel in contrast to this other un-gospel. Having established that the gospel is a Person, he also establishes that the un-gospel has to do with a person or persons. The context asserts that the Galatians are removed "from Him who called" them to "some that trouble" them. Just as Paul does not address the gospel as *doctrine* but rather as a *Person*, he does not address the un-gospel as *doctrine* but rather as a *person*. This does not diminish doctrine but rather declares that doctrine may never be separated from whoever declares it. There is no teaching without a teacher, and ultimately, the teaching always points the student to the teacher, himself. Those who preach the gospel beseech men to look to Christ because the gospel, itself, is Christ saying, "Look unto Me" (Isa. 45:21-22; Matt. 11:28). Likewise the preacher of the un-gospel, though he says that he points men to the law, in truth, bids men to look at him instead of at Christ. A man cannot preach the law and not use himself, either negatively or positively, as the measure or standard of his message. The difference, then, is that the preacher of

the gospel says, “don't look to me” (Psa. 115:1, 2 Cor. 4:5) while the preacher of the law says, “look unto me” (Gal. 6:12-13). This is the distinction that Paul is making in verses 10-12 of our context.

The perverting of the gospel of Christ is man adding himself to the mix. The perverted gospel is nothing but works and trouble, whereas the pure gospel is nothing but grace and peace. The perverting of the gospel is the polluting and poisoning of the gospel of Christ. One dram of man injected into the gospel turns good news into bad news—the balm in Gilead into a lethal injection. One modicum of human merit added to the merit of Christ is a perversion of the gospel. The gospel is a Person, one Person, and only one Person. Anyone added to the mix brings trouble rather than peace. The manner in which the poison gospel is discovered is simple: When it is preached, men are caused to look to themselves rather than to Christ. Since the punishment assigned to the preaching of the un-gospel is so severe, we must never be guilty of taking it lightly. To countenance those who teach anything or anyone other than Christ—even to call them brethren—is to take part in their perversion (2:4-5; 2 John 9-11).

A Gospel Salvation

“For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ. For ye have heard of my conversation in time past in the Jews' religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and wasted it: And profited in the Jews' religion above many my equals in mine own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers. But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood: Neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before; but I went into Arabia, and returned again unto Damascus. Then after three years, I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and abode with him fifteen days. But, other of the apostles saw I none, save James the Lord's brother. Now the things which I write unto you, behold, before God, I lie not. Afterwards I came into the regions of Syria and Cilicia; And was unknown by face unto the churches of Judaea which were in Christ: But they had heard only, That he which persecuted us in times past now preacheth the faith which once he destroyed. And they glorified God in me.”

Galatians 1:12-24

Having established Who and what the gospel is, and having distinguished between true and false preachers and between the true and false message, Paul finishes this chapter with the effect of the true gospel on the chosen of God. Using his own conversion, he sets the tone for the rest of this epistle. He also sets down the pattern, manner, and means of every conversion wrought by God upon the elect (1 Tim. 1:15-16).

The word “pattern” does not imply that everyone who is converted has the same Damascus road experience that Paul had. What it means is that there are *certain aspects* of Paul's conversion that are true of every conversion. Therefore, we may look at Paul's account of his own conversion and confidently say that this is how God saves sinners and that this is the effect of God's salvation. The reason that this is important is because it answers all the false notions that the enemies of the gospel put forth in the remainder of the epistle. This is the *standard*. This is *gospel* salvation.

The first element of gospel salvation is that no part of it may be attributed to *man* (v. 12). Though men are called to preach the gospel and God is pleased to save them that believe through that preaching of the gospel, God has fixed it so that no man may be taken into the account of salvation. Though Paul's experience was unique in one sense, it was not unique in every sense. He did meet Christ on the road to Damascus, but the scales did not fall from his blinded eyes until Ananias told him Whom he had met and the reason for the meeting (Acts 22:11-15). Paul however attributed his salvation to Christ alone (John 4:29, 42).

The first element is so because gospel salvation is by the revelation of Jesus Christ (v. 12). This revelation is according to the good pleasure of God (Matt. 11:25-26). It is a revelation of the faith once delivered to the saints and received by grace through faith. It is spiritual knowledge of Christ implanted in the heart of every one of the elect (Heb. 10:16). This revelation comes from being taught by God (John 6:45). This fact leaves the salvation of men entirely in the hands of God and entirely according to the will of God (v. 4).

The next element of gospel salvation is that it is for sinners (v. 13-14). One aspect of *every* instance of gospel salvation is that the sinners who receive it are called out of some sort of religion of works. Whether one is like Paul—steeped in the religion of the Jews, or like the pagans—worshiping numerous gods, all men and women are saved out of religion (2 Cor. 6:14-16; Rev. 18:4). Zealously pursuing their religion, and accompanied by the self-righteousness such religion relies upon, nothing short of an act of a sovereign God will suffice to pluck them as a firebrand from the burning.

The next element of gospel salvation is that it is by *sovereign grace* (v. 15-16). When Paul is inspired to use the conjunction “but,” he is stating that his career of hatred and vengeance against the church would have continued “but” for the pleasure of God. With the use of the word “when,” the purpose of God is brought to light. “When” suggests that this act of God took place at the appointed time or that it was the next thing destined to happen in the course of Paul's existence. He was

separated from his mother's womb and sanctified for this purpose (Jer. 1:5). What follows in this course is that Paul was called by grace (Rom. 8:30; 1 Cor. 1:2). This call is a call of *purpose*. It is not a call to service or a call to the missionary field. The purpose of this call is to reveal God's Son in the elect. The preposition "*in*" is correct. *Life in* the believer is *Christ in* the believer. The gospel is the revelation of that to the believer. That revelation is also for a purpose "that I might preach Him among the heathen." Though this call was particularly to the ministry of Apostleship, every believer is a minister of Christ.

The next element of gospel salvation is that it does not look to men for assurance or proof of its reality. Paul did not go to anyone to sanction the salvation that had been wrought in him (v. 16). He did not seek the counsel of the other apostles. He did not wait for orders or letters as he did with the Sanhedrin. He did not go before the presbytery for the laying on of hands or immediately enroll in the seminary. He struck out with the gospel. Gospel salvation frees the believer from the opinions and input of men (vv. 17-20).

The next element of gospel salvation is that the believer does not seek the acceptance of the brethren except upon one single premise. That premise is the gospel he preaches and believes (v. 23). That which is the singular place of believers' fellowship is the gospel. The thing that caused the churches to receive Paul was that they heard that he preached Christ. Though his former life is considered, it is only in light of the fact that

he has been changed by Christ and he attributes that change only to Christ.

The next element of gospel salvation is that the church is absolute in its attribution of glory. When God saves a sinner, the church does not run for the roll book or set up a counsel to grill the believer as to his qualifications for membership. “They glorified God” (v. 24; Luke 15:7, 10).

Freedom

“Then fourteen years after I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and took Titus with me also. And I went up by revelation, and communicated unto them that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but privately to them which were of reputation, lest by any means I should run, or had run, in vain. But neither Titus, who was with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised; . . .”

Galatians 2:1-3

Having been taught the gospel by Christ, Paul went out with that blessed instruction and, for the next several years, traveled and preached the gospel to the Gentiles. Fourteen years later, he went up to Jerusalem and took Barnabas and Titus with him (v. 1). This is a remarkable fact. Once the Lord converted Paul, he did not seek the counsel of the established men of faith (1:16-17). He did not confer with flesh and blood but rather spent the next fourteen years in close fellowship with his Lord. In the blessedness of that communion, he was directed by the Lord to go here and there and declare the glories of His grace. This reveals the sufficiency and satisfactory nature of the relationship between the believer and his Lord. Human nature would say, “Seek out your own kind,” but Paul had all he needed and more in Christ. For some this may seem a

lonely existence, but Paul was never alone (1 John 1:1-3).

When, after fourteen years, he went to Jerusalem, he did so by the revelation of Christ (v. 2). It was the Lord who directed Paul to go to Jerusalem to meet with the brethren and communicate the gospel to them. It was not that these men did not know the gospel. But, being still in Jerusalem after 14 years, living and preaching primarily to Jewish converts, there is a great possibility that they might have been influenced by the lovers of Moses' law and might have been in need of some clarification concerning the gospel and its relation to the law. Paul was sent by the Lord to communicate unto them "that" gospel which he preached to the Gentiles. The fact that the Holy Spirit inspired Paul to use the word "that" when referring to the gospel he preached, and add "to the Gentiles," certainly suggests that there was something that needed to be addressed

This is also implied by the fact that he spoke "privately" with those who were of "reputation." This word "reputation" is an interesting word. The word carries with it the sense of opinion or supposition. Paul was saying that he addressed privately, or taught privately, those who were held in high esteem or were supposedly men of repute. This does not mean that Paul held them in low esteem, but that *reputation* was of no true value where the gospel of Christ was at issue. Perhaps this implies that their reputation was gained, not only by the gospel they believed, but also by their own piety by which they had been gained a higher place of repute than the Gentiles who had done nothing more

than to believe the gospel—*that* gospel that declared justification by Christ alone, without the works of the law. Certainly, whatever Paul taught these men of repute cannot be divorced from the context of this entire epistle, which is the declaration of *that* gospel which Paul preached to the Gentiles. This is also a clear statement of the fact that Paul did not have one gospel for the Jews and another for the Gentiles. He preached *that* gospel to the Jews — the same gospel that he preached to the Gentiles (1 Cor. 2:2). I am sure that in his discourse with these men of repute, Paul declared unto them that in Christ, “Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision availeth anything” (6:15). These men of reputation had to be made to know that our religious practices—even the practices of true religion—are never to be considered in the fact and reality of our salvation. And we, likewise, need to be regularly reminded of this truth. What we do or do not do plays no part in either our justification or our sanctification or our redemption or our righteousness. Christ is all of our salvation or he is none of it (5:2-4).

This is also implied with the words “lest by any means I should run, or had run in vain.” Here, Paul is not expressing doubt about his message as to the sure success of it. He was implicitly sure of *that* gospel because Christ had personally taught him *that* gospel (1:11-12). Paul taught these men of repute that if those who had heard the gospel fell under the influence of the Judaizers and began to apply to the law for righteousness, the fault was not with the gospel that he preached. He had not done what he had done in vain.

But some sought to add the vanity of human merit to that gospel and they were to be blamed.

Whenever the gospel is preached, it raises the ire of its enemies. They soon clamor to bring the freeman into the bondage of the law. With hellish intent, the enemies of the truth suggest that to trust wholly in the merits of Christ is to open wide the floodgates of sin. They do this under the guise of caution as if they cared for the believer. Instead, they prove themselves the minions of hell. If it were possible, they would deceive the very elect. Thank God, the gospel does not run in vain. Though these imps from the pit may send leanness to the soul of the elect for a time and engender bondage and subdue freedom, they will not succeed, for all that the Father gave to Christ will come to Him and they shall know the truth and the truth will set them free (John 6:37, 8:32).

As proof that Christ justifies the believer without the deeds of the law, Paul brought with him a justified preacher named Titus (v. 3). He was a Greek who had been saved by grace alone. He was uncircumcised, yet was a preacher of that gospel. Though false brethren, by covert espionage, had sought to bring Titus under the bondage of the law, Paul and Titus had refused to give them the least bit of attention (v. 3-4). The reason is clear: If Paul had listened to those spies and had Titus circumcised, then the truth of the gospel would have ceased to be preached (5:11). There is no middle ground here. Note well that Paul does not give any credence to another message. He calls those who would peach any other thing spies and false brethren. The gospel, *that*

gospel which Paul preached to the Gentiles, is the gospel of freedom and liberty.

False Brethren

“And that because of false brethren unawares brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage: To whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might continue with you.”

Galatians 2:4-5

The use of the phrase “And that because” refers us back to the subject Paul is addressed in the previous verse. There, Paul is saying that the reason he would not have Titus circumcised was the attitude and actions of the false brethren. He does not say that circumcision is evil or that the mere act of circumcision was a matter of conflict, but that these brethren gave it importance by making it an issue of salvation or righteousness in the sight of God. Circumcision, in and of itself, was then and still is a matter of indifference concerning salvation. In truth, it means nothing (5:6; 6:15). It was used by Paul for the benefit of weak brethren in Acts 16:1-3. Since circumcision was a matter of indifference, Timothy was circumcised so as not to put a stumbling block in the sight of the weaker brethren (1 Cor. 8:6-13). Spiritually, Timothy gained nothing and lost nothing by being circumcised. In that case, Paul was being *gracious* to those who had not grown to the point where they could acknowledge that a Greek was fully accepted. Timothy's circumcision did not

bring him into bondage, but simply removed an obstacle to communion with some brethren. The *false brethren* in our text made circumcision a matter of righteousness in the sight of God and, thus, diminished—even destroyed—the gospel that Paul preached to the Gentiles (Gal. 5:11). It is often the case that false brethren will take a matter of indifference and make it a deciding factor in righteousness in the sight of God. Such things as using alcohol as a beverage, going to movies, or playing cards were the be-all and end-all when I was growing up in religion. Consequently, salvation involved something *more* than Christ. It was Christ *plus* avoiding the areas of religious conviction espoused by that particular group of false brethren. If you listen to the false brethren of this day, you will hear them ring the bell of personal convictions for obtaining personal righteousness. In doing so, they always use matters of indifference, averring that the doctrine of free grace opens the floodgates of sin. These “false brethren” used circumcision to set aside justification by Christ. So Paul refused to have Titus circumcised because these false brethren made circumcision a *gospel issue*.

Paul describes these men in many ways. First, he calls them “false brethren” (v. 4). They are not true brethren but *pretenders*. A false brother is one who speaks like a brother, using a brother's language, but puts conditions on being a family member other than birthright. A false brother will only accept you as a brother if his conditions are met. With the false brother, it is not about having the same father; it is about having the same activities and works.

Secondly, Paul reveals something very interesting about them. They are *secretly brought in* (v. 4). They are part of a greater conspiracy. They are sent to destroy. They are sent in wearing sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. They do not come with their own agenda; they are emissaries of the religion of hell. Their master, who is the father of lies and a murderer from the beginning, insinuates them into the church. This is not an operation of individual religionists who are out for their own agenda. They are agents whose master is bent on destroying justification by Christ.

Thirdly, Paul says they “came in privily” (crept in stealthily) (v. 4) to spy. The mark of a successful spy is to blend in with those upon whom he is spying. He must first establish rapport before he can do his espionage. These false brethren spy out with the intent to plot against the believers. Their aim is ever to wreak havoc and to destroy. Though they speak with words that tend to make them appear to be helpful, saying that they have a more full interpretation of the law, they are only there to destroy.

Fourthly, Paul says they are there to “spy out,” to plot against “our liberty” (v. 4). This liberty is not license; it is specific to doctrine. Our liberty is that Christ alone justifies us (Liberty: freeborn; in a civil sense, one who is not a slave: of one who ceases to be a slave, freed; free, exempt, unrestrained, not bound by an obligation; in an ethical sense: free from the yoke of the Mosaic law). Our liberty has to do with the gospel. The design of the false brethren is to seek out and find those who are trusting Christ alone, and turn their eyes from

Christ to the law for righteousness. Their plan is a plot against truth, and such an attack can only use a lie. They seek to pollute the gospel by adding the law to it (Rom. 11:5-6).

Fifthly, Paul's declares this to be their design indeed. They do what they do to bring the believer "into bondage" (v. 4). Make no mistake here. Be not deceived. Such are not the friends of believers—they are enemies of the cross. They are very persuasive as is proven by the fact that they drew Peter and Barnabas into their web of deceit. We must not think that we are immune to the designs of the legalist. There is a part of every believer that responds favorably to the false notion of personal righteousness. The old man, the old nature, thrives on it. We must ever be aware that we are vulnerable to the idea of personal merit. That which these false brethren seek to destroy is the only thing that will cause us to stand (5:1-4).

Finally, Paul sets forth the only true manner of defense against these false brethren. The first thing mentioned is simple (in principle if not in practice): Refuse to countenance or submit to their teaching for even "an hour" (v. 5). Though this may fly in the face of our concept of kindness and tolerance, we must remember that there must be no tolerance of poison. "The gospel" (v. 5) (justification by Christ alone) will not continue where the teaching of the false brethren is tolerated.

And that leads us to the second thing (and what is truly the primary thing): "The gospel, itself." Embrace it!

Tenaciously hold to it! Only that will keep us from falling prey to the spies of our liberty.

The Subtlety of the Enemy

“But of these who seemed to be somewhat, (whatsoever they were, it maketh no matter to me: God accepteth no man's person:) for they who seemed to be somewhat in conference added nothing to me: But contrariwise, when they saw that the gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto me, as the gospel of the circumcision was unto Peter; (For he that wrought effectually in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision, the same was mighty in me toward the Gentiles:) And 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 hands of fellowship; that we should go unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision. Only they would that we should remember the poor; the same which I also was forward to do. But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed. For in before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles: but when they were come, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision. And the other Jews dissembled likewise with him; insomuch that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation.”

Galatians 2:6-13

Paul, here, begins the account of his confrontation with Simon Peter concerning the fact that he and Barnabas had fallen prey to the doctrine of the false brethren. Peter had spent some time eating and fellowshiping with the Gentiles because God had already settled the matter of dietary laws with him in a vision (Acts 10:14-15). It seems that Peter may not have applied the dissolution of the dietary laws to the matter of circumcision. When conflict and confrontation could no longer be avoided, Peter and Barnabas caved to the threat of censure by the false brethren. These men of God, these preachers of the gospel, acted shamefully. There is no record that Peter and Barnabas ever insisted that the Gentiles actually be circumcised. However, by breaking fellowship with their gentile brethren out of fear of censure by their newly arrived Jewish brethren, they despised the grace of God. And this shameful act was accomplished by nothing more than changing tables at a church social. Their actions spoke louder than their words, showing respect to men's persons and holding themselves to a standard of righteousness other than "Christ alone."

The old adage that you are known by the company you keep rings true in this case. The company these men chose to keep was made up of those who discounted the work of Christ and opted instead for justification by the deeds of the law. When Peter and Barnabas broke ranks with the Gentiles, they unwittingly put their seal of approval on this discounting of Christ and His work. I am sure that Peter and Barnabas did not consider the ramifications of their

actions. Had they considered, they would have seen that the shame of their deed was that it implied that the work of Christ is insufficient for the salvation of the elect. It may seem a small thing—a thing of insignificance—to tolerate a difference of opinion, and it *is* in matters of indifference. But when a “matter of indifference” diminishes the accomplishment of Christ, it becomes a matter of *eternal* significance.

Our Lord was able to associate with such men as these Pharisaical, false brethren that troubled the churches at Galatia without it having a detrimental effect on Him. But, it is evident that *we* are not so able to withstand the logic of the legalist. So, the only safe course for us is to have nothing to do with them and follow Paul’s exhortation that, “a heretic, after the first and second admonition, reject.” (Titus 3:10)

Thus, Paul's words come from a disappointed and disgusted heart. His friends, his brothers and sisters, were under attack for believing the gospel that Paul preached to the Gentiles. The *clean* were being called *unclean*, if not directly, then by association. Paul's assessment of Peter and Barnabas is based on what they *did*. His statements are not about what they are, but about what they did in light of what they are.

In verse 6-10, Paul says that these men had formerly seemed to account that he was a minister of the gospel. The fact that they had given him the right hand of fellowship did not enter into the fact that Paul was an Apostle. God does not respect men or their opinions as to whether or not they give credence to someone whom He has called to preach, and neither did Paul (1:16-17).

Their sanction of his calling neither added anything to nor took anything away from his ministry, which was to the Gentiles.

The words concerning Peter having the gospel of circumcision committed to him, and the gospel of uncircumcision being committed to Paul does not suggest that these men preached different gospels. Neither do those words suggest that there is a message for the Jew and a different message for the Gentile. There is only *one* gospel, and the singularity of that gospel is the primary subject of this entire epistle. Paul was simply stating that God had sent Peter primarily to the Jews with the gospel and had sent Paul primarily to the Gentiles with that same, singular gospel.

When Paul says that James, Cephas and John “seemed” to be pillars, he was not saying that they were not, but rather that the actions of Peter were not the actions of one who was a pillar. He was saying that he placed no spiritual value on the right hand of fellowship, because that fellowship had been withdrawn from the brethren in Galatia.

In verse 11, Paul gives the reason for the language he employed in verses 6-10. Regardless of who these men were, regardless of their standing in the church, what was done to the Gentiles was wrong and they were to be blamed. Paul's accusation was not frivolous. It was not based on malice or envy but was born of evidence in the action of Peter. What Peter did was blameworthy.

What did Peter do? According to this report (v. 12), before some came down from James, a leader in the Jerusalem church which was a sort of “church central,”

Peter was enjoying fellowship with the Gentiles. But when the flesh cutters arrived, he withdrew from the Gentiles, and not only that, he separated from them—literally had nothing to do with them. He did this because he was afraid. The same man who stood at Pentecost and boldly declared the gospel now cowers in awe when the *holy ones* came down from Jerusalem. What was he afraid of?

His fear was a most common one. He was afraid of what others might think of him. In a crowd of strangers, he was bold to declare the truth, but when it came to acceptance among his peers, he faltered. It has been said, and rightly so, that the opposite of love is not hate; it is *self*. These who came down from Jerusalem had a reputation for moral rectitude, and as such, seemed to have an air of authority, and Peter valued *their* opinion of him more than the Gentiles' opinion of him. Legalists live "separated" lives—lives characterized by strict and confining rules of behavior. And they are generally highly respected for it. Our *natural* religious mind responds to that because it is an attack on our liberty, as if it is licentiousness that we do not live as they seem to.

Paul uses two words in verse 13 that put this whole scenario in perspective. The words "dissembled" and "dissimulation" have as a root meaning the concept of "hypocrisy," or "being two-faced." The word "dissembled" means to "feign judgment" and the word dissimulation means to "play a part." For whom were Peter and Barnabas playing the part of judge? They were *acting*

holy for the men from Jerusalem, and in doing so; they dishonored the gospel they preached.

What should we learn from this? Simply this: great men are but men, and there is only one place to find perfection. Perfection is found in Christ—invest your heart nowhere else.

The True Issue

“But when I saw that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel, I said unto Peter before them all, If thou, being a Jew, livest after the manner of Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews?”

Galatians 2:14

In verse 14 Paul asserts that the Judaizers and those who fell under their influence, who had been able to draw away even Barnabas, “walked not uprightly according to the truth.” These words are, in a sense, descriptive of the *physical* act of Barnabas and others. They dissembled themselves from the Gentiles, and were effective in influencing others with their dissimulation.

The physical actions of these, however, pointed to a much more profound fact. Their actions were about the *truth*. Their actions were hypocritical. They were not only avoiding contact with the Gentiles, they were feigning the appropriation of the false teaching of the Jews. They were taking the words of the Judaizers as if they were their own words. In order to avoid censure, they were impersonating the false teachers. By the time Paul arrived on the scene, Barnabas could not be distinguished from any of the false teachers.

This is the insidious nature of dissimulation. It is a willingness to appear as one thing, while being another, in order to preserve oneself. It is being lukewarm instead

of being hot or cold. It is embracing everything, which, in reality, is embracing nothing. It is to not walk uprightly according to the truth of the gospel. The hypocrisy is that the person who does this is an actor, an impersonator, and somewhere inside his heart, the actor believes that when the acting is done he will simply return to being as he was before, and his performance will be recognized as only that—a performance. Paul makes it clear that, in the matter of the gospel, there is truth that attends it which concerns the *walk* of the believer. The “truth of the gospel,” as it is here used by Paul, is not about the gospel being the truth, but rather that the gospel carries with it the truth about the effect it is to have on the believer.

In the context of this epistle, Paul is asserting that the truth of the gospel is that men who have received it are to walk singularly in it as the absolute and only means of justification in the sight of God. Paul, by saying that these “walked not uprightly,” was not insinuating that they had become profligates, but they had become law keepers, and did so in order that they might appear righteous in the sight of men. To walk uprightly according to the truth of the gospel is to rest in Christ as righteous men and women and to discount and avoid any practice that has as its design the approval of men (Phil. 3:2-3; 1 Tim. 1:5)

The true issue that Paul is addressing is the singular catalyst and motivation of all religion, both true and untrue. Every religion, every denomination, has as its necessary end an acceptable righteousness in the sight of God. That which separates religious sects is their

views of righteousness in the sight of God. Even within the same denomination, men do what they do and espouse what they espouse because, somewhere down where they truly live, they believe that their distinctiveness equates to righteousness in the sight of God. For example, among Baptists, there is a wide range of distinctives. From Regular, to Primitive, to Landmark, to Northern, to Southern, to Independent, to Missionary, to The Spiritual Two-Seed Predestinarian Baptists, all have added these distinctions to their name in order to say that they are more right than the others. Though it is certain that they would each humbly deny that they equate this to righteousness, none would say that they did so to be less recognized.

The fact is that the invention of denominations is, at its heart, a declaration of difference, and men do not declare their difference to lower the opinion of themselves in other men's eyes or to assert that they are wrong. They do so to proclaim that they are right, and to be right is to be righteous. The early Baptists were called so because they refused to accept infant baptism. At the beginning, they were called re-baptizers (Anabaptists). I am sure they sought only to follow the truth about baptism as it is in the Scriptures and did not take what they did as a denominational difference. In all probability, that name was given to them as a term of contempt, but the pride of man took it as a banner of righteousness.

Over the years, the name became synonymous with separatism. The Amish are German Baptist, and live an extremely separated life. In America, Rhode Island was a

haven of Baptists who were political separatists from those who held that America should be a church state. Today, for the most part, Baptists are equated with the political religious right.

No matter what religious distinctive is set forth, the issue is always personal righteousness. For the Methodist, the method is righteousness. For the Holiness people, their morality is righteousness. For the Calvinist and the Arminian, their doctrine is righteousness. But, for the believer, Christ is their righteousness, and their walk is to be upright by not separating themselves unto anything that suggests personal merit for acceptance with God. That Paul wrote this about the actions of Peter and Barnabas is sufficient evidence that every true believer is subject to the temptation of not walking uprightly according to the truth of the gospel and can even fall to it (Col. 2:8).

In verse 14, Paul draws the issue down to its crux: What is true righteousness and how is it realized? Paul addresses Peter here because he was the leader of the pack. His question, or rather indictment, is about hypocrisy. How is it that a Jew saved by grace can fellowship with others saved by grace one day and then on the next day require these same people to go back under the law? This is hypocrisy. Is righteousness by the law or by the faithful accomplishment of Christ? The true issue is this: Is righteousness liberty and freedom, or is righteousness bondage? Is true righteousness Christ alone, or is it the work of men? If it is Christ alone, then men cannot be compelled under any circumstance to apply to the law for righteousness. If it

is by the works of men—the keeping of the law—then the work of Christ is of no value, and what He did was nothing but a waste of time and has nothing to do with righteousness in the sight of God. What is righteousness to you? Is it freedom or is it bondage? The gospel and the upright walk that attends it is “either/or.” There can be no mixture; else, both are destroyed (Rom. 11:6). Walking uprightly according to the truth of the gospel is not *doing*; it is *believing* (2:16). It is doing what you do because you *are* righteous rather than doing what you do in order to *be* righteous. In this there are no exceptions (Rom. 10:4; Jer. 23:5- 6; Gal. 2:21). Beware of the temptation to walk in a manner that would entice men away from Christ to another righteousness.

What Believers Know

“We who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles, knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.”

Galatians 2:15-16

Paul is still addressing Peter and Barnabas and any other Jew who has proven themselves hypocritical in their actions toward the Gentiles that had been saved by grace under the preaching of the gospel. As we saw in the last chapter, the problem with their actions was not so much about the visible things they did (changing tables at the church social), but the fact that those actions revealed that they were not walking according to the truth of the gospel.

What they had done was not in line with what they preached and what they knew to be true. To walk in the truth of the gospel is to live in a manner that *adorns* the gospel that one believes. It is to embrace those whom the gospel embraces and to indict those whom the gospel indicts. It is to live according to *who* and what you know by the revelation of God. Hence, one who says that he is saved by grace alone yet gives credence to the doctrine of those who say that the child of God is justified by the works of the law is not walking according to the truth of

the gospel. One who professes to be saved by the unmerited favor of God denies that profession by looking to personal merit for any aspect of that salvation. If a person is what he is by the grace of God then he cannot be what he is by any other means. This is a very simple equation, but the confused and complex nature of sin, the fear of men to be censured, and the desire of men to be recognized and lauded for their accomplishments turns simplicity into a veritable mass of wicked confusion.

