

**COMMENTARY  
ON  
GALATIANS**

FAITH VERSUS WORKS  
SALVATION

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## **PREFACE**

Galatians is largely a polemical writing of the apostle Paul. Having established the church in the province of Galatia (now southern Turkey) on his first missionary journey (Acts 13,14), Paul was soon thereafter under attack from the Judaizers who taught a new type of legalism to these new Galatian believers. These legalistic teachings significantly affected the Galatians, steering them away from the true gospel that Paul had taught them when establishing the church.

The Judaizers stated that the Gentile believers were not true Christians unless they kept the Mosaic Law and were circumcised. Paul

certainly supported the Mosaic moral law – exemplified by the Ten Commandments – and he did not deny the importance of circumcision to the Jews, but neither one had anything whatsoever to do with salvation by grace through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Thus, the basic, underlying issue was faith versus works as the basis for salvation. Paul taught grace and faith; the Judaizers taught law and works. What was at stake was the very validity of the gospel itself, including the significance of Christ's death on the cross, a fact of which Paul was well aware. The same problem exists today when we consider the works-righteousness way to salvation taught by the Roman Catholic Church.

The book of Romans, which was written approximately ten years after the book of Galatians, in many ways has a close theological affinity to Galatians, as it relates to how the

Lord God justifies the sinner. The two books cover a lot of the same material.

### **Consider the Following**

1. Discussion of the Mosaic Law is prominent in both books.
2. “Righteousness” language is prominent in both books.
3. Both books give an important place to Abraham in salvation history.
4. Only these two books develop the concept of sonship.
5. Only these two books contain the imagery of being “crucified with Christ.”
6. Only these two books claim that the law is “fulfilled” by the love command.
7. Only these two books develop the na-

ture of the Holy Spirit's relationship as basic to Christian existence.



# 1

## INTRODUCTION

Galatians was written by the apostle Paul, and what is important to note as a preparation for our study is that Paul's theology derives primarily from the Pentateuch, with Abraham as his starting point.

Galatia was a Roman province in what is now southern Turkey. Paul refers to these south Galatian cities of Pisidian Antioch, Iconium, and Lystra in 2 Tim. 3:11. Paul had evangelized and established the congregations there on his first missionary journey (Acts 13:14,15; 14:1). Galatians was written about AD 48 from Antioch and is one of Paul's earliest epistles. The Jerusalem Council (Acts 15:4-29) was

held about AD 49. Thus, importantly, Paul nowhere appeals to the Galatians concerning the decree of the Jerusalem Council. Therefore, Paul's silence about the Council's decision would only make sense if the Council had not yet made that decision. Paul would not have ignored the decree of the Council if it were already being circulated among them, because the decree would have immediately destroyed the Judaizer's' argument. This further affirms that Galatians was written before the Jerusalem Council of Acts 15.

In the first chapter and half of the second chapter, Paul vigorously defends his call by God as an apostle of the church. His call was by a divine revelation (Acts 9:15) as was his learning of the gospel. This fact was needed to be established at the outset in order to withstand the challenges by the Judaizers as to Paul's authority.

The situation which brought about the writing of the letter was that Jewish Christians were seeking to impose circumcision and the Mosaic Law on the Gentile converts as necessary for salvation. Thus, Galatians is a polemic against the Judaizing error and by it any form of works salvation. Paul counters that the Gospel is a message of grace that calls for faith. By contrast, the Law does not produce faith but rather works a curse from which we need to be redeemed by Christ at the Cross. Thus, the main theme of Galatians is found in Gal. 5:1, "It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery."

In the last two chapters, Paul talks about living out the Christian life, the power of the Cross, and the indwelling Holy Spirit needed to do so. Interestingly, this letter greatly impacted

Martin Luther, playing a strategic part in the Protestant Reformation.

## **2**

### **CHAPTER ONE**

#### **Here is a summary of Chapter One:**

1. The messenger – sent by God (v.1)
2. The message – the Gospel (v. 4)
3. The method – by revelation (v.12c):
  - a. v. 11 – no human origin
  - b. v. 12a – no human being
  - c. v. 12b – no human instruction
4. Paul's life before Christ:
  - a. v. 13 – as a persecutor

b. v. 14 – as a Pharisee

5. Salvation with a purpose:

a. v. 15 – called through God's grace

b. v. 16 – to reveal His Son in me

c. v. 16 – to preach Him among the  
Gentiles

6. Independent travels as a preacher – vs.  
17 – 24:

a. vs. 17f – three years in Arabia (private instruction by God?)

b. vs. 18f – fifteen days with Peter and James

c. vs. 21ff – preaching the Gospel in Syria and Cilicia

Now let us begin chapter one. Paul declares in verse 1 that he is an apostle, which derives from the Greek verb *apostello*, which means “to send out” particularly on a divine mission. Not being one of the original twelve apostles, Paul needed to establish his divine calling, and so he emphasizes that his calling did not have a human origin but came “through” (*dia* in the Greek meaning “by means of”) Jesus Christ and God the Father. Interestingly enough, there is only one preposition “through,” as it relates to Jesus and the Father, clearly showing their unity – one God in three persons. The verse ends with “...who raised Him from the dead” by which the Father placed His seal of approval on Christ’s death. Conclusion? The authority behind Paul and his message is a divine one..

In verse 2, in case there are those who also need some human affirmation, Paul adds

“...and all the brethren (not just some) who are with me (the Greek *sun* is more thoroughly translated “together with”) to the churches (pl.) of Galatia. Paul is subtly saying that there is a unity among them and support for who he is (an apostle).

**Verse 3** is the standard Pauline opening greeting to the church to whom he is writing, and it is always in this order: grace and peace. Grace is fundamental; peace is the result, which is to say, grace brings peace with and from God. We might also say that the compromise of grace leads to the forfeiture of peace. They hang together. As in verse one, there is only one preposition “from” (*apo*, “out from”) God....and Jesus Christ. Again, the unity. Notice God our Father – one body, the (true) church, has only one heavenly Father.

**Verse 4** continues verse three, referencing the Lord Jesus.... ”who gave Himself for our

sins....” The verb “gave” is an aorist participle and is more literally translated as “having given Himself.” He made the decision to give of Himself for us. The aorist is most frequently used of the simple past. As Jesus said, “It is finished.” We are saved by grace through faith and that not of ourselves, not as a result of works. Paul continues that Christ gave Himself “...for our sins.”

That is the reason He came and died, not to meet our personal, daily, felt needs, though they may be real and in His mercy He may meet them, always by His grace (which is always sufficient). Paul, having said that Jesus gave Himself for our sins, then tells us the purpose for His doing so (when one sees, as here, the combination of *hina* [meaning “that” or “in order that”] and a verb in the subjunctive, in this case “might deliver”, one is faced with a purpose clause). The purpose for Jesus giving

Himself for our sins is that “...He might deliver us out of this present evil age” (or world). Notice He is the one who does the delivering. As Paul would later write to the Philippians, “...He who began a good work in you will perfect it...,” and elsewhere, “...for it is God who is at work in you both to will and to work for His good pleasure” (Phil. 1:6; 2:13). And then Paul ends verse 4 by telling us that all of the foregoing – grace, peace, and deliverance – is “...according to the will of our God and Father.” *All* of that is according to the *will* (read 1 John 5:14,15) of Almighty God...*our* heavenly Father. All praise, thanksgiving, and adoration are due to Him!

After telling us that Christ gave Himself for our sins in order to deliver us out of this evil age, Paul tells us that all of this was according to God the Father’s will. In verse 5 he gives us an exclamation of wonder, love, and praise,

giving all the glory to the Father and that for all eternity, writing, “...to whom be the glory forevermore. Amen.” Interestingly, the Hebrew for “glory” is “*kabod*” which can also be translated “abundance,” “honor,” “splendor,” or “esteem.” Interestingly enough, *kabod* is derived from the word “*kabad*.” *Kabad* means to be heavy or weighty. It is additionally interesting to note Paul’s statement to the Corinthians, “For momentary light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison” (2Cor.4:17, emphasis added). Is there an underlying connection here? Think also of Jesus’ words, “Come unto Me all who are weary and heavy laden....take My yoke upon you....for My yoke is easy, and My load is light” (Matt. 11:28-30 [partial]).

God’s glory deserves a small encyclopedia for its definition alone, but the essence of God’s glory is not only the honor to be given to Him

as the sovereign Lord and King of the universe (Ps. 24), but His glory is the surpassing greatness of His character in all realms of existence. His glory fills the universe and is the very essence of His presence and being. Thus, Moses asked God to show him His glory, and God responded that while He would make all His goodness pass before Moses, “You cannot see My face...” ( Ex. 33:20). Get that please. Moses says let me see Your glory, and God answers that Moses cannot see His face!! The Lord tells Moses that He will put him in the cleft of the rock and cover Moses with His hand while His glory passes by. Then the Lord says He will remove His hand so Moses can see God’s back (the Hebrew literally means “aftereffects” or “afterglow.”).

In the New Testament, the Greek word used for glory is “*doxa*,” from which we get the English doxology, a liturgical expression of

praise to God. (*Doxa* is also used for “glory” in the Greek Old Testament, the Septuagint). *Doxa* can also be translated “brightness,” “radiance,” “splendor,” “magnificence,” “dignity,” and “honour,” which gives us some slight idea of why Moses could not look upon God and live. Regardless, Paul says that God’s glory is “forevermore” (literally, “the ages to the ages”). Paul ends verse 5 with “Amen” meaning “so let it be” and is actually transliterated from the Hebrew. Praise the Lord for the richness of His living and active word (Heb. 4:12).

**Verses 6 & 7** are one sentence and so go together. Interestingly, though Paul reproaches the Galatians, he does not reject them. Paul is “amazed” that they are so quickly “deserting” Christ. Both verbs are present active indicatives meaning that Paul’s amazement and their desertion are both in process. It isn’t that they have but that they are in process of

deserting Christ, and so Paul is writing to snip this apostasy in the bud. What makes it so important is who they are deserting – God the Father Himself, for it is the Father Who does the calling in the application of redemption (1 Cor. 1:9; 2 Tim. 1:8,9). And, of course, God calls us, as Paul says in verse 6, “...by the grace of Christ.” It is all by grace (Eph. 2:5,8,9; Acts 15:11).

The Galatians are in the process of leaving the true gospel for a “different” gospel, which Paul quickly informs them “...is really not another (gospel).” We must always remember that not only is there only one gospel, but that gospel never changes. Why? Because God never changes (Mal. 3:6; Heb. 13:8). But then Satan is very active, and so Paul confronted the same situation again (and we do today – Liberalism being just one example). He wrote to the Corinthians that he was fearful that

Satan was leading them astray, through false teachers, preaching “another Jesus” or a “different gospel.” He goes on to say that such men are “false apostles” who are “(Satan’s) servants.” (2 Cor. 11:3,4,13-15). Paul in his final epistles warns us that, “The time will come when (people) will not endure sound doctrine...and will turn away their ears from the truth...” (2 Tim. 4:3,4; see also Jer. 5:30,31).

Paul continues in verse 7 that there were people who were “disturbing” the Galatians. That is also in the present tense and so was happening as Paul wrote the epistle. The verb can also mean to stir up, unsettle, throw into confusion, and agitate. And, these false teachers are not doing it innocently. Paul says they “want” to do so. The verb can also be translated as wish or desire to do so. It is the actual desire of these false teachers to “distort” the gospel. The verb can also mean to

change. These people – and they are growing in number today – actually want to change the gospel of Christ! Yes, we must jealousy guard the gospel of Christ. As Paul wrote to the Corinthians, “For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.” (1 Cor. 2:2). That, of course, is no little statement. Jesus comes from the Hebrew Jeshua which means “the Lord is salvation.” The name Jesus also shows the humanity of Christ. In addition, Christ and Messiah are absolute synonyms, both meaning “Anointed One,” that is anointed of God, and they both declare Christ’s divinity (Isa. 9:6). The crucified part would lead us back to Isa. 53 and Ps. 22 and see the connection and necessity for salvation from sin through a crucified Person. Without doubt, that was all incorporated into Paul’s teaching. In the meanwhile, may we be like Habakkuk, rejoicing in the Lord regardless

of our circumstances, trusting in Him alone, making Him our strength (Hab. 3:17-19).

In verses 6 & 7 of Galatians one, Paul had admonished the Galatians for deserting the gospel of Christ for a different gospel. He concludes the thought in verses 8 & 9. In **verse 8** Paul presents the hypothetical case (an angel), and in **verse 9** he presents the real case (another preacher). The reasoning? If even an angel preaches a false gospel, then all the more let him be accursed (Greek *anathema*). Literally it is, “let him be a curse,” with the verb being a Greek imperative, which is used for commands. So crucial is the true (and only) gospel centered in the Person of Jesus Christ, that if anyone strays from it – even an angel – Paul wants him cursed! In verse 9, Paul essentially repeats himself to make certain his point is driven home. The point? The outward person of the messenger does not validate his

message (2 Cor. 11:13-15). Rather, the nature of the message validates the messenger. Is the message Christ-centered? Is it Christ glorifying? The answer must be “Yes.”

The question is, why do men knowingly distort the gospel? The gospel is simple and straightforward. While numerous reasons could be given, they all boil down to man’s sinful nature, the major and relevant manifestation of which is pride. That is clearly implied by Paul in Eph. 2:8,9 where he tell us we are saved “by grace through faith...not as a result of works *that no one should boast.*” Oh, how sinful man wants front and center stage in life, but grace and faith – both gifts of God – disallow him his “fifteen minutes of fame.” All of the other religions of the world, with which the author is acquainted, center on the works of prideful man as the primary means to eternal life.

In verse 10a Paul poses a question which he answers in verse 10b, “...am I striving to please men? If I were...I would not be a bondservant of Christ.” The bottom line? It is an either/or. Either we choose to please the Lord, or we choose to please our fellow man. We cannot do both simultaneously. It is similar to Jesus’ comparison of either serving God or serving money. You can’t do both. As Joshua said, “...choose for yourselves today whom you will serve....but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord” (Josh. 24:15). And, as Paul wrote to the Thessalonians, “...we speak not as pleasing men but God, who examines our hearts” (1 Thess. 2:4). Paul concludes in verse 10 that a Christian cannot live trying to please men and at the same time be a bond-servant of Christ. It is impossible. Moreover, the choice to please God and not man is not a one-time decision. Because of the tug of the sinful flesh, it is a choice that needs to be

made daily. As Christ said to His disciples, “If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me. For whoever wishes to save his life shall lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake, he is the one who will save it” (Luke 9:23,24, emphasis added). The cross, of course, is an instrument of death, so that Jesus is telling us that a true disciple of His must daily die to his sinful self and all its manifestations (cf. Rom. 8:13; Col. 3:5). A clear aid to encourage us to daily die to self is found in 2 Cor. 4:16 which reads, “For momentary light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison.” Far beyond, brethren! Amen.

As we said earlier, Paul is the messenger (v.1), the gospel is the message (v.4) and now in verse 11, we are given the method via which the message came. First Paul says (v.11) that

the gospel was not of human origin but rather that he received it by divine revelation (v. 12). He appeals to his listeners to hear his words by calling them “brethren,” the Greek word *adelphoi* being used only of true Christians. He reminds them that he “preached” the gospel to them and thus they have not only heard it but are responsible for it. Paul uses an interesting play on words here to drive his point home. The Greek word for “gospel” is *euangelion*, which can be translated either as “gospel” per se, or as “good news.” The word Paul chose for “preached” is derived from the same word as the noun gospel, namely, *euangelizo*, the latter being readily translated as “preach” (the gospel), “proclaim,” or “announce good news.” So, we could say that Paul is saying (v.11b) “...the good news which was announced (as) good news was not according to man.” The last phrase not only says that the gospel was not of human origin but

also totally denies to man any credit for his salvation.

Paul is purposely redundant in **verse 12a** as he stresses that no human being nor any human instruction was involved in his reception of the gospel – man simply had nothing to do with his reception. Rather, Paul received the gospel “...through a revelation of Jesus Christ.” The word “through” is *dia* in the Greek and can be translated “by means of.” It was means of a direct “revelation,” *apokalupsis*, of Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 15:8). Christ is the Revealer (see Rev. 1:1). An interesting aside. There are three Greek words used surrounding the second coming of the Lord. They are (above) *apokalupsis* (2 Thess. 1:7b) translated “revealed”, *epifaneia* (2 Thess. 2:8c) translated “appearance” and *parousia* (2 Thess. 2:8c) translated “coming”.

Beginning in **verse 13**, Paul now gives his personal testimony starting with his life before Christ. He has at least four purposes. First, he wants to establish his successful position in his former religion (v.14). Second, he wants to establish his specific call to preach the gospel (vs. 15,16). Thirdly, he wants to establish the historicity of his call (vs. 17-21). Finally, he wants to establish the transformation that had taken place in his life as a result of the foregoing (v. 22-24).

Starting with **verse 13b**, it is interesting to do a brief “recollection” of Saul (who became Paul). See Acts 7:56-58; 8:3; Acts 9:1,2; 1 Cor. 15:9; 1 Tim. 1:13a. Just as interesting is the contrast. Read the words of Paul transformed by the work of the Holy Spirit in his life – 2 Cor. 4:7-12; Gal. 2:20; Phil. 1:21; 3:7-14; Phil. 4:11-14. Here was the chief antagonist of the church, who was to become the humble, most

outstanding leader of the same church. What an amazing change the Holy Spirit can make in a person's life who is submitted to Him. 2 Cor. 5:17 states it well, "If any man is in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away; behold, all things have become new." This is called a transformation.