Here in verses 15-16, Paul sets forth that which is the impetus of the matter of walking according to the truth of the gospel. He does so by reminding Peter and Barnabas of what *they know* to be true. He approaches it this way in order to show them that what they are doing does not line up with what they know.

The description that Paul gives in verse 15 is both definitive and distinctive. This is not a generic statement that sets the Jew in a higher moral category than the Gentile. Paul is not diminishing the Gentiles at all. Taken in light of the subject that Paul is addressing, it is the Jew that is morally questionable. The “we” that Paul refers to is Peter, Barnabas and *himself* as believing Jews. Paul's reference is two-fold.

First, being born Jews, these men had the advantage of being the people with whom God specifically dealt (Rom. 3:1-2; 9:4-5). They knew the law of Moses. The Gentiles did not have the law of Moses.

Secondly, this knowledge, more perfectly revealed and understood in the gospel by the believing Jews, held them to a higher standard concerning the law. They

knew that the works of the law do not justify a man. They *saw* the purpose and use of the law. They *understood* that the law was never intended to make a man righteous. This knowledge made them responsible, and in this case, more responsible than the Gentiles, who never had the advantage they had. So, the use of the word “sinners” in reference to the Gentiles is actually an indictment against the *believing Jews* who had given in to the sway of the legalists. Sinners who never knew the law might be excused for falling under the spell of the legalists with their religious finery and deceptive ways. But a believing Jew (specifically Peter and Barnabas) is without excuse, and such activity can only be construed as “walking not according to the truth of the gospel” (Rom. 2:28-29; Phil. 3:1-3).

Paul, Peter, and Barnabas know the truth concerning the law of Moses (v. 16). This is an amazing statement. This is what the believer knows. There is a great deal here for the one whom God has saved by His grace. The first obvious thing is that faith is not a work. The wording of this passage is so precise in this matter that there can be no doubt. In truth, faith is the cessation of labor (Rom. 4:1-8). Therefore, believers cannot join hands with those who would be justified by the works of the law, because the faith they possess is theirs by the gift of grace and involves no work on their part at all (v. 5; Eph. 2:8-9).

What follows is Paul's argument concerning the distinction that must be made about the law in order to walk according to the truth of the gospel. This is not an isolated statement. Paul is not embarking on some new

or different theological treatise. He is addressing the same topic as he has up to this point.

This statement (v. 16) should not be used to prove a point about justification by faith as to the fact that faith does not justify. Some think it necessary to state here a long argument that faith in Christ is not the means of justification. This is often done by the logical argument that “the faith of Christ” actually refers to the faithfulness of Christ—to the work of Christ—as the only means of justification. Those who hold this argument feel that, since the “faith of Christ” is held in opposition to the “works of the law,” that this is the argument Paul is putting forth. Though the premise that Christ accomplished our justification on Calvary is true, it is simply not the subject that Paul is addressing. The reason Paul says that we are justified by the faith of Christ and “have believed in Jesus Christ that we might be justified by the faith of Christ,” is that the gentile believers are under attack for faith in Christ *alone*. Paul has preached the gospel of grace to the Gentiles, and they have believed and been received into the fellowship of the brethren.

The law had not been an issue in Paul's preaching because the Gentiles had never been under the law of Moses. The false brethren had introduced the Gentiles to the law of Moses and asserted that the Gentiles were not truly justified unless they were circumcised. Therefore, Paul's argument was that the works of the law do not justify; only faith does. He was not making faith more than it is, but rather declaring that works were not involved *at all* in the justification of the sinner. Paul was

declaring that the object of faith is Christ alone for justification, whereas the object of the Judaizers was their own works for justification. Everyone who trusts Christ for justification is justified. No one who trusts his own works in the flesh for justification is justified. This is what the believer knows and the legalist cannot know. The believer, knowing this, must take care to walk according to the truth of the gospel.

Legalism's Consequence

“But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, is therefore Christ the minister of sin? God forbid.”

Galatians 2:17

In this verse, Paul continues his defense of the gospel of free grace as it stands in total opposition to the works of the law. He has established that justification by the faith of Christ and justification by the works of the law cannot co-exist on any level or to any degree.

His basic argument was this: The believer is justified without doing the works of the law, and those who would seek to add the works of the law for justification are not justified at all. In the last chapter, we saw that Paul spoke of two kinds of people: Jews and sinners of the Gentiles. He was not saying that the Jews were not sinners or that only the Gentiles were sinners. He was speaking in the context of the way that the Judaizers and those who sided with them (Peter in particular) were speaking by their actions. Leaving the fellowship of the Gentiles was tantamount to calling the Gentiles transgressors of the law or sinners.

The legalists were saying that faith in Christ is not sufficient for justification and that if the believer is not circumcised (did not keep the law), he is a sinner or transgressor of the law. The Gentiles, who never knew the law of Moses, not only did not apply to it for justification; they did not even consider it *at all* for

justification or for life. They had believed the gospel that Paul had preached and, by faith alone, *realized* the justification that Christ had accomplished for them. They did not believe that faith is a work but that it is, instead, the gift of God by which they believed they were justified by Christ alone. This being the case, they did not regard the law for righteousness at all. In truth, the law of Moses and the works of the law were not even a consideration to them. Therefore, the Judaizers viewed them as sinners and broke fellowship with them. To the believer, neither circumcision nor uncircumcision (*keeping or not keeping* the law) availeth anything.

The works of the law (or the lack thereof) have nothing to do with justification in the sight of God. The bane of the Judaizers is for someone to say that the works of the law have nothing to do with justification. But, the truth is that the works of the law are a non-issue for believers (v. 16). The legalists of that day, as well as those of this day, would call these Gentiles “antinomians” meaning “those who are against the law.” You can be assured that the same accusation will be applied to you if you believe that salvation is by grace alone. If you preach, teach, or believe the gospel, someone is going to call you an antinomian. If religion does not view you as such, you have probably never preached the gospel.

In verse 17, Paul turns the Judaizers argument on its head and defines the consequence of asserting that a person must not only believe, but also must do the works of the law for justification. He bases these remarks on what the Jewish believer (himself, Peter and

Barnabas) knows, namely, that a man is not justified by the works of the law. Knowing this, there are dire consequences to giving credence to those who apply to the law for justification (2:5). Paul, in no uncertain terms, declares that it is those who are applying to the law for justification who are sinners rather than those who believe Christ alone. Again, he is not saying that believers are not sinners, but rather that, in truth, those who hold that a man is justified by the works of the law are the actual transgressors of the law.

The first phrase of verse 17 says exactly that. When he says, “we ourselves also are found sinners,” he is equating keeping the law for justification with sinning against God. The wording is difficult because the old English does not always fit with our American version of the same language. Paul is saying that if we who believe Christ yet apply to the law for righteousness, we are sinning against God (5:4).

Though this interpretation is accurate, it does not fully deal with the context. Remember that Paul is dealing with how the Judaizers *view* the gentile believers. They view them as sinners, that is, those who disregard the law (v. 15). Remember also that Paul is not presenting a theological discourse on justification. Rather, he is dealing with the *actions* of Peter and what those actions *implied*. This being so, Paul is saying that, in light of the way the Jews view the Gentiles, being a sinner is the only right thing to do. If, while seeking to be justified by Christ, we are found to be sinners (those who refuse to go to the law for righteousness, those who have turned their back on the law), we are merely acting

like Gentiles rather than Jews with respect to the law (2:14). This is but the necessary consequence of justification by faith. To the legalist, the Jewish believer is found to be a sinner since, like the Gentiles, he ignores the law.

Does trusting Christ alone for justification, which makes us a sinner in the eyes of the legalist, make Christ the minister or promoter of sin? It does if ignoring the law for righteousness is sin. Paul, however, uses the strongest of Greek denials, “May it never be!” (The “God forbid” of the KJV is Old English idiom. Neither the word God nor forbid is in the Greek text.) Rejecting the law for justification may make us “sinners” in the sight of the religious legalists, but in the sight of God, we are doing the right thing. Rather than being the minister of sin, Christ is the minister of righteousness since righteousness is only realized by abandoning the law and, instead, believing. If believing Christ alone for justification makes us sinners in the legalist's eyes, then let us gladly be that kind of sinner.

So, the first consequence of legalism is that it makes Christ a promoter or minister of sin. What Peter and Barnabas did was no *small* thing.

As a believer, you can expect religion to respond to this truth negatively. The legalist asserts that the believer (the one who believes he is justified by Christ without the law) promotes lawlessness. To believe that salvation is by grace alone will, the religionist declares, “. . . open the floodgates of sin.” They hold that to ignore the law for righteousness is to live as one pleases, as if to say that trusting Christ will lead to a profligate life.

This is the lost religionist's natural reaction to the freedom obtained by the gospel (Rom. 3:8; 5:20-6:1, 14-15). The legalist's argument is logical, though totally erroneous. They hold that the only defense against lawlessness is the enforcement of the law. The truth is that the only defense against lawlessness is to be in such a state that the law does not apply to you. The defense against lawlessness is righteousness, because the law is not for the righteous (1 Tim. 1:7-10). Christ is our righteousness, the end of the law for righteousness to them that believe (Rom. 10:4; Gal. 2:16).

Destruction

“For if I build again the things which I destroyed,
I make myself a transgressor.”

Galatians 2:18

As we saw in the last chapter (v. 17), Paul has established that those who believe that Christ alone is their justification in the sight of God are those who disregard the law for righteousness. The result is that those who hold that justification in the sight of God is by the works of the law hold believer's in contempt and count them as sinners because believers have turned their back on the law. The result of such thinking by those who approach justification on a legal basis is that they make Christ the minister or promoter of sin. Paul, writing under the inspiration of God, declares “May it never be!” The believer, who turns his back on the law for justification, is doing right in the eyes of God. The legalist sees this as *contempt* for the law. Nothing could be further from the truth. The believer has contempt for the error of thinking or believing that anyone is justified by the works of the law. The believer is the only one who establishes the law, who sees the law for what it is, and, indeed, honors the purpose of the law in its capacity to show sin for what it is (Rom. 3:19-20; 5:20; 7:7-14, 25).

In verse 18, Paul continues illuminating the principle that he began in verse 17. Having asserted that faith in Christ disregards the works of the law for justification

and that it is the right thing to do and that such law-disregarding faith is, in effect, counted for righteousness, he now speaks of the *ramifications* of believing Christ for righteousness without the deeds of the law being involved to any degree. Remembering again that the legalist holds that believers turn their back on the law and are therefore sinners and that this opinion makes Christ to be the minister of sin, and having used the most powerful expletive that can be used, "May it never be!" Paul, now, explains why it must never be.

This principle might be best understood by asking the question, "What would I be doing if, as a believer, I began to apply to the works of the law for justification?" Paul says that he would be building again that which he destroyed, and the result would be that he would make himself a transgressor. Though the Judaizers *call* believers sinners because they turn their back on the law for righteousness, if the believer returned to the law for righteousness he would *actually* be making himself a transgressor. Paul uses some strong language to declare this truth. He says that believing Christ alone for justification is the destruction any hope of justification by the works of the law and that returning to the law is sin. He refers to the works of the law for justification as the thing *he* once built. This is a good definition of that way of life.

The whole system of false religion, no matter the alias under which it travels, is conditioned upon building legal *merit*. False religion's idea of rewards, allowing for one person to get more than another person,

must find its attainments in being a better builder than the next person. The notion of progressive sanctification must have its progress measured in comparative language, and thus, must be based on building a better righteousness than someone else builds. Otherwise, progress could not be measured. The comparative suffixes of “er” and “est,” in reference to personal holiness, demand recognition of *building skills*. This is the language that Paul uses to describe what is done by those who will not submit to the righteousness of God (Rom. 10:1). Though Christ is the end (purpose, fulfillment) of the law for righteousness to all who believe, the legalist, rather than submit (believe), goes about the business of building up a righteousness by which he believes he will be accepted by God. His efforts belie his zeal and, instead, prove that he is ignorant of the only way that a person is accepted by God (Eph. 1:6).

Paul declares that he used to be a *builder* before he understood the purpose of the law (Rom. 7:7-9). If, having believed Christ alone for justification, he returned to the law, the law would still have the same effect that it had before, namely, that sin would revive and he would die. He refers to himself as having *built* these things. He does so because he is addressing the actions of Peter and Barnabas, actions that revealed that they were not walking according to the truth of the gospel. For a believer to discount the gospel in such manner must be an act of willful rebellion against the truth. A believer cannot be “snuck up on” by the law and suddenly find that he is a legalist. Somewhere,

somehow, he must *willfully* choose to go there. That is why Paul words it in this manner, that is, in the sense of *building* again that which he destroyed.

Make no mistake here: To believe Christ alone for justification is to destroy any hope in the law for justification. Therefore, those who seek justification by the works of the law will not count you as true brethren. Likewise, to build again that which you have destroyed, that is, to seek justification in the sight of God by the works of the law, is to *make yourself* a sinner—a transgressor. No matter how logical or pious the legalist's argument may sound, to return to the law is to disallow the righteousness of Christ (the believer's only righteousness), and, therefore, to stand in the sight of God without any righteousness at all (Gal. 5:4). To apply to the law for righteousness is to sin against God.

In what manner did Paul, by trusting Christ, destroy the law? He did not destroy it in its function or purpose. In this same epistle he says that the law is “our tutor” or “schoolmaster” (3:24), and to Timothy he says that there is a lawful use of the law (1 Tim. 1:8). The law still serves the function of killing and revealing a man to be a sinner.

Believing Christ destroys the law in two ways. First, it destroys the law by rejecting it as a covenant under which men are righteous in the sight of God (4:25, 30-31). Secondly, believing Christ for justification destroys the law in that it fulfills the law and therefore renders it obsolete. All the elements of the law have been fulfilled by Christ, and, therefore, have been set aside (Heb. 10:1-9). The righteousness that is in the law has been

fulfilled in the believer (Rom. 8:1-4). The law's ability to define sin is destroyed by faith because the believer is righteous in the sight of God and the law. Having been designed to define sin, the law has nothing to define in the believer. The law is destroyed in the sense that it is of no use to the believer in the matter of justification, sanctification, or righteousness in the sight of God. To build again what you have destroyed by faith is *sin*—plain and simple.

Dead to The Law

“For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God.”

Galatians 2:19

This passage is one that intrigues the mind and is often the area where men disagree and find reason to debate. Generally speaking, most commentators assert, or at least imply that Paul is referring only to the law of Moses for justification while still holding to observing it as a rule of life or a moral compass. Because we are creatures of conscience and conscience operates in the realm of the law and sin, it is difficult for us to consider that we (believers) are completely void of any relationship to the law. In truth, it takes God-given faith and an act of the will to *reckon* ourselves completely dead to the law. To suggest that Paul is leaving some wiggle room on this matter is to do injustice to the context. Paul has just stated that if he builds again (a life of obedience for justification) that which he destroyed (by turning his back on the law for justification), then he makes himself a transgressor.

One would have to suspend all reason to suggest that Paul, when he was Saul of Tarsus, looked to the law for justification, but *not* as a rule of life. No one would apply to the law for justification if he did not believe that it was his rule of life to attain justification. Likewise, no one can make a logically consistent argument for applying to the law for a rule of life unless he also

believes that, on some level, he is justified by doing so. This was the inconsistency and hypocrisy of Peter and Barnabas and, sadly, of many otherwise faithful preachers of our day.

One does not apply to the law in an intellectual sense, nor does one apply to the law in faith. If the law is employed as a rule of life, then the life that is referred to must be ruled by it, and if ruled by it, then it must, of necessity, be played out in the action of obedience toward the rule (Gal. 3:10; 5:3). So, when Paul here asserts that he is “dead to the law,” he is referring to being dead (literally having died) to it for justification and as the rule of life as well.

The language that Paul employs, under the inspiration of God, is very strong language. What is death? Death is the cessation of the ability to connect on any level with one's surroundings. A corpse is finished with its former existence. If then the law was my former existence, being dead, I am finished with it. Death is both total and final. The corpse has not partially died and thus leaving it able to have some part in its former life; it is dead—totally. The corpse is not in some temporary limbo where it will, at some later time, revive and go back to its former life. Death is final.

This is basic and common understanding. This is why we bury the dead. Whatever the law entails, Paul (and every believer) is totally and finally finished with it. There is no going back. To err as Peter and Barnabas did at Antioch is tantamount to digging up a corpse and seeking advice from it on how to live or to resurrect yourself like a zombie in some Hollywood movie.

Legalism is the “Night of the Living Dead.” It is spiritual necrophilia. Paul says, “I died to the law.”

Paul's wording of the manner in which he died to the law is very powerful. He said, “I, through the law, am dead to the law.” The means by which this was accomplished is found in the first phrase of verse 20. Paul says that the fact that He was crucified with Christ is the means by which he died to the law. In Romans 6:6-8, Paul declares that when Christ died, he, himself, died, and so did all who were in Christ or represented by Him. In our text, Paul, with just a few words, conveys a huge amount of information. To grasp the glory of this statement, we must consider the intent of the law and what it is to obey the law.

Paul said in another place, “the letter [or law] killeth.” The law (of Moses) was never meant for life. It was never meant to produce life. It was never meant to produce righteousness or to justify (3:21). It was never meant as a set of rules to live by. When the law of Moses was given, the human race was already justly, inalterably condemned (In Adam all died). The law was *added* because men were already transgressors, and it served to *reveal fully* why their capital punishment was just (Rom. 3:19; 5:12, 20). The only way to obey the law is to fulfill its righteous precept. Therefore, the only way for a sinner to obey the law—keep the law—is not to live under it, but to die under it. All men and women will obey the law. They will die under a righteous condemnation, having obeyed (fulfilled) the law, and not one will be righteous because of it. The difference between those who end up in eternal woe and those who

do not is Christ crucified, that is, Christ's Substitutionary sacrifice. Therefore, I, through the law (by Christ's obedience to it or fulfillment of its demand; Phil. 2:8), am dead to the law because when Christ obeyed what the law demanded, I was in Him. Christ's obedience of the law was death, not life. Therefore, through the law, I am dead to the law. Look at Romans 8:34: "Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died. . ." What does Paul aver as the reason that he is not condemned (under the law)? Is it that Christ *lived* the law for Him? No, Christ *fulfilled* the law by dying for him! Who can condemn him? No one can condemn because Christ died (Rom. 8:1-4). Paul is saying that he is not justified by life lived but by death accomplished. The believer is justified only by the *death* of Christ. Through *death*, he is dead to the law.

Paul ends this sentence with a very distinctive and powerful statement, "that I might live unto God." This is the conclusion of the matter. This is the total and final analysis. The only way that I can *live* to God is to be "dead to the law" with that death being accomplished "through the law." Our relationship to the law must be totally and finally resolved by being dissolved, or I may not "live unto God." If I am seeking the law for justification, or as a rule of life, I am dead to all things spiritual. If I am dead to the law, then I am spiritually alive to God. There can be no mixture, no amalgamation, no dipping of the finger into the law for justification. *Doing* does not justify. Only *dying* justifies and that by the substitutionary, law-obeying, law-fulfilling, justice-satisfying, God-propitiating death of Christ. "For I

through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God...I am crucified with Christ.”

Contrast

“I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.”

Galatians 2:20

This verse is one of those that thrill the heart just to consider. It could stand alone as a great treatise on the love of God and the effectual accomplishment of that love. I have found this is often the case in commentaries as this passage is seldom truly tied to the context of the former and latter words of Paul, but is treated as a subject unto itself. This does not diminish the value of dealing with the passage in that manner, for it is such a wonderful declaration of the grace of God. However, within the context, these words are a wealth of teaching concerning the law and grace.

Paul continues the thought that, through the law, he is dead to the law. This glorious thought teaches the design and intent of the law, which was to exact punishment for sin. The punishment was death, and because Paul was crucified *with* Christ, the penalty that the law required was fulfilled in Paul. The truth that Christ died as his penal *substitute* fixed it so that, through the law, Paul was dead to the law. Paul's argument remains the same, namely, that he, by the death of Christ, has turned his back on the law for

justification or for a rule of life or for righteousness to any degree. The righteousness of the law that was fulfilled in him was the righteous death that Christ died for him (Rom. 8:1-4).

You will notice that after Paul asserts that he died with Christ, there is a punctuation mark. It is a colon. A colon is followed by an explanation of the remark that precedes it. What follows is an explanation of what it means to have been crucified with Christ and therefore be dead to the law. Paul is setting forth this explanation by contrast. With the use of the word “nevertheless”, he is contrasting what it is to be dead with what it is to be alive. Death and life are contrasts. Even though he died with Christ, he is, nevertheless, alive by Christ. This is one of those wonderful paradoxes of Scripture. Paul is not referring to the *natural* realm but to *spiritual* life born by the suffering and death of Christ (Is. 53:10-12). For the elect, the death of Christ was the death of spiritual death.

The primary contrast is that of *union*. With the law, there can be no union for a believer or even an unbeliever. The law (of Moses) cannot unite with the filth of humanity. It stands, always, as the stalwart accuser. It is always outside of a person, on stone tablets, condemning the individual for the sinner that he is. It never gives hope, it never embraces, and it is never gracious. It cannot enter the soul—it cannot reside in a man—because its design is to illuminate sin for its exceeding sinfulness. If man endeavors to have a relationship with the law, it always ends in bringing forth fruit unto death. The Judaizers of Galatia were

endeavoring to make the law what it was not and never could be—a governing factor of life on any level.

Paul, having died to the law, now contrasts that death with what is the result of that death. He *lives*. He lives because life is in him, and that life is Christ, Himself. A person is only dead to the law if he is alive unto God, and a person is only alive unto God if he is dead to the law.

Paul lives (spiritually) because he is united with life. The evidence of the life is faith (Heb. 11:1). Faith does not produce spiritual life. It is the natural and sure product of that life. Paul believes because he has faith. He has faith because Christ lives in him. This mystical union cannot even be explained and surely cannot be accomplished by dead men employing that which condemns them. Faith is the result of union with Christ. Men get into trouble when they try to over-explain the inexplicable. Some venture into the realm of responsibility and imparted righteousness here, but that succeeds only in muddying the waters.

Paul says that he lives but that his life is not his own; it is Christ in Him—and that is life. And, as if to answer the possible detractors of the fact that this life he lives is a result of and product of the death of Christ, he elaborates on the meaning of Christ living in him. He says that the life that he lives in the flesh (spiritual life residing in his body), he lives, not by his own faith but by the faith *of* Christ Who loved him and gave Himself for him. His life is not the result of him *believing in* Christ but is the result *of* Christ dying in his room and stead.

Everything that has to do with justification, righteousness, and life was accomplished on the cross. Nothing about justification, righteousness, or life has to do with the law. The faith *of* Christ is the producer of faith *in* Christ. One man said that faith in Christ is breathing, but Christ is the oxygen. Without the oxygen, man cannot breathe (v. 16; 6:14). Our faith is a result of His union with us; and that union is eternal (2 Thess. 2:13, Is. 54:13; John 6:45; Heb. 2:14). God, in His wisdom, inspired the writers of His word to unite all of spiritual life, including faith, to the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ (Gal. 2; 19-20; Rom. 4:1-8, 24-25; 8:33-34; John 5:25; Eph. 2:4-6; John 6:63; 1:12). We err when we try to press human logic upon the principle of inspiration and revelation. Faith embraces and lives upon what cannot be rationally, naturally, or intellectually discovered much less explained (Rom. 4:17-22).

All the benefits we receive—the death of Christ in our stead, Christ living in us, and justification, righteousness, and life by that death—are born of the love of God. Unlike our powerless and often unrequited love, the love of God is effectual and always results in the salvation of the loved one (“who loved us and gave himself for us” John 3; 14-17; Rom. 5:6-9; Rev. 1:5-6; 1 John 3:16-18).

The law is *death*; Christ is *life*. Let each man consider the outcome of that.

Truth and Consequence

“I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.”

Galatians 2:21

This single phrase is Paul's summation of all that he has said in chapter 2. Paul, the able and brilliant master of the legal brief, now presents his closing argument. In this succinct and powerful statement, he brings all the argument to the core principle of saving faith. He brings his readers back to the cross of Christ as the singular definer of the sovereign grace of God. He states, matter-of-factly, that there is a consequence, and a dire one at that, of believing that a person is justified by the works of the law.

What the Judaizers have done at Antioch and the hideous temporary lapse in judgment of Peter and Barnabas, is not only an act, but is an act with terrible ramifications. Paul has described what Peter and Barnabas did as “not walking uprightly according to the truth of the gospel” (2:14). Their “not walking uprightly according to the truth of the gospel” was not only an action but was also a declaration. Their unjust attitude toward the gentile believers was a slam on the grace of God and a discounting, disowning, and disallowing of the Person and work of Christ. This is no small thing. It is, at its core, charging God with folly in the death of His Son. It is removing from the work of Christ the necessity

of it having been accomplished. Men may feel no compunction about dangling their toes in the cesspool of legalism, but they do not do so without disregarding the truth. Such belief is tantamount to saying that Christ's death and resurrection was unnecessary—that it was nothing more than a bit of theological fluff performed by a frustrated deity in an act of unrequited love, designed to entice His creatures to show Him some pity and grant Him a concession by allowing Him to take some credit for what they had actually accomplished by their own works of righteousness. No matter how those who believe that righteousness is by the law may say that such is not the case, Paul's final statement shows it to be exactly the case. This is the summation, the closing argument, “I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.”

Paul's closing is a three-stage summation: It involves a n *indictment*, a *definition* and a *consequence*. The *indictment* is the first part of the statement; “*I do not frustrate the grace of God.*” Paul is not tooting his own horn. He is not placing himself on a higher spiritual plane than Peter and Barnabas. His statement is in light of what he has proved in the preceding verses. He is saying that by believing Christ and His accomplished salvation of the elect without the deeds of the law, he *does not* frustrate the grace of God. Conversely, anyone who believes that a person is justified by the works of the law *does* frustrate the grace of God. “Frustrate” does not reveal the true meaning of the Greek word and, thus, does not reveal the true meaning of Paul's

argument. The word does not mean “to frustrate” in the sense of discouraging or preventing the grace of God to take effect. God’s grace is sovereign and always effectual to its intended end. His grace cannot be frustrated (Isa. 42:4). The word actually means to “despise” or “deny.” Paul is saying that he does not despise the grace of God. The indictment then is this: Those who try to keep the law for justification, for righteousness, or for the rule of life despise the grace of God, whether or not that is their intention. To fall victim to this despicable lie, as Peter and Barnabas did, is to join hands with those who despise the grace of God. It is to say by your actions—your walk—that you despise the grace of God. To find yourself in league with those who hold that justification is by the works of the law is to deny the grace of God. We know that Peter and Barnabas would never openly deny the grace of God. We also know that they did not personally despise the grace of God. They did, however, kowtow to those who did despise the grace of God and, by doing so, “walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel.”

The second aspect of Paul’s closing argument is to *define* what it is to despise the grace of God. This definition is found in the second phrase of verse 21, “for if righteousness come by the law.” To say or believe that righteousness comes by the law is to despise the grace of God. It is that plain and that simple! The simplicity and singularity of the statement is its power. There is no need to extrapolate, to seek hidden meaning, or to expound several things that this might not mean. Its meaning is painfully and perfectly clear. If you believe

that righteousness in the sight of God is personal, progressive, imparted, or any other of the manifold distinctions that men add to supposedly illuminate the meaning of righteousness, you despise the grace of God. Mark this down. There is no leeway here, no prisoners taken, and no quarter given. In simple, beautiful and non-sense language, Paul erects an impregnable stone wall: Wherever law is employed for righteousness, grace is despised. If you think that by your deeds you merit God's favor, you despise the unmerited favor of God.

The third point of Paul's summation is the *consequence* of despising God's grace by keeping the law for righteousness: "then Christ is dead in vain." Be not deceived. To look to yourself for righteousness is to look at the person and work of Jesus Christ and to cry, "Folly!" If righteousness is by the law, this can be the only conclusion. If He came and died to bring in an everlasting righteousness that can be accomplished by the works of the flesh, then great doubt is cast upon the wisdom and sanity of His cross. It is utter foolishness on the part of God and His purpose in the sacrifice of His Son if what He died to accomplish can be accomplished by the work of men's hands. If Christ died in *vain*, then the glory of God is vain, empty, and groundless.

This is the bane of the legalist. This sums up his entire pious existence in the most negative terms possible. His entire life is nothing more than a boisterous and boastful declaration that he hates God's grace. He may deny this is so, but he is faced with the final argument of one whom God inspired to pen these words; "I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if

righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.” Do not search for middle ground or some soft place of compromise to land. There is none. In the words of a dear friend, “That's all they are to it.”