Back in verse 13b, Paul says he used to "...persecute the church of God beyond measure...." Revealingly, when we turn to Acts 9:4,5 and read of then Saul's encounter with the risen Christ on the road to Damascus we read, "...and (Saul) fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying to him, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?' And he said, 'Who are Thou, Lord?' And He said, 'I am Jesus whom you are persecuting....'" (emphasis added). Such is the intimate relationship we Christians have with the Lord Jesus Christ, that when we are persecuted, He is persecuted!! ( See John

14:16,17,23; John 17:21,26; Rom. 8:9-11; 1 Cor. 3:16,17). Now we can understand Paul's remorse over his past life (1 Cor. 15:9).

At first glance one wonders, "Why does Paul take the time to talk about his life before Christ and not just get on with the gospel?" Actually, he had begun doing so in verse 13 where he talked about his life before Christ as a persecutor of the Church. In verse 14, he talks about his life as a Pharisee. But why? This author believes that, by showing himself first as a persecutor, Paul was demonstrating the dramatic, life-altering change that God had wrought in his life, thus in part validating his call as an apostle (see vs. 23,24). By showing himself as a Pharisee, Paul was demonstrating that religion – even in its most zealous form (v.14) – was insufficient for salvation. As Jesus said to the Pharisees, "...you invalidated the word of God for the sake of your tradition"

(Matt. 15:6b). Moreover, in Philippians Paul further developed the idea when he wrote, “If anyone else has a mind to put confidence in the flesh, I far more...” (Phil. 3:4b), and then he goes on to present a litany of his religious accomplishments. He then says, “But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ” (Phil. 3:7).

Having established himself as a zealous persecutor of the church, as well as an equally zealous religious person following all its traditions, Paul, now in **verse 15** speaks of his conversion. Notice that he begins the changeover with an abrupt “But” (*de* In the Greek, which can also be translated “rather” or “on the other hand”). Whenever God actively enters into a situation a “but” can arise. “We were headed toward disaster, but God...” Paul was headed toward hell, but God entered into his

life. We Reformed love verses like 15. (Here I prefer the order of word translation of the KJV). But, says Paul, “when it pleased God...” All things are done for God’s good pleasure, not ours. First and foremost because He is God, and secondly because He knows the beginning from the end and thus what is best for us. As this author likes to say, God can see around the corner of our lives; we can’t. The word translated “pleased” can also be translated “to take delight in.” So, at that point in time when God took delight in acting, He (as verse 15 continues) “who separated me from my mother’s womb...” (lit., “having separated me”). Is that not a wonderful thought? The God of the universe has known us individually from our mother’s womb (actually even before – Jer. 1:4,5; Eph. 1:4). This awesome God, Paul continues, “...called me by His grace.” The word translated “called” is *kaleo* and can also be translated “summon.” Paul was sum-

moned by God.....but how? “...by His grace,” God’s always unearned favor for undeserving sinners.

**Verse 15** clearly exemplifies the doctrine of election. Paul writes, “But when He who had set me apart, even from my mother’s womb, and called me through His grace...” What a wonderful thought when applied personally. All that we are, have done, or could do deserves hell and nothing less. Yet, for a reason unknown to us (Deut. 29:29), the awesome God of the universe has chosen us for eternal life (Eph. 1:4,5) and all by His grace (Eph. 2:8,9). He caused us to be born again of the Holy Spirit (Titus 3:5; 1 Pet. 1:3), justified us by Christ’s blood (Rom. 5:9), Christ having become for us our righteousness, sanctification, and redemption (1 Cor. 1:30). And, He promises us that He is making all things new – death, mourning, crying, pain will all be gone forever

(Rev. 21:4,5). As Paul wrote to the Romans, “Oh the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways. For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen” (Rom. 11:33,36).

As we have seen in verse 15, Paul tells the Galatians that God had set him apart since he was in the womb of his mother (God is sovereign) and then called him (God is gracious). It is suggested that we have here two of the so-called five points of Calvinism (TULIP), namely, **U**nconditional Election and **I**rresistible Grace. And, God did all of this, our verse tells us, “...when it pleased God” (God’s timing). So, what we have here in verse 15 for ourselves is that a sovereign, gracious God, in His good time, will accomplish His purposes in us (Phil. 2:13).

In **verse 16**, Paul continues that God was pleased “to reveal His Son in me...” (see 2 Cor. 4:6). So first we had an objective revelation of Christ to Paul (v.12b), and now we have a subjective revelation of Christ in Paul (v. 16a). Then Paul tells us why he received the revelation: “...that I might preach Him among the Gentiles.” [Here is a little parenthetical aside. Whenever you see the combination of “that” or “in order that” (*hina* in the Greek) with the subjunctive case (would, could, should, may, might) you have a purpose clause, which is what we have here]. So, we can rightly translate that God was pleased to reveal His Son in Paul *for the purpose that* Paul might preach Him among the Gentiles.

In **verses 16b and 17** Paul wants to historically affirm the truth he objectively stated in verse 12. As a matter of fact, the verses beautifully fit together as follows:

v.12a = v.16b

v.12b = v.17a

v. 12c = v.17b

Does God's Word ever stop to amaze you? When Paul says he did not consult with "flesh and blood" he obviously means human beings. Nor, he continues, did he consult with the apostles. But, did you catch the way he said that? Paul said he did not go to Jerusalem to see those who were "*apostles before me.*" So, Paul is subtly reminding the Galatians that he, too, is an apostle of God. But, Paul continues, "...I went away to Arabia" (and later returned to Damascus). In **verse 18** (remember the verses and chapters are not inspired; they are man-made and were added to the Bible circa AD 1200 and later). Paul continues, "Then three years later I went up to Jerusalem..." Now, the word "then" in the

Greek is *epeita* and can readily mean “afterwards” or “next” (in time). Let’s put the non-inspiration of the verse numbers and chapters together with the alternate meanings of *epeita*. We can then conclude that Paul spent three years in Arabia. What was he doing there? Here are a couple of legitimate speculations: This is when he was translated into Paradise (2 Cor. 12:1-4), and/or, this is when he was taught by the Lord Himself which, with the indwelling Holy Spirit, made him such a powerful preacher and teacher of the Word.

So, in verse 18 Paul goes to Jerusalem and “...became acquainted with Cephas...” Cephas is Aramaic for Peter, the name given to him by Jesus, his original surname being Simon. “Peter” means “rock” or “stone.” Aside from Peter, the only other apostle Paul met with (v.19) was James, the Lord’s brother

(1 Cor. 15:5,7,8). Humanly speaking (and Jesus was fully human), it must have been very difficult for Jesus in His earthly ministry when even His brothers did not believe in Him (John 7:3-5). Yet, one of His brothers would end up as one of the leaders among the apostles (Acts 15:13-21) and the leader of the Jerusalem church. Ah yes, the merciful grace of a loving God...the same God Who is our God as well. All praise to His holy name!

We have reached verse 19. In his visit to Jerusalem, Paul had become acquainted only with the apostles Peter and James, the Lord's brother (v. 18). Peter and James, along with John formed the inner circle especially close to Jesus. Thus, they alone went with Christ onto the Mount of Transfiguration (Matt. 17:1). Both Peter (Acts 2:14-40) and James (Acts 15:13-21) played an active leadership role in the early church, and so it made sense for Paul to be-

come acquainted with them. Because of their leadership role in the church, Paul felt the necessity, verse 20, to assure the Galatians of the truth of his visit with Peter and James.

In verse 21, Paul continues sharing his journey with the Galatians, going into the regions of Syria and Cilicia, and stating that he was still unknown to the churches in Judea, verse 22. Notice how he affirms the Christian standing of these Judean churches, namely, that they were “in Christ.” For a person to be “in Christ,” he has to have been united to Him in the new birth. Paul expressed it this way to the Corinthians, “If any man is *in Christ*, he is a new creation” (2 Cor. 5:17a). The result of that is the sealing with the Holy Spirit, as Paul earlier wrote to the Corinthians, “Now He who establishes us with you *in Christ* and anointed us is God, who also sealed us and gave us the Spirit in our hearts as a pledge” (2 Cor.

1:21,22). This occurred when we were united to Christ in His death and resurrection (Rom. 6:3-7).

Although Paul was unknown by sight to the Judean churches, they kept hearing, **verse 23**, that the former, well-known persecutor of the church was now preaching “the faith.” That simply is another way of expressing “the gospel.” Writing to the church about their “common salvation,” Jude appealed to the Christians that they, “....contend earnestly for *the faith* which was once for all delivered to the saints” (Jude 3; see also Acts 6:7).

Paul then concludes the chapter in **verse 24**, sharing the response of the Christians who had heard about the evangelistic fruit of Paul’s conversion in a way that we all should do, namely, “And they were glorifying God in me.” Glorifying God is not just the way it should be but the way it must be. As the psalmist writes,

“Ascribe to the Lord glory and strength, ascribe to the Lord the glory due His name” (Ps. 29:1,2).

### **3**

## **CHAPTER TWO**

**Here is a summary of chapter two:**

1. Validity of the Gospel confirmed by the Apostles (vs. 1-6)
2. Work of the Gospel divided (vs. 7-9)
3. Poor to be remembered (v. 10)
4. Peter and Paul at Antioch:
  - a. Peter's hypocrisy (vs. 11-13)
  - b. Paul's rebuke (v. 14)
5. Nature and result of justification:

- a. Comes by faith in Christ (vs. 15,16)
- b. Reveals sin (vs. 17-19)
- c. Results in a life lived for God (vs. 20,21)

Paul's timeline, so to speak, including the beginning of Chapter Two would look something like this: converted AD 33 (Gal. 1:16); 1<sup>st</sup> trip to Jerusalem AD 36 (Gal. 1:18); 2<sup>nd</sup> trip to Jerusalem AD 50 (Gal. 2:1). This second trip to Jerusalem would parallel Acts 15 and the ensuing Jerusalem Council (see Acts 15:6 – 29), except that Paul, before the Council meeting, had a private meeting with James, Peter, and John (Gal. 2:1,2,9). Therefore, as stated previously, Galatians was written from Antioch before the Council meeting in AD 49. Thus, we see one of the many beauties of the Christian religion, namely, that it is real history about real people. Praise the Lord!

As stated above, Paul's second trip to Jerusalem, verse 1, paralleled Acts 15. Here is how it lines up:

<u>Acts 15</u>	<u>Gal. 2</u>
vs. 1,2	vs. 1,2
v. 5	vs. 4,5
vs. 7,10,11	vs. 6,7,9

At the time of the Jerusalem Council, Paul had been a Christian and preaching the gospel for about 14 years, bearing great fruit (Acts 14:27,28; Acts 15:3,4). So, Paul went up to Jerusalem with Barnabas and Titus, two of his faithful brethren in the gospel. In verse 2, Paul says that the cause of his trip was "...because of a revelation" he had. The word "revelation" connotes that it was directly from God, and, interestingly, is one of three words used con-

cerning the second coming of Christ (2 Thess. 2:8 uses all three).

Continuing in verse 2, Paul says that he “...submitted to them the gospel” he was preaching, referring to the apostles or at least the leadership among them. He did so “in private” (the better part of wisdom) “for fear” that he might not have been correctly preaching the gospel. What tremendous humility on Paul’s part! Here was a man specifically chosen by the Lord, who had spent three years most probably under His tutelage, and had been translated into heaven, and yet he humbly submits the gospel he is preaching to the apostles for their approval. May we, regardless of any elevated status we attain, be like the humble Paul (1 Cor. 11:1).

Paul (v.2) made his gospel presentation to those “of reputation” (lit. “having reputation”) which could also be translated “being

recognized.” What is our reputation? How are we recognized? Good questions to ask ourselves as representatives of Christ. And Paul made his presentation for fear that he “...might be running or had run in vain.” “Running,” of course, is a metaphor depicting the Christian life as a race – see Gal. 5:7; 1 Cor. 9:24-27.

Thus, it was necessary for Paul to make his Jerusalem trip to obtain the agreement of the apostles, not so much as to validate his gospel, but to avoid a major split in the Church between Jew and Gentile. Remember, until Acts 10 with Peter and Acts 13 with Paul, the gospel was preached to Jews only, so that for the first circa ten years of its existence the Church was basically a Jewish one.

In verse 3, Paul states that, “...not even Titus (a Greek) was compelled to be circumcised.” He states that because the Jewish Christians were

still clinging to Old Testament laws no longer valid – the mandatory requirement of circumcision being the primary example. God had made a covenant with their spiritual father Abraham, mandating that all males be circumcised, and if they were not, they had broken God's covenant (Gen. 17:10-14). Jerusalem was the heart of Jewish Christendom. Thus, Titus was a test case of principle for the gospel (and perhaps the reason why Paul brought Titus along with him) that a true believer no longer needed to be circumcised to be a covenant child of God. Today, as Christians, our circumcision is of the heart, not of the flesh (Jer. 4:4a; Rom. 2:28,29).

In **verse 4**, we see that the pressure (successfully resisted) to circumcise Titus was "...because of the false brethren." These were no doubt the Judaizers who were a plague to Paul throughout his ministry (see 2

Cor. 11: 3,4,13-15). Notice the “liberty” versus “bondage” contrast that Paul makes. Liberty only comes to those who are “in Christ,” that is, regenerate, and that liberty is from the bondage to our sins which is made manifest by the Law (Rom. 7:7,8). The “bondage” referenced then would be the yoke of the Law (Gal. 5:1). The Law, of course, has a threefold purpose: (1) convict us of sin; (2) act as a schoolmaster leading us to Christ; and (3) show us how the Christian life is to take shape.

Fortunately, in **verse 5** Paul did not yield to the pressure to circumcise Titus. His resistance was immediate and unyielding, and for a specific purpose, “...so that the truth of the gospel might remain with you.” The gospel expresses truth, because it is founded on He who is the Truth (John 14:6; Rom. 8:2-4).

**Verse 6a**, coupled with **verse 9b**, makes the basic point of this section – the approval of Paul’s gospel and calling to the Gentiles by the apostles. Pieced together it would read like this: “From those who were of high reputation....gave to me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship that we might go to the Gentiles.” Take note, that Paul is not impressed by title or reputation (see also 1 Cor. 4:3,4), and the reason why is because “...God shows no partiality” (lit., “God does not receive the face of a man”). Interestingly, in 2 Cor. 10:7a, Paul chides the Corinthians in the same manner when he [literally] says, “You are looking at things according to the face.” How guilty are we of showing partiality by looking at things only outwardly, “according to the face?” The “God shows no partiality” statement is repeated later by Paul in his letter to the Romans (Rom. 2:11) where it is specifically in the context of the gospel. Paul concludes verse

6 with the bold statement that the apostles “...contributed nothing to me.” Paul had been well taught through a revelation by the Lord, spending over three years in Arabia.

In **verse 7**, Paul gives us the results of his Jerusalem visit with the apostles: (1) he was entrusted with the task of bringing the gospel to the Gentiles; (2) Peter was to be his counterpart to the Jews. Yet neither was to the exclusion of the other (Acts 10:34ff; Acts 13:16ff). An important side benefit of this meeting was this: If Paul’s gospel was fully accepted by the apostles, so must Paul’s apostleship be by the Galatians. Thus, he speaks with authority. Moreover, verse 7 says that Paul “...had been entrusted with the gospel.” The verb “entrusted” is in the perfect tense in the Greek, meaning a past act whose effects continue on into the present.

In verse 8, because Peter was recognized as the early leader of the New Testament church (Acts 1:15; 2:14; 3:12; 4:8; etc.), Paul states that God was (just as) effectively working through his preaching of the gospel as He was so doing through Peter. The verb “effectively worked” comes from *energew* from which we get the English word energy. For the use of the same Greek verb see Phil. 2:13 (actually used twice). To serve the Lord takes energy...but then God is the provider of such energy, because to Him must the praise always go and deservedly so (Zech. 4:8; Phil. 4:13).

Verse 8 had actually been a parenthesis and so verse 9 really belongs right after verse 7. After stating that Peter was to “gospelize” the Jews and Paul the Gentiles, in verse 9 he adds “and recognizing the grace that had been given to me” (see Eph. 3:8). It was nothing that Paul did to receive God’s grace, it “*had been*

given” to him. Grace – God’s unmerited favor to undeserving sinners – finds its origin only in God and is His gift to help His children in time of need (Heb. 4:16). And, His grace is always sufficient for the need (2 Cor. 12:9). But like manna, grace cannot be stored. It is given at the time of need and is always sufficient for the need of the time.

Recognizing the “correctness” of Paul’s gospel as well as God’s grace that was with him, James, Peter, and John gave their formal approval for Paul to pursue the Gentiles with the gospel. It is interesting to put together three verbs of response by the apostles to Paul as found in verses 7 & 9 and see thereby the sequence. First, seeing that Paul had been entrusted with the gospel to the Gentiles, and second, recognizing the grace given to Paul, and third they gave the right hand of fellowship. God has given the Christian a mind to be

used in his service (Rom. 12:1,2 ; Eph. 4:22-24). In **verse 10**, the apostles ask Paul to also remember the poor. In context, the poor would be those among the Palestinian churches. It is interesting that Jesus said, “The poor you always have with you, and whenever you wish you can do them good” (Mark 14:7, emphasis added). So, man’s thoughts of wiping out poverty are nothing but hubris. The poor are here for a reason. Will we “do them good,” as Jesus said? (Matt. 25:34-36).

**Verse 11** begins a new thought and situation. Historically it fits in at Acts 15:35, following the Jerusalem Council meeting. Shortly after Paul returned from Jerusalem to Antioch, Peter made a return visit to Antioch where this incident occurred. Since Pentecost, this is the only instance of one apostle correcting another apostle. Paul says he “opposed” Peter, the verb opposed being in the aorist tense, com-

monly used for a past event. The idea is once the situation was dealt with, it was over. Paul says that Peter “stood condemned,” literally “having been condemned.” “Condemned” is the only word that can be used to translate the Greek. Peter knew better and so stood without excuse as an apostle (see Acts 10:15,28,34,47 plus the results of the Jerusalem Council – Acts 15:28,29).

Notice (v.11b) that Paul opposed Peter “to his face.” Moreover, Paul did so “in the presence of all” (v. 14). When a fellow Christian is living in a sinful manner are we willing to confront him? And if he is doing so in public, are we willing to confront him in public? Biblically, we should be willing.

**Verse 12** shows the change in the process taking place (“Peter began to withdraw” – shown by the imperfect tense). Like so many sins, the act can begin slowly but then end up consum-

ing us. Prior to the coming of the Judaizers who professed Christ but clung to certain Old Testament beliefs (in this case the need for circumcision – see Gen. 17:9-14, esp. v. 14), Peter, from his experience at the house of Cornelius (Acts 10), knew that it was perfectly acceptable in God's eyes to eat with (uncircumcised) Gentiles. But good old peer pressure caused him to withdraw and hold himself aloof from the Gentiles when the Jewish Christians arrived. Ah yes, the fear of what others think of us has damaged many a Christian witness (see Prov. 29:25). May we fear, rather, our great and awesome God, which is the beginning of wisdom (Prov. 9:10; Heb. 10:31).

**Verse 13** clearly shows us the power of example, especially of a person in a leadership role. As James warns us, “Let not many of you become teachers, my brethren, knowing that as such we shall incur a stricter

judgment” (lit., greater condemnation), James 3:1. So powerful was Peter’s (sinful) example that “the rest....even Barnabas” joined Peter in his “hypocrisy” (used twice in that short verse). The Greek verb translated “joined in hypocrisy” (*sunupokrinomai*) literally means “joined with (him) in playing the hypocrite.” As Paul so aptly put it, “Let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall” (1 Cor. 10:12). We never “arrive” to perfect sanctification in this life. Rather, it is an ongoing pilgrimage, fraught with spiritual dangers and battles. DAILY commitment of our lives to the Lordship of Christ is vital. DAILY confession and repentance of our sins – most especially in our thought life – is vital. DAILY dying to ourselves is vital. DAILY recognizing our total inability to live the Christian life by ourselves and thus our total dependence on the Lord to so do is vital. DAILY, consciously turning to Him for His mercy and grace and empower-

ment is vital if we desire to live for His glory. Only as the desire and focus of our lives are so arranged will we consciously experience the outworking of grace in our lives and the joy that accompanies it. But, let it be understood that none of the foregoing will see the light of day without the grace and enablement of the Lord. In addition, it is His desire that we so live, so that His grace and enablement will be available to those who ask in faith believing. Remember, God's ultimate goal for our lives is to conform us to the image of the Lord Jesus Christ, so that when we see Him, we will know Him, because we will be like Him (Rom. 8:29; 1 John 3:2).

In **verse 14**, Paul continues that when he saw that the Christian Jews were not "straightforward about" (NASB), the Greek can also be translated "being consistent with" or "making progress toward" (Paul continues) "the truth

of the gospel,” he responded. Regardless of the choice of translation, the verb is in the present active indicative which is the same as the simple present in English. This was an ongoing, present situation when Paul confronted it. He did not wait in hopes that the (sinful) situation would correct itself. He knew that committed sin grows like cancer and must be dealt with expeditiously. Yet, Paul did not act hastily. He waited until “...even Barnabas was carried away” (v. 13b). The sin Peter had committed was to make two groups of Christians, relegating the Gentile (uncircumcised) Christians to second class citizenship in the Kingdom of God (cf. Gal. 3:28,29). Thus, a public sin requires a public chastisement (1 Tim. 5:20). Notice how Paul brings together the words “truth” and “gospel.” They belong together, of course, because the gospel is the good news of what Christ has accomplished at Calvary, and Christ is the personification

and embodiment of Truth (John 14:6). Notice also how verse 14 draws to a close. Peter was so taken by what the Christian Jews from Jerusalem thought of him that he “compelled” (also translated “forced”) the Gentiles to live like Jews (cf. Col. 2:16-23).

In **verse 15**, Paul makes an interesting statement: “We are Jews by nature, and not sinners among the Gentiles.” Paul, if you will, is using Jewish language. The Jews thought of Gentiles as “sinners,” even “dogs.” The Jews had the Law of God and strove after righteousness. By contrast (in Jewish thinking), the Gentiles were without the Law and didn’t strive after righteousness.

In **verse 16**, Paul now returns to “Christian” language. In a somewhat round-a-bout way, Paul expresses a foundational truth of the Christian faith, namely, that the just (righteous) man shall live by faith (Hab. 2:4; Rom.

1:17 Gal. 3:11; Heb. 10:38). May the Lord give us an ongoing hunger to live godly lives, by faith, to His glory. Paul writes, “...knowing that a man (*anthropos*, meaning “mankind”) is not justified by (the) works (of the Law) but through faith (in Christ Jesus,” emphasis added). The underlining and parenthesis are meant to drive home the point: Man is not justified by works but through faith. What works? The works of the Law. Faith in Whom? Faith in Christ Jesus. Faith is not ethereal. Rather, faith has a tangible object, namely, the Person and work of Jesus Christ. That is why our religion is called CHRISTianity. It is based on Who Christ is and what He has done at Calvary.

Paul began our above quote with “knowing that a man, etc.” The Greek for knowing in this case is *oida* which is different from the usual word used. It means to know in the sense of understanding and can be so translated (see

Prov. 2:6, Septuagint). So, knowing salvation is by grace through faith is more than just an intellectual knowledge (though it certainly includes that). It is a deep within, Spirit-attested truth which the regenerated (“born again”) believer understands and willingly embraces with his whole being.

It is interesting to note how important this doctrine is. In verse 16 alone, Paul basically repeats the justified by faith not works doctrine three times. It is as if he were saying, “Do you grasp this important, foundational truth, dear Galatians, I mean really understand it? It is vital to your Christian lives.” And, in fact, only by understanding this biblical truth does all the glory go to God. God is a jealous God Who shares His glory with no one (Ex. 34:14).

At the heart of this, of course, is justification. For a person to be justified is to be declared righteous by God. It is a forensic (legal) term

whereby God, as Judge, renders a verdict in which the righteousness of Christ is imputed to the person. To impute means to credit something to a person. Synonyms for impute would include to attribute, assign, or ascribe. In this case, God the Father imputes Christ's righteousness to the new believer thereby justifying him in God's eyes. In imputation we gain no righteousness of our own. It is Christ's righteousness which is attributed or assigned (imputed) to us.

So, regarding justification we could say: It is an act of God alone (Rom. 8:30,33,34; 1 Cor. 1:30). God is justifying the ungodly (Rom. 4:5). It is not of works (Rom. 3:20). It is by grace (Rom. 3:24). It is by faith (Rom. 5:1). It is through Christ's shed blood (Rom. 5:9). It is through Christ's righteousness (Rom. 5:18,19). Notice, there is no "me, myself or I" in there!

Also interesting is that Paul uses three different prepositions in verse 16 which are all translated “in” Christ by the NASB (and can so be translated). The first “through faith in Christ Jesus” is *dia* which conveys means and thus could be correctly translated “through faith by means of Christ Jesus,” conveying the idea that Christ Himself is the means by which we are enabled to believe (or have faith). The second preposition used is *eis*, which can also be translated “into” or “upon.” The idea here is that Christ is the object of one’s faith; it is placed upon Him. The third preposition is *ek*, the most common translation of which is simply “from.” But, and here perhaps is the clue, it means from in the sense of “out from.” Could we say, putting it in context, “be justified by faith out from Christ,” that is, our faith (and justification) are sourced in Christ and emanate from Him? It certainly makes biblical sense and gives God all the glory.

Let's strip verse 16 to its basic elements. Paul says: 1) man is not justified by works but by faith in Christ Jesus; 2) he believes in Christ Jesus to be justified by faith in Christ not by works; 3) by works no flesh shall be justified (Rom. 3:20; James 2:10). Suffice it to say, the two verbs translated "justified" in verse 16 are both in the passive, affirming again that it is a work of God, so graciously done to us, for us, and in us. To Him be the glory, forever and ever, amen.

To understand what Paul is saying in **verse 17**, we must make verse 16 parenthetical. In other words, verse 17 immediately follows verse 15 in Paul's thought process. What he is saying is that the Jewish Christians, in seeking justification by faith in Christ have to come face-to-face with the fact that they too are sinners, just like the Gentiles. It would have been a shocking realization to the Jewish Christians

who looked with disdain on Gentiles, calling them “Gentile dogs,” that in God’s eyes they are on the same sinful “level” as the Gentiles. Does that make Christ a minister of sin, Paul asks, and immediately and emphatically responds, “May it never be!” While not in the Greek, the King James most emphatically says, “God forbid!”

In **verse 18**, Paul continues his thought aimed directly at the Jewish Christians while phrasing it as if talking about himself. He says that if they “...rebuild” (better, “restore”) what they had destroyed....” What is he talking about? He is talking about their returning to the Law with all its rules and regulations, to say nothing of the sacrificial system. If they do so they will “...prove themselves to be a transgressor” in their claimed faith in Christ alone for salvation by putting themselves back under the Law. Remember, salvation is by grace

through faith, not as a result of works (Law) that anyone should boast (Eph. 2:8,9). The writer of the book of Hebrews spent most of the book exhorting the Jewish Christian “audience” on the same point, demonstrating how much “better” (appears 13 times in Hebrews) Christ was/is than the Law.

In **verse 19**, Paul truly personalizes his point through the use of the stand-a-lone personal pronoun “I” (*ego* in the Greek) and places it first in the sentence for emphasis. Literally, verse 19 would read, (I am going to translate *dia* [“through” in your Bibles] as “by means of”, a more exacting translation in context): “(For) I by means of (the) Law to (the) Law died, in order that to God I might live.” Paul’s point here is clarified when we look at Romans 7:1b,4a,6. Paul says the Law has jurisdiction over a person as long as he lives, but that Christians were made to die to the Law

through their union with Christ in His death, so that they are now released from the Law and serve in the newness of the Spirit, not in the oldness of the letter of the Law.

**Verse 20** basically divides into two parts. First, what has happened to Paul in his union with Christ, and second, the resulting fruit of that transformation in his life. Again, Paul uses the emphatic **I** (*ego*). The verb translated “crucified with” (*sustaurow*) more literally means “crucified together with” and can also be translated “co-crucified.” So, Paul says, “**I** (emphatic) have been co-crucified with Christ...” Now that is identifying with Someone! Rom. 6:3-7 amplifies this point, especially verse 6 which reads, “...our old man was crucified with (Christ)...that we should no longer be slaves to sin...” Here in Galatians 2:20, co-crucified is in the perfect passive indicative. That conveys two important

points. First the perfect conveys a past action whose effects continue on into the present. Secondly, the passive means that the co-crucifixion was an action done unto Paul by God. Paul had nothing to do with his co-crucifixion with Christ. Because of this co-crucifixion with Christ by God, Paul continues, "...it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me..." This parallels Phil. 1:21 where Paul says, "For to me, to live is Christ...." and Col. 3:4a, "Christ who is our life." To complete the meaning of this thought we need to hear the words of Jesus in John 15:5b, "...he who abides in Me...bears much fruit; for apart from Me you can do nothing." Apart from Christ we can do lots of things, of course, summarized in the word "sin." But, to bear the fruit of the Spirit, we must first be co-crucified with Christ and then daily abide in Him (see Phil. 4:13). God must receive all the glory.

We had said above that verse 20 is basically divided into two parts. Part one (covered above) deals with what happened to Paul in his union with Christ – he had been co-crucified with Christ, and it was no longer Paul who lived but Christ lived in him.

We continue with part two of verse 20, namely, the resulting fruit of that transformation in Paul's life. Paul realizes that he has now (since regeneration) been empowered by Christ through the present indwelling of the Spirit of Christ (Rom. 8:9b,10), but he still has to continue to live in this life "in the flesh." Therefore, it is a walk of faith ("I live by faith"), however not an aimless faith but one rooted in a Person ("in the Son of God") Who demonstrated His love for Paul ("Who loved me") while Paul was yet dead in his sins (Eph. 2:4,5) by dying on the Cross for Paul ("delivered Himself up for me"). Think about that. Here is

Paul, not only a sinner, spiritually dead in his sins, but actively persecuting Christ through His Church (1 Cor. 15:9; Acts 26:14,15). For this man Christ suffers an agonizing death on the Cross, taking upon Himself the wrath of God for all of Paul's sins. Amazing! Yet we can substitute our name for Paul, can we not?

Two closing thoughts on verse 20. First, Paul uses the personal pronoun translated "me" twice in the verse showing how each and every salvation is individual. As someone has said, "God has no grandchildren." Secondly, the verbs "I live" used twice by Paul are both present active indicative in the Greek, meaning that the life we live as Christians is an ever-present, day-by-day life of faith.

**Verse 21** is a perfect example of where context is vital to correctly interpreting Scripture. Paul is saying, "Look Peter and Barnabas (and the rest of you Judaizing Christians) **I** do not nul-

lify (or, “declare invalid”) the grace of God as you have by your actions (Gal. 2:12,13), for if righteousness comes through the Law – which your actions seem to imply – then Christ died needlessly.” (See 2 Cor. 5:21). Verse 21, then, is a further rebuke, especially to Peter. Either God’s grace in Christ is all-sufficient, Paul effectively says, or it is nothing. Choose, Peter (and us)!

## **4**

### **CHAPTER THREE**

**Here is a summary of chapter three:**

1. The Galatians received the gospel not by works but by faith (vs. 1-5).
2. Abraham, the father of the faith of believers, received the gospel by faith (vs. 6 – 9).
3. The works of the Law bring a curse, versus the blessings brought by faith (vs. 10 – 14).
4. God's covenantal promise to Abraham's seed – Christ – is not invalidated by the Law (vs. 15 – 18).

5. The Law, added due to sins, cannot impart eternal life but convicts of sin and acts as a tutor bringing men to faith in Christ (vs. 19 – 26).
6. All mankind who are baptized into Christ belong to Him as Abraham's offspring according to promise (vs. 27 – 29).

In verse 1, Paul now applies this same teaching to the church in Galatia (and of course to the church as a whole). There is a progression in Paul's argument. He begins with his own personal experience (Gal. 1:13 – 17), then Christian (church) history (Gal. 2:1,7,9,10), then the Galatians' personal experience (Gal. 3:2-4), then the experience of Abraham (Gal. 3:6 – 9), and finally the testimony of Scripture (Gal. 3:10 – 12). Thus, Paul is saying to the Galatian church, "Look, I've experienced the truth

of grace over Law, church history affirms that (Acts 15 – the Jerusalem Council), you people have personally experienced that truth, the father of the faith Abraham (Rom.4:11,16) was saved by grace through faith, not the Law, and finally, the Word of God confirms that truth.” No wonder Paul begins chapter three with “O foolish Galatians.” It reminds one of Jesus’ comments to the disciples on the road to Emmaus after His resurrection. For three-and-one-half years He had been teaching them. Yet, they believed not. ”O foolish men and slow of heart to believe...” said Jesus. Are we that way sometimes? Does the Lord not have to repeatedly teach us on various points in life? Does He not effectively say at times, “O foolish.....”

Continuing with verse 1, Paul is chiding the Galatians for wanting to return to the Law (works), leaving behind faith as the basis for

their justification before God. The sin of pride was the fundamental basis for the fall (Gen. 3:6), and it is a sin that still tugs on the heart of even regenerate man...most especially in America, where pride of accomplishment via one's works is highly rewarded. But, Paul calls such reasoning "foolish," asking who has "bewitched" them (the Greek can also be translated "placed under a spell")? He reminds them that before their very eyes – not something done in secret – Christ was "publicly portrayed" (also translated "put on public display," even "written about") as crucified. So, this wasn't some esoteric event made aware to only an elite few (1 Cor. 15:6). No, this crucifixion was a public display, even written about, and done so, Galatians, before your very "eyes." You, therefore, stand without excuse. The crucifixion of Christ (and the meaning thereof) was central to Paul's preaching wherever he went (see 1 Cor. 2:2).

In **verses 2-5**, Paul asks a series of questions that are really an amplification of one: What is the basis of your salvation, Galatians? The questions are related and sequential, requiring the Galatians to think through the basis of their salvation. Paul begins at the point of a believer's initial, self-realization of his salvation, namely, regeneration ("Did you receive the Spirit..."). He asks, "...Did you receive the (Holy) Spirit by the works of the Law or by the hearing of faith?" Pointed. Appropriate. Works? Faith? Choose...for there are no other choices (Rom. 10:17; Heb.4:2). It is clearly an either/or situation, Law, or faith. Confident that the believers will answer "faith," Paul continues in **verse 3**, "...Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?" Again, Paul presents them with an either/or situation. The "flesh" in this context would mean their own personal efforts, which is to say, works (Rom. 8:13). How many

Christians try and serve the Lord in their own strength and then wonder why their efforts bear no fruit? The Christian walk is a daily realization of our dependence on the Lord to accomplish anything for His kingdom (John 15:5b; Phil. 4:13). That, of course, requires humility and is why Christ tells us that if we wish to follow Him, we must 1) deny ourselves, 2) take up our cross (an instrument of death), and 3) do so daily (Luke 9:23,24; 1 Cor. 15:31; 2Cor. 4:10).