Foolish Believers

“O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you? This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh? Have ye suffered so many things in vain? if it be yet in vain. He therefore that ministereth to you the Spirit, and worketh miracles among you, doeth he it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?”

Galatians 3:1-5

Paul begins this third chapter continuing the same argument that he finished with Peter in Chapter 2. Having declared the gospel to the Galatians in chapter 1 (the gospel he did not receive by men but by the revelation of Christ) and having set before them the issue he had with Peter at Antioch and having set forth the truth of justification by the faith of Christ, he now turns away from Peter and Barnabas and addresses the Galatians, themselves, concerning the same matter. The first five verses of Chapter 3 further illuminate what Paul declared in Chapter 1, verse 6.

Paul, in the first five verses of Galatians 3, asks five questions. All of them are rhetorical questions. A rhetorical question is not really an inquiry but a

statement or declaration put in the form of a question. A rhetorical question is, in truth, an answer rather than a question. Within the rhetorical question, the answer to the question is declared. This manner of speaking is a tool of teaching; and Paul uses it here to cause the Galatians to think and to consider what it means to embrace that a person is justified by “the works of the law.” (Religion requires no thought; believing produces thinking and consideration.) He approaches this using the Galatian’s experience of salvation (justification by faith in Christ) in opposition to the notion that the work of justification is actually *finished* or *perfected* by the deeds of the flesh.

Paul does not mince words, but he is *not* speaking in anger. He uses the words “foolish” and “bewitched” but not in the sense of reprobation. The word “foolish” means “thoughtless” and is no small reference to “immaturity” (Eph. 2:20-21; 4:1-15). This thoughtlessness is like that of a child who has no consideration of the consequences of his actions.

Likewise, the word “bewitched” does not mean that they have fallen under the spell of wicked sorcerers or that they were practicing the arts of the occult. It means, literally, that they have been *charmed*. There is an element of the idea of magic. They have been manipulated by sleight-of-hand, by prestidigitation, to believe that something that cannot be done has, nonetheless, been done, namely, being justified by the works of the law. Magic does not quite tell the entire tale. This word “bewitched” has more to do with that trait of humanity that responds to *flattery*. These

Galatians have been flattered (Ps. 12:12; Prov. 29:5). Also in this word is the element of *light* or what appears as light (2 Cor. 11:2-4, 13-15).

These Galatians have been *thoughtless, flattered* by angels of *light* and ministers of righteousness, and fallen victim to the *illusion*—the *charm* of the idea—that a man can be personally righteous and accepted in the sight of God on that basis. Legalism is a *magic* trick that makes Christ's righteousness disappear and human righteousness materialize out of the ether. These folk have left the *real* for the *illusion*. The real is spiritual. It is “Christ evidently set forth, crucified.” It is spiritual life that produces faith that cannot be seen. The illusion is human merit, visible by hocus pocus, and it relies on the charm and flattery of self-importance. The error of The Galatians is, in general, the same as the error of Peter and Barnabas. They walk not according to the truth of the gospel, “that they should not obey the truth.” Paul's rhetorical question is the declaration that justification is Christ crucified, and that the charm and flattery of self-righteousness does not justify. To obey the truth is to believe Christ for righteousness and justification in the sight of God (Rom. 10:16-17).

The next question (v. 2) declared by Paul calls for more thought and logical reasoning based on the experience of grace. Did you receive the Holy Spirit because you *kept* the law or because you *heard* the gospel? Did you convert to Christianity or were you converted to Christ? To receive the Holy Ghost is to receive Christ; and to receive Christ is to believe Him

and His works as the sole means of justification in the sight of God (John 1:12; Rom. 10:8-17; 1 Peter 1:18-25).

The next question (v. 3) pertains to life or the believers walk and growth in this world and addresses how it is accomplished. This rhetorical question is proof that the declaration of the first two verses is Christ crucified and the gospel received. "Having begun" means that they obeyed the truth by *believing* Christ and they received the Spirit by *hearing* and *believing* the gospel. This question in verse 3 is for those who believe that the law is the *rule of life for the believer*. If your spiritual life began by the Spirit of God, and is "Christ in you," do you now keep that life going and bring it to fruition by the works of the flesh (Phil. 1:6; Coll. 2:6)?

The next question (v. 4) deals with the cost incurred by trusting Christ. These Galatians had paid a price. They had disowned their pagan gods, their friends, and their families and had incited the wrath and censure of the legalists. They had lost the exaltation of self. They had lost their world. Paul asks, "Was it all for naught?" This also addresses what they had gained by trusting Christ: redemption, justification, sanctification, life, and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. All things were theirs and they were Christ's. To go to the law for righteousness, that is, for justification, would make all that Christ did to be vain and all their gain would be loss (2:21; 5:1-4).

The final question (v. 5) brings the believer to consider the first cause of his salvation, justification, and righteousness. Paul is declaring that it is God who works in you to will and to do His good pleasure (2:20;

Heb. 13:20-21). Does God minister (supply) the Spirit and work in you through your keeping the law or by giving you faith to hear the truth (John 6:63; 68-69)? Think!

So, one does not obey the truth by the law, receive the Spirit by the law, grow by the law, lose all by the law and is not dealt with by God through the law. It is all by the Spirit, through the word and unto the glory of God by Jesus Christ, or it is nothing but an illusion.

Believing Abraham

“Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness. Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham. And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed. So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham.”

Galatians 3:6-9

Paul, having declared to the church their weakness in succumbing to the wiles of the Judaizers, and having shown them again that justification is by the faith of Christ and not the works of the law, now turns to Abraham as an example of the truth that he is setting forth.

Abraham is called (and rightly so) the father of the faithful. His life is an exhibition of faith in Christ. He believed the promise of Christ, and it was accounted to him for righteousness (Gen 15:6; Rom. 4:20-25). The theme of chapter 3 through chapter 4 is filled with Abraham. Paul uses Abraham to show that the believer is justified by faith and not by the works of the law.

The first thing to consider is this. Was Abraham truly justified—truly accounted as righteous—when he believed God concerning the seed? He believed God centuries *before* Christ came, yet Christ was his

righteousness as declared in the word of God (Rom. 4:1-7). This teaches us two things. First, it teaches us that it is not faith, itself, that justifies; rather, it is the object of faith, even Jesus Christ, that justifies. Secondly, it teaches us that it is the faith of Christ (His work rather than ours) that justifies. The fact that Abraham was justified by faith in Christ is the strength of Paul's argument.

First, what was Abraham when God called him? He was not a Jew, because there were no Jews until his progeny was enslaved in Egypt for 430 years and then delivered by God. He was a pagan living in a pagan land.

Secondly, when he was "accounted righteous," there was no law yet given. That also waited for the nation to be formed and delivered and to stand at the foot of Sinai. The Judaizers held Abraham as their father and they based their entire notion of the necessity of circumcision for righteousness on Abraham's circumcision. The problem with their requirement was that their example (Abraham) was accounted as righteous before circumcision was ever given as a token of relationship with God (Rom. 4:9-11). The entire argument of the Judaizers had no ground to stand on. The very one to whom they looked would not fit their scheme of justification and righteousness.

The manner in which Paul sets the truth in order is truly amazing. The argument the Judaizers tendered was that believing the gospel, though important, was not sufficient for justification in the sight of God. Like all legalists, in order for them to give credence to their lie, they must diminish the sufficiency of the gospel. Human

logic, born of a self-righteous heart, simply cannot believe the gospel. It cannot grasp the Biblical principle of hearing the gospel and believing as being anything more than intellectual understanding and agreement. It can never accept faith as evidence because human logic is not born of faith but rather, is born of sight. Since faith cannot be *seen* or *proved* to exist, then it is of minimal value at best. Thus, the works of the law become of primary importance. The Judaizers looked to the law and, in great measure, believed that it preceded the gospel. They were theological conservatives who looked to what they deemed to be the old way—the way of the fathers—as the way of justification.

Paul puts their argument to rest, declaring that faith *preceded* the law, *preceded* circumcision and even *preceded* Jewry. He did that by declaring that the gospel preceded even their father, Abraham. Remember, their entire doctrine rested in the notion that faith was insufficient to justify. So Paul declares that the gospel which he preaches (1:8-9)—the gospel that delivered God's people from this present evil world (1:1-4), the gospel that can be walked in only by those who reject the law for righteousness (2:14)—is the very gospel which God, Himself, preached to Abraham, by which Abraham believed, and upon which he was accounted righteous. It is *the* gospel, the *only* gospel, and only the gospel by which the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith (Rom. 1:16-17).

Paul's argument, then, was that Abraham, the father of the faithful, was justified by the faith of Christ. Abraham was justified in exactly the same manner as

the believers in Galatia were justified—by faith without the works of the law.

Paul does this by tying verses 5 and 6 together. Having established that God operates in the realm of humanity by supplying the Spirit through the hearing of faith (v. 5), he declares that Abraham was justified in the same manner (v. 6). In verse 7, he *excludes* the legalists, altogether proclaiming that believers are the *true* children of Abraham. Imagine the impact of this statement. With these words, Paul has taken from the Judaizers even their hope of being children of *Abraham*.

He settles this by asserting that God preached the gospel to Abraham, gave Abraham faith to believe the gospel, and accounted Abraham as righteous in Christ before there was circumcision, much less the law. The gospel is that means by which justification is realized, and it is the *eternal* gospel. It is the everlasting gospel. It is the gospel that God preached (John 6:45). Abraham trusted Christ (John 8:56). All who *trust* Christ are the children of Abraham (v. 29).

Therefore, the issue is settled. Abraham was not justified by the works of the law but by the faith of Christ. He learned of Christ and received faith through the *preaching* of the gospel. Abraham was saved by *grace* through faith. All those who believe are accounted as righteous in the same manner. They are blessed of God the same way that God blessed Abraham and have the same standing in the sight of God as Abraham (v. 7).

Just as he has thus far in this epistle, Paul brings all of justification and all of righteousness to *Christ*. Christ is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith

and He is the end of the law for righteousness to all who believe. We are blessed with faithful, believing Abraham.

By Faith

“For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them. But that no man is justified by the law before God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith. And the law is not of faith: but, The man that doeth them shall live in them.”

Galatians 3:10-12

Having established that Abraham was accounted as righteous when he believed God concerning the seed, and having shown that those who trust Christ are the true children of Abraham and are justified in the same manner as Abraham, Paul continues to build on that truth. He also begins to introduce what will take up a great part of this and the next chapter: the subject of the two covenants.

When reading verses 10 and 12, some might get the idea that Paul is intimating that the law can be kept and, if kept, might produce life. (5:3). However, Paul is actually revealing that the law and faith operate under two completely different covenants. Faith operates in the spiritual and eternal realm; the law (of Moses) operated in the natural and temporal realm. When Paul speaks of *living* in and *doing* the law, he is addressing that covenant under which temporal blessings were promised for obedience. The *living* involved under that covenant

addresses earthly blessing and had to do with length of life in the Land of Promise. There was no promise of *eternal life* under that covenant because what was needed to obtain eternal life did not exist within the confines of that covenant.

Eternal life comes only when the issue of eternal death is fully settled. Our Lord settled that issue when He bore the sin of His people away and answered what the law finally and truly required: eternal death for sin. As a penal substitute, our Lord died the death required and brought immortality to light in His resurrection from the dead. The curse of the law is death, and anyone who applies to the law for life (justification and righteousness in the sight of God [v. 21, 2 Tim. 1:9-10]) is actually applying to death to find life and employing the curse to obtain blessing. Under that covenant, no life other than temporal life could possibly exist.

Paul states this by contrasting those who are believers and blessed with faithful Abraham (v. 9) and those who are not “of faith” but are seeking to be justified by the “works of the law” (v. 10). Paul quotes from the book of Deuteronomy concerning when God stationed half of the tribal Elders on Mt. Gerizim and the other half on Mt. Ebal. Those on Gerizim told the people of the blessings promised for obeying the law, and those on Ebal told the people the curses promised to those who did not obey the law. Paul deals only with the curses pronounced from Ebal (Deut. 27:26). Why? Because the people were sinners, already condemned by the law issued in Eden, and the law of Sinai, or law of Moses, was added because of the transgression. The

only conclusion that could be reached is that as “many as are of the works of the law are under the curse” (v. 10).

In the matter of justification in the sight of God, the law cannot apply as the means on any level. It never did and never could enter into the realm in which justification is found. That realm is the spiritual realm of faith. This is evident, apparent, and crystal clear. The just (that is, the justified) live by faith, and that realm of faith is the realm of blessing wherein is no curse. The first time this phrase, “the just shall live by faith,” is found in the New Testament, it is in direct connection with the preaching of the gospel (Rom. 1:16-17). Paul’s use of the same text of Scripture here ties Abraham’s justification to the faith of Christ, not to his own works of the law.

Before Paul declares how this wonder of justification is accomplished, he sets the stage by setting things in their true order. Verse 12 is a grand and glorious statement explaining in simple and unmistakable terms what living by faith means. It means, first, that spiritual life has nothing to do with the works of the law. “The law is not of faith.” One cannot imagine anything simpler than that. Only those who do not have faith could mistake what this means.

Secondly, under the law, a man has to *do*, perform, labor, and work: “the man that doeth.” Conversely, it is evident that living by faith does not involve *doing*. This flies in the face of religion. Religion is all about doing. *Imagined justification* by the works of the law is all about

doing. But, faith is all about believing, not doing. (Romans 4:5)

All concepts concerning justification in the sight of God fall under two principles: Men do what they do *in order to be* justified, or they do what they do because they *already are* justified. Faith *works*, but not by the law. Faith rests in the righteous justification accomplished by the “faith of Christ” and not the works of the law.

Thirdly, those who are of the works of the law must live in the realm where they do their works. “The man that doeth them shall live in them.” This is to live under the curse of death. It is not to visit there and go in and out as you please. No matter where they go, it is bondage; they cannot move between bondage and freedom. It is to be in bondage, to live and breathe in bondage. It is the jail of religion (5:1).

What a contrast this is to the just who live by faith. They live in grace. They live in Christ, and they are free. They go in and out and find pasture (John 10:9). This does not mean that believers can move between bondage and freedom. Rather, the believer moves back and forth between the freedom of the safe, Shepherd-protected fold and the freedom of the safe, Shepherd-guarded “green pastures.” They seek no merit of their own. They believe that Christ is their merit and they desire no other merit than His. They have the best; and they would not ruin their garment by spotting it with the flesh. Why would they leave the blessings that attend faith for the dung heap dungeon of cursedness and the chains and fetters

of the bondage of utter ruin (Phil. 3:4-9)? The just shall live by faith.

Redeemed from the Curse

“Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree:”

Galatians 3:13

In this passage, Paul gives as good an explanation of what he has meant thus far by the phrase “the faith of Christ.” He has set this phrase in opposition to the works of the flesh and the deeds of the law (Gal. 2:16). By contrast, he has proven that sinners are justified only by the faith of Christ and that no sinner has been or can be justified by the works of the law. Anyone who pursues justification by any other avenue than faith in Christ is under the curse of the law (vv. 10-12). The only way a person can be delivered from the curse of the law is by “the faith of Christ.”

The faith of Christ is then only this; “Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us.” In this study, we will be looking at only this phrase because it explains the manner of our release from the curse of the law. The next phrase uses an Old Testament passage to explain what it meant for Christ to be made a curse for us (v. 13; Deut. 21:23). The next verse (v. 14) relates the intent and the accomplishment of the work of Christ. These all could be dealt with together since they comprise one theme, but so much is said in these two verses, one study could not begin to do them justice.

This phrase precisely reveals where and in Whom the faith of the elect rests. The justified live by faith, and Christ is the object and subject of their belief. They believe that they are justified by “the faith of Christ,” and the faith of Christ is that “Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law; being made a curse for us.”

The first thing declared here is an accomplished act. I love the certainty of these words. There is no possibility of misinterpreting their meaning. There is no condition placed upon men, no intimation of an unsuccessful attempt, and no hint of failure. Christ has redeemed us. He has not merely tried to redeem us. He has not merely made an effort to redeem us. He has not created the mere possibility of redemption. He has *redeemed*. Whoever is referred to as “us” in this passage has been redeemed. In time, this fact will be revealed to “us” by God teaching “us” the same gospel that He taught Abraham. And He will give “us” faith to believe, and He will account it to “us” for righteousness (vv. 6-9). In His great and successful work on Calvary, Christ *redeemed* (Rev. 5:9)!

Christ accomplished our release from the curse. No one else is mentioned in our redemption. No one else is responsible for our redemption. He is the Redeemer, and He wears that title exclusively because He redeemed.

The thing from which we were redeemed was the curse of the law. With the use of the word “redeem,” it is established that our release was by payment of a required price. Redemption is about a price required and a price paid. It is usually in reference to buying back from slavery and actually obtaining and possessing that

which was purchased. No redemption takes place if the redeemer does not *possess* that for which he has paid (Acts 20:28; Eph. 1:14).

What is taught in this passage is that the curse of the law had a specific value to God, a price that He had established as *the curse, itself*, and that which must be paid in order to be released from the curse. What was the price or value that God assigned to the curse? The *curse* was *death for sin*. The *price* was *death for sin* (Gen. 2:17; Ezek. 18:4; Rom. 6:23). The curse of the law is that it must exact the price from the offender and the price is death. The death referred to is not mere physical death, but the second death—eternal death—because sin is deserving of eternal wrath from the eternal God. This is the price of redemption: a death equal in value to spending an eternity suffering the just wrath of the Holy, eternal God. Since Christ has redeemed us, this is the price that He has paid (Heb. 9:15; Rom. 8:33-34). How do we know that Christ has paid the price? He has “redeemed us from the curse of the law!”

The price of our redemption was Christ’s substitution of Himself in our place. Since the curse was death and death was the price, then Christ, in His redemption, paid the price by being made the price. He died, and in that act, paid the price of the curse. He was “made a curse for us.” This word “made” means “to become.” He became a curse. What does that mean? Since the curse of the law is death, then Christ became death. Notice the indefinite article “a.” Christ was made a death. A death was what was required, and He became that. This is a mystery that cannot be fathomed because

of the power involved in it. Having fully satisfied God's justice and expended God's wrath in the three hours of darkness on the cross, and coming through that unimaginable crisis alive and vital enough to declare in a loud voice, "It is finished," He then paid the price required. He gave up the ghost. He, by the power of His will, became a death, an eternal death: He was made a curse. This was the gracious, substitutionary sacrifice of our Redeemer.

It was substitution because it was "for us." He redeemed us by being made a curse for us. We are sinners and we owe God a death. Christ became a death for us, a death that God accounted as our own death, a death that assured that we would not die the death required of us because a death has been recorded on our account (2 Tim. 1:10; Heb. 2:14-15; Rom. 8:2-4). "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us."

Proof

“Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree: That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.”

Galatians 3:13-14

This great passage declaring the glory of our Lord's substitution ends with the words, “for it is written, Cursed is everyone that hangeth on a tree.” This phrase relates to the teaching in Deuteronomy 21 concerning the punishment of a rebellious son. The son is punished because he is rebellious and will not obey the voice of his father. The son is pictured as stubborn, and though punished often, remains in his rebellious ways. The unique thing about this is that it is the parents who bring the charges against their son that eventuate in his death.

The death prescribed was stoning, and then after death, he was hanged. The stoning and hanging of the son were not two separate actions dealing with two different infractions but sequential events for the same transgression. The Targum said, “and he be put to death, and thou hang him, on a tree; or is condemned to stoning, and after that, they hang him.” This may seem like double-kill, but the hanging was designed to display the criminal and served as proof that he was guilty of

the crime and that the law had been satisfied. Paul uses the incident—particularly the hanging—in connection with the fact that Christ was made a curse for us and, by being made a curse, redeemed us from the curse of the law. What are we to make of this?

The first thing to remember is that no type in the Old Testament is a perfect representation of the substance it illustrates. The passage in Deuteronomy is evidently in reference to the crucifixion of Christ; of this there can be no doubt. The second thing to remember is that the substance is not understood by the type, but rather, the type is understood by the substance. The substance defines the type, not the other way around. We would never know the meaning of types had not Christ come into this world.

This being so, we can plainly see that the whole of the incident in Deuteronomy is summed up in the words of Paul in this text. The many particulars of the incident in Deuteronomy do not picture the *manner* in which Christ died. Christ was not stoned to death. Nor was Christ killed and afterward, hanged. Christ was hanged and then He, of His own volition, gave up the ghost.

Nor does the Old Testament type picture the person of Christ in His *nature*. As far as the rebellious son typifying Christ, it cannot be so in nature. Our Lord, as the son of man and the Son of God, was never rebellious or disobedient to His Father, nor was He often punished (Heb. 10:10,14). He was holy and harmless, pure, perfect, and undefiled in His nature and His life. If, however, we leave the subject of nature and go to the cross, particularly to that three-hour period of darkness

when our Lord, as substitute, was made to be sin for us, we see that by imputation, He was made *worse* than the rebellious son. He was made essential sin. He was not rebellious, for at that moment He was the definition of unqualified obedience (Php. 2:8). He was made to be *rebellion*. He was not corrupt but was made to be *corruption* itself. He was not wicked but was made to be *wickedness*. He was not sinful; He was worse. He was made to be *sin*.

Whatever the acts might be that flow from sin, they are but symptomatic of the greater problem, which is essential sin. Christ was not, by nature, a sinner; He was made to be the *nature of sin*. By this, He was guilty of all that naturally flows from the essence of sin. He was not made like us; he was *made to be* that which makes us *what we are*. He was not depraved; He was made to be *depravity*. At that moment, in the sight of the thrice-holy God, He was worthy of death. This is incomprehensible glory. Were it not for the clear declaration of Scripture, we would be at a total loss because, though we are able to see our *sins*, we have no comprehension of our *sin*. Christ was made to be sin and bore the full punishment due it (Psa. 22:1-6; 38:1-4; 40:12). He was made a curse and became the death that was due us, "That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith" (v. 14)

To understand why Paul used these words in connection with Christ's substitution, we need to look at the final words of the passage in Deuteronomy 21. In verses 22 and 23, we see that the whole of the action

was to show that the one who was hanged was proven guilty in the sight of God and accursed by God. The *hanging* was to signify that the law was fully satisfied. It was proof that the justice of God had been exacted by the accursed being hanged (openly displayed). The body of the hanged one had to be removed from the tree on the same day and buried because it was accursed. His body was hanged to prove his guilt and buried to, in effect, remove the curse from the land. Thus, Christ was hanged to remove any doubt that he was accounted guilty in the sight of God and buried to remove the curse from the Promised Land.

Our Lord being hanged on the tree forever settled two things. First, there can be no doubt that our sin was accounted as His own, and He was accounted guilty in the sight of God. How do we know this? “Cursed is everyone that hangeth on a tree.” Secondly, there can be no doubt that the curse was removed from his people because he was taken down from the tree that day and buried. When Christ was hung on the tree, it proved that He had redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us. “Cursed is everyone that hangeth on a tree” is another way to say that our redemption is sure. This phrase is blessed assurance. Note that the next verse says exactly that.

“Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree: That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.”

Two Covenants

“Brethren, I speak after the manner of men; Though it be but a man's covenant, yet if it be confirmed, no man disannulleth, or addeth thereto. Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ. And this I say, that the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect. For if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise: but God gave it to Abraham by promise.”

Galatians 3:15-18

In verses 15-18, Paul is picking up on the declaration he made in verse 14 concerning receiving the promise of the Spirit through faith, which is the blessing of Abraham. He explains this by addressing the promise as being the benefit of a covenant. He makes a distinction as to how the promise is received by setting forth two covenants. Under one covenant, and only one, is the promise obtained and received. Conversely, the other covenant has no part whatsoever in obtaining or receiving the promise. One covenant is the covenant of the law (Moses' law), which, by no means, accomplished or obtained the promise. The other covenant (the covenant of grace) accomplished, obtained, and

administered the promise by means of Christ being made a curse and hanged on the tree.

The blessing attending the covenants was equally different. The covenant of the *law* ministered only temporal blessings. The covenant of *grace* administered only spiritual blessings “the promise of the Spirit through faith” (Eph. 3:1).

Paul's distinction between these two covenants has to do with “kind.” These are two different *kinds* of covenants. One might say that it is obvious that one is of grace and the other is of works, and the Bible is clear that never the twain shall meet (Rom. 11:5-6). That is so, but what Paul is teaching is that one covenant is a *will*, akin to a last will and testament, and the other is a *contract*. When a covenant is a will, the testator alone is active and the beneficiary is passive except in the sense that he receives what is designated for him. When a covenant is a contract, the terms of the contract are only valid and the benefits only obtained by strict adherence to the terms of the contract by *both* parties.

The covenant of the law was a contract wherein the receiving of blessing was contingent upon strict obedience of both parties to the terms of the contract. Under that contract, gain was based on obedience to it. The promise and all its attendant blessings are summed up in the theme that Paul has been addressing throughout this epistle, namely justification in the sight of God. Under the contract of the law, it has already been established that “by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified,” and it has also been established that

they who “are of the works of the law are under the curse.” It is, therefore, impossible for that contract to apply, in any degree, to the obtaining of the promise of the Spirit through faith.

On the other hand, the covenant that is a will *assures* that the beneficiary receives the “blessing of Abraham” without any obedience, or even disobedience, on his part. The covenant that is a will or testament has nothing to do with the merit of the one who is the recipient of the benefits. The whole of the performance of that covenant relies on the testator.

This being the case, Paul first addresses the binding nature of a covenant (v. 15). When Paul says that he speaks “after the manner of men,” he is not saying that his words are not inspired of God. He is simply asserting that what he is about to say is universally understood in the realm of humanity. Humanity understands the concept of a covenant. If a covenant is confirmed, even among men, it is binding and cannot be disannulled nor can anything be added to it after the fact. It is a “given” that to do so would result in loss of all benefits that were promised in the covenant. Paul uses this fact to establish that the covenant of grace (the will and testament of God, which is an *eternal* covenant) was not affected or disannulled by the contract of the law. The law was *added* some 430 years later. Since nothing can be added to a covenant, the law is not a codicil to the testament. It did not change or alter the *will* because it could not.

The two covenants are wholly distinct. The bringing in of the law or adding the law should be understood,

not in the sense that it was a supplement to the promise, or even a development of the promise, or in any way had a part in the transmitting or administration of the promise (Rom. 5:20). It was added or superimposed upon the *transgression*, truly having nothing to do with the *promise* and therefore could not disannul it. Justification and righteousness in the sight of God was the promise of the eternal covenant, the will and testament of God. It was in effect from all eternity, accomplished before the world began and ratified in time by the death of Christ (the faith of Christ...Heb. 9:15-17). Another *kind* of covenant, brought in 430 years later, had nothing to do with that *eternal* covenant (v. 17- 18; Rom. 4:13-15).

This is what the Galatian brethren needed to grasp. To go to the covenant that entered 430 years after the covenant with Abraham was to involve themselves in that which has nothing to do with the promise—has nothing to do with justification. The covenant of Abraham was not a contract; it was a will. It did not involve *accomplishment* by works of the law but rather *inheritance* by the grace of God without consideration of merit on the part of the recipient in any measure whatever.

Paul declares this truth by asserting that the promises were made to Christ and are found only in Christ by the faith of Christ, and are received through faith in Christ (v. 16; 2 Cor. 1:18-20). Paul's use of this absolute "to thy seed, which is Christ" is not designed to exclude the elect, but to attribute all of the inheritance and promise to the singular One who, alone, obtained

the inheritance for His people (Heb. 9:12). Spiritually, Christ and His church are one body, He being the head and the elect being the members in particular. Christ is the singular heir of the promise and so are His people (Rom. 8:15-17). This distinctive phraseology is used to further reveal that justification and righteousness in the sight of God are not the product of the works of the law but are the benefits received from the testator of the covenant and from nowhere else. The reception of these benefits is conditioned entirely upon the merits of Abraham's singular seed, which is Christ (Heb. 6:13-20; Gal. 3:14).

Wherefore Then Serveth The law

“Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator. Now a mediator is not a mediator of one, but God is one. Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid: for if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law. But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe.”

Galatians 3:19-22

Paul has established that the covenant of promise and the covenant of law were different in nature and kind, the covenant of law being a *contract* and the covenant of promise a *will* and testament. One deals with earned blessing and the other with inheritance, and one has nothing to do with the accomplishment of the other. Now, Paul answers the reasonable question that would naturally arise: If the law has nothing to do with the promise, then what purpose, if any, does the law serve? “Wherefore then serveth the law?”