In verse 4, Paul continues on the assumption that the Galatians are (even if some reluctantly) agreeing with him. A true Christian, who will live out his life in public, will sooner or later suffer tribulation of some sort (John 16:33; 1 Pet. 4:12,14,16). Based on Paul's comment in this verse, the Galatians had so suffered. And so, Paul asks almost rhetorically, "Did you suffer so many things in vain, if indeed it

was in vain?” (emphasis added). Interestingly, the Greek verb translated “suffer” (*pasko*) can also be translated “experience.” May we not conclude that the Lord wants us to profit from our experiences (positive or negative), especially in light of Paul’s concluding clause “...if indeed it was in vain?”

Paul concludes his questions in verse 5 by reminding them of the fruit the Holy Spirit had borne through them and uses the Greek word *dunamis*, translated “miracles,” from which we get the English word “dynamite.” He does so to emphasize the impossibility of it being a purely human accomplishment. These “deeds of power” (alternate translation), Paul reminds them, are such as to demand them being accomplished by the Holy Spirit, not by the deeds of their own flesh. So, Paul’s concluding question is whether or not God accomplished these miracles among them,

“...by the works of the Law or by hearing with faith?” Is it because you, Galatians, kept the Law perfectly (Matt. 5:48), or because of your faith in Christ? Works or faith: choose....yet isn't the answer obvious, Galatians? Perhaps that is a good question via which to remind ourselves of one of the three solas of salvation: by faith alone.

As mentioned at the outset of this commentary on Galatians, Paul's theology stems primarily from the Pentateuch, with Abraham as his starting point. See Genesis 12:1-3; 15:5,6; 17:1-14; 22:1-18 (Isaac a type of Christ); John 8:56; Romans 4 (entire chapter); Gal. 3:6-9, 13-18, 28,29 ; 4:22-28; Heb. 11:7-12.

In verse 6, Paul now points to Abraham – the father of the faith of us all, both subjectively (Rom. 4:11) and objectively (Rom. 4:16). (*kathos* is better translated “just as”). “Just as Abraham believed God...,” Paul begins. Paul

could point to no higher human source of faith exercised than Abraham. Belief is faith put into action. The Greek form of “believed” here shows that it was a settled decision. Notice that true, saving faith always has an object and that object is always God. Abraham didn’t just believe; he believed in God! And what was the fruit of that God-given faith (Eph. 2:8,9)? The Messiah’s righteousness was imputed (“reckoned” in our Bibles) to Abraham. How can that be? Just as we Christians look back on the Christ Who has come and accomplished redemption, so the true Old Testament believer looked forward to the Messiah Who was to come and accomplish redemption (Job 14:14,15; 16:19; 19:25-27; Heb. 11:39,40). Job was considered a contemporary of Abraham. Confidence in God results in obedience to God. That is why Jesus could say (in order to separate the true disciple from the pretender),

“If you love Me, you will keep My commandments” (John 14:15, see also v. 21).

Having established the primacy of Abraham as a human example of true faith, Paul, in **verse 7**, draws a conclusion. “Therefore, know (with certainty) that it is those who are of faith (not works) that are sons of Abraham.” To be “of faith” means to live a life that is characterized and controlled by faith. Moreover, it is not physical descent (“With the wicked life he leads, it’s hard to believe his parents are such committed Christians”) but spiritual likeness that makes a true son of Abraham (John 8:39,40; Rom. 2:28,29; Phil. 3:3).

In **verse 8**, Paul moves from the subjective example of Abraham to the objective source of the Scriptures to further support his salvation-by-faith-not-works thesis. Paul says the Scripture would foresee that God would justify the Gentiles (also translated “nations”)

by faith. Notice that it is God who (sovereignly) justifies. Man is the recipient of God's sovereign work. And, much to the surprise of many Christians, the gospel was preached to Abraham! That was about 2,000 years before the incarnation. Actually, the first proclamation of the gospel (which means "good news") can be found in Gen. 3:15, right after the fall of Adam & Eve. The phrase in verse 8 of "preached the gospel beforehand" is actually one word in the Greek, namely, *proeuangelizomai*, which literally translated means "to proclaim good news in advance." In advance of what? In advance of the actual, historical event (Calvary). And, the gospel preached beforehand to Abraham was, "All the nations (Gentiles) shall be blessed in you." That was taken from Gen. 12:3c. In its historical context (Gen. 12:1-3), God chooses Abraham (Abram at the time), sends him forth on a journey requiring faith, promises him not only great per-

sonal blessing, but to be the father of a great nation (Israel), and further promises that he will be a blessing which will result in all the families of earth being blessed as well. Interestingly, Paul takes the exact same sentence in Galatians and substitutes the word “nations” (he could have used “Gentiles,” same word in the Greek) for the word “families.” The blessing of these Gentiles would point forward to the New Testament church, as especially Romans 4 and Galatians 3 & 4 demonstrate, tied in with Abraham and the covenant God made with him..

The gospel – the good news of God’s redemption of mankind – appears in different forms throughout the Bible, all of which point to Christ as types. In Gen. 3:15 it is the seed of the woman (Christ) who will bruise (Satan) on the head. In Ex. 12:1-4, it is the protecting blood of the Passover Lamb (a type of Christ). In

Lev. 17:11 it is “...the life of the flesh (which is) in the blood (which is) given to (us) on the altar which (blood) makes atonement for (our) souls.” In Job 19:25-27, it is our “...Redeemer who lives” and will “take His stand on the earth....who we will behold with our own eyes.” In Isa. 53 and 55:1 it is the Suffering Servant Who bids “...everyone who is thirsty to come to the waters...” and to do so “...without money and without cost.” In Ezek. 36:25-27 it is God Who will “...sprinkle clean water on (us) and we will be clean” (justification) and, will “give (us) a new heart and put a new spirit within (us)” (regeneration), and will “put His Spirit within (us) and cause (us) to walk in My statutes...” (sanctification). In Hab. 2:4, it is, “But the righteous will live by his faith.” In Matt. 3:2,8 the gospel was “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand (and) bring forth fruit in keeping with your repentance” (see also Luke 3:18). In John 3:3,5, it is “...unless one

is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God....unless he is born of the water and the Spirit he cannot enter the kingdom of God” (see John 3:10). And finally, in Acts 20:21, Paul expresses the gospel to the Ephesian elders, saying that he had been “...solemnly testifying to both Jews and Greeks of repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.” We see then that there is only one book of life (Rev. 20:12; cf. Mal. 3:16-18) in which one’s name can be found, which will result in salvation. And, that book of life contains the names of those whom God has caused to respond to the gospel, starting in Genesis 3:15 and appearing repeatedly in its appropriate form for its historical setting on through Revelation 14:6,7 where an angel flying in midheaven preaches the eternal gospel to those who live on the earth before the final judgment.

In verse 9, Paul draws a conclusion. Having demonstrated that Abraham is the supreme example of faith (re-reading Gen. 11:26 – 12:9 and placing it in its historical context will confirm why), Paul then draws a conclusion, “So then, those who are of faith are blessed with Abraham, the believer.” There is a little Greek word there – *sun* – which, when associated with the verb (in this case) “blessed” strengthens the verb. So, it is more precisely translated “are blessed together with Abraham,” demonstrating our close, spiritual association with Abraham. Moreover, the verb translated “blessed” is present passive indicative showing that the blessing is something that is ongoing (present) and given to us (passive) by God. The same underlying thought of Gal. 3:9 is found in Gal. 3:29 and Rom. 4:22-24.

Having established the exclusivity of faith for salvation, using both the example of Abraham

and confirming it by Scripture, Paul, in verse 10, demonstrates the disastrous results of substituting the Law for faith as one's means of attaining salvation. Under "faith" one is "blessed" (by God), while under the Law one is "cursed" (also by God). Notice, "...as many as are of the works of the Law." The Law dominated all phases of the life of the Old Testament Jew (read Leviticus). Moreover, God only has one standard, namely, perfection (Matt. 5:48). Thus, if a person does not perform and conform to all of the Law – and do so for his entire life – Paul says he is cursed (see Rom. 9:30-32). This is spoken of an Old Testament Jew who tried to justify himself by keeping the Law.

In summary, then, verse 10 says that the Law, by its very demands, brings a curse, because it demands perfect and total obedience – an impossibility for sinful man. As verse 10 makes clear, we would need to "....abide by all things

written in the book of the Law....” That leaves no exceptions for an entire life and thus the impossibility of doing so.

In **verse 11**, Paul shows that the Law was never designed by God as a means of justification, rather, faith was. He then quotes Hab. 2:4, “The righteous man shall live by faith.” After Habakkuk grasps the truth of the just quoted verse – having previously had a question-and-answer session with God – he exults and rejoices in the Lord (read Hab. 3:17-19). The Greek adversative particle that begins **verse 12** (*de*) is best translated “but.” So doing, verse 12 continues the thought of verse 11 saying, “But, the Law is not of faith...” That says it all. Then Paul drives home a vital point, namely, that those who choose to justify themselves before a holy God by works of the Law, “...shall live by them.” Again, Paul drives home the fact that choosing Law as a means of justification

requires a life of (perfect) obedience to the Law. Interestingly, the Greek verb translated “shall live” (*zao*) is in the future middle indicative. The middle means that the subject is acting in some way that concerns himself, in this case self-justification by works. He does it himself, without God’s help. One could say: Lean on law, you lean on self. Lean on faith, you lean on Jesus Christ.

Realizing the fundamental gravity of the subject of works versus faith, Paul continues the subject in **verse 13**. This is what is known theologically as the “ransom” concept. Its most clear expression in the Old Testament is found in the book of Ruth, where Boaz ransomed Ruth. Here in verse 13 the Ransomer (if I may) is Christ “...who redeemed us from the curse of the Law...” And, how did He do it? “...having become a curse for us...” He was/is our Substitute. Paul then ends the verse quoting Deut.

21:23, “Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree.” In context, that refers to a person who has so egregiously sinned as to be worthy of death in God’s eyes...as we all are apart from Christ. (See also on this subject 1 Pet. 1:18,19; 2:24; 2 Cor. 5:21). One final point on this verse: the Greek word translated “redeemed” is *exagorazo*, which can also be translated “to set free.” Truly, Christ does set us free from both the guilt and the power of sin.

In **verse 14**, Paul tells us why Christ set us free (redeemed us), and in doing so he uses a common Greek form called “*hina* plus the subjunctive,” which expresses a purpose clause. So, going back to the major thrust of verse 13 and carrying it over to verse 14, we would read it as follows: “Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law...(for the purpose that) in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles (i.e., to us).” Paul is not

finished, however, and again he uses a second purpose clause. He says that the blessing of Abraham will come to us through Christ's redemption of us, "...so that we might receive the promise of the (Holy) Spirit through faith." What we have here are two purposes of God. First, the objective purpose of our receiving the blessing of Abraham (vs. 6-9), which is justification by faith, and then the subjective purpose of our receiving the promise of the Holy Spirit (v. 2), again by faith. The question that arises is, why does Paul spend fifteen jam-packed verses hammering home the importance of faith versus works?

The importance of stressing faith versus works emanates from man's fallen state in which his sinful nature is in rebellion against God. Remember, Satan's promise to Eve (and Adam) was that they would be like God (Gen. 3:5). Pride and self-righteousness are the pri-

mary sins that resulted from the fall. We see them worked out in so many ways in the ordinary occurrences of life. The little boy (or girl) wants to be first, or the center of attention in whatever the occasion is. The adult man wants to be super rich because of the power it will give him over others. And, all the religions of the world, excluding Christianity, are based on a works salvation of some form. Why? Because works elevate self! By contrast, the Christian is called to humility, to die daily to self, to live a repentant life of faith, totally dependent on Christ. This is diametrically opposed to a works ethic life or religion. Man in his pride wants (at least some) credit for his salvation.

Beginning in verse 15 and continuing on through verse 21, Paul now approaches the underlying subject of faith versus works from a different vantage point. Here he will talk

about the superiority of God's covenantal promises over against the Law. Why? Because someone might argue that the later given Law would annul the earlier given promises of God. Paul begins verse 15 with "Brethren", a reminder to his readers that they are all children of God who will spend eternity together, and thus a call by Paul for unity and open-mindedness to what he is about to say. He continues with a human example, saying that even a "man's covenant" (read "will," the Greek *diatheke* can so be translated) once legally "ratified" cannot be "set aside" or even have "conditions (read "codicils") added to it." Paul then turns the argument back on his dissenters. In effect he says that under these legal conditions the earlier promise trumps the later Law. Paul is emphatic when he says, "...no one sets (the will) aside," or even "adds conditions to it" (emphasis added).

Having established his point (promise trumps Law) using the example of a human will, Paul, in **verse 16**, now moves on to establishing the same basic point using God's promises to Abraham. How masterful! If it is true in a human court, how much more so in God's court! Paul begins verse 16 with "Now" (*de* in the Greek, an adversative particle indicating a transition and so continuity with verse 15). Paul makes clear that God's promises to Abraham from the very beginning included the "seed" (descendent) of Abraham. Then to make certain his listeners (and we as well) did not miss it, Paul says, "He does not say, 'And to seeds' as referring to many, but rather to one, 'And to your seed...'" He then identifies the seed, "...that is, Christ" (emphasis added). Thus, the promise of God the Father was ultimately made to His Son. Dear Judaizers, how is the Law given 430 years later going to set aside a promise of the Father to

His Son? (Heb. 2:16). Moreover, we who are “in Christ” are the body of Christ (Eph.1:22 ,23; Col. 1:24), and therefore the promises to Christ are the promises to us, the corporate “new man” (John 17:6, 20-24). That promise to the “seed,” of course, goes back to the fall in the garden of Eden where Christ is the seed of the woman (Gen. 3:15).

The truth Paul humanly illustrated and established in verse 15 (promise in the form of a human will trumps Law) and then in verse 16 brought to its divine form (promise of the Father to the seed Christ trumps Law), he brings to its logical conclusion in **verse 17**. He opens with, “What I am saying is this...” In other words, “What I mean is this.” Listen up you Judaizers, I’m about to draw a conclusion! “The Law [which came 430 years later] does not invalidate a covenant previously ratified by God” (brackets added).

As we saw in verse 17, Paul said that, “...the Law...does not invalidate a covenant previously ratified by God, so as to nullify the promise.” Here the form of two of the Greek verbs is revealing. The Greek verb *akurow* translated “does (not) invalidate” is in the present active indicative, meaning here that the Law will never invalidate the covenant promise. The Greek verb *prokurow* translated “previously ratified” is a perfect passive participle, meaning here that the previous ratification of the covenant will always be a present reality, and because it is passive, it was ratified by God, not man. Therefore, the Law cannot “...nullify the promise” (see Ps. 105:8-10; Heb. 13:20 [“eternal covenant”]).

In verse 18, Paul confronts his readers with an either/or situation. “If the inheritance is based on law, (then) it is no longer based on a promise...” It cannot be both; it must

be one or the other, says Paul. Then comes that wonderful combination of words – trace them in the Bible sometime – “But God.” Ah yes, the providence of God in the affairs of man (Isa. 40:15,17,22-24). Paul continues, “...but God has granted (the inheritance) to Abraham by means of a promise.” “Has granted” is in the perfect tense meaning that the granting of the inheritance by promise was made in the past but is always continuing in the present. Remember, Abraham is the father of the faith of us all (Rom. 4:11,16), and thus this promise to Abraham is a promise to us as well (Heb. 11:8-10). Finally, regarding verse 18, the Law was never intended to be a means of attaining salvation, for what is earned by obedience cannot be received as a gift. But, through His promise, God has given salvation to us as a gift (Rom. 3:24; 5:17; 6:23).

In **verse 19**, Paul anticipates a response by the Judaizers, namely, that if the Law is seemingly almost irrelevant in light of God's promise, why did God give the Law? What is its use and meaning? Paul says, "...It was added because of transgressions..." The word translated "because of" is better translated for clarity of understanding "on account of," which is an interesting word, namely, *charin* in the Greek. It is the accusative form of *charis* which means graciousness, or even grace. Can we say then, that on account of man's sins, God graciously gave him the Law so that his sin and sinfulness would become manifestly obvious to him, driving him to Christ? The reality is that man may sin in ignorance, but he "transgresses" when he has a recognized standard of what is right or wrong, that is, the Law. The moral portion of the Law was given for three reasons. First, to convict of sin. Second, to act as a school-

master leading to Christ. Third, to show how the disciple's life is to take shape.

Paul in verse 19 now wants to drive home two points. First, that the Law wasn't of human origin. Rather, it was "...ordained through angels, by the hand of a mediator" (Moses, Ex. 24). Therefore, you cannot ignore the Law. However, (point two) the promise was given directly by God to Abraham and so is superior to and supplants the Law whenever they seem to conflict with one another. Paul continues that the Law was given, "...until the seed (Christ) should come to whom the promise had been made." So, the Law was given, in part, in order to prepare man for the coming of Christ by so deepening his sense of sinfulness, daily convicting him of his breaking the Law, that he would not look to the Law as his source of righteousness but to Christ. This latter reaction would, in its practical outworking, only be

valid for God's elect. The rest of unsaved man hardens his heart in defiance of God's law, unwilling to repent (Rev. 16:9,11,21). Even up to His final judgment, God shows His mercy (Rev. 14:6,7).