Paul's answer serves to *further* the distinction between the law and the promise. With the use of the word “added”, he relates back to the premise of verse 15. The fact that it was *added* proves that it can have no

effect on the promise and was not involved in the promise. This word “added” would better be interpreted as “superimposed” or as in the case of Romans 5:20, “entered.” The word in Romans 5:20 means “to come alongside” and sometimes carries with it the sense of stealth. Paul used the same word in Galatians 2:4 (came) to describe those who insinuated themselves into the fellowship of the Galatian believers in order to spy out their liberty. He is not saying that God had some sinister plan when He gave the law, but that the law is only understood by faith. This usage, however, does serve to remind the believer that the legalist is never honest enough to admit that he discounts the promise when he preaches the law. The law was not added to the promise; it came along side the transgression. The law then served this purpose, it came alongside the transgression to show that the condemnation of the transgressor was just (Rom. 7:13).

Paul takes an interesting tack with what follows. From here to the end of verse 25, he relates to the law in the past. Since he has established that the gentile believers were never under the law in the sense that the Jews were, he speaks of the law as having to do with a past purpose rather than a contemporary one. Rather than having to do with the promise, it served only in the capacity of revealing the transgression of those who were under its contract. In effect, he is saying that the Galatian believers were not even around when that contract was in force or when it ended. He does this by using the terminal conjunction “*till*.” When the seed came, to whom the promises were made, the law was

terminated. It was in effect only to that point and no further. The law served a *past* purpose.

The following phrase “it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator” is difficult to understand apart from the principle of it being in the past. This could be read, “it was delivered by the messengers into the hand of a mediator.” The mediator, in reference to the law, was Moses. Paul is setting up to make a distinction, once again, between the contract and the will or testament. Verse 20 is that distinction. The reason for this statement is that the word “mediator” suggests a problem that needs to be solved between two opposing parties. That word might suggest that God and man need to be reconciled to each other and, to a degree, that was true under that past contract. However, under the promise, God is not declared to be reconciled to man. The fact that He has included His elect in the will negates any notion that He needs to be reconciled to his elect.

Every place in the New Testament where reconciliation is declared concerning God and man, it is *only the man* that is reconciled to God (Rom. 5:10; 2 Cor. 5:18, 20; Col. 1:21). Paul states this fact in verse 20. Under that past contract, the mediator was between man and God (two parties) “Now a mediator is not a mediator of one.” But the promise is not a contract between two opposing parties but is rather a gracious declaration of God alone. Christ's mediation of the New Testament (the covenant of promise) is not in the sense of reconciling both parties but in the sense of ratifying and administering the promise—the inheritance

established by one person. He is the medium of the new covenant, the executor of the will. Why? Because God is one, and the promise is the designated inheritance for those for whom the testator died. Simply stated, Moses was a mediator between two parties, but since the promise involves the activity of only *one*, the law cannot have part in the promise. It served, but it served a past contract.

This being the case, another opposition might arise in the minds of men (v. 21). “Is the law then against the promises of God?” Paul emphatically declares that the law was not against the promise, it simply did not and could not enter into the realm in which the promise existed. The promise exists in the realm of life and righteousness but the law operated in an entirely different realm. “As many as are under the works of the law are under the curse” (2 Cor. 3:6, 7, 9, 11—Notice; killeth, ministration of death, ministration of condemnation, that which was done away [destroyed]). That past contract could not produce what the promise provides. It could not produce life and righteousness and was, therefore, done away.

The purpose it served was to conclude all men under sin and therefore under the curse. This past contract served to conclude all that were under it to be condemned by it in order that the promise (accomplished) by “the faith of Jesus Christ” would be given (as an inheritance) to them that believe. Paul is saying that he was under the law in the past and it served to condemn him and his works (Rom. 7:7-9; Phil.

3:4-9), but now, he is a recipient of the present promise by the work of Jesus Christ.

Next, we will look at verses 23-25, but for now, note the language of the “past” that Paul employs in these verses: . . .21 “had been a law given” . . .22 “scripture hath concluded” . . .23 “before faith came, we were kept,” “faith which should afterwards be revealed” . . . 24 “the law was our schoolmaster” . . .25 “after that faith is come.” The law is not against the promise; it simply does not serve the promise because its service was to the past contract.

The Schoolmaster

“But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed. Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster.”

Galatians 3:23-25

In this part of the passage, Paul addresses the law in its capacity of schoolmaster. As we saw in the last chapter, the language that Paul employs concerning this is that of the *past*. He is not referring to the gentile believers of Galatia, because the law was never their schoolmaster. It was exclusive to the Jews. The Gentiles were justified by the faith of Christ without the deeds of the law. They were justified believing Christ without ever having been given the law. So, as Paul speaks of the law in this capacity (that of the past) he is referring to how the law served him along with the rest of the elect of Israel.

In these three verses, Paul is looking at the law in a different capacity than that of revealing the vileness and punishment of sin. In that particular administration of the law (specifically the Sinai covenant), there was only *death* and *condemnation*. Whether we consider the law in its moral precepts (The Ten Commandments) or in its religious precepts (the various feasts, rituals, sacrifices

and ceremonies), it was not given to produce life and, therefore, righteousness. The revelation and condemnation of sin is the fundamental capacity of the law as given in the covenant of works to natural Israel. In that capacity, the law could not be construed as a schoolmaster or teacher.

What, then, is this different take on the matter? Paul is taking the law in these verses as referring to the *Old Testament*, the whole of the revelation until Christ came into the world (the scripture, v. 22). He is declaring that the law served as a schoolmaster under the old covenant in the sense that it held Israel in check, and that *within the several commandments, rites, and ceremonies was the hidden mystery of Christ*. The law did not and could not reveal Christ until Christ came and revealed the meaning and purpose of the law by fulfilling every aspect and precept of it. For example the blood of the lambs offered to God under the old covenant did not remove sin but served only to remind men of their sin year after year (Heb. 10:3). However, in that annual reminder of sin, shrouded in mystery, there was also the gospel of Christ in type and picture, and once Christ came, the meaning and purpose of those typical sacrifices was made clear.

So the law revealed sin and pictured Him who was the remedy for it. Paul and the rest of the Israelites were not aware of either of these purposes of the law until Christ was revealed to them. Thus they were, as Paul says, “kept under the law and “shut up” by it until Christ came. Paul makes this a clear distinction and establishes this principle, to which He further attests in

these three verses. The law keeping him, shutting him up, and serving as a schoolmaster all transpired “before faith came.” All of this ended when faith came upon the justified (3:11).

However, before faith came, Paul was kept under the law. He was garrisoned (kept). The sense of this is that until faith came, the law fortified him. The law was a fort in which he resided. Paul is saying that before faith came, the law served to protect him from the enemies of God. Though the law did not reveal Christ to him, it served to prevent any strange wind of doctrine flowing into his mind by preserving the Old Testament revelation of God and the promise of the Messiah. In this way, the law kept Paul from being tainted by false religion. The law kept him in the Old Testament. He was shut up by the law. That is, he was enveloped in it—surrounded and enclosed by it.

The word “kept” also intimates holding in safety until something better comes afterward. This is the meaning of the word “unto.” It suggests that the law, unbeknownst to Paul, was holding him in check *toward* a better thing afterward to be revealed (Heb. 8:6). It is important to realize that Paul is not expressing a general or generic view. He is not saying that this keeping and shutting up was for all Israel in general but rather for the believer in particular. He is further proving that the law was not against the promises of God, but served to keep and shut up those elect Jews who would afterward hear the gospel and, by God-given faith, believe. Further proof of this is seen in chapter 4:1-7. There, Paul calls those who were under the law in this schoolmaster

capacity “heirs,” thereby putting them in the covenant of promise, the will and testament of God.

“Wherefore” (v. 24). So then, for Paul, the law served as a schoolmaster or pedagogue. A pedagogue is a guardian and guide of boys. Among the Greeks and the Romans, the name was applied to trustworthy *slaves* who were charged with the duty of supervising the life and morals of boys belonging to the upper class of society. The boys were not allowed so much as to step out of the house without the schoolmaster until they arrived at the age of manhood. Again, we see Paul using an illustration to show that the law served for a specific time (vv. 17, 23). When the child reached maturity—became a man—the schoolmaster's servitude ended.

Note that the words “to bring us” are italicized. They simply do not fit at all with what Paul was teaching. The law acting in the capacity of pedagogue did not bring Paul to Christ, nor does it bring anyone else to Christ (Rom. 7:5-9; 1 Peter 3:18). The servitude of the schoolmaster took place before faith came. Once Christ had come, the schoolmaster was retired, having accomplished its purpose. Once Christ came and performed His great work of justification, Paul was justified by faith.

Verse 25 has a two-fold application. As to time, once God had given faith, the law was finished in all manner of keeping, protecting, and holding Paul in strict check. He was free to go in and out and find pasture. Secondly, and this is probably the clearest meaning of these words, the law has no function in the life of the believer. Paul, using himself as an example, says that, after he

believed, he no longer applied to the law for justification or righteousness to any degree or on any level. Also, this means that the law, once a keeper and a pedagogue, no longer has authority over him. Its dominion (right to govern) has been totally removed (Rom. 6:14). “But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster” (v. 25).

Heirs

“For ye are all the children (Gk. “sons”) of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.”

Galatians 3:26-29

These last four verses of chapter 3 are Paul's final establishment of the fact that the believer is not under the law. In verse 25, he makes it clear that after faith came, the law ceased to have a function; it is no longer the schoolmaster. He begins this proof with the word “for” or “because.” Paul says to the Galatian believers: Ye are not (and never have been) under the schoolmaster because ye are the sons of God.

What a glorious and plain revelation this is! *Sons of God* are not under a schoolmaster; they are not under the law. This is a simple and beautiful equation that cannot be challenged without discounting the word of God. If you are a son of God, one chosen in Christ before the world began, redeemed by the precious blood of the Lamb, and made to be the righteousness of God, then you are not under the law. Nothing may be added or taken away from this truth.

We are “sons of God by faith in Christ Jesus.” With this statement, Paul is not saying that faith makes us sons of God. Faith does not make us anything. Faith does not make us believers. The fact that we are sheep insures that we will believe (John 10:26-27). Faith is the operation of the believer not the cause of his being a believer. Faith does not make us sons of God. We are God's sons in two ways. We are His sons by spiritual birth (John 3:6-8; James 1:18). We are His sons by divine predestinated adoption (4:4-5; Eph. 1:5).

Paul is here returning us to the theme of this Epistle. The believer is not justified by the works of the law. The believer is justified by faith in Christ. Read verses 25 and 26 together. “But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster. For ye are all the [sons] of God by faith in Christ Jesus.” Such blessed ones have no need of a schoolmaster because all of the sons of God are taught by their Father (John 6:45; Isa. 54:13).

Paul describes those who are sons of God by faith in Christ as those who “have been baptized into Christ.” Some may attribute the language to receiving the “Baptism of the Holy Ghost” or the believer being “put” in Christ before the world began. Paul is not here referring to a supernatural act of God. He is referring to the initial response of faith. He is referring to the initial confession of faith, namely baptism by immersion.

With the words “as many as”, he is not suggesting that the churches in Galatia consisted of both baptized and un-baptized members. That would countenance disobedience to the ordinance of the church as set forth in the great commission (Matt. 28:19-20). By this

expression, He is declaring that true faith in Christ results in the believer submitting to baptism by immersion. He ties these two together by again using the word “for.” You are not under a schoolmaster because you are sons of God by faith in Christ, and this is because you have acted in faith and have been baptized. As many as have believed in Christ and have been baptized, have “put on Christ.”

What is it to “put on Christ”? Paul here simply relates it to believing. It does not have to do with fleshly pursuits of righteousness. Clearly, the Bible declares that with the heart man believes unto righteousness (Rom. 10:10). He does not “do” unto righteousness (Rom. 13:14). Putting on Christ is being a son of God by faith in Christ (Col. 3:9-10). Baptism is the confession of faith that you have been robed in the righteous garments of salvation (Isa. 61:10).

The fact that we are sons of God by faith in Christ puts all of us in the same standing with God. All social and cultural castes that so easily separate men have no part in the standing of the son of God. By the substitutionary work of Christ, all those for whom he died are equal in the sight of God. Though they may serve different functions in the body, they are all part of the body and inter-dependent with one another under their singular Head.

There is a blessed oneness in the church of Christ, a oneness that strips away the status symbols that men put on themselves. The hierarchy of religion is cast into the dust. The notion of progressive sanctification or holiness is disclosed as vain and empty. Having put *on*

Christ, they have put off the old man and are all wonderfully the same. Their unique singularity of mind and heart surpasses religion (Jew), education (Greek), slave or freeman, male or female. Being one in Christ is being a son of God by faith in Christ.

If this is your happy estate—if you are Christ's—then you “are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.” With these words, Paul does two things. First, he shows that the sons of God are not part of the covenant of works or under the Mosaic law. Secondly, he brings up the covenant of promise to reveal that, though the son of God by faith in Christ was never under a schoolmaster, as were the elect Jews, he was not without the government of tutors, who served to teach and watch over him till his day of realized grace. Here, Paul not only declares the Galatian believers to be heirs according to the promise, but, in the verses that follow, he also puts himself among them. He reveals that though, as a Jew, he was garrisoned under the law, it did not bring him to Christ or make him an heir. It was the covenant of promise that resulted in his salvation.

If you have been given faith, then these words are a description of you: “For ye are all the sons of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.”

The History of Heirs

“Now I say, That the heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all; But is under tutors and governors until the time appointed of the father. Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world.”

Galatians 4:1-3

In Galatians 4 Paul continues to address the two covenants: the contract of the law and the promise of the will and testament. In the latter part of chapter 3, he established that the elect Jews (himself included) were garrisoned and protected by the law (the Old testament) until Christ came. He was not only speaking of the incarnation but also of the death of Christ and its attendant results, namely justification and righteousness without the law. He was also addressing the experience of grace, which is faith *in* Christ, given by God in order to trust in the faith *of* Christ (His person and work whereby He justified His people and made them righteous). This was particularly convincing to the gentile believers because it assured them that their salvation and the salvation of the elect Jews was not by the law but by the work of Christ. Therefore, they were not subject to the legal trickery of the Judaizers who had crept in to spy out their liberty.

Another thing to consider is that the tone of this letter intimates that this is a very personal issue with Paul. Unlike the other Epistles, which Paul dictated to others, he wrote this entire epistle with his own hand (6:11). This does not diminish the value of all the other letters that Paul wrote, but in that He mentioned this fact by the inspiration of the Spirit, it suggests that God would have the Galatian believers know that Paul was personally invested in this matter (2:4-5, 11; 5:12).

In chapter 4, Paul is continuing the thoughts that he addressed in the latter part of chapter 3. Having declared that the law served the elect Jews historically as a schoolmaster until the gospel made them realize that their salvation was an inheritance and not a result of their obedience, he closed the chapter with the glorious words of equality, family, spiritual lineage and heirship. I say, he closed the chapter because our translation is divided into chapter and verse. In fact, chapter 4 begins a new paragraph and is a continuation and further illumination of the historical servitude of the law until Christ came.

The difference is that Paul now groups the elect Gentiles in with the elect Jews and declares that both were historically served by the law (v. 3 “we”). He is not now saying that the gentile believers were under the law of Moses, but rather, that they were not without a law that served to do something for them historically. Since he is now specifically dealing with salvation as an inheritance, he groups the Jews and the Gentiles into a single group. They are believers saved by the faith of

Christ; they are the church made up of both Jew and Gentile of every nation, tribe, tongue and people.

The distinction that He makes between Jew and Gentile is not one of standing because he has already established that all believers are the same, are one in Christ, and therefore, heirs according to the promise (3:28-29). The distinction he makes is that of the historical law under which the Jews and the Gentiles resided and that both these principles served a purpose. The law of Moses historically served the Jews as a schoolmaster until Christ, but the “elements of the world” (a different law) served both Jew and Gentile in a different capacity because it had to do with the covenant of promise. Whereas the law of Moses historically served the elect Jew as a guard and a keeper, the rudiments of the world served as a tutor and a governor to the heirs. Both of the historical principles engendered bondage, and governed the lives of the elect. The difference was that the law of Moses carried with it no promise but merely the declaration and definition of a just condemnation. The law under which the heirs resided served as a school for bondservants (where they were tutored and governed) who, by the will of their Master, could be adopted into the family and actually refer to their master as their Father (Abba).

Paul, using the term “elements of the world” uses it differently than he does in Colossians. There, he refers to the restriction of the law (touch not, taste not, handle not) as things of no value in the spiritual realm (Col. 2:20-2). Here, in our text, the “elements of the world” are used in the sense of a tutor or governor and fall in the

realm of predestinated providence or eternal purpose whereby the sons of God are cared for, taught and provided for until they are finally brought to hear the gospel and are made aware, by faith, that they are the children of God. The heirs are seen as unaware of their being such. They are children, and as children have no interest in anything other than seeing their immediate needs and desires met. They are, as children, oblivious to their glorious future. They appear no different from anyone else, though they are predestinated to inherit all things (v. 1).

Unbeknownst to them, they are being ordered about by purpose and providence that they might finally be brought to their appointed end (v. 2). They are being lead by divine purpose. Their steps are directed by God and are moved here and halted there, and their hearts, like rivers of water, are turned whithersoever God wills (Hosea 11:1, 3). The “elements of the world” refer to the ABCs of life before Christ is revealed to His heirs. This schooling did not and could not save us. Nothing about it had anything to do with us being justified in the sight of God. It was our ABCs, but it was still bondage. It was lessons in living, but its value was purely historical. We did not know that we were heirs and were not made aware of that fact until the appointed time of salvation.

The elements of the world were not instrumental in our salvation but served to keep us protected until we were set free by Christ. Only after faith can we look at our history and see and understand that we were in bondage. After faith and only after faith, can we look at our life before the gospel was rooted in our hearts by the

Holy Spirit and see that all of it was school. Only in Christ are the “old things” seen with “new eyes.” By faith we understand providence and predestination and can see that the elements of the world served to keep and protect us in kindergarten until Christ came and set us free (Ecc. 3:1- 15; Rom. 8:28).

Until Christ

“But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.”

Galatians 4:4-7

These words written by Paul are the culmination of what he has been dealing with in the first three chapters of this epistle. They are especially words that define the end of the service of the law for the elect Jews and the service of the “elements of the world” for the elect Gentiles. These words explain the “faith which should afterward be revealed” (3:23), the words “unto Christ” (3:24), the words “after that faith is come” (3:25), the words “heirs according to the promise” (3:29), and the words “until the time appointed of the Father” (4:2). Paul addresses all these in the first phrase of verse 4 “But when the fulness of the time was come” (Rom. 10:4).

What Paul has declared thus far is that within the eternal covenant of grace, which he has referred to as the covenant of promise—the covenant that engulfed what we know as *time*—God introduced into the realm of

time subservient covenants referred to as “the law” and “the rudiments of the world.” These covenants were instituted to serve a function within the covenant of promise for the sake of the elect of the Jews and the Gentiles. They were inserted for a specific time, and after their service was fulfilled, they ceased to function on any level.

The law (the covenant of Sinai, consisting of the Ten commandments, the laws of ceremony and rites, and the entire Old Testament) served the elect *Jews* as a pedagogue or a schoolmaster to garrison or protect the elect Jews and to maintain the Word of God and to keep the lineage of the Messiah. It was also added because of transgression to reveal that those under the law were under the curse. This pointed to the only remedy for transgression: the substitutionary death of Christ (3:10-14).

The law under which the elect *Gentile* lived was called “the elements of the world” and referred to the life they lived *before* Christ. Neither of these “laws” served to teach the Jews or Gentiles about Christ. Though the message of the gospel was the message of the Old Testament, until faith came, that message remained an undisclosed mystery. So, for those under both of these laws there was only bondage and never anything but bondage. It stands to reason that neither the schoolmaster nor the tutors and governors had anything to do with liberty and neither could ever play any part in a free person's life. These laws served those counted in the covenant of promise until faith came but not one minute after. They had nothing to do with the

accomplishment of the promise, the benefits of the promise, or the revealing and receiving of the promise. That was all accomplished by God in eternity and fulfilled in the accomplishment of Christ on the cross. These laws were not against the promises; they simply had nothing to do with justification and righteousness in the sight of God.

In verses 4-7, Paul declares the ratification and enforcement of the promise. He also declares the setting aside of the law by the fulfillment of it and the spiritual means of receiving the promise by faith born of the Spirit of God. Here is justification by the faith of Christ and justification by faith in Christ.

Both the elect Jews under the schoolmaster and the elect Gentiles under tutors and governors were heirs according to the promise. Neither of these groups was aware of their privileged estate. They did not know that their names were written in eternity in the will and testament of God. They did not know that they were heirs and so they functioned as servants in bondage to their respective systems of government.

But, then Christ came, born of a woman, as the seed of promise (Gen. 3:15; Galatians 3:16). He, being made of a woman, was not tainted with original sin. His father was *not* Adam. His Father was God (Luke 1:35). He came in the fullness of time, at the time appointed by the Father, to set aside the law by blood redemption. It is for this particular purpose that He was made under the law—that He might fulfill the law by His propitiatory death (3:13). The law, added because of transgressions, pointed particularly to our Lord being made sin for His

people, the act by which His people were justified and made righteous (Psa. 89:26-36; 2 Cor. 5:21).

Remembering that the Galatians had believed the gospel by God-given faith gives a sweet beauty to the hearing of faith. Being ignorant of their heirship (4:1), they would have remained so were it not that, within that covenant of promise contained in the glorious purpose of grace, was the revelation of *the Christ* by the gospel. The gospel did not reveal that they could be or might be heirs but that they *were* heirs (v. 5). The believer is not adopted when he believes; rather, he receives that which was already his by predestined promise (Eph. 1:3-5). This is clearly seen in the first phrase of verse 6, “because ye *are* sons.”

What a blessing this must have been to the Galatians as they dealt with the assaults of the Judaizers! Those enemies of the cross could not cry “Abba, Father.” They were yet under the curse. They were not in the will and testament. But these believers had heard the good news. The Spirit of God had entered their hearts, and their immediate response was the acknowledgement that they, indeed, were not slaves—not servants—but sons: sons of God and, if sons, then heirs of God through Christ. The believing Jew could say good-bye to the schoolmaster, and the believing Gentile could bid adieu to the tutors and governors (3:26; 4:4-7). The word was nigh them, even in their mouth and in their hearts: the word of faith. With their hearts indwelled by the Spirit, they believed unto righteousness and, with their mouth, confession was made unto

salvation. What a confession indeed, “Abba, Father” (1 John 3:1; Rom. 8:14-17).

Believers Warned

“Howbeit then, when ye knew not God, ye did service unto them which by nature are no gods. But now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage? Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years. I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain.”

Galatians 4:8-11

In this passage, Paul is warning the Galatian believers of their obvious *tendency* to return to their former life of idolatry. The language that he employs has a ring of both amazement and urgency. These warnings are not isolated. They come quick on the heels of the glorious rehearsal of the greatness of their salvation in Christ (vv. 4-7). This is a tack that Paul often uses in his writings. In order to address a problem that might or does exist, Paul first sets forth the absolute salvation of the elect and then gives warning about the fact that certain behaviors can all but destroy any semblance of true interest in Christ.

Clearly, a reversion to former idolatry—to the life a person lived before the knowledge of Christ (the elements of the world) or to a legal approach to justification (the law)—is not indicative of one who has been justified by “the faith of Christ,” indwelled by the Spirit of God, and made to realize that they are no longer

slaves but sons. We, as believers, are not “fruit inspectors,” but neither are we blind to our own inclination to err. Though apostasy is never clearly defined in Scripture by a set of exact parameters, if we or anyone else claims to believe the gospel yet shows no obvious interest in the things of Christ and appears to be a slave to the former things, certainly the possibility of apostasy enters into the picture and rightly would induce concern (v. 11; 3:3). A life touched by sovereign grace that is yet seemingly without graciousness calls into question the experience of grace.

The manner in which Paul here addresses the church is a very good example of how one is to rebuke and reprove, “letting no man despise thee.” The gospel—the glory of the salvation of the elect—must be declared before any warning is given. In fact, the declaration of the gospel is often more than enough for a believer to see the error of his ways.

Also, the warning that Paul gives here is not just a general rebuke. He does not speak to these Galatians about something that has no foundation. He is not trying to make them feel guilty in the general way that *religion* does. He is dealing with a specific tendency that they are displaying by contrasting such behavior with the behavior one could reasonably expect of one who is no longer a slave but a son. Obviously, where no problem exists, no warning or rebuke is necessary.

In Galatia, the Gentiles were obviously succumbing to the guile and trickery of the Judaizers, and such error must be dealt with because Paul declares that it is

tantamount to committing idolatry. Upon this foundation, Paul makes these remarks.

The first word of this passage is a word of contrast. “Howbeit” refers us back to the previous verse and contrasts the fact that the believers at Galatia are spiritual sons and heirs with their tendency to return to their former lives. He plays the memory card, causing them to recall their life before Christ. “Back ‘*then*,” he says, “you didn't know God,” and the reasonable conclusion of such is that they served false gods. This is a blanket truth. Men, by nature, are not irreligious. They are servers and worshippers of false deities.

Before the knowledge of Christ given in the gospel and received through the Spirit by faith, you were not close to the kingdom. You did not know the true God, but you were about the business of religion nonetheless. “But now,” having received the Spirit of adoption whereby you call God, “Abba, Father,” and having been made to understand that you are a son and not a slave, it is entirely unreasonable, even criminal, that you would return to your former life of *bondage*. The last phrase of verse 9 is spoken in a sense of *astonishment* and addresses the idea that such action makes no sense—no sense whatsoever! Having been set free, do you desire to be back under bondage? Having received the Spirit of adoption, do you wish to return to the bondage of slavery (v. 21)? It would be ridiculous to do so, because ye have known God, or rather are known of God.

Paul, here, makes a very astute distinction. To know God is to be, first, known of God (2 Tim. 2:19). “We love

Him because He *first* loved us.” Though the believer's knowledge of God is real and true (1 Cor. 2:15; 1 John 2:20), that knowledge is a result of God's eternal knowledge of His elect. God is the first cause of all things, and we know Him because He knew us in election, love, predestination, purpose, and in Christ before the foundation of the world. There will be those who claim to know Him who will hear the terrifying words “I *never knew you*” (Matt. 7:21-23). They could not *know* Him because they were not known *of* Him (John 10:14, 27-30; I Cor. 13:12).

Paul does an amazing thing in verse 9 and 10. He switches from the past to the present in reference to idolatry. The things referred to in verse 10 are particularly the element of Jewish worship. He, in effect, is saying that the Galatians, having been freed from their former idolatry (1:4), have opted for another kind of idolatry. Though the Judaizer's primary desire is to have these Gentiles circumcised, and though the tenor of the letter seems to imply they have not succeeded in doing so, they have evidently seduced (bewitched) the Galatians into the observance of Sabbath-keeping and feast days and such things as attend the ceremonies. This is no small thing. Paul is saying that the pagan practices of their past and the legal pursuits of their present are *both* the worship of false gods. For the law to be employed for justification and righteousness in the sight of God is exactly the same as worshipping a stump or a man or a bird or a four-footed beast or creeping things. This is a big lump into which Paul has lumped idolatry. Make no mistake here! To seek justification or

righteousness on any level, in the sight of God, by the law, is idolatry. It is Paul's former idolatry and their present idolatry.

Paul is afraid for them, because such practices make it at least appear that the gospel of grace has not, indeed, freed them from their idolatry. This is a reasonable fear because it causes Paul to wonder if the labor he bestowed on them was in vain and that their faith was an empty religious profession (1 Cor. 15:1-2; Col. 1:20-23; Heb. 3; 6,14).

A Personal Plea

“Brethren, I beseech you, be as I am; for I am as ye are: ye have not injured me at all. Ye know how through infirmity of the flesh I preached the gospel unto you at the first. And my temptation which was in my flesh ye despised not, nor rejected; but received me as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus. Where is then the blessedness ye spake of? for I bear you record, that, if it had been possible, ye would have plucked out your own eyes, and have given them to me.”

Galatians 4:12-15

I refer to this passage as a “personal plea” because Paul speaks to the Galatians in a manner that calls the believers to remember the relationship that they enjoyed with him when he first preached the gospel to them. This is a wonderful aspect of the inspired Word. In the calling of His elect, our Lord uses the Word. However, He also uses men to preach it, and that principle establishes relationships between the preacher and the hearers. So centered on the gospel and so full of love for these brethren, Paul's very emotions toward them fall in the realm of “God-breathed words.” His love for them made his words as the words of Christ, Himself (v. 14; 2 Cor. 5:20).