In **verse 20** we read, "Now a mediator is not for one party; whereas God is one." In the giving of the Law, Moses was the obvious mediator, but Paul doesn't even mention his name. Why? Because the Jews laid such great stress on the importance of Moses. Moreover, a mediator presupposes the existence of at least two other parties between whom he mediates, in this case God and the Jews. So, the Law is a contract contingent upon the participation of both parties. By contrast, the promise (of God) has no intermediary. It is made directly by God with the people and thus is unilateral; there are no two contracting parties. Therefore, whereas the Law was contingent (it

takes two to tango, as the old saying goes), the promise is absolute and unconditional. The Giver is everything; the recipient is nothing ....but blessed.

By the way, did you notice how Paul deftly threw in a part of Israel's age-old creed? He ends the verse with "God is one" (Deut. 6:4b). The Judaizers (in context) could not disagree with that. It was important because of the pantheon of pagan gods that existed, and it continued to be important (to the Jew) with the preaching of the Trinity by Christians – three gods in the Jewish mind. Interestingly enough, the Hebrew word translated "God" and used from Gen. 1:1 right up to Abraham's believing in God in Gen. 15 is "*Elohim*", which is the plural form of "*Elohah*." Moreover, in their creedal statement, "Hear, O Israel! The Lord is our God; the Lord is one" (Deut. 6:4) the Hebrew word translated "one" is "*echad*."

The exact same word is used in the joining of Adam and Eve, “...and the two shall become one flesh” (Gen. 2:24b, emphasis added). Regarding “*echad*,” It stresses unity while recognizing diversity within that unity. It is a plurality in one. A great Old Testament Scripture on the Trinity is Isaiah 48:16 (in the context of verses 12-15).

In **verse 21**, Paul now addresses the seemingly logical conclusion of some of the Judaizers, namely, that the Law and the promise are in opposition to one another. Thus, Paul asks rhetorically, “Is the Law contrary to (can also be translated “against”) the promises of God?” He quickly and emphatically responds, “May it never be!” (or as the KJV puts it, “God forbid!”) The reason for Paul being so emphatic is that if it were possible for Law & promise to contradict one another, it would show contradiction and conflict in the mind of

God Himself. However, the Law itself is holy (Rom. 7:12) and spiritual (Rom. 7:14) and good (Rom. 7:16), and Paul was to state, “I joyfully concur with Law of God in the inner man” (Rom. 7:22). BUT, the Law had/has no power to confer on the believer the righteousness it demands. A recent study by the author uncovered 33 instances in the Old Testament where the words “justice” and “righteousness” appear adjacent to one another. They appear many more times not so physically situated. For example, Ps. 97:2b says, “Righteousness and justice are the foundation of (God’s) throne.” Thus, we have the demand of God in order to come into His presence, namely, righteousness (2 Cor. 5:21) and the promise of God of a welcome reception to those so equipped (1 Cor. 1:30), and the promise of justice to those not so equipped (Rev. 20:11-15). Justice and righteousness remain the foundation of His throne today. Law and gospel

(promise) stand side-by-side with one another in both the Old Testament and the New Testament.

**Verse 22** is divided into two clauses separated by our good friend *hina* (that, in order that) plus the verb in the subjunctive (may, might) which combination means a purpose is being given. In the first clause Paul tells us what the Law has done, “...the Scripture has shut up all men under sin...” Why? Because of the working of the Law (Rom. 7:7-9). Ironically, by being classified as “sinners,” we are eligible for salvation (Matt. 9:12,13). Seen from this angle, the Law is of grace. Paul now gives us the ultimate reason why the Scripture shut up all men under sin, for the purpose “ that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.” Notice that the explanation of the promise is bracketed “by faith....who believe.” Salvation is by faith, not

Law (Gal. 2:16). It is important to note as well that saving faith has an object, namely, “in Christ Jesus.”

**Verse 23** demonstrates the sovereignty of God in regard to the salvation of mankind. Three of the action verbs pertaining to the future (time-wise) potential believers are all in the passive. They speak of what God has done to us and for us. These verbs are (NASB), “kept in custody,” “being shut up to the faith,” and “later to be revealed.” Paul says, “Before faith came (literally, “the faith came,” referring both back to verse 22b and faith in the Person of the incarnate Christ), we were kept in (protective) custody under the law...” (The word “protective” was added in that the Greek word translated “kept” can also be translated “guarded”). After saying we were kept in custody under the law, Paul continues, “being shut up to the faith which was later to be

revealed.” Again, a particular faith and in a specific Person (an abiding reason why Christianity will always be hated in their hearts by non-Christians). If we were, in our unsaved state, “shut up to the faith,” then we must conclude that even faith – saving faith – is a gift from God. All praise to Him!

Beginning with verse 24, Paul presents his closing argument, to extend through the end of the chapter (v. 29). “Therefore,” he says, “the law has become our tutor...” (the verb is in the perfect tense, so that its function as a tutor ever continues on into the present – today’s unbelievers are convicted by the law [Rom. 2:14,15]). The law convicts one of sin – including Christians – but, Paul says, for a specific reason, “to lead us to Christ.” Paul closes the verse with yet another purpose clause, “...that we may be justified by faith.” Thus, the law is indispensable but once having ac-

complished its role of leading us to Christ and through Him justification, its role as a tutor ends, which is the point of verse 25.

In verse 25, Paul draws the first of five conclusions seen in the remaining verses of chapter 3. It is straightforward: “Now that faith has come (in the Person and work of Christ), we (Christians) are no longer under a tutor.” Once faith is operative, there is no room for that of law since the law is principally preparatory. Through faith in Christ, we have obtained full sonship, so that the preparatory restraints of the law are no longer needed. However, the moral aspects of the law still apply to Christians as a mode of living.

In verse 26, Paul draws the second conclusion from the faith/works (law) discussion, speaking obviously to those who have come to saving faith in Christ. A subtle change in pronouns has taken place. Initially Paul ad-

dressed the Gentile Galatian Christians (Gal. 1:2,3, 6-8). Then when Peter failed in his testimony (Gal. 2:11-14), Paul gave his emphasis more to the (Christian?) Judaizers (Gal. 3:15-25). In verse 26, Paul goes from “we” (v. 25) to “you” (v. 26). His instruction now is to the entire body of Christ, Jew & Gentile.

Verse 26 contains the second conclusion from the previous faith/works (law) discussion. Again, it is straight-forward. Both Jews and Gentiles are “all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.” The words “through faith” are more literally “by means of the faith.” Again, it is a particular faith – saving faith – which is the means of salvation. Moreover, “in Christ” is Paul’s commonly used phrase meaning that the person is regenerate, born again, a true Christian.

In verse 27, we have the third, straight-forward conclusion: “All of you who were bap-

tized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.” Some observations. First, verses 26 & 27 both encompass “all” those who claim the name of Christ, Jew, and Gentile. Secondly, “baptized” here would refer to Spirit baptism (realizing that the adult water baptism that follows is an outward sign and seal of the inward Spirit baptism). Moreover, the verb “baptized” is in the passive tense in the Greek, meaning that it is an act done to us by God, further supporting the fact that this is Spirit baptism. Thirdly, “baptized into Christ” (v. 27) and “in Christ” (v.26) are direct synonyms. Fourthly, to “be clothed with Christ” is to have Christ’s righteousness imputed to us (cf. Isa. 61:10; Zech. 3:3,4). Good cross-references dealing with the same subject would be Rom. 6:3-7 and Col. 2:11-13. It is interesting how Paul uses different words to express the same basic idea. In Romans 6, for example, he speaks of our being “baptized into Christ,”

being “buried with Christ,” being “united with Christ,” and being “crucified with Christ,” all synonymous as to their meaning.

In verse 28, Paul gives us his fourth conclusion, namely, that the gospel is universal (see Rev. 5:9; 7:9) and results in (only) one people of God. Thus, neither ethnicity (“neither Jew nor Greek”), nor social status (“neither slave nor free man”), nor gender (“neither male nor female”) have anything to do with whether or not a person is a child of God and part of the body of Christ. In its historical context, this statement was a blockbuster that shook the very foundations of the existing society! “Those Gentile dogs on the same level as we Jews, God’s chosen people? Impossible!” “My slave equal to me? Impossible!” “Inferior women equal to us men? Impossible!” “No,” says Paul, “not only possible, but factually true in the eyes no less of the infinite,

personal, living God. Moreover, He calls you to a oneness in our new, mutual relationship in Christ (cf. Col. 3:11). It is not that the foregoing differences have ceased to exist, rather, that they cease to matter. In other words, there is, in Christ, religious equality (role relationships being another matter). Regarding Paul's call for oneness in the body of Christ see 1 Cor. 12:12-27 (and more briefly, Rom. 12:4,5).

In verse 29, Paul draws his fifth conclusion: If we are "in Christ" then, as with Abraham, our eternal inheritance is according to promise, not works. Thus, Paul has come full circle. The "promise" of God for eternal life is based solely on faith. Works have nothing to do with it. When Paul begins verse 29 with, "And if you are Christ's..." he is not doubting that they are. The Greek *ei de* in context is considered a first-class conditional sentence and does not thereby imply doubt. As a matter

of fact, it could be translated “And since you are Christ’s...” Further, he says, “...you are Christ’s...” the “to be” verb being in the present active indicative, meaning the status is always the same and supportive of their eternal security. Finally, in the concluding thought as it relates to verse 29, Paul says, “If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s seed (singular) heirs (plural) according to promise.” The “seed” of Abraham is Christ, showing that the seed of Abraham is spiritual seed. The “heirs” would point to the corporate body of believers, the body of Christ (Rom. 8:15-17), but notice that includes suffering.



## 5

### CHAPTER FOUR

#### Here is a summary of chapter four:

1. The conversion of the Galatians from spiritual slaves to adoption as sons by God (vs. 1 – 7).
2. The weakness of the Galatians' faith in their returning to pre-Christian observances (vs. 8 – 11).
3. The Galatians' acceptance of Paul when he first preached the gospel to them (vs. 12 – 16).
4. Paul's concern about the wavering faith of the Galatians (vs. 17 – 20).

5. God's covenant of promise illustrated allegorically to confirm its basis in faith, not works (vs. 21 – 31).

By the beginning of chapter 4, one would assume that Paul had thoroughly made his case for justification by faith alone, not by Law (works), powerfully summarized back in Gal. 2:16. Yet he is now to take chapter 4 and hammer further the same central point, but to do so coming at it from another perspective: the sinner's inferiority under the Law. He does so using the "heir" theme.

In **verse 1**, Paul says, "As long as the heir is a child..." The Greek word here translated "child" really means "baby" or "infant." Paul is not talking about his physical state, however, but his mental and spiritual state. Notice that the "baby" is an "heir," that is, he is a son of God, but as long as he is a spiritual baby, Paul continues, "...he does not differ at all

from a slave...” Thus, he is an heir by right but not in fact, even though to quote Paul, “...he is owner of everything.” (See Heb.11:39,40 for the same underlying thought).

In verse 2, Paul continues, “...but he is under guardians and managers until the time previously set by the father.” The guardians and managers would refer to the Law and those who administered it. As previously mentioned, the Law was meant to convict him of sin and act as a schoolmaster driving him to Christ (and to guide him in his life). The time previously set by the father would refer to the coming of the Messiah.

Paul was using an illustration in verses 1,2, and now he applies it in verse 3 when he says (literally), “So also we when we were babies under the elements of the world we were having been enslaved.” That is the literal Greek. When we cross-reference to Heb. 5:12-14 and

Col. 2:8,20 (which see) we get an idea of what Paul means. When we are young in our faith, we tend to be in bondage to the teachings consisting of basic rules of do's and don'ts, and so is anyone who is dependent on the Law for salvation, says Paul in effect.

**Verse 4** begins with “But.” What a wonderful word that is when followed by “God” and referring to His dealings with His obedient children. “But when the fullness of time came...” The servitude of the heir lasts until the time appointed by the father (see v. 2b and Mark 1:15). In our impatience for unanswered prayer, we must remember that God is actively sovereign and has His own timing. When He answers (and He does answer every prayer, even if the answer is “No”), we will know that it is the right answer. Paul continues, “God sent forth His Son...” Notice that God is the initiator in salvation, and more than that, He

does the saving! The Greek verb translated “sent forth” is *exapostello* and the Greek for apostle is *apostolos* so that we see that an apostle is one sent forth by God. Paul says that God sent forth His Son “...being born of a woman, being born under law.” While being born of a woman would certainly speak of the virgin birth (Isa. 7:14), more deeply it refers back to Gen. 3:15 and the seed of the woman, who is Christ (see Gal. 3:16,19). And, of course, Christ was born under the Law, which He came to fulfill. He fulfilled the “...be thou perfect as Thy Father in heaven is perfect” (Matt. 5:48) by His life, death, and resurrection.

**Verse 5** consists of two purpose clauses answering the question, “Why did God send forth His Son?” (v.2). First, “...that He might redeem those who were under the Law.” This is the same basic thought expressed in 3:13 (which see), and it would include both Jew

and Gentile (see 3:14 and Rom. 2:14,15). The Law is called a “curse” (3:13) both because it presents God’s standards unable to be met by sinful man, and because it was/is (wrongly) seen by man as a system of self-justification. Thus, Christ needed to redeem us. The whole idea underlying redemption is the ransom concept, of which the book of Ruth is a beautiful example played out in human terms (Boaz the ransomer and Ruth the ransomee).

The second reason given in verse 5 for God sending forth His Son is “...that we might receive the adoption as sons.” We are actually made members of the family of God (1 John 3:1)! Christ, who by nature was the Son, became a servant, so that we who by nature were servants of sin might become sons of God (cf. 2 Cor. 8:9) Amazing grace! And equally amazing, when God adopted us He imparted to us the Spirit of His Son (Rom. 8:9b,15,16), which

Paul deals directly with in **verse 6**. He says, “...because you are (now) sons (and no longer babies under the Law – v.1) God has sent forth the Spirit...” The verb “sent forth” (one word in the Greek) is the identical Greek word in the identical form (aorist, simple past in this case) as appeared in verse 4. So, first God “sent forth” His Son to redeem us (v.4), and then He “sent forth” His Spirit to cry out from within us (v.6) “Abba Father,” which cry confirms our sonship. Did you notice in verse 6 that the entire Trinity was indicated, to say nothing of their harmonious cooperation in our salvation? What an awesome God we serve! The presence of the Holy Spirit is the absolute assurance of our sonship (Rom. 8:9-11; 2 Cor. 1:22). By the way, even Jesus when on earth addressed the Father with “Abba” (Mark 14:36). Notice also how Paul includes himself in this. He starts out, “...because **you** are sons...” and ends up “God sent forth the Spirit...into

**our hearts...**” An interesting aside: “Abba” is an Aramaic word, and it means “father” (and conveys the idea of “dearest father”). When the Jews came back from the 70-year Babylonian exile (Ezra/Nehemiah time), Aramaic, which is a first cousin to Hebrew, was commonly spoken by them.

In verse 7, Paul concludes his thought which he began in verse 1 and does so starting with a “Therefore.” Moreover, he switches from using the plural to using the singular pronoun to drive home the point that this applies to each and every son of God. He says, “...you are no longer a slave...” which they were, being under bondage to the Law (v.3), even though legally an heir (v.1), “...but a son...” Through the indwelling Holy Spirit there is a self-recognition that we are sons of God (Rom. 8:16). Paul concludes verse 7 saying, “...and if a son, then an heir through God.” The Greek word translated

“if” is *ei* and does not imply uncertainty and is better translated in this context “since.” Notice that Paul stresses not just that he is a son but also that he is an “heir.” Why? To give all the glory to God. In this case, an heir is someone who the Head of the family has chosen to adopt into His family and proclaim as His heir. The son therefore can take no credit for his status as a son and heir. Moreover, have you noticed how Paul has had everything center around God? God sent forth His Son (v. 4). God sent forth the Spirit of His Son (v. 6). God bestowed the inheritance on us (v. 7b). Soli Deo Gloria! It is all by grace. However, may I suggest a reading of Rom. 8:17b,18 and 2 Cor. 4:17 for a more complete understanding.

**Verses 8-11** belong together in which Paul references their unsaved state (v.8), their saved state (v.9), and then their current actions which portray them as if they were back in

their unsaved state (vs.10,11). The Greek is very interesting here, and I am going to emphasize words freely to drive points home. In **verse 8** Paul says, “However, at that time when you did not know God...” Paul uses the Greek verb *oida* for the English “know.” So, in their unsaved state they did not *oida* God. Yet in **verse 9**, Paul says, “But now that you have come to know God...” Here he uses the Greek *ginosko* for the English “know.” When we look at John 14:7, where Jesus is with His disciples at the Last Supper, He says, “If you had known Me...” (*ginosko* - they did know Him, but not yet the Father), “...you would have known My Father also” (*oida* they did not yet know the Father, but...) “...from now on you know Him...” (*ginosko* , they now know the Father). And, in John 17:3 (same scenario), Jesus says, “And this is eternal life, that they may know Thee...” (*ginosko* ). Other examples could be given. So, it seems, as a generaliza-

tion, that *oida* means more of a “know about” (as one Greek dictionary puts it), whereas *ginosko* means more of a really having come to know the person personally.

So, in verse 8 Paul says the Galatians, before Christ, only knew about God; they didn’t personally know Him (Rom.1:21,25). As a consequence, they were slaves to various idols. Idolatry always spells slavery, regardless of the form the idolatry takes (in America today it is primarily self-centered materialism in its multiple forms).