Note that he calls them brethren (v. 12). Though they have slipped and have given some credence to the

Judaizers, this does not change the fact that they are brethren and does not change Paul's love for them or his desire to see them recovered. It is clear that, not only is Paul's message the message of grace, it is likewise clear that his heart is established with grace. How often brethren are quick to burn bridges over issues that do not involve the gospel. But, here, Paul seeks to recover these wayward brethren even when the very *heart* of the gospel is at stake: the issue of how a man is just with God.

The first phrase of verse 12 is not in the vernacular (everyday language) that we would necessarily use today. Paul is here urging the brethren to remember how he was when he came to them preaching the gospel. How did he come to them? He came without the law. His message did not involve the law (for justification, righteousness, or life), because these Gentiles were never under the law. Hendrickson phrased it this way, "I urge you to become as I am because I became as you were." This may not fully cover the premise that Paul is here asserting, but it certainly gives us the gist of his desire. He is one who has died to the law (2:19) and so urges them to be likewise. He is saying that he is justified and righteous in the sight of God by "the faith of Christ" alone and urges them to be the same, because when he came to them preaching the gospel, they believed that they were justified without the law, even as he was.

Though these words are spoken from the tenderness of Paul's heart, they are nonetheless a line drawn in the sand. Paul is as much as declaring that they either

follow the Judaizers or follow him. The last phrase, “ye have not injured me at all” is merely Paul completing the principle of the Galatians being as he is. It probably alludes to the fact that the Judaizers hold the punishments of the law over the heads of those who they are trying to deceive. Legalism is powerless if it cannot punish, censure, or reprobate those whom it considers to be out of compliance. Paul says that when he came to the Galatians without the law, preaching to them the pure gospel of freedom, that it was not injurious to him, and so, if they disown the Judaizers and their laws now, it would not be injurious to them. Since the law is toothless without the curse that attends it, and since by believing the gospel, one is freed from the curse, no matter what the legalists may threaten, trusting Christ alone for justification will not injure you. It certainly did not injure Paul.

Much has been made of Paul's' infirmities as to what they were. This is due to men's willingness to forego the obvious in order to show themselves to have understanding beyond context. The first thing I ever remember hearing about this text (v. 13) was that this was referring to Paul's poor eyesight. The so-called “proof” used was that Paul mentioned his eyes in verse 15, and when that is tied with his words in chapter 6, verse 11, all doubt is supposedly removed that Paul's infirmity was poor eyesight. Even if this were true (which it is not), what possible value would such knowledge have to the context of what he is saying. Paul's words in verse 14 suggest that whatever this infirmity was, it might be such that, were it not for the grace of God, it

could cause those to whom he preached not to listen to him. But such was the power of the gospel that they received him as if he were an angel (messenger from God), even as one speaking in the stead of Christ.

What infirmity, what trial in the flesh, might preclude someone from listening to a preacher? In Paul's case, he has already addressed this in his letter to the Corinthians (1 Cor. 2:1-5; 2 Cor. 4:7; 12:5, 9-10). Though his writings are masterpieces of persuasive literature, it appears that Paul was not what men would call a gifted speaker or orator such as Apollos. He was probably the epitome of that preacher described in Isaiah 28 who came with "stammering lips and another tongue" declaring the gospel. Though he came to the Galatians in this "weak" manner, they did not despise or reject him but rather received him as sent from God with the words of God in spite of his speech.

There is probably no small reference to the difference between his manner of speaking and that of the Judaizers. They were persuaders (v. 17). He came with weakness, fear and trembling and not with enticing words of men's logic, reason, and wisdom. He preached Christ (and only Christ) and Him crucified: the wisdom and power of God (1 Thess. 2:13).

Paul's assertion is two-fold. First, he declares that they believed, not because of him, but because of the gospel he preached. Secondly, they were blessed by the gospel to believe without even the mention of the law. Their proclamation of blessedness by the gospel was now being assaulted by the Judaizers and by their own willingness to give the Judaizers the least attention. In

the latter part of verse 15, Paul, speaking hyperbolically and metaphorically (not about poor eyesight), says that that the gospel so blessed and entrenched these believers in faith that they would have plucked out their own eyes and given them to Paul. Why? In order to show that they saw by faith, not by natural sight, and were justified by faith without the law as opposed to being justified by the works of the law which would have required natural sight. Paul's urging then follows. "What happened?" "Where is, then, this blessedness?" Be like me because I am like you. Both of us were justified by "the faith of Christ" without the deeds of the law and were made aware of this blessedness by the declaration of the gospel.

Zealously Affected

“Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth? They zealously affect you, but not well; yea, they would exclude you, that ye might affect them. But it is good to be zealously affected always in a good thing, and not only when I am present with you.”

Galatians 4:16-18

In this passage, Paul describes *zeal* in both a good and evil sense. In our day, the word “zeal” is rarely used in a good sense but rather in the sense of fanaticism. Those who fervently practice *evil* are often referred to as “zealots,” but rarely is this word applied to one who gives his energy, life, and spirit to a *good* cause. The word as it is used in Scripture can be applied either way. Paul uses *both* in this context.

Zeal is a word that must be defined by its object and in context. When applied in an evil sense, it pictures boiling water, hot and dangerous, and it is usually in reference to jealousy, envy, and hatred. When used in a good sense, it alludes to fervent love, devotion, and unbridled enthusiasm. Zeal cannot operate in a vacuum. It must have an object, a fervent motivation and a specific result in mind whether *good* or *evil*.

Having established that the Galatians were once zealous toward him and the gospel he preached and that they had apparently changed in their attitude toward

him and the gospel after the Judaizers began to make inroads into their assurance with their legalistic tactics (vv. 14-15), Paul now deals more fully with that thought. In doing so, he establishes the difference between himself and the Judaizers: the difference in their objectives, the difference in their methods and the difference in their desired results.

It is evident in verse 16 that the Judaizers were seeking to defame Paul and make him to be the enemy of the believers in Galatia. The means by which they sought to give him this name are not clear, but it is safe to say that they were, on some level, painting Paul as *against* God and saying that to follow him was to follow a heretic. They obviously used the law to do this, so, in all probability, they employed the lie that what Paul was preaching would lead to sin. This is always the ploy of the legalist. They discount the freedom obtained by the gospel by saying that it opens the floodgates of all manner of iniquity (Rom. 3:7-8; 6:1, 15). The Judaizers were as much as saying that Paul and his gospel of grace would lead to lasciviousness, therefore, Paul and what he preached was their enemy. Paul's response was a classic example of rhetorical genius. I am your enemy if telling you the truth makes me so. If the truth makes me your enemy, then the lie would make you my friend. To disown the law for justification, righteousness, and sanctification will cause religion to label you as an *antinomian*. It simply cannot be avoided. It is, and will remain the single most utilized weapon in the arsenal of the legalist, and it is and will remain the biggest lie.

The Judaizers “zealously affect you” means that they fervently *woo*, or *court* you. The language implies that these legalists promised the Galatians things that Paul did not promise in the covenant of promise. Their promises were probably the same promises of the false teachers of this day. In this day, men are invited to Christ and promised a wide range of worldly benefits such as health, wealth, happiness, success, excitement, and power over the elements: virtually every conceivable trinket that is an enticement to the natural flesh. But, the gospel—the covenant of promise in which all the promises are yea and Amen in Christ—is spiritual. These promises are mercy, grace, forgiveness, redemption, justification, sanctification, and glory. These are *good* while Paul makes it clear that the things promised by the Judaizers are “*not* for good.” These are absolute and they are opposites. The legalists thus calls evil good and good evil (Isa. 5:20).

The design of the legalist is to exclude (v. 17) the Galatians from Paul and the gospel that he preaches. They desire to abolish any contact with Paul. They intend to isolate and indoctrinate the Galatians and turn them into their own disciples. They seek to control the very lives and existence of these gentile believers and prevent them from encountering any outside influence. This can even take place under the guise of seeking gospel *purity*. This is an obvious indicator and must be avoided. Though part of the preaching of the gospel is dealing with error and warning men to avoid it, at its heart, the gospel sets men free. The moment someone begins to create suspicion about another gospel

preacher, it should serve as a red flag. Legalism's design is to make its followers dependent upon their leaders, who are *thought* police. Such have the ulterior motive of ensuring that their followers follow *only* them. They *woo* and *court* their followers in order that their followers will *woo* and *court* *them* (v. 17). Legalists surround themselves with pliable and blindly obedient sycophants. Without such, the legalist cannot function.

The gospel preacher, on the other hand, seeks to set men free to follow Christ. His message is never anything but "Seek the Lord." Even though he is said to rule the flock, he does not lord over the flock (1 Pet. 5:3). He rules, but his rule is limited to the pulpit and involves declaring the truth that sets men free. He feeds the flock that they may freely go into the world with the necessary nourishment to freely serve the Lord. He is at once the *true* friend of every lamb over whom he is given charge (as one who must give account for their souls) and the "best" friend of none of them. His design, motivation, and desire (his zeal) is not to have followers but to see the flock follow the Lord—to be "zealously affected" for the gospel of the glory of God (v. 18).

Paul's mention of the fact that he was not there with them at that time is a reference to the fact that they were once "zealously affected" by him, or better, what he preached. He desires by this letter to zealously affect them again (v. 18) by clearly setting forth the gospel of grace, called "the faith of Christ," as the only proper and acceptable zeal. Many are sidetracked by *good things* while forgetting the *best* thing. Social programs, Christian education, church growth, and politics all

have their place, and some are worthwhile, but none of these zealously affect you for good. Only the constant rehearsal of truth will affect you for good.

Paul's Zeal

“My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you, I desire to be present with you now, and to change my voice; for I stand in doubt of you.”

Galatians 4:19-20

C. H. Spurgeon once said that, every time he preached, he preached for the conversion of his hearers. There is but one way to do that. A minister of the gospel must be exactly *that*: a minister of the gospel. The consistent preaching of the gospel is the only means that God has purposed whereby His elect are converted. When I speak of conversion, I do not mean changing religions or systematic theology. Rather, I mean the salvation of the *soul* and the faith and repentance that attends it. One who has not been redeemed by the person and work of Christ will never be spiritually converted. All who have been redeemed by the blood of Christ will, in time, be regenerated by the Spirit, through the Word, and the immediate result will be conversion.

Conversion is basically a *change*. Therefore, it is aligned with repentance, which is a radical change of *mind* concerning what recommends you to God. It is not only a one-time thing but is also a continual thing. The Galatians, or at least many of them, have changed. They, who once had received the gospel with joy and had turned their back on the law of Moses for justification, sanctification, and righteousness in the sight of God,

appear to have been converted to the message of the Judaizers. Paul is afraid for them and writes this letter in his own hand to let them know that what they have done is tantamount to looking at the cross and the work that Christ accomplished there as being of no value (5:2). Verses 11-20, are Paul's personal plea to the Galatians to return and to walk in Christ as they have received Him. Verses 19-20 are the closing words of this plea.

In these words, we see Paul's heart laid bare. He speaks as the pastor, who, unable to be physically in their presence (v. 18), is in pain for them. He speaks of the labor of the gospel, that is, the preaching of the gospel, as birth pains, and it is clear that he knows that the same message in which he travailed for them when they first believed is the message that he now preaches to them to rescue them from the danger that now assaults them. As he travailed with them in the beginning, he travails with them now (again v. 19). The end desire is also the same. Just as in the beginning, he travails (preaches the gospel) in order that Christ would be formed in them. With these words, he defines the work of the pastor. It is *not* self-promotion. It is *not* seeking to gather a following for himself. It is solely to see Christ formed in his hearers. When Christ is formed in His people, He fills them up and there is no room left for any other means of justification, sanctification and righteousness.

These words are the words of a father. Paul calls the Galatians his "little children." This paternal aspect of the ministry is not in the sense of him being responsible for

the new birth. That is a work of the Spirit of God. He speaks as their father in four ways. First, he speaks as a father who pities an erring child. Secondly, he speaks to the truth that God regenerates and converts His people by the means of the preaching of the gospel. He was instrumental in their conversion because he preached the gospel to them (Rom. 10:13-17; 1 Cor. 1:21-24). Thirdly, he speaks as a father in the sense that he has a responsibility to feed and supply nourishment necessary for their growth. Fourthly, he speaks in the sense of a father whose children are in danger and he is not able to be there to personally deal with those who have “zealously affected” his children for evil. Every parent can relate to the emotion of parental protection. This is why he calls them his “little children” (1 Tim. 1:2; 1 John 2:1).

Part of the travail he feels—the pain in his heart for His children—is that he cannot be with them personally (vv. 18, 20). He travails in his heart (Phil. 1:7). He travails in personally penning this whole epistle (6:11). He travails because he must *write* to them rather than be in their *presence*. He travails because he has doubts concerning them because they have seemingly embraced the message of the enemies of the cross. He travails for them to turn them back from their error. He travails with them that they might be as he is. He travails for them that they may be “zealously affected” in a good thing. All these things are actually “one thing.” He travails again as he has travailed before (Phil. 3:1) that Christ might be formed in them. In his travail, he draws

a clear distinction between himself and those who are endeavoring to bring them under the law.

The legalist labors for power and influence over people. The legalist labors to make a fair show in the flesh (6:12-13). The minister of the gospel labors to espouse you to Christ as chaste virgins, that Christ may be formed in you. Mark well this fact because herein lies the difference between the truth and the lie. The design of the legalist is to have you follow *him*. The design of the gospel preacher is to have you follow *Christ*. The difference is night and day, darkness and light, life and death and truth and error.

This personal plea of Paul (vv. 11-20) is bookended with the phrases “I am afraid of [for] you” and “I stand in doubt of you.” The reason for this is simple: The gospel calls for a verdict, and it always gets one. The gospel is not only the facts or the report of “the faith of Christ,” it is also the effect. A person cannot receive the gospel and not be changed. If you play around with the law as a rule of life, as a means of justification, sanctification, and righteousness, if you and your life are not about Christ alone, then I *am* afraid for you and I stand in doubt of you. Paul is not saying, “I disown you.” He is saying, “I desire your recovery, but don't be fooled into thinking that you can have Christ and also embrace the law.” “It's time for a verdict,” says Paul, and what follows is a further distinction between the covenant of works and the covenant of promise. “Tell me, ye that desire to be under the law, do ye not hear the law?”

Hear The Law

“Tell me, ye that desire to be under the law, do ye not hear the law?”

Galatians 4:21

The words of verse 21 are the final words of the personal plea that begins in verse 11 for the Galatians to consider the consequences of falling under the message of the Judaizers. These words, by themselves, stand as a banner of the grace of God and the work of Christ for justification as opposed to the works of the law for justification. It is a question that goes to the heart of the matter of life in Christ.

With these words, Paul accomplishes two things. These words are first a rebuke to those who seek to keep the law for righteousness and justification in the sight of God. Paul has spent nearly four chapters declaring that no one, under any circumstance, is justified, sanctified, or made righteous by keeping the law. He, himself, was born under it, received his education in it, and believed that he kept it only to find on the road to Damascus that his hope of justification by it was nothing more than loss—nothing more than dung (Phil 3:3-8). He withstood Peter, James and Barnabas face to face, and concerning their evident willingness to act as though the law had something to do with justification, told them that they, by their actions, despised the grace of God (2:21).

Concerning the capacity in which the law served, he spoke of it in the past tense as having served to assign

guilt, establish punishment for transgression, and to garrison him and the rest of the elect Jews until Christ came (3:18-25). Having declared that the law (the law of Moses) has never made anyone righteous and that those who seek to add the law to the work of Christ are enemies of the gospel, he asks this pointed question as a rebuke to those who have succumbed to the wiles of the legalists.

He prefaces the question with the words “tell me.” He is, in effect, demanding an answer to his question. The things that he has settled in the first part of this letter require an immediate response and conclusion. “Tell me” requires standing on Christ alone or the law alone for justification. This demand is akin to the words of Moses when he drew the line in the sand and asked, “Who is on the Lord's side.” Our Lord confronted the Pharisee in the same manner (Mark 11:29-30). “Tell me, ye that desire to be under the law, do ye not hear the law” (Rom. 3:19-20)?

The second thing that Paul accomplishes with this question is to cause those who are tinkering with the law for justification to put the law (of Moses) into its proper place—the “law” (specifically the entire writings of Moses). He is in effect saying, “Evidently, you who hear the law of Moses (from Sinai) do not hear the words of Moses prior to the giving of the law on Sinai.” He does so because he had preached the gospel to these Gentiles without bringing them *under* the law. He had preached the gospel to them as the covenant of promise and used Abraham as a picture of that covenant, declaring Christ as the seed of Abraham and believers as children of

Abraham who were justified by the “faith of Christ” understood and embraced by God-given faith (3:25-29). The covenant that God made with Abraham *preceded* the covenant established at Sinai and pictured the covenant of promise of which Christ is the mediator (executor) (Gen. 12:1-3).

The Galatians had heard the gospel of grace and had believed without the law (of Moses). The law that Paul preached was the entire Word of God, of which the law of Moses plays an integral but temporary role. That role had been fulfilled and finished by the time Paul came to the Galatians with the gospel (Gal 3:17-19; Heb. 10:9). This question (v. 21) is a declaration that the law (or, more specifically, the works of the law) did not justify these folks because the law of Moses had been fulfilled and retired by Christ before they even heard the gospel. Therefore, it was never declared to them at all. If they heard the law of Moses *now*, it could have nothing to do with their justification, righteousness, or rule of life.

This question also serves to remind the Galatians (and us as well) that text without context is pretext. The Judaizers lived and breathed only a few verses of Scripture and measured all things by them. The legalist cannot get outside the law of Moses. No matter how much the Judaizers are told that all of Scripture points to Christ and His works as the entirety of salvation, they cannot keep from inserting the law of Moses. Rather than holding the law up to the light of the rest of Scripture, they hold Scripture hostage to the Ten Commandments. “Tell me,” you who hear the message of the Judaizers, do you hear it while disregarding the

message of *all* the Scriptures? The Scriptures are about Christ (John 5:39-40; Luke 24:27, 44-45; Acts 10:43). Those who hear only Moses' law miss Christ and do err neither knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God.

This question is also the opening statement of Paul in his conclusion concerning what the Scriptures teach. What follows this question is a final distinction concerning the law of Moses and the Seed of Abraham, which is Christ. He will, with this final argument, bring his hearers to the verdict that this question demands (Read verses 22-31).

Allegory

“Tell me, ye that desire to be under the law, do ye not hear the law? For it is written, that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondmaid, the other by a freewoman. But he who was of the bondwoman was born after the flesh; but he of the freewoman was by promise. Which things are an allegory: for these are the two covenants; the one from the Mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is Agar. For this Agar is Mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children. But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all. For it is written, Rejoice, thou barren that bearest not; break forth and cry, thou that travailest not: for the desolate hath many more children than she which hath an husband. Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise. But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now. Nevertheless, what saith the scripture? Cast out the bondwoman and her son: for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman. So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman, but of the free.”

Galatians 4:21-31

In this portion of the context, Paul illuminates his hearers concerning his words in verse 21. This is the law that they are not hearing because they have shrunk the meaning of “the law” to that of “the law of Moses.” He sums up the intent of his words (that is, the meaning of “*hearing* the law”) with the words “For it is written.” This phrase is consummate and embraces the fact that the words that he is about to say are, indeed, the law of God, in which the law of Moses serves a particular yet temporary function on the one hand, while meaning much more than what they present at face value. With the use of “it is written” he establishes an unshakable principle. He established that any portion of Scripture must be viewed in light of all Scripture and that the declaration of a fact in the Old Testament finds its true meaning and scope in the New Testament. In this passage, he declares that the facts and surrounding aspects of the birth of Abraham's two sons had a vastly broader meaning than a mere historical record. The earthly aspect of the birth of these two sons—the true purpose of the entire historical episode—conveyed a spiritual truth that is about to be disclosed.

The subject Paul addresses here is the same that his letter has been addressing all along. He returns the Galatian believers to the Word of God, showing them the Judaizers, in spying out their liberty, were seeking to steal the gospel that *established* their liberty. Again, this liberty and this bondage are allegorically revealed in the manner of the birth of Abraham's two sons: one born by the power of the flesh and the other by the power of the

Spirit: one engendering bondage, the other, freedom. The issue remains the same: *bondage* under the law or *liberty* by the gospel.

Before Paul shows the true meaning of these two mothers and two sons and the meaning of their respective conceptions, he sets up the case with the facts surrounding their births. The groundwork that he lays before revealing the entire episode to be an allegory, is full of gospel truth as it relates to spiritual life.

The first spiritual truth related by these facts is that Abraham had two sons. One was born of a slave and the other of a free woman. Until Ishmael and his mother were cast out, Abraham nurtured a relationship with both of his sons. Important to understanding this epistle is that, not only is seeking righteousness and justification by the law sinful and eventuates in bondage, but using the law as a believer's rule of life leads to the same kind of bondage, as well. Abraham's familiar relation with *both* of these boys clearly suggests that even a believer may fall prey to the enticements of the flesh concerning the law as a rule of life. Folks are wrong when they think that Paul was dealing with the law for justification as the *only* problematic issue in Galatia.

Many whom Paul called *brethren* were incorporating new moons and feast days into their worship suggesting that, though they believed Christ for justification, they also held that keeping the law as the rule of life was necessary for personal righteousness in the sight of God (4:9-11). Abraham, though never in doubt of the promise of Isaac, yet carried on a relationship with Ishmael,

teaching us that though we are believers, we may succumb to the wiles of the law teachers. We may, indeed, do often find ourselves having a familiar relationship with *grace* and with the *law* and continue such until the word of the Lord reminds us that we are to “cast out the bond woman and her son” (v. 30).

It is also said of the two sons that they were *born*. We rarely think of the *bondage of the law* in terms of producing birth. When we speak of birth, it is usually the new birth or regeneration. But, both the relationship of a person with the *law* for justification as well as the relationship of a person with the *promise* for justification produce a birth. Both these sons were born, but they were born of two distinct and diametrically opposed mothers. One was a slave, a bondmaid of the other who was free.

It is worthy to note that the bondmaid served the freewoman. The bondmaid serves the freewoman, and Paul's distinction is that of the *flesh serving the spirit*. It was the *spiritual* that was always in control of the *flesh*. This is no small allusion to the fact that the law of Moses served the entire law of God (the Scriptures). This also declares that the law served its purpose within the rule of grace, but was never grace and never ruled (John 1:17).

The births accomplished by both these mothers are as distinct from each other as life is distinct from death, as flesh is distinct from spirit. Ishmael was *born* of the power of the *flesh*. That is to say, that he was born by the sexual *union* of Abraham and Hagar, both of them being vital in reproduction. Clearly those who are *united*

with the law can and do produce offspring, but such offspring are forever bound to the realm in which they are born—the flesh. Such a union cannot, on any level, produce anything that is spiritual. The two (flesh and spirit) shall never co-exist and they shall never mix. Paul makes this plain on many levels. In Romans 7:1-5, he teaches that the fruit produced by a marital relationship to the law is fruit unto death. In Romans 8:5-8, he teaches that the flesh and the spirit are mutually exclusive and that those who are of the flesh cannot please God. Our Lord's words to Nicodemus in John 3:6 settle the matter in absolute terms.

Isaac was *born of promise*. That is to say, Abraham and Sarah could not, of themselves, produce a child. Romans 4:19 declares that both Abraham's and Sarah's bodies were dead as to the ability to reproduce. Isaac was born because God had promised that he would be.

The particulars of this miracle are not revealed. But remember that this entire episode is allegorical and, therefore, teaches a spiritual truth. The spiritual truth set forth is that the new birth is not in the realm of the possibility of man but wholly conditioned upon the work and promise of God (John 1:13). The *flesh* and the *promise* are the two covenants. Hagar, the mother of the fleshly seed, is Sinai, and Sarah, the mother of the spiritual seed, is the promise. If you desire to be under the law of Moses hear what the law says.

Allegory II

“Which things are an allegory: for these are the two covenants; the one from the mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is Agar. For this Agar is mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children. But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all. For it is written, Rejoice, thou barren that bearest not; break forth and cry, thou that travailest not: for the desolate hath many more children than she which hath an husband.”

Galatians 4:24-27

In this passage, Paul continues to address the manner in which the Galatians and *all* believers are justified in the mediation of the covenant of promise by Jesus Christ (the faith of Christ). He employs the Old Testament record of the birth of Abraham's two sons, Ishmael and Isaac. He does this in order to reveal to the Galatians that the Judaizers do not understand that the covenant of works (the Mosaic law given at Sinai) served a function in the Covenant of Promise but was not the means of the ratification or accomplishment of the promise. He makes a very bold and precise statement concerning these two sons and their respective births. One, Ishmael, was a son born of the flesh and the other, Isaac, was born of the promise. The flesh and the spirit

will be continuing themes that Paul will address throughout this epistle as well as in all his other letters (3:1-3, 4:23; 5:16-25).

Paul declares that the things he is speaking of are an allegory. That simply means that these things were true and real, but that when they were recorded, they were recorded with something else in mind. It is possible that the Judaizers were using this story to prove *their* point that the Gentiles could not be children of God because they were not circumcised. That being the case, the Galatians were all “Ishmaels” and could not be “Isaacs” except by keeping the law of Moses. Whether Paul was addressing this spoken error or merely showing that what the Judaizers believed about the law was false, the end result was the same. What had happened between Abraham, Hagar and Sarah meant something else altogether.

Paul states that these two women represent the two covenants. But we know that there were *many* covenants set forth in the word of God. There was a covenant made with Adam under which the entire human race fell. There was a covenant with Noah wherein the entire human race was destroyed—save for eight people. There were covenants made with Jacob, Isaac, and David. Paul brings *all* these down to *two* covenants because he was dealing with two concepts of justification within the churches of Galatia. He continues to address the covenant of *works* and the covenant of *promise*. The one covenant is with man and is conditioned upon the perfect obedience of man. The other is *for* the elect and is conditioned only on the

performance of God to accomplish it. In one sense, both are covenants of promise. The promise of blessings is conditioned upon performance. The difference is who does the promising. Under the covenant of works, the people are the “promisors” (Exo. 19:7-8). Under the covenant of promise, God is the “promisor.” Who do you think will accomplish the promise!

Paul says that the covenant pictured by Hagar is the one from Mount Sinai. This covenant “gendereth to bondage.” Note well that there are no qualifying or mitigating statements attached to this declaration. Sinai, represented by Hagar (the flesh, Moses' law and the covenant of works), “gendereth,” or brings about, propagates, or procreates bondage or slavery. To seek to obtain the promise by means of the power of the flesh, simply, concisely, and always gendereth bondage. It can do no other no matter the guise in which it may appear. Whether we use Sinai's covenant for justification, righteousness, moral improvement, or rule of life, the end result will be bondage, slavery, and ultimately, failure and damnation. Even under the best of intentions, (though clearly the Judaizers had no such intentions) and even if the desire is sincere and well intended to make men better than they are, it will only enslave them to the flesh.

Verse 25 addresses the estate of the Judaizers. They, represented by Jerusalem (the geographical one “which now is”), are in bondage because they are under the covenant of works. This, Paul declares, is the *true* estate of all those in Galatia who endeavor to have believers come under the jurisdiction of the law for justification.

They—all of them—are in the flesh, producing dead works and are bound and enslaved. They are not and cannot be free unless the yoke of their bondage is destroyed by the “work of Christ.” This passage also addresses the tendencies of the believing Gentiles, warning them that they, as free men, will immediately forfeit their freedom and become enslaved if they adhere to the message of the Judaizers.

With the blessed conjunction “but,” Paul assures the believers that the estate of the Judaizers is not their estate. They are residents of another city, a Jerusalem that is not of this world. That heavenly city, pictured by Sarah and the manner in which she conceived (by promise—the same manner in which the Galatians were born) is above and free. In this city, there is no bondage, nor can any bondage be engendered. Just as it is impossible to be free under Hagar, it is, likewise, impossible to be in bondage under Sarah. The children born of these two mothers are born in ways that are diametrically opposed: one of the flesh and, therefore, a slave, the other of promise and, therefore, a freeman.

The Jerusalem represented by Sarah is said to be “above.” There are two applications of this truth. The first is that, being *above*, all that are born from her are *from* above. She is the church, the heavenly body and bride of Christ (Rev. 21:9-11; Eph. 2:6). The literal translation of “born again” is “born from above” (John 3:3 [margin]).

The second application, taking into consideration what Paul is addressing in the context, could mean that the earthly (fleshly) Jerusalem was preceded by the

heavenly Jerusalem (spiritual), as the covenant of works is preceded by the covenant of promise. Every believer is born from above, is free, and the covenant of promise is the “mother of us all.”