Paul continues in verse 9, “But now that you have come to know God...” (*ginosko*). This is a saving knowledge of God. In the Bible to “know” has a far deeper meaning than just intellectual knowledge alone. That is why it can be used concerning the relationship of God and man and the intimate relationship between husband and wife. But Paul then de-

cides to be more theologically specific and says, “...or rather, to be known by God...” (*ginosko* again). The verb is in the passive. This transfers salvation out of the possibly subjective will of man into the objective will of God (Rom. 8:29,30 – “foreknew” is the Greek *proginosko*, which is our verb *ginosko*, to know, with the preposition *pro* meaning “before” attached to the front of it). Here then Paul is revisiting God’s sovereignty in the effectuation of man’s salvation.

Having again confirmed that they are children of God and cemented it with the fact that it was God who brought it about, Paul then says in verse 9, “...how is it that you turn back again to the weak and worthless elemental things...?” Paul is shocked that after experiencing the free grace of the gospel, the Galatians, under the influence of the false Jewish teachers want to return to a works (Law) sal-

vation. He calls them “weak and worthless elemental things” (see v. 3) because they are unable to save man. Basically, Paul is saying that the Law, as it pertains to salvation, is weak and poor, and the sinner is also weak and poor, and even together they remain weak and poor and cannot bring about salvation. Paul ends verse 9, referencing the weak and elemental things, “...to which you desire to be enslaved all over again.” Paul drives home his point by effectively calling what they are doing “slavery,” a very common social status in those days. The sad point is that they seemingly desired to return to spiritual enslavement. But then again, how very commonplace it is for man to want to earn and “deserve” his salvation. It is kind of like bragging rights before his fellow man.

**Verses 9b – 11** are really one united thought. Paul is shocked that after hearing and accepting the gospel of grace that the Gala-

tians seem to be desiring to turn back to a works type of salvation and thus be enslaved all over again. He illustrates what he means in verse 10 saying, “You observe days and months and seasons and years” (cf. Col. 2:16-18, 20b-23). The Greek verb *paratarew* translated “observe” means more exactly to “watch closely” or “observe carefully.” That is one of the problems with an attempted works salvation; others in the same boat will watch you closely or observe you carefully as to whether or not you are carrying out all those works precisely. It is a vain attempt to earn merit before God, so common in Roman Catholicism.

In verse 11, Paul gives his personal response to this outward spiritual lapse of the Galatians. He starts out, “I fear for you...” The Greek for “fear” is *phobew* from which we get the English “phobia.” Because it is in the intransitive

form and the middle voice, we could literally translate this, “I myself am afraid for you...” Paul was deeply concerned that all of his effort had been for naught, and so he continues, “I myself am afraid for you that perhaps I have labored over you in vain” (cf. 2 Cor. 11:2-4). The Greek verb translated “labored” means to work hard, toil, or struggle. Evangelizing among pagans is hard work, a struggle, because you are in a spiritual battle against “the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places” (Eph. 6:12b). Satan and all his minions hate you and what you are doing and will do all they can to discourage you and cause your defeat. That is why Jesus said, “Apart from Me you can do nothing” (John 15:5b). However, Paul was to later write, “I can do all things through (Christ) who strengthens me” (Phil. 4:13). It all comes down to what Paul wrote to the Romans, “For from (Christ) and through (Christ) and to (Christ) are all things. To Him

be the glory forever. Amen” (Rom. 11:36). The word “labored in vain” can also be translated “to no avail.” Paul was deeply discouraged and concerned for the Galatians.

We see Paul’s state of mind as we begin verse 12, “I beg of you brethren...” This begins a very personal paragraph (vs. 12 – 20). Paul pleads with the Galatians and affectionately calls them *adelphoi* better translated “brothers.” He continues, “...become as I am, for I also have become as you are...” This is a tough one. I believe Paul means something like this: “Return to your walk of faith by grace as I am, for I once wrongly followed a works-righteousness as you are.” Paul finishes verse 12 with, “You have done me no wrong.” This sentence is explained by reading ahead to vs. 13-16. Paul is reflecting on the manner in which the Galatians received him when he first worked among them evangelizing.

In **verse 13**, Paul reminds them of his physical condition when he first preached the gospel to them, “You know that it was during a bodily illness that I preached the gospel to you the first time” (2 Cor. 12:7). Paul wants the Galatians to re-think and reflect on their first meeting and their reception of Paul. And so, in **verse 14** he reminds them that even though the “temptation” was there to “despise” him due to his bodily sickness...even to “loathe” him (the Greek *ekptuo* literally means “spit out”), instead the Galatians “...received (Paul) as an angel of God, as Christ Jesus Himself” (Matt. 10:40). Why then, Paul implies, is their attitude so different towards him now? Why are they listening to the Judaizers? Paul is simply (and understandably) perplexed as to why the Galatians who started so well on the road to salvation are seemingly ending so poorly.

In **verse 15**, Paul asks, “Where then is the sense of blessing you had?” The word translated “blessing” can actually mean “happiness.” The Galatians had obviously realized and experienced the blessing that comes with the freedom of the gospel of grace. The burden of the enslaving works salvation had been lifted in Christ. The blessing, the happiness they experienced in Christ was such, Paul continues, “...if possible you would have plucked out your eyes and given them to me.” Why did the Galatians choose to be willing to “pluck out (their) eyes,” instead of cutting off their arm or leg? I believe it was because the “thorn in the flesh” that God gave Paul (2 Cor. 12:7) was an eye disease. Additionally, in Gal. 6:11, Paul says, “See with what large letters I am writing to you with my own hand.” Finally, in the Greek, “your eyes” is given a forward position in relationship to the verbs associated with it, which is done in the Greek to

give emphasis to the eyes. Remember, Paul's translation to heaven took place approximately AD 33, following which he received the thorn in the flesh, while Galatians was written about AD 48. It should be noted that commentators disagree with me, saying we do not know what the thorn was.

Having set up the Galatians in verse<sup>15</sup> by reminding them of the blessing they experienced upon coming to saving faith and the overwhelming thankfulness of their response to Paul, in **verse 16** Paul now confronts them with a blunt, to-the-point question. "Have I therefore become your enemy by speaking the truth with you?" What irony, yet how commonplace. Paul tells the Galatians the truth and relationally he moves from beloved friend to enemy...simply by speaking the truth! The reality is that true friends will speak the truth even knowing that it may hurt for the moment

(Eph. 4:15,25), while false friends will hide the truth so as to remain in our favor. Which do we want? As for the Galatians, at least for the moment, they were unable to tolerate the truth Paul had for them.

In verse 17, Paul is now referring to the Judaizers who were leading the Galatians astray with their works salvation. This is the approach of all the cults. Paul writes, “They eagerly seek you, not commendably...” The Greek verb *zelousin* is better translated, “They are deeply concerned about you (but) not commendably...” Cultists are eager, ever-pursuing evangelists. Think of the Jehovah’s Witnesses knocking on your neighborhood doors. And, the verb is in the present active indicative, meaning that this pursuit by the Judaizers was taking place at the very time Paul was in the midst of writing this letter. Paul continues, “...but they wish to shut you out, in order that

you may seek them.” Paul here states who are the real enemies and how. The Judaizers want to “shut out” the Galatians from any influence but their own and certainly also from the influence of Paul. Once having succeeded in that goal, the result will be the utter dependence of the Galatians on the Judaizers, so that the Galatians will “seek” the Judaizers.

In verse 18, because Paul is deeply concerned about the Galatians, he makes it clear that being eagerly sought by someone is a good thing if it is done in a “commendable manner” (obviously referring to himself). He concludes this thought with, “...and not only when I am present with you.” So, when Paul was present with them, they were all behind Paul and his gospel of grace, but as soon as Paul was absent, they were readily influenced by the Judaizers. Such fickleness! Yet, this is what happens when the Christian is not well-grounded in the truths of

the Word of God. If Paul was so jealous for them, how much more the Christ who died for them! Christ will have the whole heart of the individual, or He will have none of it.

In verse 19, Paul begins, “My children...” Obviously, Paul means his spiritual children, for it was through Paul’s evangelism that the Spirit of God had caused these Galatians to be born again (cf. 1 Cor. 4:14,15). Paul continues, “...with whom I am again in labor...” Paul compares himself to a mother giving birth to a child. Notice the word “again.” He had been through the “pain” of spiritual childbirth before, and now these same Galatians were leaving the gospel of grace and embracing a gospel of works. So again, Paul must explain the gospel of grace to get them back on the biblical track. He ends with, “...until Christ is formed in you.” Until they have matured in Christ, until the nature of Christ is exhibited

through them by the fruit of the Spirit, until Christ and Christ alone is the focus of their faith, Paul will be in labor over them.

In verse 20, Paul says, “I could wish to be present with you now and to change my tone...” He was conscious that he was restricted by the limitations of time and space (Paul was in Corinth at the time, a good distance from Galatia), and wished he could be with them to hear and see and converse with the Galatians, knowing that the corrective change in them could be brought about more speedily. He finishes his thought (and prepares his listeners for the next stage of development of the works/bondage versus grace/freedom argument) by saying, “...for I am perplexed about you.” What Paul means is that he is unable to understand why they have yielded to the works/bondage temptation after experiencing their freedom in Christ.

In the rest of chapter four (vs. 21 – 31), Paul will vindicate the gospel of justification by faith apart from Law-works using the Old Testament and particularly the life of Abraham, the father of the faith of us all (Rom. 4:11,16; Gal. 3:7,29). Sarah and Isaac are now described as representing all those freedom-loving people who live by faith, as contrasted with Hagar and Ishmael who represent those spiritually enslaved people who live by the Law as it relates to their salvation.

In verse 21, Paul asks the Galatians influenced by the Judaizers, “...do you not listen to the Law?” They neither understand the strict demands of the Law, nor do they understand that the Law contains the germ of grace (e.g., Ex. 20:2; Deut. 5:6).

In verse 22, Paul now speaks of the two sons of Abraham, Isaac, and Ishmael. He is using Abraham because the Judaizers took great

pride in the fact that they were descendants of Abraham (cf. John 8:53). But Paul is also reminding them that Abraham had two sons, not one, and, that there was a remarkable difference between them. As Paul states it, “...one (son) by the bondwoman and one (son) by the free woman.” That difference is not of a physical but of a spiritual nature, representing the contrast of those who live by law and those who live by faith.

In verse 23, Paul contrasts the birth of the two sons. The birth of the bondwoman was “...according to the flesh,” that of the free woman “...according to the promise.” (see here John 1:13; 3:6; Rom. 4:19-21; 8:8,9; 9:6-9,16; Heb. 11:11,12). In essence Paul is saying that one birth was natural (according to the flesh), and one birth was supernatural (according to the promise). That certainly was an obvious truth in the historical setting. Abraham was 100,

and Sarah was 90 at the birth of Isaac. Thus, Isaac's birth was by divine power and became symbolic of all true believers who are (must be) born again of the Holy Spirit (John 3:3,5). Paul will now allegorize the historical situation to make a spiritual truth supporting his argument.

In **verse 24**, Paul is allegorizing the historical situation in order to show to the Galatians that behind the plain meaning of the words there is a great spiritual truth. He says, "This contains an allegory; for these women are two covenants..." Hagar, the slave-woman, represents the Sinaitic (Mosaic) covenant of Law. While God gave this covenant in the context of grace, the Law was/is unable to save anyone. As a consequence, says Paul, it "(bears) children who are to be slaves..."

Trying to keep the Law (works) as a means to salvation enslaves us to the works as

a (failed) means to save ourselves (James 2:10; Rom. 3:20). Notice how Paul connects the “...(covenant) proceeding from Mount Sinai...” with Hagar. Hagar, of course, was a slave. Slaves produce slaves. Incidentally, the verbs “bearing children who are to be slaves...” are both in the present tense. Even today Hagar has her children.

In **verse 25**, Paul now applies the allegorical truth to the present-day situation and specifically to the Jews and Judaizers. “Now this Hagar is Mount Sinai...and corresponds to the present Jerusalem, for she is (also) in slavery...” Jerusalem is no longer the capital of the land of promise but has become that of the land of legalism (Matt. 23:13,15). It still holds true today, for all who trust in the works of the flesh to justify them by keeping the Law before a holy God.

**Verses 26 – 28** are effectively one verse. Paul now contrasts the works/legalism covenant of slavery with the Abrahamic covenant of grace/faith which sets the believer free. In **verse 26**, Paul says, “But the Jerusalem above is free; she is our mother.” Paul refers to the heavenly Jerusalem, for its sons are born through grace by the power of the Holy Spirit, and that is why it is “free” and the “mother” of all true believers (John 8:36; Eph.1:3; Rev. 3:12; 21:2,3).

In **verse 27**, Paul now quotes literally Isa. 54:1. Thus, we must look at the setting of Isaiah 54. It follows, obviously, Isaiah 53 which deals specifically with the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ and the justification (v.11) of believers. [Remember, the chapters and verses of the Bible are purely man-made. The Bible was divided into chapters by Stephen Langton about AD 1228. The Old Testament was

divided into verses by R. Nathan in AD 1448. and the New Testament by Robert Stephanus in AD 1551. The entire Bible divided into chapters and verses first appeared in the Geneva Bible in AD 1560. A second edition of the Geneva Bible came out in AD 1652. The Geneva Bible was the Bible used by Shakespeare, John Bunyan, Oliver Cromwell, and especially by the Puritans. It was the Bible brought over on the Mayflower in 1620]. In Isa. 54:1, Isaiah is proclaiming the results of the Servant's work (Isa. 53) and clearly pointing toward the New Testament Church. Further on in Isaiah 54 it deals with the millennium and eternity. Thus, in verse 27 the "barren woman....not in labor" would speak of the New Testament church because her "children" are not born by Law/works but by the Holy Spirit through the word of faith. Moreover (v. 27b), the time would come when the Gentile Christian church (of which the Galatians are part)

would far outnumber both the unbelieving Jews and the believing, legalistic Jewish Christians. By the way, both verbs of the second line of verse 27, namely, “break forth and shout” are aimed at us Christians and are in the Greek imperative, used for commands. Do I hear a few “hallelujahs?”

Paul, in **verse 28**, now personalizes these foregoing thoughts and applies them to the Galatians. He affectionately calls them “brethren” (also “brothers”) and “children of (the) promise.” Moreover, Paul compares the Galatian believers to Isaac as a fellow child of promise, not works. Thus, as Ishmael, the child of the flesh (works), mocked Isaac, the child of promise (Gen. 21:8,9), so the Jews mocked the Christians.

In **verse 29**, Paul develops the relationship (as fellow believers) of Isaac and the Galatians even further, making, to many Christians, an

eye-opening statement. I am going to bold the key words, using the literal Greek (*hosper* = just as; *houtos* = in the same way) and supply the proper names where the Greek uses the pronoun “he” and “him.” Verse 29 then reads, “But **just as** at that time (Ishmael) who was born according to the flesh persecuted (Isaac) who was born **according to the Spirit, in the same way** it is **now** also.” Just as Isaac was born again, so now we true believers are born again (see Num. 27:18,19; John 1:13). The difference is that in the Old Testament the indwelling Holy Spirit came upon the chosen individuals, whereas, to quote Peter on the day of Pentecost as found in Acts 2:17 (which quotes Joel 2:28), “And it shall be in the last days, God says, that I will pour forth of My Spirit upon all flesh...”, that is upon “every tribe and tongue and people and nation” (Rev. 5:9; 7:9) or “the world” (John 3:16). The other related truth, the “just as...in the same way”

teaches us that we will be persecuted today by unbelievers just as Isaac and the Galatians Christians were. As a matter of fact, to be persecuted is the lot of the true Christian who “walks the talk” (Matt. 5:10-12; John 15:20; 16:33; 2 Tim. 3:12; Rev. 12:13).

In verse 30, we see demonstrated in the conclusion drawn the kindness and the severity of God (Rom.11:22). Works and faith cannot co-exist, and Paul bases his conclusion on Scripture. He writes (again providing the proper nouns), “Cast out Hagar and Ishmael (representing the bondage brought about by works/Law attempted salvation) for Ishmael shall not be an heir with Isaac the son of Sarah” (representing the children of promise, whose salvation is by faith alone). Notice, it is an either/or situation: law/works equals death; faith (in Christ) equals life. No other choices. That is why, of course, Christianity is

the despised religion of the world. All the other religions are works based, glorifying man. By the way, “cast out” above in the Greek is in the form of a command.

In verse 31, Paul now draws his practical conclusion, applying it to the Galatians. Again, he calls them “brethren” (or “brothers”), an affectionate term. He writes, “...we are not children of a bondwoman but of the freewoman.” Notice he uses the article “the” with the freewoman, demonstrating the specificity of the association – Sarah, the wife of Abraham, the father of the faith of us all (Rom. 4:11,16; Gal. 3:7,29) and no one else.



## 6

### CHAPTER FIVE

#### Here is a summary of chapter five:

1. Christ set us free from the Law's yoke of slavery (v.1).
2. To receive circumcision is to seek justification by the Law, whereas Spirit engendered faith is the gospel basis of righteousness (vs. 2 – 12).
3. Our call to freedom in Christ is fulfilled by loving our neighbor as ourselves (vs. 13 – 15).
4. Walk, live, and be led by the Spirit and you will not bear the deeds of the flesh

but will evidence the fruit of the Spirit  
(vs. 16 – 26).

Thought-wise, verse 1 belongs with Gal. 4:31. A new paragraph actually begins with verse 2. In chapters 5 & 6 of Galatians, the truths vigorously defended by Paul up to this point are now applied to our lives. Moreover, the tone of his presentation changes, from an *apologia* (verbal defense) of the true faith (1 Pet. 3:15) to a hortatory approach of strongly urging the Galatians (and us) to take certain courses of action in living out the faith.

In **verse 1**, the carryover from Gal. 4:31 is seen in the word “free” and its derivatives. Verse 31 ended by saying we are children of the freewoman. Verse 1 picks right up on the same note. The Greek literally says, “(For) the freedom us Christ freed...” The verb translated “freed” is in the past tense. The freedom Christ purchased for us is once and for

all. It is finished. But, what does Paul mean when he speaks of freedom? In context he means freedom from the bondage of the Law. In a larger sense, however, freedom means first of all deliverance. Thus, there is deliverance from the power and guilt of sin and the wrath of God (Eph. 2:3-6); deliverance from an accusing conscience (Heb. 10:22); and deliverance from the tyranny of Satan (Heb. 2:14,15). Secondly, freedom also means the state of our Christian walk and life in the Spirit (Gal. 5:13,16,18, 25). As Paul says elsewhere, "...where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty" (2 Cor. 3:17b).

Because of the freedom from the bondage of the Law that Christ has purchased for them, Paul in verse 1 tells the Galatians (using two verbs in the form of a command in the Greek) "stand firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery" (that is, the requirements of

the Law as it relates to salvation). Notice the word “again” as Paul reminds the Galatians that they have escaped from the slavery of the idols of heathenism and should beware about returning to the slavery (this time) of legalism (cf. Matt. 11:28-30). In verse 2, Paul begins with “Behold.” In the Greek, this word in its purpose is equivalent to “truly,” as when Jesus said, “Truly, truly I say unto you...” (e.g., John 3:3,5). The idea is that something very important is about to be said, so it is best you listen up! (As a matter of fact, the Greek *ide* [behold] can actually be translated “listen up.”) Paul then heightens even more the importance of what he is about to say by using the personal pronoun “I” (Greek *ego*) when it is not needed as the Greek verb “say” already contains the pronoun. Similarly, when the high priest asked Jesus if He were the Messiah, Jesus did the same thing. He answered, “*Ego eimi* “ which literally means, “I I am.”

By so responding, Jesus was answering emphatically that He was the Messiah. So, in verse 2 Paul says to the Galatians, “Behold, I Paul I say to you that if you receive circumcision, Christ will be of no benefit to you.” The thought is that by receiving circumcision as per the Judaizers, the Galatians were questioning the sufficiency and efficacy of Christ’s work. The little word “if” is important here as it implies that the Galatians had not yet received circumcision. Paul had caught the problem early enough to “nip it in the bud” so to speak.

In verse 3, Paul reaffirms the point of verse 2. Notice the words “again” and “every.” Paul testifies “again” just in case anyone missed his previous point, and he drives home the point that it doesn’t just apply to the church at large but to “every” man. If he insists on receiving circumcision, he is “under obliga-

tion” (can also be translated “a debtor,” or “one who is guilty”) “to keep the whole Law” – “whole” is in the Greek. (See James 2:10.)

In **verse 4**, Paul assumes for the moment that some indeed may have received circumcision and thus informs them of what that means in their relationship to Christ. It should be mentioned at this point that circumcision was very important to the Jew of the Old Testament, roughly equivalent to water baptism today, but even more fundamentally so. Stop here and read Gen. 17:9-14 and Ex. 4:24-26, remembering the importance of Abraham in God’s historic plan of salvation (Gen. 12:1-3; 14:17-20; 17:1-8; 22:15-18; Rom. 4; Gal. 3:6-29; 4:21-31; Heb. 7:1-10). Thus, it is understandable from their viewpoint why the Judaizers were pressing hard on the Galatians to be circumcised (cf. Acts 15:1,2,19,20).

Continuing with verse 4, Paul warns the Galatians that if they insist on being circumcised, they are thereby demonstrating that they are seeking to be justified by Law, not faith. The reality? No man can be justified in two ways at once. It's either by Law (but see Gal. 2:16) or by faith. The verbs translated "severed from Christ" and "fallen from grace" are interesting in the flexibility of their translation. In verse 4, Paul surrounds the Galatians' choosing to be justified by Law with two results of that choice. Bringing those two results together and using acceptable alternate translations of the aforementioned verbs, verse 4 would read this way: "You have become estranged from Christ, (and) you have drifted off course from grace, you who would be justified by Law." The warnings are sharp and clear as are the results. Faith. Law. Choose your destiny.

In verse 5, Paul now puts forth his contrast. To be emphatic Paul again uses the pronoun “we” when it is not needed, that is, it is already incorporated in the verb “are waiting” which is in the first-person plural in the Greek. Moreover, position in a sentence in the Greek is important, and Paul, excluding the conjunction “for,” places “we” at the beginning of the sentence. Thus, “For we...we are waiting” (Is Paul encouragingly including the Galatians in his “we”?). And by what means are the true believers “waiting”? Literally, “...in the Spirit out from faith.” Notice the close association of the Holy Spirit and faith. True, saving faith, of course, is a gift from God (Eph. 2:8,9). Did you see the clear contrast between verses 4 & 5? In verse 4, it is “by law.” In verse 5, it is “by faith.”

Verse 5 continues that the true believer is waiting “for the hope of righteousness.” Biblical

“hope” (elpis) is an integral part of the meaning of faith (Heb. 11:1). Moreover, biblical hope conveys a confident expectation of good. Let us remember that through Christ’s death and resurrection we have already been justified, the righteousness of Christ having been imputed to us (Rom. 4:5,25; 1 Cor. 1:30; 2 Cor. 5:21). Thus, when Paul speaks of our “waiting for the hope of righteousness” he is speaking eschatologically, when we will be glorified at Christ’s second coming, receiving our new, immortal bodies (Matt. 13:43; Rom. 8:18,19; 2 Cor. 3:18; 4:17).

In verse 6, Paul begins by expressing in another way the born again or regenerated state when he says, “For in Christ Jesus...” and then goes on to say that being circumcised or not is irrelevant as regarding one’s status before God (compare in principle Rom. 14:17; 1 Cor. 8:8). What is important to the Christian, says

Paul, is “faith working through (or, “by means of”) love” (*agape*, God’s love). We might say that action (faith) begets reaction (love).

In **verse 7**, Paul addresses the Galatians directly: “You were running well...” Here is an interesting aside. The verb “running” is in the uncommonly used imperfect tense. The imperfect denotes continued action in past time, so it is obvious, then, when Paul says they were running well, that the Galatians had a history of demonstrating the reality of their faith. Thus, this is a true compliment by Paul. He goes on to say, “...who hindered you from obeying the truth?” Both Paul and the Galatians knew that it was the Judaizers, but Paul was not going to even give them official recognition by mentioning them, in addition to which it was not the identity of the Judaizers that was important but rather their character. Finally, the Greek does not use the article

“the” in front of truth; it simply says “truth.” The reason is that truth here embodies both doctrine (e.g., the gospel per se) and life (life in the Spirit, their daily walk).

In **verse 8**, Paul writes, “This persuasion (to be circumcised) did not come from Him who calls you.” The arguments of the Judaizers to be circumcised were merely human arguments, and they were in opposition to the effectual calling of God which requires a response solely of faith. God’s calling is in reality a summons by Him to life in Christ, and it is always effective. Calling is the first “interaction” of God with man in the order of salvation (cf. John 10:14,27-30).

In **verse 9**, Paul writes, “A little leaven leavens the whole lump of dough.” Leaven in Scripture always stands for evil or that which is not good. Thus, in context Paul is saying that a little legalism mixed with the gospel pol-

lutes its purity. Expressed another way, to add works (circumcision) to justification by faith destroys the whole. It always happens that when works are added to grace by faith alone, that works soon begin to dominate (consider Roman Catholicism).

In verse 10, Paul writes, “I have confidence in you...” The verb is in the perfect tense, so that Paul’s confidence was a past confidence that extends into the present. He has not given up on the Galatians. But, his confidence is based “...in the Lord...” His confidence is not based on the flesh of the Galatians but in the Spirit of God who indwells them (cf. Phil. 1:6). And, such is Paul’s confidence in the Galatians that they “will adopt no other view...,” the verb being in the future tense, that (combining the perfect and the future tense verbs) Paul’s confidence in the Galatians extends from the past on into the future, because his confidence is

really placed in the Lord who saved them. Paul finishes up writing, “...but the one who is disturbing you shall bear his judgment, whoever he is.” The verbs “disturbing” and “bear” are both in the singular, fitting in with Paul’s last clause of “whoever he is.” Without identifying him – and thus giving him notoriety – Paul appears to be pointing to a ringleader among the Judaizers. Regardless, he who brings false teachings to God’s people “will incur a greater condemnation” (James 3:1). Interestingly, the Greek word translated “will bear” is the very word used in Luke 14:27 referencing true disciples bearing their crosses.

In verse 11, we yet once again have the emphatic “I”, not being needed as it is included in the verb “I preach.” “Brothers,” Paul again reaches to their heart strings, as he writes, “But I brothers, if I preach (actually, “proclaim aloud”) circumcision, why am I still

persecuted?” The Greek conditional particle *ei* translated “if” in context clearly implies that Paul was not preaching circumcision. So, this is a purely hypothetical “what if.” The fact that Paul is still persecuted by the Jews and Judaizers is the perfect evidence that he is not preaching circumcision. (Remember, in his pre-Christian days, Paul was a Pharisee of Pharisees – Phil. 3:5). If he were still preaching circumcision, Paul finishes up, “Then the stumbling block of the cross has been abolished” (cf. 1 Cor. 1:18,22,23; 2:14). The words translated “stumbling block” are one word in the Greek, namely, *skandalon* from which we get the English “scandal.” It was a “scandal” to the Jews and Judaizers that the Messiah should die, let alone die an ignoble death of crucifixion. The Judaizers could learn to live with Jesus Christ death and resurrection if the Law were included, especially the outward sign of circumcision (works). But the either/or

of the Christian preaching (choose this day whom you will serve) was an unacceptable “scandal” in their eyes. The fact is the cross will ever remain a stumbling block to the unbeliever because it forbids works of any kind and calls the unbeliever to humble himself and respond in repentance and faith, bringing to the “despised” cross nothing but his sins, trusting in the finished work of Christ alone for eternal life. The existence of a multitude of works-based religions shows how difficult that is for so many, but for the grace of God alone.

Paul had ended up in verse 11 stating that if he still preached circumcision (works) then the stumbling block of the cross – knowingly placed there by God – has been abolished. Pride and self-righteousness, the back sides of one another, are the underlying sins that started it all in the garden of Eden (Gen. 3:5,6).

The cross, by contrast, demands repentant humility (redundancy intended).

In **verse 12**, Paul is so concerned about the influence of the Judaizers that he more literally says, “I would that the ones troubling you would mutilate (or castrate) themselves.” Interestingly, in a similar warning found in Phil. 3:2c Paul literally writes, “...beware of the mutilation.” The idea is that if circumcision is so important, Judaizers, why not go all the way as the eunuchs do and castrate yourselves. For the Christian, however, the true circumcision is of the heart (Rom. 2:28,29; see also Jer. 4:4). These seem to be very harsh words from the apostle until we remember the words of our Lord to the Pharisees (Matt. 23:13-36, esp. vs. 13,15,33).

In **verse 13**, Paul contrasts the bondage which accompanies the Judaizers – and their works salvation – with the freedom which comes

in Christ, a salvation by grace through faith alone (cf. 5:1). Paul again affectionately calls the Galatians “brothers.” Notice, they were “...called to freedom...” It is God Himself Who did and does the (effectual) calling (Rom. 8:28-30a; Eph. 1:17,18), and that calling is unto a salvation that includes freedom in Christ. Because of the presence of man’s sinful nature (whether regenerate or not – Rom. 7:14-25), however, Paul must warn them, “...only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the (sinful) flesh...” (cf. Rom. 6:1,2). The sad reality is that turning freedom into license is the proclivity of our sinful nature. Thus, Paul now gives us the antidote to license, and in so doing the Christian definition of true freedom, when he writes, “...but through love serve one another” (Mark 10:45; Phil. 2:7). This love, of course, is *agape* love, God’s love (Rom. 5:5). In our salvation, then,

we have moved from being a slave of sin to being a slave of Christ (Phil. 1:1).

In **verse 14**, Paul reaches back to the Old Testament (Lev. 19:18) to summarize the meaning of fulfilling the “whole” law, when he writes, “For the whole law is fulfilled in...’You shall love your neighbor as yourself’” (cf. Rom. 13:8-10; 1 John 4:7-12). A life lived in agape love, then, is the practical outworking of God’s moral law.

In **verse 15**, Paul now warns the Galatians what will happen among them if they do not walk in love (as per v. 14). Verse 15 can be translated, “But if you bite and consume one another, be (constantly) taking heed lest you be consumed by one another.” On the basis that the first three verbs (translated above “bite,” “consume” and “taking heed”) are all in the present active indicative (our English present), the biting and consuming must have

been taking place among a significant number of the Galatians at the time Paul wrote this letter. This is further affirmed when we see Paul's discussion in verses 17-21.

In **verse 16**, Paul informs the Galatians of what they must do in order to stop their fleshly activities of verse 15. "But I am saying, walk (present tense, thus ongoing) in the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh." The only way to frustrate the desires of the sinful flesh is to walk in the power of the Spirit. Thus, we are to do the walking, but the **Spirit** needs to supply the power to overcome. Put another way, we are to resist the sinful desires of the flesh by responding to the (biblical) leadings of the Holy Spirit, Who provides the power to do so.

While we have reached verse 17, Paul began this thought in verse 16 which forms one of the bookends, verse 25 the other one:

Verse 16 – “Walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh.” (cf. Jer. 17:5-8)

Verse 25 – “Since we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit.”

Most translations of verse 25 read, “If we live by the Spirit...”, but the Greek is *ei* which is a conditional particle, and when the condition is a true one (in this case, we do live by the Spirit), “since” is a better translation than “if.”

In verse 17, after commanding us (in the Greek) to walk by the Spirit in verse 16, Paul then tells us why: “For the (sinful) flesh lusts against the Spirit and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another...” (cf. 1 Pet. 2:11). “Lust” is in the present tense. The Christian is in an ever, ongoing, in-this-life war with an enemy within, which is encouraged by an enemy without. Within is our utterly corrupt sinful nature (“flesh”)

which is with us until the day we die. Without is Satan and his multitude of demonic minions who are an encourager to the flesh. (“You deserve that.” “You were unfairly treated.” “Nobody appreciates you”). Paul experienced this ongoing struggle with the flesh as expressed in Rom. 7:14-24. Interestingly, in Rom. 7:24 he writes, “Who shall (future!) set me free (lit.) out from this body of death...” The struggle ends at physical death, not before. However, it must be noted that in Rom. 7:25, Paul concludes his discourse about the struggles with the flesh by stating victoriously, “Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord” recognizing that the victory has already been won. He affirms this in Rom. 8:1 with, “There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.” The victory over sin and death has been won at the cross, but its full, lived out reality awaits heaven.

And, the more committed we are to living out a biblical life, the harder the struggle will be. Ironically, the unbeliever knows nothing of this struggle (1 Cor. 2:14; Eph. 4:17,18), because it is the presence of the Holy Spirit who prompts resistance to fleshly desires and a desire for godly living (which arouses the flesh). So, be of good cheer, dear Christian, your struggle in the sense described herein is tangible evidence of your salvation (Phil. 2:12,13). When we get to heaven, the battle will be over. We will wear the victor's crown. By the way, the legalists (Judaizers in context) struggle and struggle but never achieve victory or even sense a certain, ultimate triumph because they are trying to achieve salvation by the works of the Law.

Stating the ongoing struggle between the Spirit and the flesh and noting that they are in opposition to one another, Paul concludes verse

17 with, “...so that you may not do the things that you desire.” Because of the presence of the Holy Spirit, this last phrase must mean that His presence enables us not to give in to the fleshly desires of our sinful nature.

In verse 18, Paul continues, “But if you are led (present tense) by the Spirit, you are not under the Law.” Here “if” is the better translation of *ei*, because being led by the Spirit is a daily choice Christians must make (see Rom. 8:12,13). The ultimate result of being led by the Spirit is our sanctification (not positional sanctification – that takes place at the moment of salvation – 1 Cor. 1:30; 6:11, but personal sanctification – 1 Thess. 4:3; 5:23).

In verses 19 – 21a, Paul now lists the evident deeds of the flesh (cf. Mark 7:21,22; Rom. 1:29 – 31; 2 Tim. 3:1 – 5). There are fifteen deeds broken down into four (somewhat arbitrary) groups. The first three are sexual

sins: “sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality.” The next two are sins of false religion: “idolatry and sorcery.” The next seven violate love and are sins of ill-will: “enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envyings.” The last two are sins of intemperance: “drunkenness and carousings.” Paul ends the list writing, “...and things like these...,” making it evident that this list is merely illustrative, not comprehensive (see Scriptures listed at the beginning of this paragraph). Paul then sternly forewarns them “...those who practice such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.” No equivocation here!

In verses 22,23, Paul lists the nine fruit of the Spirit. It is important that we emphasize that these are not our fruit, but the fruit of the Spirit. So, for our lives to give evidence of this fruit, we must be in submission to, yielded to

the Holy Spirit. As Jesus said, “...apart from Me you can do nothing” (John 15:5c), but as Paul said, “I can do all things through (Christ) who strengthens me” (Phil. 4:13).