Verse 27 must be viewed in light of the teaching and the attitude of the Judaizers. They believe the church to be desolate and barren. Although the Jews far outnumbered this motley gentile crowd, Paul goes to the law (Isa. 44:1) to assure these believers that the Lord was speaking of *them*. They may *appear* barren but such is not the case.

As Isaac Was

“Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise. But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now. Nevertheless, what saith the scripture? Cast out the bondwoman and her son: for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman. So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman, but of the free.”

Galatians 4:28-31

As Paul ends this chapter, he once again defines the distinction between the covenant of works and the covenant of promise as the difference between flesh and spirit. Having assured the church that, though those who are under the covenant of works far outnumber those who are of the covenant of promise, the church will prove victorious (vs. 27).

In verse 28, Paul makes an astounding statement. He seals the fact that the believer is not born of the works of the law by stating that we (believers) are the children of promise, just as Isaac was. We have no part of or part with being born of the flesh (Hagar or Sinai). Our heritage is the eternal covenant of promise. With these words, he first makes a distinction between *true* Israel and *natural* Israel. This is not only a theological fact but finds its weight in the turmoil that the Galatian churches now face. Those who oppose them and desire

to bring them under the law are historical Jews. Part of their power over the Gentiles was that they (the Jews) had an undeniable link with Abraham. They used their heritage as a blunt instrument to bludgeon the Gentiles with the law. Paul, in one fell swoop, sets things in their proper order. With these words, he tells the believing Galatians that *they* are the *true* descendants of Abraham and that those who trouble them are *not* truly Israel. Just as Isaac was born because of promise, so were the Galatians. The Jews' heritage is *historical*; The believer's heritage is *prehistorical*. The weight of Scripture bears this out (Rom. 2:28-29; 9:7-8; Gal. 3:6-14, 29; 4:28, 31; 4:6-7).

This being true, the animosity of those who seek righteousness by the law will always prove them to be enemies of the cross (v. 29). Such will come in an assortment of shapes, sizes, and names, but they come only to make a fair show in the flesh. They will persecute him that is born of the Spirit. It is not a war the believer seeks, but it is one he cannot avoid (Phil. 3:18-20). The true gospel, the gospel of sovereign grace, is an *affront* to the legalist on many levels, not the least of which is the legalist's notion of *heritage*. For years, I have heard men speak of their beliefs as if this or that historical confession of faith gave what they believe some greater credence. The believer's rule and practice are bound up, not in the some ancient confession of faith put together by the brightest minds of denominational religion, but in the singularity of the gospel they heard and through which God gave them faith. God-given faith cannot prove its existence and does not need to, so it never uses as

evidence the fact that others who came before have believed likewise. We are thankful for our fathers in the faith, but not one of them took away our sin or justified us or made us righteous. Neither does our agreement with them have anything to do with our standing in the sight of God. Paul is simple and concise in his word to the Galatians. The Judaizers were not born of the Spirit but of the flesh, and believers should always expect persecution from those who are approaching God on the basis of their heritage and their own merit (Phil. 1:1-3).

In verse 30, Paul is not suggesting that force be brought to bear on these Judaizers. Though it might be a thing that we might wish for (5:12), it is not a thing we can rightly do. Abraham *did* cast out the bondwoman and her son, and since it is written, we are to do the same. Remember, however, that this historical fact is an allegory that is spiritually understood and applied. The only place *we* can cast out the bondwoman and her son is from our own *minds* and *hearts*, and the only way that can be accomplished is by the *Spirit*.

Though persecution comes from without, that which is the chief trouble for our soul comes from within. Further, we cannot oppose this trouble in the strength of the flesh because we will find ourselves in league with all that opposes grace. Faith is a dilemma to our own selves. When these notions, born of the flesh, rise up in our bosoms, our immediate response is to go to the flesh to quash them. *Why* Abraham cast out the bondwoman and her son is *how* we cast them out. He cast them out *because* he believed God. We cast them out by *believing* God. It is accomplished through the Spirit (Rom. 8:13-

15; Col. 3:5). These two verses teach us that mortification (crucifixion) of the deeds of the flesh—casting out the bondwoman and her son—is by the Spirit with our affection set on Christ (John 16:13-15). This makes absolutely no sense to the flesh, but is the *only* way the command of God is obeyed: by believing. It is the only way we can have “no confidence in the flesh” (Philippians 3:3).

The reason for casting out the bondman is specifically declared. “The son of bond woman *shall* not be heir with the son of the freewoman.” There is no possibility of misunderstanding here. The Lord leaves no room for compromise, no area for debate or discussion. In the matter of justification, there is no place where one who is free and one who is in bondage can dwell together, no way for them to come together, and no rule of life by which they can walk together. The Lord even removes any possibility of ability. He does not say they *cannot* dwell together but that they *shall* not. He will not allow it.

So the line is drawn in the sand (v. 31). This is where the proverbial rubber hits the road. Believers are not children of the bondwoman, but of the free. You and I are one or the other, but never both (Rom. 11:5-6)!

Liberty

“Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.”

Galatians 5:1

In the first 6 verses of this chapter, Paul brings the readers to the conclusion of what he has taught in the previous chapters. The reader of this epistle is exhorted to “Stand fast, therefore. . .” The stand that the believer is told to hold is based on the proof Paul has stated so far. This admonition to stand suggests that one might fail to do so, at least for a time, before he is recovered by the gospel. Since even such men as Peter, James and Barnabas had fallen prey to the enticements of legal righteousness, we are moved to take Paul’s admonition as a warning as well as an exhortation.

Evidently, the Galatian believers had also dabbled in some of the peripheral aspects of the law (4:9-10). Because believers are yet sinners (though saints and sons in the sight of God), the possibility always exists that they will not stand firm in the liberty that Christ has purchased for them and the Spirit has applied to them. This does not mean that, if they do not stand firm, they lose their standing in the sight of God. Since they had nothing to do with the attainment of that standing, there is no way they can forfeit it. Yet, as has been plainly shown, they can fall into a state of bondage, and they most certainly *will* fall into a state of bondage if

they take their eyes off that which has bought their freedom.

There is also the possibility that those who have professed Christ have done so only in a nominal way and have never truly rejected the efforts of the flesh for justification. Such are reprobates and apostates and are described in a most unflattering way in Scripture (2 Peter 2:19-21). Paul's exhortation is to stand in the truth that has been declared, that is, the proof that he has preached (1:8-9).

The point he has proven (and that, by inspiration of God) is that the believer is free from any and all aspects of the law for justification, righteousness or rule of life. What is this liberty wherein we are to stand? Is it a safe, solid, and indisputable foundation? It is the liberty of the delivered (1:4). It is the liberty of purposed salvation (1:15). It is the liberty of reliance on no one but Christ (1:16). It is the liberty of being dead to the law (2:19). It is the liberty of imputed righteousness (3:6). It is the liberty of the redeemed (3:13-14). It is the liberty of being an heir (3:18, 29). It is the liberty of being a son and not a servant (4:4- 7). It is the liberty of one who has no part in the covenant of works (4:24-26). It is the liberty of being a freeborn child of promise (4:28-31). It is the liberty of faith and not works (2:16; 3:11-12). It is the liberty of spiritual life (5:18).

Paul summarizes this place we and the Galatians are to stand—this foundation of solid footing upon which every believer is to make his defense. He describes it with words of sovereign accomplishment, “Stand fast therefore in the *liberty* wherewith Christ *hath* made us

free.” This liberty is not a figment of the imagination, and it is not a thing to be attained by will or whim. It is neither *possibility* nor *probability*. The believer *has*, *possesses*, and *owns* this liberty because Christ has made him free. The wording of this phrase is very interesting. The wording suggests that we are to stand in the liberty *by* which Christ has made us free. Christ has made us free by liberty, the liberty in which we are to stand. This certainly suggests “the liberty” in which we are to stand existed before we were privileged to stand in it, and more, declares that it was the means by which Christ has made us free.

This liberty by which Christ has made us free is the liberty of Christ, Himself. It is the liberty that he has gained for and by Himself. The liberty with which Christ has made us free is the same with “the faith of Christ” to which Paul has referred throughout this epistle. It is the work of Christ culminating in His resurrection and ascension. He fulfilled the law in every jot and tittle, suffered the wrath of God against sin, and, in a final glorious act, died under the penalty of the law. By those things, He propitiated God. In three days, He came forth from the grave (free from death, at full liberty for Himself and all for whom He died (Rom. 4:25)). “Death could not keep its prey, He tore the bars away.” By His life, and more specifically, His death, he obtained perfect and full liberty for Himself, triumphing over death in His own death (Rom. 8:1-4; Col. 2:12-15). His substitutionary work is the liberty He accomplished over death, law, hell and the grave, and it is this “liberty wherewith Christ has made us free.”

The “liberty wherewith Christ has made us free” is the liberty of one who does not fear death. It is the liberty of one for whom death has neither sting nor victory (1 Cor. 15:55-56). It is the liberty of one who is free from the fear of death (Heb. 2:14-15). It is the liberty of one who does not fear judgment (1 John 4:17). It is the liberty that exists where the Spirit of Christ is (2 Cor. 3:17). It is the liberty of one who will never die (John 11:24-25). It is the liberty of one who is free from the dominion of sin because he is not under the law (Rom. 6:14). This is the liberty (Christ’s liberty) wherewith He has made *us* free and is the place where *we* are to firmly plant our feet. The liberty that made us free is the liberty of Christ himself, therefore, this is not referring to the loss of salvation but rather the enjoyment of what we already possess (Rom. 5:1-2; Eph. 2:18-22). Freedom is the bane of the law because the law cannot and does not exist except to assign blame and effect punishment by death or bondage. The law and its applications are for the lawbreaker, not the free man.

Paul's admonition ends with the words “be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.” This warning also suggests the true believer can be caught up with the enticements of the law. It may even suggest the words of Paul are words of recovery because he, at least, intimates that those to whom he is speaking may have already fallen prey to the legalists—“be not entangled *again*.” He pictures the law as an entanglement and a yoke of bondage (4:24). Such application may never be made in reference to liberty. The gospel contains no such language and does not espouse anything but

liberty (Isa. 58:6-12). “Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.”

Profit or Loss

“Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage. Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing. For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law. Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace. For we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith.”

Galatians 5:1-5

Believers are free. This is a cardinal tenet of the faith. Their liberty has been obtained at the highest possible cost—the very blood of God's dear Son. Their freedom is *sure*. Their liberty is a blood-bought benefit of the covenant of promise. It seems almost absurd that Paul would need to declare that such a blessed and treasured thing needs protection and nurturing. Who, having tasted freedom, would ever be enticed to return to bondage? Evidently, since these words are written under Holy Spirit inspiration, a true danger exists of forgetting what we have.

These first words of Paul are words often employed on the battlefield. They set forth the idea of standing your ground and not losing the ground you have gained. His admonition is akin to when the Lord told Joshua to

“be strong and of good courage.” As we see in newly formed democracies throughout the world, freedom is a tender plant and must be protected and nourished lest it wither. Such is also true in the spiritual realm. As Paul exhorts the Galatians to “stand fast” here in our text, he also exhorted the Romans to do the same (Rom. 6:11-14). And so, Paul uses the concept of war to assert that we are to, in effect, *defend* our liberty (1 Cor. 16:13).

This concept of war is not odd or strange. Those who have been freed by the liberty of Christ are under constant onslaught by enemies of the cross who rise up to spoil their souls by bringing them into bondage. The prevalent legalism residing in our own heart, the wiles of the devil, and the unbelief continually plaguing our mind are but a few of those things that would destroy our liberty. The *difficult thing* to remember is that the defense of our liberty is only fought with *spiritual* weapons. We cannot, in the flesh, engage in spiritual warfare (vv. 5, 22).

Standing fast in this liberty is the only means by which we will avoid entanglement in the yoke of bondage. The “yoke of bondage” is being a *slave* to the law. By comparison, the yoke of Christ is *rest* (Matt. 11:28). Liberty has nothing to do with the law. We are either free or bound, and there is no middle ground. Paul makes this fact very clear in verses 2-4.

In these verses (vv. 2-4), Paul becomes an accountant. He applies “circumcision” as indicative of applying to the law, in any aspect, for justification. The Jews insisted that circumcision was necessary for salvation (Acts 15:1). They held that circumcision was

the hallmark of the Mosaic law. The only problem with such thinking is that it was not so. Circumcision was *not part of the law* given at Sinai, it *belongs to the covenant of promise* given to Abraham, and it spoke to issues of the heart and not the flesh. Because the Judaizers had made it to be a part of salvation, Paul discounts it altogether. He makes it, in the end, a matter of no consequence in relation to being in Christ (v. 6). However, in relation to *justification*, it is of no profit, but instead, places a person in debt.

He presents circumcision in the loss and debt column only. He gives it *no value* at all in the life of the believer. This is important because of the mindset of the Judaizers. The legalist is ever held to the notion that to *do* is to gain. All human, fleshly ideas of ambition, success, and merit are cast into the waste bin if one can gain *without doing* something. The entire matter of legal religion is bound up in the idea of doing something in exchange for or in pursuance of merit. Paul emphatically lays this notion to rest. If you are circumcised (for justification, sanctification or rule of life) then Christ profits you *nothing*.

Clearly, Paul put only one thing in the profit column. There is no justification, no sanctification, no righteousness, no rule of life, and no merit but Christ. The moment circumcision is introduced and one endeavors to put it in the profit column, Christ disappears and the person is left with *nothing* with which to approach God. I know the natural mind works against that. Doing and trying *must* count for something!

No, it counts for *nothing*, and any who seek profit on that basis are found void of merit.

Not only is this so, but seeking justification by works of the law actually puts the doer in debt (v. 3). Again, this makes no sense to the flesh. How can my production—my works—bring me to indebtedness? How can my *adding* result in my *owing*? Paul's accounting results in the person seeking justification by the law incurring an *unpayable* debt. By adding obedience to the law, he is a debtor to obey every jot and tittle of the law—in every aspect, every concept, every precept, every second of every day of his life—in thought, word and deed. If that were possible, two problems would still present themselves. The issue of original sin would still condemn him, and, having *added* the law, Christ would profit him *nothing*.

A third argument Paul presents concerns one seeking justification by the law. If the law *justifies* you, Christ is “of no effect unto you.” Christ and what He has accomplished have not affected you. What is the effect of Christ's work? It is salvation by redemption, justification, sanctification and righteousness. To go to the law is to have none of these effects applied to you. In short, to apply to the law is to be without Christ. It is to fall from grace. This is *not* referring to *losing* salvation. It is referring to *never having* had salvation. There is no salvation in the law, and there is no law in salvation. There is no law in grace, and there is no grace in the law. These two things are mutually exclusive. One is nothing but profit—effect and grace. The other is nothing but loss—debt and falling.

The believer is not motivated by the law. He is dead to it. How is the believer motivated? He is motivated “through the Spirit.” Through the Spirit, the believer has expectation of that which the righteousness of Christ has obtained for him—the glorious inheritance of the promise. Nothing but condemnation and ruin is realized in the law. The life of the believer is spiritual life, not the life of the flesh.

The Work of Faith

“Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace. For we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith. For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love.”

Galatians 5:4-6

In verse 4, Paul describes those who have gone to the law of Moses for justification as “fallen from grace” and those to whom the person and work of Christ has been of no effect. He is not speaking of those who were once saved and now lost their salvation, but of those who were never saved. Those spoken of here, *apparently* for a time, have embraced the truth but left it for the dregs of works for righteousness. From what comes in the following verses, it is clear that Paul is making a distinction between *natural* and *spiritual* life. The believer has spiritual life. That is why he is a believer. God has made him alive by the Spirit through the gospel, and the immediate response to that work of grace is *belief* of the gospel (John 1:12). The opposite of that is a graceless life—a life void of the Spirit. Those who apply to the law for justification or righteousness are not spiritual. They are carnal. They are natural. They know nothing of the grace of God. Can it be a more plain

and understandable fact? Seeking justification by the works of the law is a blatant disclosure that you are not spiritual, not regenerated, not alive to God and not a believer. Understand that this is not to say that they believe nothing. Unbelief is not the absence of belief; it is the absence of belief of the *truth*. To such, unbelief *is* their belief, faithlessness *is* their faith and death *is* their life.

Paul proclaims in verse 5 that “we,” the believer, live and operate in a different realm. He says, “We, through the Spirit,” wait. Since the Spirit is invisible and cannot be discerned by anyone but a person who is spiritually alive, the only possible evidence of spiritual life is faith in Christ and what He has done (Heb. 11:1). Do not expect this to make sense to those who live in the religion of works because their entire mode of operation is a visible, palpable, and evidentiary existence. They expect and demand visible acts to support their hope that they will receive recognition for the righteousness they have displayed by their obedience to the law of Moses because they have earned such recognition. “We” however, through and by the spirit, wait for the hope of righteousness by faith. This means that, unlike those who hold to their merit for an earned reward, we (believers) have a hope of righteousness that is unseen (Rom. 8:24). The believer’s “wait for the hope of righteousness” does not refer to the future but to the present principle of spiritual life. By faith, we hold with confidence and expectation to that which the

righteousness of Christ has *already* fully procured for us.

The believer does not disown or discount works. He discounts works as having anything to do with his *salvation*. The believer, however, works because he is righteous by the work of Christ (the faith of Christ). Paul states it very simply in verse 6. What we do or do not do (in reference to the law) counts as nothing toward our standing with God. But, faith is not without works. Faith works in the realm of love. This is a very telling phrase. Love works toward the welfare and happiness of the loved one without any notion of reciprocation. Faith does not work in order to gain anything; it works by love, which means that it does what it does without regard to self. Its interest, motivation, and existence are for the loved one. Faith that works by love has neither concept of nor interest in its own things (Phil. 2:1-9). The law, then, is not of faith and, therefore, has nothing to do with love. Those who apply to the law for justification speak of love, but they manage to make it legal. They find a way to make love look for *reciprocation* and complain and cast doubt on others for not expressing love to them. This is not love. This is law and is void of the Spirit and of faith.

“Faith which worketh by love” is simply not about self, it is the primary aspect of selflessness. Faith works, but works on behalf of someone else. After dealing with false teachers in verses 7-12 of chapter 5, Paul picks up the matter of love in verse 13 and carries it through the 10th verse of chapter 6. In particular, Paul is speaking of love in reference to the situation at Galatia. Those

who would bring them under bondage *do not love* them. Those who would set them free by the gospel *love* them. Love is about the *brethren* (6:10). The law is about *self* (6:12).

Faith works by love. This is a defining theme through Scriptures and one that is not to be taken lightly. The principle is so well defined that it is a governing factor in the life of the believer and even calls into question the existence of faith where love is not manifest (1 Cor. 13:1-3; Rom. 13:8-10; Matt. 22:37-40; John 13:34-34; 1 John 2:9-10; 3:14-18; 4:7-8; 5:1; Jam. 2:17). All those references are so stated that not one is about *being loved*. It is always about *loving*.

The "faith that worketh by love" is self-restrictive. Love demands that you and I do nothing that we know is an offence to our brother. Though we may have liberty to do a thing, if it is an offense to our brother or sister, we are to forego that activity and restrict ourselves from partaking of it in the presence of our brother or sister. The Bible is very clear on this subject (Rom. 14:12-23; 1 Cor. 8:9-13; Jam. 4:17).

"Faith which worketh by love" will not bring another person into participating in sin. Fornication and adultery are often defended with the word love as if employment of the word justifies the illicit behavior. It is not love. It is hate! It is hate to the point of bringing someone you say you love into your condemnation. It is saying, "I love you so much that I want you to share my condemnation and my hell with me." Such bastardization of the concept of love smacks of the

absence of faith altogether. Love works no ill to his neighbor (1 Cor. 6:15-20).

With the little word “which” in verse 6, Paul makes it absolutely clear that love is not optional. Love is the outworking of the inward principle of God-given faith. If you and I do not love the brethren—if you and I do not live in a manner that considers our brothers and sisters before we do anything—then we have neither right nor warrant to claim faith in Christ. Faith, always and in every case, works by love.

False Teachers

“Ye did run well; who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth? This persuasion cometh not of him that calleth you. A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump. I have confidence in you through the Lord, that ye will be none otherwise minded: but he that troubleth you shall bear his judgment, whosoever he be.”

Galatians 5:7-10

In verse 6 of chapter 5, Paul began the theme that he will address throughout most of the remainder of this epistle. He has established that those who operate in the realm of works for righteousness are lost (fallen from grace) because faith does not originate, operate or culminate in the works of the law. Faith, the *free* gift of grace, works by love. He set this principle by using *opposition* and *distinction*. In the matter of justification, sanctification, and righteousness, neither circumcision (keeping the law of Moses) nor uncircumcision (not keeping the law of Moses) accomplishes anything, means anything, or has anything to do with salvation. Justification comes singularly by faith. When Paul speaks of faith, two things are declared: the faith of Christ (His person and work) and faith in Christ (the believer's immediate, God-given, positive response to the hearing of that Person and His work). What follows faith are the works of love: “faith which works by love.”

In verses 7-10, Paul makes it clear that though many of them have been adversely affected (“bewitched” 3:1, “hindered” v. 7) by the Judaizers, he holds them as *brethren* (v. 11). He rebukes their error and, at the same time, completely discounts those who have troubled them, but Paul still considers *them* brethren. Legalists cannot destroy what God has wrought in and for the believer. However, legalists may, for a time, remove the believer's eyes from Christ and create troubles in the mind, heart, and relationships of the brethren. The law makes you look at others critically to find the presence or lack of righteousness, whereas grace looks only to Christ *as* righteousness and looks for opportunity to be a help rather than a hindrance to others (Rom. 13:10).

To demonstrate, Paul uses an analogy that is found in many of His writings. He compares the life of faith to running a race (v. 7; 1 Cor. 9:24; Phil. 3:13-14; Heb. 12:1-2). The beginning of the race for the Galatian believers went well. They ran well (v. 7). They ran well in a most unusual manner: not by the power of their might or by the speed of their feet but with a heart of faith. Although very clear to the believer, this makes no sense to Judaizing religionists. Running well is nothing more, nothing less, and nothing else than *obeying the truth*. *Obeying* the truth is nothing more, nothing less, and nothing else than *faith* in Christ.

How did the Galatians run well in the beginning? They *believed* the gospel. They were never under the law of Moses and, if they heard of it, it was in the context of the gospel wherein the law was fulfilled for them by Christ in answering all its requirements, especially the

requirement of death. But, for the believer, Christ's death was not only a fulfillment of the law; it was the ratification of the covenant of promise. They began the race by believing (obeying) the truth, that is, the gospel (Rom. 10; 13-17).

Faith is the race. If they were hindered in the race, then that hindrance can only be by the introduction of something other than *faith* for reaching the finish line. The believer walks by faith, runs the race by faith and is only hindered when something takes his eyes off the prize (Christ). Anything that removes the runner's eyes from Christ is a deterrent to running, and that thing, whatever form it may take, is *disobedience of the truth*.

The word "hinder" (v. 7) means "to drive you back." That is interesting because the entire thrust of the legalist's message is that keeping the law is the means of "progressive sanctification." Clearly, Paul proclaims that keeping the law for justification or righteousness is "retrogressive sanctification." Rather than helping a person to finish the race, it drives him back toward the starting line, moving him away from the prize rather than toward it. Keeping the law for righteousness is disobedience of the truth and a hindrance to faith (2:18). The believer and the circumciser are not headed in the same direction after all.

In verse 8, Paul lays the ax to the root of the all-inclusive idea that we are all headed to the same place. The notion or persuasion that one must keep the law for justification did not come from God, is not taught by God, and is, therefore, the doctrine of men and devils. It is the doctrine of the world (John 6:45; 1 John 2:15- 17).

In this verse, Paul returns the believer's mind to remembrance of the starting line. When Paul showed up on the scene in Galatia, he came armed only with the gospel. He did not bring the knife of the flesh-cutter but rather the Word of the Lord, which is “quick (i.e., living) and powerful and shaper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of the soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart” (Heb. 4:12). He brought the gospel—God's gospel, God's doctrine—and God called the elect of Galatia by it. The doctrine of the Judaizers did not come from Him that called them (2 Thess. 2:13-14).

Think, for a moment, of the power and singularity of these words. Just as our Lord dismissed the Pharisees out of hand when he said “I came not to call the righteous,” Paul, with these heavenly inspired words, dismisses all who teach that righteousness, justification, sanctification or rule of life is anything other than faith. Neither they nor their teaching comes from God. This puts a bunch of religionists in soul-jeopardy. And lest it be thought that a tiny bit of mixture might be allowed for the sake of keeping peace or not making waves, the inspired word concludes that a speck of law-keeping for righteousness taints faith altogether and will hinder you in the race (v. 9: Rom. 11:5-6).

Be of courage believer, says Paul in verse 10. You are a believer, and though you may be hindered in your race, you will finish it. Christ Himself will give you the crown of righteousness and the crown of life because He gave you faith to begin this race, and the faith He gave

will carry you to the end (Phil. 1:6; 2 Tim. 4:7-8;; 1 John 5:4). Those who hinder you will get what is due them. Here we see an example of faith working by love as Paul deals honestly with the Judaizers and encourages the brethren who have been abused by them.

The Offence of the Cross

“And I, brethren, if I yet preach circumcision, why do I yet suffer persecution? then is the offence of the cross ceased.”

Galatians 5:11

The words of Paul in verse 11 stating that he is persecuted for preaching the cross (gospel of Christ) are a revelation of the actions of those who “trouble” the believers in Galatia (vv. 10, 12). The trouble they inflict is “persecution” (Rom. 3:7-8). The word used, in the original language is the origin of our English word *scandalize*. They accuse Paul of creating a scandal, and thus, declare his doctrine to be scandalous. By nature, a scandal must be a public matter because its success relies on convincing the public that their moral sensibilities have been assaulted by disgraceful behavior. In effect, the Judaizers—those who trouble the Galatians—are saying that the cross of Christ is a disgrace to God, rends the moral fiber of pious society, and is a thing of which to be ashamed.

This ploy of the legalist relies on the human weakness of fear of censure and public shame. The shame they would cause ends in being about those with whom you are seen or those with whom you fellowship. The persecution that Paul speaks of is never about two brethren sitting down and discussing something about which they may differ. It is always about publicly

naming names, creating suspicion, and engendering fear of losing community. It is a gang mentality shrouded in the pristine robe and silver slippers of doctrinal purity, and the troublemakers always refer to those who they are scandalizing as the offenders. This is “splendida pecatta” or “splendid sin” committed by pseudo-gospel gangsters. Further proof that this is a gang mentality is that the persecutors, themselves, *do* what they *do* because they fear persecution (6:12).

Some have stated (and there is a possibility) that the Judaizers were claiming that Paul was speaking out of both sides of His mouth—that he was preaching circumcision and submission to the law of Moses along with the cross of Christ. By doing so, they were slandering or scandalizing him. Since it is the tack of many Judaizers to combine or mix law and grace, in saying this about Paul, they were putting themselves on the same apostolic footing as Paul, thus giving authority to their error. Paul answers their accusation in no uncertain terms (v. 11). “If I did that,” Paul says, “I would not be persecuted at all.”

However, I do not think that was what was going on in Galatia. Paul sets forth his argument in the form of a *rhetorical* question. A rhetorical question is one to which no answer is expected because the answer is an established fact. It is a statement put in the form of a question and is used in a satirical fashion in which folly is attacked and exposed. To paraphrase Paul, he is saying that he is persecuted because what he is preaching (the cross of Christ) is offensive to the Judaizers. (The word offense has its roots in the idea of

being a stumbling block [I Peter 2:6-8]). Paul's meaning is:

If I preached the law, it would remove the offense of the cross and would put an end to the persecution. What offends them is that I refuse to give them "the space of an hour" for their "flesh cutting" doctrine. Rather, I insist that salvation, justification, sanctification and righteousness were accomplished fully and finally on the cross of Christ.

The fact is, however, that I am being persecuted for what I preach, so it is obvious that I am not preaching circumcision but *only* the cross of Christ (1 Cor. 2:2). All I would have to do to end my persecution is preach the law or a mixture of the law and grace. This would remove the offense and the scandalizing would stop.

John Calvin wrote concerning this verse, "When, therefore, he [Paul] says that now, if the preaching of circumcision be received, the stumbling block of the cross will no longer exist, he means that the gospel will no longer be harried by the Jews, but will be given a place with their entire agreement; for they will not take offense at a pretended and spurious gospel, compounded of Moses and Christ, but will tolerate such a mixture, because it will leave them in possession of their earlier superiority."