The nine fruit of the Spirit break down into three groups of three. The first three are spiritual graces: love, joy, peace. The second three are social conduct: patience, kindness, goodness. The last three are personal disciplines: faithfulness, gentleness, self-control (cf. 2 Pet. 1:4-8). An interesting point is that these nine fruit are all essentially directed manward. Moreover, they belong together as a unit. Notice that Paul does not say “fruits,” even though there are nine listed, but “fruit,” singular. They are, collectively, the harvest, so to speak, of one who walks in and by the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit, and are, thereby, a good affirmation that the person is a Christian. I say that with some trepidation,

because the new Christian cannot be expected to initially evidence the fruit of the Spirit in his life (1 Cor. 3:1; 1 Pet. 2:2) but only as he “...grows in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Pet. 3:18; 2 Cor. 10:5 [see also 2 Pet. 1:4-8 above]). Paul finishes verse 23 with, “against such things there is no law.” The reason that statement is true is that a person who exhibits such fruit in his life has thereby fulfilled the law and thus is not under the law (vs. 14, 18).

In verse 24, Paul writes, “Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.” This is another way of expressing Gal. 2:20, which see. Moreover, Rom. 6:6 has almost the same exact thought. “Have crucified” is in the aorist tense which here is the simple past. It is a done deal. The idea is for the Galatians to be what they in

fact already are, to put into practice what they are in principle (cf. Phil. 3:7-14).

**Verses 25 & 26** really belong together as one verse. In **verse 25**, Paul places the other book-end on this thought which began in verse 16. He writes, “Since we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit.” So, Galatians, if God’s Spirit lives in you, let Him govern all your actions. His fruit will attest to the reality of your faith. Paul concludes in **verse 26**, “Let us not become boastful, challenging one another, envying one another” (cf. v. 15). Walking by the Spirit will put to death these carnal desires, which are yet more examples of deeds of the flesh. Verse 26 also illustrates how ready to act the flesh remains, even in the serious Christian, and why Paul expresses walking in the Spirit in the present tense. It is something we must do day-by-day, even moment-by-moment (see v. 17 again).



## **7**

### **CHAPTER SIX**

#### **Here is a summary of chapter six:**

1. Bear one another's burdens, and thus fulfill the law of Christ (vs. 1 – 5).
2. Whatever a man sows, this he will also reap (vs. 6 – 8).
3. Do not grow weary in doing good to all men, especially Christians (vs. 9,10).
4. Neither is circumcision anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation (vs. 11 – 16).
5. Conclusion and benediction (vs. 17 –

18).

In **verse 1**, Paul now deals with interpersonal problems within the local church, although he could be subtly referring to the fellow Christians influenced by the Judaizers. Regardless, he again begins his exhortation with the affectionate, “Brothers.” He references the Christian who is “overtaken” or better “caught” in any trespass, which can so easily happen to so many Christians. “...you (plural) who are spiritual (that is walking by the Spirit – 5:25), restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness...” The verb “restore” can also mean “mend,” which goes well with the idea of “gentleness,” and the verb is in the form of a command. Paul continues, “...looking to yourself (singular), lest you (singular) too be tempted.” Even though multiple spiritual men exist in a local church, we must each individually beware of temptation and examine ourselves.

**Verse 2** is entirely in line with and complements verse 1. “Bear one another’s burdens and thus fulfill the law of Christ.” The verb “bear” can also mean “carry” and is in the present tense. We are to be ever ready to carry the burdens of our fellow Christians, helping them through their difficult times. How at odds this is with our individualistic culture! But in so doing, says Paul, we “...fulfill the law of Christ,” (lit. will fulfill) which is to love one another (John 13:34; James 2:8; see also Rom. 5:8). In context, the “burdens” are primarily spiritual burdens, although all burdens ultimately have a spiritual root.

Paul continues in **verse 3**, “For if anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself.” This verse only makes sense when tied in with verse 2, that is, the person who thinks he is something is one who thinks he has no burdens, spiritual or otherwise. So,

Paul is attacking the spirit of overconfidence in oneself. This person regards himself so far above frailty or sorrow that he neither needs nor desires sympathy or help. Such a one will not stoop to bear another's burdens. The reality is that what makes us generous, humble, and empathetic toward others is the realization of our own many sins and weaknesses. The person as described in verse 3, says Paul, "deceives himself." "Deceives" is in the present tense, so this person lives in a state of self-deception. ( Here is an interesting aside: This is the only use of the Greek verb *phrena-pata* , translated "deceives" in the New Testament.)

In **verse 4**, Paul writes, "But let each one examine his own work..." Self-examination – a good, honest look in the mirror – is where we all need to begin before we judge another. Having done that, Paul continues, "...then he will have

reason for boasting in regard to himself alone, and not in regard to another.” In other words, if the person has any reason to boast in his work, it will be because of the worthiness of his own work standing alone, not by comparing his work with someone else of his choice (Luke 18:11). The same basic argument is put forth by Paul in 1 Cor. 4:3-5 and 2 Cor. 10:12,13.

Paul continues in verse 5, “For each one shall bear his own load (or burden).” At a quick glance this would seem to contradict verse 2. However, two different Greek words are used. In verse 2, it is *baros*, which is translated “burden” or “weight.” In verse 5, it is *phortion*, which is translated “burden” or “load.” In verse 2, it deals with the social responsibility within the body of Christ for a brother or sister with a heavy burden requiring the help of others. In verse 5, it deals with our individual

self-responsibility before the Lord to bear the burden of our sins and weaknesses.

With verse 6, Paul begins a new thought. “Let the one who is taught the word share all good things with him who teaches” (cf. Matt. 10:10; 1 Cor. 9:14; 1 Tim. 5:18). Even during his first missionary journey, Paul established elders in each of the local churches he founded (Acts 14:23). In his first pastoral epistle, Paul distinguished among the elders those who are teaching elders (what today we would call pastors) as the spiritual leaders of the church (1 Tim. 5:17).

The Greek of verse 6 is interesting. It uses the participle form of the same verb (*kateixeo*, meaning to teach) to act as a noun. Literally it reads, “And let him share, the one being taught the word with the one teaching in all good things.”

In verse 7, Paul states one of the greatest truths of life and living known to mankind, whether committed Christian or rank atheist. “Do not be deceived,” Paul warns, and how often – daily – man is deceived, “God is not mocked.” Obedience or disobedience to the commandments of God will have consequences. Count on it!

Completing verse 7, Paul writes, “...whatever a man sows, this he will also reap.” This is probably one of the most important and fundamental truths of life. There is simply no getting around it. Listen to a few other verses that put forth the same, basic truth, not given in any particular order (see also Ps. 7:16; Hos. 8:7; Obadiah 1:15):

2 Cor. 9:6 – “He who sows sparingly shall also reap sparingly; and he who sows bountifully shall also reap bountifully.”

Col. 3:25 – “He who does wrong will receive the consequences of the wrong which he has done, and that without partiality.”

Rev. 18:7 – “To the degree that (Babylon) glorified herself and lived sensuously, to the **same** degree give her torment and mourning.” (emphasis added).

In verse 8, Paul now applies that principle to the local situation. (An excellent cross-reference to verse 8 is Rom. 8:12,13). He writes, “For the one who sows to his own flesh shall from the flesh reap corruption...” While “flesh” can reference the body, in Paul it almost never does. The Greek for flesh is *sarx*, while the Greek for body is *soma*. In Paul, the flesh represents our sinful nature that abides within the body. Therefore, a person who “sows to his own flesh” is allowing his sinful nature to have its own way in his life. Therefore, based on the sowing/reaping principle,

he reaps from the flesh “corruption.” The Greek is *ftthora* and can also be translated “decay” or “ruin,” even “depravity.” Thus, the word is more focused on moral corruption. However, the truth is that physical death and decay are but the consequences and outward results of the spiritual and moral death and decay that are ever present. That is why it is “appointed for men to die once” (Heb. 9:27) because it is only through death that we finally rid ourselves of our sinful nature, the flesh. That is why Paul ends his lament of his struggle with his sinful nature in Romans 7:24,25 as discussed previously. So, we will struggle with our fleshly nature until we die, or Christ comes again, whichever is first. (For the ultimate result of “corruption” as it pertains to unbelievers see 2 Thess. 1:8,9.)

Paul continues in verse 8, “...but the one who sows to the Spirit shall from the Spirit reap

eternal life.” Here is the other side of the coin or the anti-type of sowing to the flesh. The Holy Spirit is not only the Source of our resurrection life but also the Person through whom and by whom it is lived here and now. Thus, we are faced daily (both “sowing” verbs are in the present tense, conveying a daily choice) with two choices: sow to the flesh and reap corruption; sow to the Spirit and reap eternal life. It is important to note that both reapings are eternal in their consequences (Dan. 12:2; Matt. 25:46).

Paul implicitly assumes the Galatians are sowing after the Spirit in verse 9, in that in the Greek the first part of verse 9 (quoted immediately below) is actually part of verse 8. Paul writes, “And let us not lose heart in doing good...” While we are saved (solely) by grace through faith, we are saved for the purpose of good works (Eph. 2:8-10). Notice Paul begins

with “and” (*kai* in the Greek), showing a tie-in with verse 8. He then encourages the Galatians not to “lose heart.” The reality is that it is easy for Christians to become discouraged in their work for the Lord when they don’t see (immediate?) results. How would the typical American Christian respond today if he experienced what the missionary to China, namely, Hudson Taylor did. After decades, he had one “confirmed” convert, only to see him backslide. But, Taylor realized he was a planter (1 Cor. 3:6a), and so today we see a flourishing church in China. Therefore, the Galatians are encouraged not to lose heart because God will remember their good deeds and reward them, if not now, then in heaven (1 Cor. 15:58; Heb. 6:10).

**Verse 10** continues the thought of verse 9 on doing good works. Paul writes, “So then, while we have opportunity let us do good to

all men...” The word translated “opportunity” is *kairos* in the Greek which literally means “time,” but time viewed as an occasion rather than an extent of time. God is the one who presents us with the occasions to do good, and He expects us to do so. We reject such opportunities to do good at our peril, because they will not always be there for us (Rom. 14:12; 1 Cor. 3:10-15; 2 Cor. 5:10; Eph. 2:10; Heb. 10:30b,31; James 2:17; 1 Pet. 4:17,18). Notice that Paul says that we should “do good” (present tense) to all men. We cannot discriminate among those who we will help. Yet, Paul completes verse 10 writing, “...and especially to those who are of the household of the faith” (emphasis added). The word “especially” is *malista* in the Greek and can also be translated “above all” or “most of all” showing that our first concern, in order of importance, is to meet the needs of the members of the body of Christ. Interestingly, Jesus, in the judgment

scene of Matt. 25:31-46, makes His decision as to the eternity of the person – heaven or hell – with this statement: “...to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, even the least of them, you did it to Me” (v. 40b, emphasis added). In the same gospel, Jesus had earlier said, “...’Who is My mother and who are My brothers?’ And stretching out His hand toward His disciples, He said, ‘Behold, My mother and My brothers’” (Matt. 12:48b,49 emphasis added). See also 1 Tim. 3:15; 5:8. Finally in verse 10, Paul calls us believers “the household of the faith.” The article “the” is in the Greek and by it Paul is saying that there is only one, true faith, the gospel of Jesus Christ (Gal. 1:6-9).

**Verse 11** begins a new paragraph and with it a new thought. Paul is drawing to a close, but before he does so he will make one more warning regarding the Judaizers and their

call for the circumcision of the Galatians. He writes, “See with what large letters I am writing to you with my own hand.” With humility, the great apostle speaks from the heart. When it came to outward appearances, Paul had nothing to offer. Tradition has it that he was short, stocky, and bald. From what he says about himself in Corinthians, he was not a great orator. It is this writer’s opinion that Paul’s thorn in the flesh was an eye problem, and his comment here (“see with what large letters I am writing to you”) would seem to support that conclusion. But Paul, “an apostle through Jesus Christ and God the Father” (Gal. 1:1) speaks with the authority of God’s Spirit (Zech. 4:6), and in order that the Galatians will know that he wrote this letter “...with my own hand.” It was not uncommon for the apostles, in writing their letters, to use an amanuensis, the equivalent of what today we would call a private secretary.

In verse 12, Paul begins his summary criticism of the Judaizers. He writes, “Those who desire to make a good showing in the flesh try and compel you to be circumcised...” So, outward appearances is what counted to the Jews. Today’s equivalent would be those who brag about how many baptisms they’ve performed. Being nothing but outward, it was “in the flesh,” thus physical, not spiritual. So important was circumcision to the Judaizers that they tried to compel (also, force, or insist upon, and in the present tense) the Galatians to be circumcised. They never gave up. Why were they so adamant? Paul tells us in the rest of the verse, “...simply that they may not be persecuted for the cross of Christ.” The Jews were implacably opposed to the cross because it offered the Gentiles salvation without requiring them to become, effectively, Jewish proselytes, thus placing the Gentiles on a spiritual level with the Jews. To avoid this, the Ju-

daizers compromised the gospel with a form of required works.

Paul begins **verse 13** stating, “For those who are circumcised do not even keep the Law themselves...” The flagrant hypocrisy of the Judaizers continues on display (see parallel statement of Jesus in Matt. 23:4). Paul addressed the same hypocrisy when writing to the Romans, “For indeed circumcision is of value if you practice the Law; but if you are a transgressor of the Law (which they were), your circumcision has become uncircumcision” (Rom. 2:25, emphasis added). Paul completes verse 13 writing, “...but (the Judaizers) desire to have you circumcised that they may boast in your flesh.” The Greek of the two words underlined show this to be a purpose clause. The purpose of the push for circumcision is pride and self-elevation on the part of the Judaizers. With a mere piece of flesh, they

would boast of their Gentile converts. Unfortunately, this outward rite can effect no inward change. Only the Holy Spirit can do that.

Over against the boasting in the flesh of the Judaizers, Paul sets forth his own boasting. In verse 14 he writes, “But may it never be that I should boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ...” The natural (unsaved) man would never choose the cross as that in which to boast. As Paul wrote to the Corinthians, “...we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block, and to Gentiles foolishness” (1 Cor. 1:23). By contrast, the cross was central to Paul’s theology, again writing to the Corinthians, “For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified” (1 Cor. 2:2). Paul glories in the cross because it exposes man’s helpless state and complete bankruptcy that made and make the cross an absolute necessity and perfect

demonstration of the love of God for mankind. Notice that Paul says that his boasting is in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. In so doing he embraces the Galatians as fellow believers, encouraging them to cling to the gospel which he preached to them. Paul concludes verse 14 saying, "...through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world." The "world" as used here would represent all that was outside of Christ. All that the world had to offer had lost its charm over Paul. Thus, the world had become effectively dead (crucified [the cross being a symbol of death]) to Paul. (Phil. 3:7,8 is an excellent cross-reference explaining v.14b.) Paul ends the verse saying, "...and I (have been crucified) to the world." Anyone who is "sold out" to Jesus Christ as Lord is viewed by the unbelieving world with contempt; he is "dead" in their eyes.

In **verse 15**, Paul draws a conclusion dealing directly with the situation in Galatia. He writes, “For neither is circumcision anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature.” So, neither of the outward states means anything. Neither state contributes anything to salvation. The problem with the Judaizers was that they were still “looking at things as they are outwardly” (2 Cor. 10:7a) and were “recognizing man according to the flesh” (2 Cor. 5:16a). Rather, counters Paul, what is needed is a “new creature” (see 2 Cor. 5:17; Rom. 2:28,29; John 3:3,5). The reference, of course, is to the **inward**, regenerating (“born again”) work of the Holy Spirit.

In **verse 16**, Paul presents his summa conclusion, writing, “And those who will walk by this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, even upon the Israel of God.” The verb translated “walk” can also be translated “follow,” “hold

to,” or even “live.” The word “rule” can also be translated “principle” or “standard” and would reference the need for an inward, spiritual change brought about by trusting in the Person and efficacious work of Christ crucified. The term “Israel of God” would reference all true believers, from the Old Testament Jew who looked forward to the coming Messiah, to the New Testament Jew who trusted Jesus as the Messiah, to the Gentile who also trusted Jesus as his Messiah Savior (Gen. 15:6; 22:18; Isa. 53; Rom. 2:28,29; 9:6; Gal. 3:7-9, 28,29; 4:28,29; Phil. 3:3). To such true believers, God’s mercy has been shown, resulting in the peace of God (Rom. 5:1).

In verse 17, Paul exercises his authority as “...an apostle through Jesus Christ and God the Father” (Gal. 1:1) and commands (the Greek imperative is used) that the troubling of him in Galatia cease. He has clearly es-

tablished the truth of his position and the falsehood of the Judaizers. Enough is enough. He writes, “From now on let no one cause trouble for me, for I bear on my body the brand-marks of Jesus.” When Jesus called Saul/Paul, through Ananias, He told Paul he was a chosen instrument of the Lord and warned him “...how much he must suffer for My name’s sake” (Acts 9:16). Indeed, Paul suffered much and often (see esp. 2 Cor. 11:23-29). The scars of these wounds, ironically enough, were outward, not unlike circumcision. However, unlike circumcision, which is performed by man, Paul’s scars were the fruit of an inward work and change by the Spirit of God, resulting in a life in imitation of Jesus (1 Cor. 11:1), and the consequential scars of persecution (Col. 1:24).

In **verse 18**, Paul gives us a shortened form of his commonly used benediction, writing,

“The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brethren. Amen.” Nevertheless, all the necessary elements are there. “Grace” is a free gift of God, not as the result of works. “Our” both personalizes and individualizes salvation and simultaneously points to the collective body of Christ, the Church. “Lord” deifies Christ. “Jesus” demonstrates His full humanity and means salvation. “Christ” is the New Testament word for Messiah, and both translate as God’s Anointed One. “Spirit” shows that this is an inward, spiritual work by God. And finally, Paul’s use of “brethren” demonstrates his view of the Galatians and is an affectionate term. To this Paul adds, “Amen,” meaning “so be it,” to which we can merely echo, “Amen.”

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