If one takes the words of Paul in verse 11 together with his words in chapter 6 and verse 12, the reason why the Judaizers persecuted Paul becomes much clearer. They wanted to avoid persecution. They

accomplished this by mixing the law and grace. Several years ago, I read a book titled “The Reformers and Their Stepchildren.” Its author said, the legalist who mixed the law in with grace were “syncretists.” That is a big word that means *joining the old covenant with the new*. The Judaizers were *syncretists*. They could not have gotten away with completely discounting the gospel. Peter, James and Barnabas would never have bought into that. However, they might have bought into an idea that would bring about an easing of tension between the Jews and the Gentiles. By combining the cross with the law, persecution would be effectively removed. Clearly, however, their interest, though perhaps socially reasonable, was doctrinally blasphemous. With this combination, they became men-pleasers and therefore could not please God (1:8-10).

This syncretism is common practice today. Men avoid persecution by preaching in a manner that shrouds the truth in legal language. They hide the gospel with a choice of words that requires the *believer* to go on a treasure hunt to find tidbits of truth. They refuse to declare the gospel of sovereign grace because it could cost them their popularity and their job. In short, they avoid persecution by preaching circumcision along with a *diluted* gospel. The fact is that the preaching of the cross is offensive. Offense is *unavoidable* because of its singularity. The only way to avoid offending is not to preach it—to leave off the doctrine of substitution and the sure, finished work of redemption (1 Cor. 1; 23-24) or to mix it with the law thereby salving the sensibilities,

sentimentality and moral sensitivity. "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of Christ."

Spiritual Life

“I would they were even cut off which trouble you. For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another. For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another.”

Galatians 5:12-15

In the remainder of chapter five, Paul declares what it is to walk in the Spirit. He is defining *spiritual life*. It is important to realize that, as he does so, he speaks of *the fact of it*. He speaks of the spiritual life that came into existence entirely as the result of the work of the triune God in the salvation of the elect. In addition, he addresses the manner in which spiritual life is displayed.

The believer possesses spiritual life because God, in Christ, by the Spirit, through the word, freely gave every aspect of spiritual life to the elect (1 Cor. 4:7; 2 Peter 1:2-3). That blessed and freely favored person who has been the recipient of this life is made *a new creature* in Christ (6:15, 2 Cor. 5:17). This being the fact, the result of being the recipient of the Spirit is a different manner of living. To be made spiritually alive is not a static existence. It is a vital, intelligent, and useful existence and *is* filled with choices that must be made. They are

choices that can be made only by one who is walking in the Spirit, and that only by the power of the Spirit and not ever by application to or doing the law.

In the verses we looked at (1 Cor. 4:7; 2 Peter 1:2-3), the Word declares that we are made to differ. Surely, this denotes the doctrine of election, the result of the substitutionary work of Christ, and the indwelling of the Spirit by the word. Likewise, it states that we, as believers, are not what we were before. If God has made us to differ, then it stands to reason that we are different than we were before. In 2 Peter, the inspired Word states the work of Christ as well as the result of it. God has given us everything that pertains to life (has to do with both the life and the living) and godliness and has called us to glory (the life) and virtue (the living—See vv. 4-10).

Men—religious men—tend to take such admonitions and immediately go to the law for their accomplishment. They label the living of the spiritual life with catch phrases such as practical holiness, personal righteousness, and progressive sanctification. God does not add such descriptive adjectives to define holiness, righteousness *or* sanctification. These are the inventions of men and can only set a man on a course of law-keeping in order to achieve them. The Bible says that without holiness (*not* practical or personal, *just* holiness) no man shall see God. The Bible says that because the world will melt with a fervent heat in the day of the Lord, the manner of persons we ought to be are a life lived in “all holy conversation and godliness” (2 Pet. 3:11). Paul admonished the believer to “work out your own salvation

with fear and trembling because it is God that worketh in you to will and to do of His pleasure” (Phi 2:12).

I know that we who believe the gospel of free, pure grace have an adverse reaction to defining ourselves as godly or holy. It is in no small part because we have been raised under law and free will religion, and such terminology (“godly,” “holy”), when applied to the believer, often carries with it the unpleasant aroma of legalism. Because men are extremists by nature, we must guard our minds against going into antinomianism just so we can avoid the *accusation* of being a legalist. The indwelling Spirit of Christ causes the believer to apply to the Spirit to mortify the deeds of the flesh. The Spirit will never lead the believer to the law. Rather, He will lead the believer to that which is the *fulfillment* of the law.

There is an important distinction to be made here. The believer is not commanded to keep or do the law, nor is it said that he actually keeps or does the law. He is, however, said to *fulfill* it. We know that the work of Christ fixed it so that the righteousness of the law was fulfilled in us (Rom. 8:1-4). We also know that the believer, by faith, through the Spirit both establishes and fulfills the law (Rom. 3:31). “Doing” belongs to those who are under the law, not the freeman who stands in the liberty wherewith Christ has made him free.

There are three things you will never encounter in the epistles of Paul.

1. Paul *never* attributes appropriate Christian behavior to the application of the law.

2. Paul *never* claims that Christians “do” the law. They and they alone, are said to fulfill it.

3. Paul *never* prescribes fulfilling the law as *a way to produce* proper Christian conduct. Instead, he describes fulfilling the law as *a result of* Christian conduct, accomplished by the Spirit alone and not the law.

The believer fulfills the law by walking in the Spirit. Paul’s admonition in our text concerning the proper use of the liberty to which we are called has nothing to do with keeping or doing the law but *results* in the fulfillment of it. Paul, in verse 13, further illuminates what he said in verses 1-6. You not only stand in this liberty, you are named as freemen admonished to live as those who are free from the constraints of the law and to live in spiritual liberty (Rom. 6:12-18).

The proper employment of that liberty is of paramount importance, because, unfortunately, we, as mutable human beings, may use it for an occasion to the flesh. As freemen, because of what we are, there is ever a danger of mistaking liberty as license for the satisfaction of self and fleshly lusts (1 Peter 2:15-16). The liberty of the child of God is liberty to love the brethren and, as such, is the only proper use of it. To love the brethren is to involve your life for their benefit, not the fulfillment of your fleshly desires (v. 13). Liberty certainly involves what you *can do*, but liberty is truly only about what you *should do* (Gal. 6:9-10).

The proper employment of the liberty wherewith Christ has made you free is *love*. Love is not emotionalism, but love is never free of emotion and empathy. Love *feels* for the loved one and acts for their

consolation and relief. Our Lord is touched with the *feelings* of our infirmities, lives to intercede for us, and acts for our consolation and relief. Paul does not tell us to love in order to fulfill the law; he says that when we use our liberty in love for the brethren, the law is fulfilled. The doing, keeping, or fulfilling of the law is not an objective or even a consideration of love, but the result of love is the fulfillment of the law (Rom. 13:8-10; 1 John 3:16-18). The evidence of ill use of liberty is doing that which harms the brethren (v. 15). Such activity is fulfilling the lust of the flesh and can only be countermanded by walking in the Spirit. As ye have received Christ, so walk ye in him.

In the Spirit

“This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would. But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law.”

Galatians 5:16-18

Two things are made very clear in these 3 verses. The first is that, even though Paul is assuredly addressing the believer's life (godliness and holiness), he has not deserted the theme of this book. Simply stated, justification, righteousness and sanctification are the work of Christ and received through faith. Neither justification, righteousness, nor sanctification is accomplished by the law on any level. The second is that in this passage Paul clearly links the lust of the flesh to being under the law. There is no comparison in law and grace; there is only, and always, conflict and contrast.

The terms “lust of the flesh” and “under the law” respectively refer to man in his Adamic nature and man in his Adamic nature with a religious twist. In either case, they are not a product of walking in the Spirit, and in both cases they are incapable of making Adam a better example of evolved humanity. Adam will never be better and there is no part of salvation designed to make him so. The law, having no ability to touch the heart,

might improve social morality and skim the surface of the cesspool, but it will never turn manure into honey. Our Lord said it this way when he declared the necessity of the new creature by the new birth, “That which is born of flesh is flesh and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.”

Regeneration does not change that which is born of the flesh. Regeneration does not improve that which is born of the flesh. Regeneration, because it is the creation of a new creature, can only subdue the behavior of the flesh, and that only as the believer walks in the Spirit. The flesh is subdued not by force or duress but by the redirection and renewing of the mind. Walking in the Spirit is Christ living in you and producing a life (manner of living) by His presence (Gal. 2:20). What Paul is addressing in this passage is that the manner of living produced by Christ living in a person (walking in the Spirit) will not fulfill the lust of the flesh and cannot be produced by being under the law (w. 16, 18).

Paul gives verse 17 as a reason *why* a person walking in the Spirit will not fulfill the lusts of the flesh. Walking in the Spirit *and* lusts of the flesh are diametrically opposed (“contrary”) to one another, and in fact, do not operate in the same realm. There is no instance in which walking in the Spirit will fulfill the lusts of the flesh and no instance when fulfilling the lust of the flesh will accomplish anything remotely spiritual. Furthermore, there is no instance where walking in the Spirit will bring a person under the law and no instance where being under the law will produce anything remotely spiritual. The notion that the believer can be

holy by applying to the law is as utterly ridiculous as thinking that a person can be holy by committing adultery, drunkenness or heresy (vv. 19- 21). Paul is asserting that the flesh and the law are incapable of bringing forth fruit unto God, and the Spirit is incapable of bringing forth fruit unto death (Matt. 7:17- 19; Jam. 3:11-12). When we speak of these things, we are not addressing what should or should not be but, rather, what is or is not. The old adage “East is east and west is west and never the twain shall meet” is very applicable to what Paul here declares concerning the Spirit and the flesh. There is never a mixture!

Paul is contrasting the two. He is making it very plain that he is not speaking of a life of moral and ethical perfection, meritorious holiness, or seamless godliness in life. He *admonishes* believers to walk in the Spirit, but he does not admonish them to “*not* fulfill the lust of the flesh.” He declares in no uncertain terms that *when* the believer walks in the Spirit, he “*shall not* fulfill the lust of the flesh.” I use the word “when” in reference to the points in time in which the believer's eyes are fixed on Christ and his heart is enamored with Christ. In those moments he does not fulfill the lust of the flesh. This sweet estate never ascends to the lofty place of perfection because, even in the most precious moment of fellowship with Christ, there is always something about us that makes perfection an impossibility—our flesh.

Paul gives verse 17 as the reason that, *when* you walk in the Spirit, you will not fulfill the lust of the flesh (“For”). Verse 17 explains the principle that he has espoused throughout the epistle. He explains that the

flesh and the Spirit are never on the same page. They always operate in different and opposing arenas.

Two things are stated absolutely in this verse. First, you can never attribute to the flesh anything that is spiritual and you can never attribute to the Spirit anything that is of the flesh (3:3). If I do a good thing or a righteous thing, I can never say that I was the cause of it. I must give glory to where it is due, to the Spirit of Christ *in* me (2:20). Conversely, when I do that which is unrighteous, I can never attribute it to the Spirit of Christ in me but must lay the blame for it at *my own feet* (Rom. 7:18-23).

Secondly, because the flesh and spirit reside in my members, they are mutually prohibitive. The Spirit prevents me from going as far as I would desire in my flesh, and my flesh prohibits me from going as far as I would in the Spirit. This is the life of the believer. Far from being the religious ideal of a trance-like, ethereal, mystical higher plane, it is a struggle that lasts from the moment of the new birth until we draw our final breath (Gen. 25:8-9)

Finally, to reassure the believer that walking in the Spirit has nothing to do with the flesh, Paul affirms that walking in the Spirit—being led by the Spirit—has nothing to do with the law. Neither the flesh nor the law, both of which operate in the same realm and produce the same results, have anything to do with Spiritual life! The law and the flesh alike are opposite of and contrary to the Spirit (Rom. 8:5).

Works

“Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.”

Galatians 5:19-21

Paul has firmly established that the flesh and the Spirit are always contrary to one another, that they are distinct natures or principles of life in the believer, and that a believer walking in the Spirit will not fulfill the lusts of the flesh. Conversely, the one who walks in the flesh cannot do anything spiritual. Now, Paul *defines* these two principles. As we consider these things, it is important to remember a governing fact of life. Nothing spiritual can be accomplished by the flesh and nothing fleshly can be accomplished by the spirit.

Paul says, “Now, the works of the flesh are manifest” (v. 19). By this, he does *not* mean they are *done* openly and in plain sight, but that they are *apparent, evident* or *plainly recognized*. His statement declares that none of these things could ever be attributed to “walking in the Spirit.” Though some of them involve religious practices, they are not born of spiritual light but of spiritual

darkness. They are works of the flesh, done in the power of the flesh, and have nothing to do with spiritual life other than being a constant enemy of it. Paul calls works of the flesh as “these.” All of “these” are acts and mindsets that flow from the nature of sin and rebellion against God and His gospel. Make no mistake here: If you are involved in any or all of these things and have not repented, there is no reason to believe that you are a spiritual being at all. Paul makes it clear in verse 17 that, though temptation may arise, and the believer may even fall into one aspect or another of these, he or she will not remain there. The Spirit will prevent him from doing what he would.

These are:

Adultery. This is the defilement of the marriage bed with illicit sexual activity. It is interesting to note this is placed first on the list. I think it is placed first because it not only refers to the act, itself, but also what the act means. Adultery, though a physical act, is born of enmity against spiritual truth. Marriage and the sexual act are meant for a husband and wife. Their union is a picture of the marriage between Christ and His church. He is for her, and she is for him, and no interloper is countenanced in that bond. They have become one flesh and their union is both honorable and holy in the sight of God (Heb. 13:4). To commit adultery is to disallow not only the union of Christ and His church; it is to disallow the Person of Christ, Himself, and the work by which He established that union. It is to disallow God's gracious election, wherein he betrothed the church to His Son. It is to say that election was of no value and that *my*

choice supersedes and overrides *God's* choice. Adultery is mentioned first because it is against God and His Christ. In truth, all that follows in the list that Paul gives is, in one form or another, a manifestation of *adultery*.

Fornication is illicit sexual activity outside the bonds of marriage. Necessarily, Paul often confronted this among the Gentiles. It was common practice and considered no sin, or, if sin, it was but a small one. The age we live in is rampant with this behavior. Since it is so prevalent, men and women are reticent to speak against it for fear of offending just about everybody. Some who practice fornication even claim to be spiritual people and yet see nothing wrong because it is a natural urge. It is a work of the flesh and will eventuate in separation from God for eternity. This too is a mockery of the Person and work of Christ for his bride.

Uncleanness and *lasciviousness* involve a general lack of chastity and virtue in word, thought, and deed. They result in self-pollution, degradation of character, and loss of any notion of integrity. No amount of philanthropy can ever cover or put such away. These are apparent works of the flesh.

Idolatry begins the religious aspects of the works of the flesh. It may mean covetousness in other contexts, but here it means the worship of other gods. This may include images, relics, indulgences, idols, and such, but primarily, it is the worship of and paying homage to one's *self*. This is so because to worship any other than the true God must, first, include a rejection of Him and His words and opting for your own.

Witchcraft is more than groups of Wiccans practicing their paganism; it also includes any real or pretended league and association with the devil and/or seeking conversant relations with familiar spirits in order to gain unlawful knowledge or to do harm to fellow creatures. It is giving honor to Satan and disowning the glory of God. Other words that describe witchcraft are conjuring, soothsaying, necromancy, and any other word that describes seeking help from invisible spirits to gain knowledge and advantage. And, given that its original name is the word from which we get our word “pharmacy,” “witchcraft” also includes the use of drugs and potions to achieve a higher plane of understanding.

Hatred, as a work of the flesh, teaches that the works of the flesh include not only outward acts, but also inward attitudes like malice. Hatred is a homicidal malice against any person (even our very enemies) and it is forbidden. In the original text the word is “enmities,” just as the carnal mind is nothing else but enmity against God and Christ, against law and gospel, and all good men, and everything that is good (Rom. 8:7-8).

Variance is a contentious, argumentative, and defensive spirit. It is generally held that it flows from a sense of superiority, which causes one to easily berate and scold others.

Emulations are “zeals”—not good ones, but bad (Gal. 4:17). Such zealousness is directed against the honor of another, desiring to defame and dishonor another in order to draw praise to one's self. It is building your reputation on the ruins of others.

Wrath or “wraths” are violent emotions of the mind, often moving toward revenge, and seeking to harm others (Jam. 1:20).

Strife or “strifes” are perpetual, unrelenting contradicting, fault finding, and blame assigning. It includes putting forth trivial arguments, asking doubting questions, and engaging in silly quibbling (1 Tim. 6:3-5). Strife can be expressed in words or can be a working principle of the mind and heart, according to Jas. 3:14, 16.

Seditions or “divisions” are the willful causing of schisms, factions and dissensions in things domestic, civil, and religious.

Heresies are bad principles and tenets, relating to doctrine, which subvert the gospel. They are a man's own invention and the matter of his choice, without any foundation in the Word of God. The root word of heresy is “opinion” and relates to reaction to truth. If the truth is preached, there is no place for a person to opine. Upon hearing the truth, any other reaction than bowing and submission is heretical. These are works of the flesh springing from a corrupt and carnal mind. They are propagated with carnal intent to gain popular applause, worldly advantage, and are indulgent to the lusts of the flesh.

Envyings are unease and dis-ease. They are tortures in the mind that cause one to grieve at the good fortune of others. It is a plague of a man's mind that disallows that anyone else should be in an equal or better condition than him. It is an inability to rejoice in the success of another.

Murders are the destroying of men's lives, and are often the consequence of the evils and works of the flesh.

Drunkenness is excess in the drinking of wine or strong drink by which a man's mind is intoxicated, rendering him incapable of rational thought and decent behavior. It is giving the reasonable control of self over to the momentary pleasure of oblivion. It is prohibited by God, and those who refuse to repent of it will not partake in the inheritance of the saints.

Reveling is simply excess in anything.

Though a litany of other things are enveloped in the phrase "and such like," Paul ends his list here. These works of the flesh that accomplish the lusts of the flesh are apparent and obvious, and the consequence is apparent and obvious as well. They who do such things, practice such things, refuse to repent of such things, and do not apply to the Spirit to mortify and crucify such things (v. 24) will not inherit the kingdom of God. This kingdom is possessed by inheritance. It is a bequest of our heavenly Father, a free gift of his grace. It cannot be obtained by the works of the law or the merits of men. It belongs to the children of God by adopting grace. Those that do such works of the flesh, who live in the commission of these things, whose entire lives are employed in such behavior and activity, who live and die in such a state without repentance towards God and faith in Christ, shall never enjoy eternal life and happiness. However, those who *have done* these things but, by God's grace, have been brought to a *sense* of them and have fallen upon the blood and righteousness

of Christ for justification, sanctification, life, and salvation shall inherit the kingdom and glory of God through the free grace of God and the propitiatory sacrifice of Christ despite the works of the flesh done by them.

These are works of the flesh and, therefore, cannot be accomplished and will not be fulfilled by one who walks in the Spirit. These are *works* and the use of this word is in opposition to the things produced by the Spirit.

Now, let us consider the *difference* between *works* and *fruit* (v. 22).

Fruit

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.”

Galatians 5:22-23

In the last chapter, we considered the contrast between *works* and *fruit*. Paul used these two words deliberately to distinguish between the respective products of walking in the Spirit and fulfilling the lusts (works) of the flesh. Works are different from fruit because one is a product of labor and looks for a result; the other is a product of a spiritual connection with Christ and, rather than looking for a result, *is* the result and simply lives by virtue of a vital union with Christ.

Works of the flesh are done with an eye on *gaining* fulfillment of the lusts of the flesh. Fruit of the Spirit is accomplished with an eye on *Christ*. When walking in the Spirit, gain is not sought or even considered because the one who walks in the Spirit is already in possession of all things. Works are things that are done. Fruit is something that is naturally produced. One might ask if Christian works are not the fruit of the Spirit. The answer to that question is yes and no. The works of the believer are the fruit of his union with Christ. However, these works are not accomplished by the believer in the power of his flesh. Whether they are called fruit or works of the Spirit, they are accomplished according to the will

and purpose of God (2 Kings 9:30; John 15:16; Eph. 2:10).

The bearing of spiritual fruit may be compared to that of an apple tree. The apple tree does not *labor* to bear apples. It is simply what apple trees do because of what they *are*. The fruit of the Spirit is as natural to the believer as fragrance is to the rose (John 15:4-5). It is important to remember that the fruit of the Spirit cannot, under any circumstances, be produced by the work, labor, or power of the flesh or the works of the law (deeds of the flesh). If there is spiritual fruit, the glory for the production of it belongs only to the Holy Spirit—the Spirit of Christ that dwells in the believer.

As Paul sets forth these things described as fruit of the Spirit, he is still contrasting them with the works of the flesh (“But” v. 22). As we consider these things, remember that they are *not* things we can *try* to do or *work up* in ourselves. They are the work of the Spirit *in* us. This teaches a very important lesson. *Every* believer bears this fruit. He does not do so to perfection because his flesh prevents him. These are not things that are goals; they are the natural outflow of new life in Christ.

The first fruit mentioned is primary because Scripture declares that it is the fulfillment of the law (Matt. 22:37-40; Rom. 13:10). The fruit of the Spirit is “love,” without which all religious actions are frivolous and worthless (1 Cor. 13:1-3). This love is from God and goes back to Him. It is shed abroad in the heart of every believer (Rom. 5:8) and results in familial love to the household of faith (1 John 5:1). If the Spirit of Christ dwells in you, the fruit of that union is love.

Following naturally upon the heels of love is “joy.” Joy is the condition of the heart of everyone who has experienced what God has done for and in His people. It is inexplicable yet every believer knows it well. It is called “joy unspeakable and full of glory.” It has little or nothing to do with happenstance. Its object is God the Father, and no believer can look on Him with anything but joy.

What follows this joy—indeed, what *must* follow this joy that comes from the knowledge of God's favor toward us—is “peace.” First and foremost is peace with God established by the blood of the cross. This fruit of the Spirit is a continual witness to us of the goodness of our benevolent despot. This peace that passes knowledge and understanding swells richly in our hearts and causes us to seek peace with our brethren, and with all men, as much as it is possible (Rom. 12:18).

This peace engenders “longsuffering.” It speaks not to patience in general but to a patient bearing and enduring of present evils with joyfulness, being slow to anger, ready to forgive injuries, put up with ill treatments, and bear with one another (Coll. 3:12-14). This is the fruit of the Spirit.

Next is “goodness” which is singularly self-explanatory. Being that the Spirit of God indwells every believer, and since He is good, what other possible fruit might He bear in us but goodness (Exo. 33:19)? Though we do not feel comfortable with applying this trait to ourselves, the *fact* remains that the fruit of the Spirit is goodness.

“Faith” follows, not in the sense of descending importance, but as the hinge pin upon which all that precedes and follows hangs. Faith *worketh* by love. I believe that Paul is not making a general application of faith but is reverting to the theme of this book. It is by the Spirit that we believe that we are saved on the merits of another, and this blessed gift of God is at the very heart of love, joy, peace, longsuffering and goodness. We believe by the Spirit of God. We walk by faith. As ye have received Christ, so walk ye in Him.

“Meekness” is humility and lowliness of mind, acknowledging every favor, being thankful for every blessing, and depending on God's grace.

The last of the fruits of the Spirit mentioned, “temperance,” speaks to chastity and sobriety, self-control, moderation in eating and drinking.

These fruits of the Spirit are opposed to the works of the flesh. “Love” is opposed to hatred. “Joy” is opposed to emulations and envying. “Peace” is opposed to variance, strife, and seditions. “Longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, and meekness,” is opposed to wrath and murders. “Faith” is opposed to idolatry, witchcraft, and heresies. “Temperance” is opposed to adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, drunkenness, and reveling.

Every believer bears this fruit, and it is solely the result of walking in the Spirit and will never result in fulfillment of the lusts of the flesh. Do *not* look for this fruit or seek ways to produce it or advance it. Walk in the Spirit with your eyes on Christ, and you *will* bear this fruit because it is the fruit of the Spirit.

The Flesh Crucified

“Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.”

Galatians 5:23-24

Paul ends the list of things that make up the fruit of the Spirit with the words “against such there is no law.” We can draw several undeniable conclusions from these words:

First, we can be sure that there is no prohibition of these things and that the law, whose function is to assign guilt and blame, can find no purchase here.

Secondly, we can be sure that, since the law engenders bondage, these things can be practiced only by one who is free from the law.

Thirdly, we can be sure these words permit the believer (who walks in the Spirit) to express these characteristics with fearless abandon because they will only serve to enrich his life. None of these things will ever bring the believer into bondage or cause him to fall (2 Peter 1:5-11).

This phrase, “against such there is no law,” is one of a set of bookends that enclose the works of the flesh and the fruit of the Spirit. Paul is still making a distinction between walking in the Spirit and fulfilling the lusts of the flesh.

The first bookend is verse 18, “But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law.” He proceeds to make a

long list of activities and mindsets that represent the works of the flesh. Clearly, all of these are *against* the law. But, more than that, Paul puts those who do such things in the same category as those who apply to the law for righteousness. What Paul is addressing is the principle of *dominion*. Though the law is not sin, and though the law does not make men sin, if a person seeks to be justified, sanctified or made righteous by the law, that person is brought under the law and, therefore, under the dominion of sin.

The law can never and will never bring anyone out from under the dominion and penalty of sin. Sin operates under the dominion of the law. When Paul speaks of dominion to the believers of Galatia, he is not referring to sovereign rule but rather is addressing the “right to dominate.” The person who seeks righteousness by the law has surrendered his life to the *dominion* of the law, and in that thing where he does so, he cannot walk in the Spirit but will fulfill the lust of the flesh. This is hard for unbelievers to understand, especially *religious* unbelievers such as the Judaizers who troubled the believers at Galatia. All of us can recall times from our own experience as believers when we tried to better our estate by *doing* rather than *being*. It is difficult to grasp that if our desires got us into a fix, we can't work ourselves out of the fix by doing something different or making an effort to do and be better.

It is the common and pervasive nature of man to believe that he can undo a bad estate by pursuing better and more godly behavior. Every believer knows that such thinking is nothing but quicksand and that his

struggles to do better only sink him further into despair. Yet, he cannot seem to help himself. The fact is that he *cannot* help himself. This speaks not only to his inclination and inability but also to the fact that what he does will never be of any help to him. The moment we seek to be better by doing or by applying to the law, we immediately give ourselves to the dominion of the law, and from that moment until we are, by grace, “plucked as firebrands from the burning,” we will become more weighted down by the fetters and shackles of sin. Sin has no right to rule the believer, but a believer may *give* himself to be *dominated* by it and, indeed, will do so if he seeks righteousness by the law (Rom. 6:12-14; 1 Cor. 15:56; 1 Tim. 1:3-10). The remedy for such a life is for a person to walk in the Spirit, and, being led by the Spirit, he will not fulfill the lusts of the flesh and he will not operate under the dominion of the law (vv. 16, 18, 23).

Walking in the Spirit and being led by the Spirit are the same as walking by faith (3:11). In verse 24, Paul explains who it is that walks in the Spirit and what it means to walk in the Spirit. Those who walk in the Spirit are they who *savingly* belong to Christ. All men belong to Christ by virtue of His Lordship (John 17:2-3; Rom. 14:9). All who belong to Christ *savingly* are those who are elected unto salvation from the foundation of the world (Eph. 1:3-4; 2 Thess. 2:13). Paul is referring specifically to those elect who belong to Christ by *faith*: those who have been *given* faith to lay hold of eternal life and to trust the merits of Christ as their righteousness and justification. He is speaking of believers who walk by faith and are led by the Spirit.

What it means to walk in the Spirit is revealed in the words “crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.” Clearly, since these affections and lusts have been categorized as works of the flesh and, therefore, come under the dominion of the law, walking in the Spirit has nothing to do with *doing* the law for righteousness. Since the believer is flesh and spirit, he can never perfectly walk in the spirit or fulfill the lust of the flesh. Therefore, there are two sides to this coin: The believer *has* crucified the flesh, and he *ought to* crucify the flesh (v. 25).

How is the flesh crucified? It is crucified by living in the Spirit. Crucifying the flesh is not accomplished by *doing* but rather by *living*. It is not accomplished by *doing* but by *being*. The use of the word “crucified” and fact that it is written in the past tense are critical points. Paul brings the believer back to when he first believed. The life of the believer is lived in the same way that it began: in faith, in the Spirit. In that moment of revelation, when God gave you faith to believe that everything necessary for justification, righteousness, sanctification and life was found, fulfilled, and accomplished by Christ, you did not look to the law nor to the power of your flesh. You trusted Christ. You crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.

Your life as a believer is to be lived in exactly the same manner (3:1-3; Col. 2:6). In that moment of revelation, you nailed yourself, your merits, and your works to the cross. *Crucifixion is a slow death*. It is not immediate. It is, by design, a painful death brought on by asphyxiation—literally starving the breath of life out

of a person. Walking in the Spirit does not kill the flesh, but under the dominion of the Spirit, the life of the works of the flesh is starved for air. It is not a conscious doing or undoing. But, with our eyes fixed on Christ, living, walking, and being in the Spirit, the realm of the dominion of the law and the flesh (the old man) is made to gasp for air. Walking in the Spirit is *reckoning* the old man to be dead (Rom. 6:8- 15). It is, by the Spirit, mortifying (crucifying) the deeds of the flesh (Rom. 8:13-14; Col. 3:1-14; Gal. 5:16).

Live and Walk

“If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another.”

Galatians 5:25-26

The last two verses of this chapter are a kind of summation of what Paul has declared from verse 14 through verse 24. Verse 25 describes the spiritual life: union with Christ by the Spirit. Verse 26 describes the works of the flesh, which always interfere with, and are always contrary to, walking in the Spirit (v. 17.)

“If we *live* in the Spirit, let us also *walk* in the Spirit.” Here we are referred back to the fruit of the Spirit that is produced by the indwelling Spirit of Christ. Union with Christ is the source of this fruit, and nothing about this fruit has to do with the works of the flesh on any level (v. 16). Living in the Spirit and walking in the Spirit are obviously two distinct things. They are not the same thing but they do derive from the same source. Evidently, one can *live* in the Spirit and, at least for a time, fail to *walk* in the Spirit, as did some of the Galatian believers.

Because of the natural tendency of the old man (i.e., our old nature) to look for and recognize some progress, we are often confused as to what it is to walk in the Spirit. We may think that we are to pursue the fruit of the Spirit in the sense that we can see the production of these blessed things in our lives. In a sense, we are to

seek to nourish that new nature that we might be found exercising faith, love, meekness, kindness, temperance, and longsuffering. Certainly, these are worthy things and are worth seeking.

This, however, causes a bit of a paradox. Fruit is not gained or produced by anything other than union with the vine. This is true of any fruit including the fruit of the Spirit. To actively seek these things (faith, love, meekness, kindness, temperance and longsuffering), even though it is a noble endeavor, is to seek the effect and not the cause. Because we are who we are and because the flesh is always contrary to the Spirit so that we cannot do what we would, we will tend to look for the fruit of the Spirit and then look *a t* what we have produced as evidence that we are indeed the children of God. Therein lies our problem.

The moment we look for evidence, even good evidence, we are detoured from the path. This fruit will come. It must come to those who “live in the Spirit” because they are vitally connected to the vine (John 15:5, 16). However, the fruit is not the object of faith, and therefore, to look for the fruit is to walk in the flesh and not in the Spirit. This fruit is the gracious outgrowth of the heart and is produced by Christ. The situation is addressed by Paul by the Spirit-inspired omission of a word when contrasting the works of the flesh and the fruit of the spirit. Concerning the works of the flesh, Paul says that they are *manifest*—discernible as evidence (v. 19). But, concerning the fruit of the Spirit, he simply states what it *is*. He does not say that the fruit of the Spirit is manifest, because the fruit of the

Spirit is of faith, and therefore, is not of sight, therefore, it cannot be viewed or observed as evidence.

The difference is actually quite simple. The works of the flesh are evidence of the flesh. The fruit of the Spirit is the testimony of Christ written on the heart. The fruit of the Spirit, being spiritual fruit and, therefore, invisible to the eye, is nothing other than the Spirit of God bearing witness with our spirit that we are the children of God. The only possible evidence of this fruit is faith—God-given faith. Only the one who has been given such faith is aware that he has it, and, for the most part, he does not look to see evidence of it. Faith's object is singular: Faith looks to Christ, always to Christ, and to nothing but Christ. If we look to fruit, we have abandoned faith and are not walking in the Spirit but in the flesh. In those times when we are seeking to produce the fruit of the Spirit, we do so, not in faith, but in unbelief. It is a hard lesson, and it is one that we have not yet fully learned. Though we know this to be so (because we *live* by the Spirit even when we are not *walking* by the Spirit), we have yet to learn it perfectly. And, it is obvious we have not learned it perfectly because we are still exhorted to *walk* in the Spirit.

To walk in the Spirit is to simply look to Christ and only to Christ, and, with such looking, the fruit of the Spirit will flow as surely as fragrance is emitted from the rose. We *trust* Christ for the full and complete salvation of our souls. Shall we not then trust Him for the full production of the fruit of the Spirit?

You may ask, “How do I know if I have the fruit of the Spirit?” If you do ask, you are looking in the wrong

place. Look to Christ and the fruit will be there, and in that look to Christ, you will not fulfill the lusts of the flesh. If you can see it, it is *yours*: *You* did it; *you* produced it. It is *your* evidence and *you* will, on some level, take credit for it. And, that will be the work of the flesh. But, if Christ produced it, it has nothing to do with your doing or trying, so all glory for it belongs to Christ. You cannot look to Christ and look to yourself in the same glance.

When John Newton wrote the words “do I love the Lord or no” he was addressing a thing that plagues all of us from time to time. But I suggest that when he wrote those words, he was not looking to Christ but to his own heart. He was searching out the *effect* rather than steadfastly looking at the cause (1 John 3:20-21). It is a simple principle, but it is not an easy one. In fact, according to the context (v. 17), it is impossible to accomplish this perfectly while we remain in the flesh.

So what are we to do? Are we to diligently seek these fruits as evidence, or are we to seek to fix our eyes on Christ and not worry about evidence. The answer is clear. We live (exist, have our being) in the Spirit by the sovereign operation of the grace of God. Therefore, since we had nothing to do with the Spirit indwelling us, let us not try to produce for evidence that which is the assured product of that divine relationship (Gal. 3:3). The works of the flesh are *manifest*, the fruit of the Spirit just *is*. Faith is an enigma. Where the fruit of the Spirit is not present, faith does not exist. But, where love, temperance and such do exist, it is *not* evidence that

faith exists. Faith alone is evidence (Heb. 11:1), and its existence cannot be proven.

Walking in the Spirit, looking to Christ, will not produce vainglory (glory in self). It will not produce a provoking or contentious spirit. It will not produce envying or a discontented spirit (v. 26). In fact walking in the Spirit will not *produce* the fruit of the Spirit. Walking in the Spirit is acknowledging that Christ will and does produce the fruit of the Spirit. Walking in the Spirit is not looking to the effect but rather is looking to the cause (Matt. 6:33).

Defining Fruit

“Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself. But let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another. For every man shall bear his own burden.”

Galatians 6:1-5

As we have seen in the last chapter, walking in the Spirit is not looking to or for the effect (the fruit), but rather it is looking to the cause—the Lord Jesus Christ. In the last verse of chapter 5, Paul assures us the fruit is *effectual* and *brings about* a specific effect in the believer's life. Looking to Christ alone for salvation, justification, righteousness, and sanctification produces the fruit of the Spirit. Considering the fruit itself, we can see that each of the things produced speaks to a state of being and not a pattern of doing.

It is important to note that Paul postscripts chapter 5 (v. 25) with the admonition, “Let us.” This fruit is born of a relationship with Christ, and it is the believer's life played out in the world. Galatians 5:26 is not only a postscript to the preceding chapter; it is a preamble to the immediate remarks of chapter 6. What Paul is doing

is setting up to teach the effect of a saving relationship with Christ. Certain aspects of the fruit of the Spirit are personal. That is to say, they have to do with the individual in whom they are found. Joy, peace, faith, and temperance are the effects that a union with Christ has on the believer. However, love, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness and meekness are rarely expressed toward self but are rather expressed toward the household of faith. There is nothing in the law that prohibits these things. They are, in fact, what Paul refers to as fulfilling “the law of Christ” in verse 2.

The believer is under the law of Moses in no way shape or form. He is dead to it, and it is dead to him by means of Christ's obedience unto death. The believer is not, however, without law or governing principle or rule in his life. He is ruled by the Lord with whom he is in union (Rom. 6:16). He is ruled by the constraining love for Christ that exhibits itself in love to the brethren. This is the believer's law or rule (v.2, 16) and is designated here as the “law of Christ.”

To fully understand what the apostle speaks of in vv. 1-5 we must remember the entire gist of this letter. The believers at Galatia were under assault from the Judaizers. These legalists were endeavoring to coax the Gentiles to embrace the law of Moses for justification. It is apparent from the words of Paul that some of the believer's were giving these legalists an ear, and some were in danger of slipping and falling from grace. Some were applying to the law as a means of finishing what the Spirit of God had begun in them. The natural outflow of such thinking is comparing of one's self to

someone else (usually someone of lower moral values) so that one can feel righteous in himself. This is the effect of using the law as a rule of life: self-righteous pride and prejudice. That is not a fruit of the Spirit; that is a work of the flesh.

Another aspect of this kind of thinking is that it brings about a harsh, judgmental, and condemning spirit against those of the brethren who have fallen into sin (1 Cor. 5:1-2, 6). In the first 5 verses of our text (chapter 6), Paul declares how one who has the fruit of the Spirit manifests that fruit toward a fallen brother. He chooses that part of the fruit of the Spirit that is named “meekness” (v. 1). In using this part of the fruit, he does so in opposition to pride and self-righteousness (v. 3). This teaching is a follow-up of the use of the word conceit (“vain glory”) in 5:26. Paul makes it clear that the restoration of the fallen brother is the *spiritual* reaction and not the work of the flesh.

The primary reaction—the spiritual reaction—to a brother or sister who has succumbed to sin is not condemnation but restoration. This flies in the face of legalism, which thrives on words like *discipline*, and *excommunication*. Sin is never to be excused or overlooked, but when a brother falls, sin is to touch the heart of pity and the heart of compassion.

The first consideration of meekness is restoration because the meek person considers that it is only the grace of God that has kept him from falling into the same error (v. 1; 2 Cor. 2:4-11). The spirit of meekness is always more demanding of self than it is of others, and it is more ready to condemn sin in self than in

others. “Meekness” is realizing that, though a brother may have a splinter in his eye, it is nothing compared to the telephone pole that is in one’s own eye (Matt. 7:1-5). Paul further illuminates this fact in the next verse. Restoration of a fallen brother is not about indictment but about intercession. Meekness is up close and personal. It will not work at a distance. Meekness is involvement with the troubles and cares of the brethren. This is spiritual fruit (Phil. 2:1-8; Rom. 12:15; 1 Cor. 12:26-27). In doing this, you fulfill the law of Christ. This phrase means exactly the same thing as chapter 5 and verse 14. The law of Christ is the fruit of love produced by vital union with Christ. It is the same as walking in the Spirit because you live in the Spirit. This is nothing new, and we can be assured that though this is a law, it has nothing to do with the flesh and carries with it no legal sentence or punishment. This *law* is the principle of *life*, the governing factor and motivator of the child of God. It is exemplified in meekness toward a fallen brother.

That it is nothing else but part of the fruit of the Spirit is made clear by what the apostle says in verse three. What you do in meekness toward a brother can never be a source of pride and self-righteousness, because in the matter of production of the fruit of the Spirit, the believer is nothing. Producing something from nothing requires the act of sovereign creation, and believers are neither sovereign nor creators. If, indeed, we are spiritual and act in meekness, we can rest assured that neither of those characteristics flows from

ourselves but is fruit born of our connection to the vine. To *Him* be the glory!

Verses 4-5 are wise counsel. He again refers to the attitude toward a fallen brother. Verse 4 is weak in the English translation. In the original language, it means that we are not to evaluate ourselves in reference to one who is fallen, because that will produce a high reading on the ego scale. In evaluation of sin, look no further than your own sin. He reiterates this in verse 5. Meekness of spirit will keep you busy in your own vineyard and not cause you to prune someone else's vine. This is fruit defined.

The Flesh and the Spirit

“Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things. Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting. And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.”

Galatians 6:6-10

These verses, especially verses 7-8, are often used by religion to set forth a conditional equation by which men will earn rewards in heaven. Thus far, Paul has spent the entirety of his letter to the Galatians declaring in repetitive and absolute terms that all that we have, are, and hope to be is by the work of Christ alone. He has declared that all glory for what is accomplished in us is due to Christ alone. Here, he does *not* jump from that horse, mid-stream, and ride off in another direction. If anyone believes that he will receive rewards that can be attributed to anything other than the grace of God in him, he is walking in the flesh and not in the Spirit.

What Paul is saying in these 5 verses is a synopsis of what he has said thus far, beginning in chapter 5, verse

13 and leading to this point. Paul is describing and contrasting the man who walks in the flesh and the man who, by virtue of vital connection with Christ, walks in the Spirit, bearing the fruit of the Spirit. He does so by restating an absolute that he has already declared (5:16-17). He does so in a manner that is common and readily understood. He uses a common and obvious truth, set forth in agricultural or horticultural language. What he says and the way that he says it are designed, not to make us look to ourselves or become personal fruit inspectors in hope of producing or rewarding worthy works, but to consider the fleshly man and the spiritual man in light of the results of what they sow.

Sowing and reaping are very understandable things. Paul is declaring that if you sow an apple seed, you will not reap a horse chestnut, and conversely, if you sow a horse chestnut, you will not reap an apple. He is *not* setting forth a formula by which someone may gain anything. He is simply stating what begets what. The spiritual man sows to the Spirit, and the result is spiritual. The fleshly man sows to the flesh, and the result is fleshly (corruption). To look at this otherwise would play into the hands of the legalist who, more than anything, wants his followers to continually look at the flesh for improvement thus giving themselves reason to compare themselves with others and congratulate themselves for their accomplishments.

Paul has already made it clear that walking in the Spirit will not produce a self-congratulatory life (6:2-5; Luke 17:10; Rom. 12:1). Paul is declaring *facts*, not *formulas*. The man who sows to the Spirit will not reap

of the flesh, and the man who sows to the flesh will not reap of the Spirit. It will never, ever be otherwise (Hosea 8:7; 2 Cor. 9:6). The product of the flesh will always be corruption, and the product of the Spirit will always be eternal life. This is what Paul is asserting in verses 7:8.

Do not be deceived here! God will not be mocked by one endeavoring to produce the fruit of the Spirit by the works of the flesh. Sowing to the Spirit (living and walking in the Spirit) is nothing more than having your eyes fixed on Christ, doing what you do for His honor and glory. The factual result of sowing to the Spirit is that you will reap the product “of the Spirit,”—a fruitful life. Sowing to the flesh (walking in the flesh, minding the things of the flesh, fulfilling the lust of the flesh) will “of the flesh” reap the product of the flesh—corruption. God will not be mocked by a man putting his righteousness alongside that of Christ for justification, sanctification, or any part of salvation.

As means of illustrating this fact, Paul says these things (vv. 7-8) in reference to the fruit of the Spirit. In particular, it is a further illustration of what he has said in vv. 1-5. In those verses, he spoke of the fruit of the Spirit in terms of love toward the fallen brother. Now he further defines love in the action of the fruit of the Spirit—giving. Giving is the act of loving, and thus, our Lord interchanges the words “love” and “charity” throughout His word. In verse 6, Paul specifically relates giving (communication) to the financial support of those who teach the Word. The man who has been taught the Word financially supports those who have taught him.

Again, remember this is not an edict or a thing to be viewed as a legal command. It is a fruit of the Spirit and is not to be looked to at all (Matt. 6:1-4). This is what the spiritual man *does* out of a heart of love and gratitude to Christ because of his vine-branch connection with Christ. Because the flesh part of us fights against this tooth and nail, giving will never be perfected here, but this is the *heart* and *intent* of the child of God. I heard a man once described as a “giving” Christian. Be not deceived, God is not mocked: there is no other kind of Christian other than a giving one. His giving is not out of fear of loss or for minimizing a tax on his income or with any consideration of meeting the requirements of the law of tithing. It is as a man freely spending someone else's money (1 Chron. 29:13-14; 2 Cor. 8:1-12, 9:5-15; 1 Cor. 9:13-14; 1 Tim. 5:17-18).

Paul does not end this word on giving with just the financial support of the minister. He makes known that this fruit—this liberality of spirit—involves the giving of self, time, and energy. This liberal spirit is toward all men (v. 10) but especially toward the church—the body of Christ (v 1). This is declared in this manner because to touch one who belongs to Christ is to touch Christ (Matt. 25:34-40).

Verse 9 serves as both a guard and a promise and reiterates the facts declared in vv. 7-8. “Let us not be weary in well doing.” This is a very instructive warning and admonition. How would one become weary in well doing? If well doing is done in the power of the flesh, it will prove wearisome. Why? It will prove wearisome because it will reap corruption. It will prove wearisome

because you are looking at the “well doing” and not at Christ. It will prove wearisome because you are looking for a *result* rather than looking at *Christ*. The only way to not be weary in well doing is not to consider well doing but to set your affection on things above where He who “doeth all things well” sits in majesty. You will not faint unless you are operating in the power of you own fainting flesh. The promise is sure! Looking to Christ, walking by and in His Spirit, you will sow to the Spirit, and you shall reap of the Spirit. Look to Christ, love the brethren, do good to all men. This is spiritual life. This is sowing to the Spirit and not to the flesh (Hosea 10:12).

Glorying

“Ye see how large a letter I have written unto you with mine own hand. As many as desire to make a fair shew in the flesh, they constrain you to be circumcised; only lest they should suffer persecution for the cross of Christ. For neither they themselves who are circumcised keep the law; but desire to have you circumcised, that they may glory in your flesh. But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.”

Galatians 6:11-14

In these 4 verses, Paul presents his final argument for the glory of justification by the faith of Christ. He brings the theme to its most simple and singular level. “In what do men glory?” is the issue. The Judaizers glory in one thing, and Paul and the believers in Galatia glory in another.

Paul begins his words with a strong assurance of his love for the believers in Galatia (v. 11). He does so by comparing this letter with other letters he has written to churches. Some say that Paul is talking about poor eyesight, and the largeness of the letter refers to the size of the print. Others say that he refers to the illegibility of his penmanship, and the large letters are for the purpose of legibility. *Neither* of these speaks to what Paul means by this statement. Paul is saying that,

unlike the epistle to the other churches, which he dictated to a scribe or secretary, this letter was written word for word by his own hand. In doing so, he assures the Galatian believers that they are dear to his heart and that the difficulties they face are of great importance to him. Their difficulties were so important to him that he penned this entire epistle with his own hand. He loved the churches in Galatia with the love that a father has for his children.

Having asserted his care for this people, he brings to them the heart of the matter. In verses 12 and 13, Paul sets forth *what* the Judaizers glory in and *why* they do so. It is no surprise to those who have read this epistle that the Judaizers have no interest in anything spiritual. As all legalists, they do what they do to be seen of men (Matt. 23:5-7). They desire, Paul says, to make a fair show in the flesh. They want the praise of their fellow Jews for bringing the Gentiles under the law of Moses. If successful, they would accomplish three things. First, they would effectively discount the ministry of the gospel. Secondly, they would put Paul, a man whom they considered a traitor, out of business. Third, they would insure themselves against persecution.

With such a victory under their belt, they would no doubt gain great fame among their peers. Make no mistake here: The legalist does what he does without any interest in anyone but himself (Luke 18:9). They constrain you to be circumcised. Their design is to control you by legal means. Freedom and liberty are the farthest things from their mind. Their “truth” will *not* set you free but rather bring you into abject slavery.

They do not even have an interest in the law. They are seeking to have men follow them. They are looking for results. They deceive themselves, and their deceit is so subtle that they are not even aware that they are not keeping the law they declare. They are equating the results of their so-called ministry—bringing people under the law—with doing their duty in the sight of the law. If they can make someone else appear under their thumb, or make someone leave the gospel for the legal life, to them it is righteousness; to them it is keeping the law. Their true interest is to glory in *your* flesh, to glory in *your* conversion from faith to works. It makes you a feather in their cap.

The root of their desire to glory in your flesh is to avoid the persecution that attends the preaching of the cross. They fear the censure of their fellow legalists more than they fear God. The preaching of the cross, they believe, encroaches on their arena of control and would cost them their religion. They are correct. The gospel not only saves the lost, it also destroys any hope in anyone or anything but Christ. Obviously the Judaizers in Galatia did not discount the cross altogether, but they refused to preach it as that which renders the law useless in the justification of men. They felt that it was of paramount importance to destroy the gospel by winning men's minds to the law. Not to do so would mean that Jewish religion would persecute them. This is the glory of the *legalist*.

The *believer* glories also. Paul defines the believer's glorying in no uncertain terms. Three times he makes reference to the cross. When he speaks of the cross, he

is not referring to the wooden gibbet on which our Lord hung. Neither is he referring to the religious trinket that adorns the steeples of religious buildings or dangles from the earlobes or necklaces of religious people. When he speaks of the cross, he speaks of the crucifixion of the Lord. He speaks in the manner that he always speaks—Christ and Him crucified. The gospel that he preaches brings about persecution from the Jews (5:11). He does not avoid preaching it. In fact, it is the singular source of his glorying. He does not glory in men's flesh. He glories in the cross. He declares that God forbids glorying in anything but the cross.

This word *glorying* does not enter much into common vocabulary, though its meaning does. It signifies boasting, pleasure, satisfaction, rejoicing and exultation. It means that the heart and mind is so taken up with a thing that a person is lost in the contemplation of it. The believer glories in the cross and has no confidence in the flesh. Paul was a gifted man: He was educated, had writing ability, went on many missionary journeys, and had the esteem of many believers. Yet those things were never the source of his glorying. He gloried in the *cross*. He gloried in the cross because the work of Christ was effectual: it crucified the world to him and crucified him to the world. The world he speaks of is the world that glories in the flesh, the world that would bring men under the law, the world of freewill, works religion. The crucifixion of Christ killed every interest that Paul had in that world before.

Likewise, to those who yet practice the world's religion, the preacher of the gospel is a dead thing.

Neither of these things is negative. They are the result of identification with Christ and His cross. They are a source of great joy and satisfaction to the believer. The believer has been delivered from this “present evil world” (1:4). He glories in the cross because, by it, the world is crucified to him and he is crucified to the world, and that is ample reason to glory. God forbid that I glory in anything or anyone else (2:20).

Salvation Is of the Lord

“But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature. And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God. From henceforth let no man trouble me: for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus. Brethren, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen.”

Galatians 6:14-18

In these final words of Paul to his beloved gentile brethren, he sums up his life and his ministry. He, by God's grace and by God given faith, looks only to the Lord Jesus Christ and the price that the Lord paid for his full and final redemption (v. 14). With eyes fixed on the Savior, the world and all its attendant follies are dead to him. Because the world requires evidence of religion and life and lives for the notice and validation of others, a man whose eyes are fixed on Christ is dead to the world. Glorifying in the cross of Christ alone for justification, redemption, sanctification, and rule of life is the mark of the believer and the bane of the world. The preaching of the gospel, baptism, and the Lord's Table all point to and center in the cross of Christ. The

church has tunnel vision; it is narrow-minded and single-minded because the church has only one thing in which to glory—the crucified Christ. The singular evidence of that relationship is faith (Heb. 11:1). The world requires that faith be evidenced in a visible manner so that the religion of the world can judge the fitness of one to call himself a saint. It can never grasp that faith in Christ, looking only to Christ, living by Christ, and seeking not to produce or account anything other than that as evidence is the believer's credo (Matt. 6:22).

When Paul said, “God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of Christ,” he was reducing all that he had said thus far to a single and wonderful axiom. This phrase encompasses justification by faith, walking in the spirit, being dead to the law by the law, being a child of Abraham and, thus, an heir according to the promise, and being under Christ as a rule of life. Consequently, this being the absolute maxim, it stands to reason that nothing that one does or does not do has anything to do with the salvation of the soul. Paul goes back to that which the Judaizers believe to be the source of righteousness and justification: circumcision. When Paul refers to this word, he is speaking of any and every aspect of the notion of keeping the law for righteousness as opposed to believing Christ for righteousness. Verse 15 is a profound statement because it simply disallows anything about a human being or produced by a human being as having any part in the salvation of his soul.

He not only approaches keeping the law in a positive negative but also in a negative negative. By this, he simply states that if you are saved, it has nothing to do with you. If you are circumcised it means nothing. He has made that perfectly clear throughout this epistle. Perhaps there are those who have willfully refused circumcision. Paul would have them know that their uncircumcision has nothing to do with salvation either. Salvation has nothing to do with what you do or do not do.

Salvation is the bringing forth from nothing a totally new thing, created by God, called into existence by the sovereign act of creation. There has never been and will never be but one Creator, and that one is God Himself. If you are a believer, you did not exist in that form until you were spoken into existence by the will and power of God. A creature is the product of creation and never an actor in it. If I am a believer, I am so because God caused it and made me what I am by creation. It was not a cooperative effort between God and me because something that does not exist can hardly be presumed to cooperate in its own creation (2 Cor. 5:17-18).

“As many as walk” (v. 16) is Paul's way of saying, as many as believe or as many as walk by faith, live by faith, walk in the Spirit, live by the Spirit, glory only in the cross of Christ, and are a new creature in Christ. These observe this rule (vv. 14-15). This is the law of Christ (6:2). This is the rule of life for the believer, and there is none other. Upon them falls peace and mercy. They are the Israel of God, the Church of Christ, and the body of Christ. This is their rule; “Nothing in my hand I

bring, simply to thy cross I cling.” The world looks at that and views it as dead and lifeless because among such who observe this rule, there is peace and rest born of sovereign mercy. They seek no evidence but the person and work of Christ as summarily declared in the gospel. Religion is the harlot in the darkened doorway with out-stretched hand crying, “More, more, show me more, do more, be more.” But the believer cries, “I am what I am by the grace of God.”

Paul's words in verse 17 are in reference to the price paid for declaring this singular truth in such absolute terms. The legalist will not be persecuted for his religion because, once all the superficial differences are removed, every religion, no matter the denomination or name, is based on works and freewill. So, no matter what the denominational distinction may be, the *entire world* is in agreement on how a person is accepted by God. But the man or woman who faithfully rests in the Person of Christ alone and seeks nothing else is the proverbial “thorn in the flesh” to society's religion and he will suffer the indignation and hatred of the masses.

Paul states that such cannot trouble him because he has already born their indignant hatred, and his scarred body is a declaration that he is preaching the gospel. He is *not* saying that his sufferings are meritorious or are to be compared with the sufferings of Christ, but that preaching the gospel eventuates in the vehement vitriol and hatred of the world. They do not trouble him because they and their religion (of which he was once an ignorant partaker) are crucified to him (5:11; 2 Cor. 6:4-10; 11:22-33—notice in this passage that Paul is

contrasting himself to the false apostles who sought to bring believers into bondage—2 Cor. 11:13-20).

Paul ends his letter with a benediction that is common to his other letters. He calls them his brethren, born of the same Spirit, washed by the same blood, and members of the same family. His prayer for them is that the grace of God be with their spirit. Here, there is no small allusion to the theme of the entire epistle: the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ brings about spiritual life, a life of walking in the spirit, and therefore not fulfilling the lusts of the flesh. If the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ is with them, it is with their *spirit* and not their *flesh*.



Nowhere is the claim to desire freedom so thoroughly denied by people's actions than in the sphere of religion. All religions, while claiming to set people free, instead multiply rules and restrictions. For this reason, almost all sermons on the believer's freedom spend more time hedging that freedom with warnings against sin than actually setting people free. The reason for this is that they are approaching the concept of freedom as a fleshly concept rather than what it is in truth, a spiritual concept. And viewing this freedom from a fleshly perspective makes it a frightening concept. And this fleshly fear of freedom compels them to look to bondage for security. But the Lord said, "If the Son shall make you free, you are free indeed."

In the book of Galatians, Paul made a clear and powerful argument for the freedom of the believer. In this commentary, the author breaks the chains of bondage that many have put on this book: he sets the Book of Freedom free! With unassailable argument, he sets forth the radical freedom that is the possession of every believer, shows why believers can be trusted with that freedom, and unfolds that it is only in the context of this freedom that they can truly express the fruit of the Spirit and live their lives as productive and useful citizens of the Kingdom of God. And in all of these points, Christ and His cross is the reason.

I have been friends with the author for 40 years and can testify that this book is no mere academic work but is a representation of what he truly believes and how he lives. He has been set free by the Son, and is free indeed. His own experience of gospel freedom has enabled him to write a commentary that captures the spirit and meaning of Paul's epistle better than anything else I have read on the book of Galatians. Read it, believe it, and be free.

Joe Terrell

