

The Book of Galatians: A Commentary

In his epistle to the churches of Galatia, the Apostle Paul sternly warns those who were turning away from the One who had called them in the grace of Christ to a DIFFERENT GOSPEL (Galatians 1:6). If someone—whether man or angel—comes along preaching a gospel different from the one the apostles preached, says Paul, “let him be ACCURSED” (verses 7–8). But just what was this “different gospel” Paul so strongly opposed?

If all of Scripture is used as a foundation in understanding Paul’s message to the Galatians, you will see that nothing in what Paul says here is in conflict with

any other part of the entire Bible and certainly not contrary to the law of God. The epistle highlights a critical controversy, which arises between the converted Jews, led by Peter along with the other Jerusalem apostles, and the Gentile congregations led by Paul.

These two separate groups have vastly different customs and traditions which surface to create the controversy. Many of the Jews tenaciously cling to their former status as the “special people of God,” while at the same time they are gradually coming to understand the message of Christ and the significance of His coming. This transition is made difficult because many of the influential factions among the Jews persist in elevating certain customs and especially the practice of circumcision as

“essential” to obedience. This “cultural clash” with all of its natural prejudices made this transition difficult for both groups while the Jews struggled to accept that the Gentiles had been “grafted in” and that salvation was now available to all mankind. Paul was upset that the Jews were prejudicially using circumcision (now only a custom and tradition and not required by law) as an “essential test” as to whether the Gentiles were legitimately being “grafted in” to the salvation offered by God. He speaks against the Jews who were trying to force physical circumcision upon the Gentile congregations to “Judaize” them when it was not required for salvation. Paul is also upset with Peter for “tolerating” this “mindset” among the Jews, which was affecting Peter’s own behavior. Therefore, by

using the highest doctrinal authority, Paul highlights the importance of grace as a “master strategy” in his discourse to go beyond just criticizing the Jews to teach that obedience without the “faithfulness of Christ” and what He accomplished was meaningless. Paul consistently says that the law was not void or meaningless but that their misapplication of it was. He knew that they incorrectly continued to “link” circumcision with the law and that Peter, knowing the truth of the matter, continued to tolerate this practice among them. Paul was clearly using these arguments to back down the Jews from forcing circumcision upon the Gentile congregations and from seeing themselves as “better” for continuing in the practice. Paul clearly saw that physical circumcision apart from the law

had become a “rite” or “essential cultural practice” of the Jews and was not to be forced upon other cultures. Paul was making that distinction. Paul consistently shows in his writings that the symbol of physical circumcision was no longer part of the law—but has been replaced by the more important spiritual “circumcision of the heart.”

A present-day controversy exists from this book arising from a misapplication of the context in Paul’s discourse. Paul is emphatically stating that one could obey laws or rituals forever, but if Christ had not come and been sacrificed we would never be justified and certainly not saved. Our works never justify us—rather it is God’s grace in giving us this supreme sacrifice that justifies us. Some suggest that Paul is teaching that grace

stands apart from obedience and even invalidates it. Yet, Paul constantly speaks of the need to obey. They cite this book as proof of this “grace only” doctrine, rationalizing that in his effort to shield the Gentile congregations from the practice of circumcision Paul is saying that the works of the law (especially circumcision) are not required and only grace stands. However, we do find in his writings that he makes a clear distinction that circumcision is no longer a part of the law. As such, the context of Paul’s discourse is certainly appropriate in that it emphasizes grace, choosing this context in an effort to “teach the Jews” they were focusing on the wrong things. He was emphatically showing that clinging to the practice of circumcision as a “sign” of their “specialness” only

serves to deemphasize what Christ had done for them. He was not teaching that obedience to the law of God was now meaningless because grace invalidated it. He was saying that the Jews needed to let go of forcing their customs and traditions on others even though these same practices may indeed have once been required, as specifically these things now had no standing in the New Covenant. He was saying that all men (and especially the Jews who resisted this) should focus on accepting what Christ fulfilled for them—what they could not fulfill for themselves. That is the case, and we shall see the evidence of these facts in this annotation of Paul's letter to the Galatians.

Paul is first introduced to us as Saul of Tarsus, a man who persecuted

Christian's and was "consenting to the death of Stephen" (Acts 22:20). He knew very well the "religion of the Jews." He had been taught by Gamaliel and was "highly placed" in that religion (Galatians 1:14). But this (false) religion of the Jews was not the true religion taught by God through His Word but a perversion of it overseen by a corrupt Sanhedrin council which had adjudicated the very death of Jesus Christ. It was this perverted and apostate version of what the Jews practiced in that day that brought about rejection of Christ and refusal to accept that He was truly the Son of God. However, the true believers who "worshipped God in Spirit and truth" (John 4:23) remained faithful men of God. Both kept "a version" of the law of God. One group did so in a

“stringently physical way,” while the true believers better understood the spiritual implications and practices of obedience. We see, however, that even many of these “converted” Jews were slow to change in some things and continued in certain aspects of the traditional customs and practices that identified them as Jews. Of particular importance in their culture was the practice of circumcision. Many of these practices had standing not just as doctrine but also as rites of their national heritage. Many of these faithful Jews did indeed keep the law of God but also fervently longed for the arrival of Messiah and recognized Jesus as that Messiah. Paul refers to these true believers as being those who espoused the true “same gospel” as he himself was teaching. He differentiated the faithful Jews as the

“circumcision” from his mission to the Gentile nations, which he describes as the “uncircumcision.” These two descriptive “identifiers” highlight the key issues addressed in his epistle to the Galatians. It is important to note that Paul clearly says they both had the same gospel.

Paul does indeed speak against other wicked men (of which he was formally one) who had established a highly authoritative ruler-ship over the faithful believers (of “the circumcision”) and perverted the law of God, making it a burden upon the people. These particular men were other Jews of the “old guard” who never acknowledged nor accepted Christ. They took leadership authority, which was not sanctioned by God and maliciously

imposed their own commandments and traditions never intended by the law of God. As overseers, they forced their doctrines upon the culture by misapplying the law of God under the Levitical Priesthood to gain superiority over the people and, in so doing, were supplanting the message in it that foreshadowed the coming of Christ. By “intermingling” their own decrees with the tenets of the now past Levitical priesthood they made these practices a “yoke on the necks of the people.”

These men were not who Paul called “the circumcision” who preached the SAME GOSPEL as he did, even though these of the “same gospel” did indeed also to one degree or another cling to the custom and practice of circumcision. Rather, these others he speaks of were malicious men (as he himself once had

been) who preached a very different gospel! He understood this clearly as he had been Saul of Tarsus, a chief persecutor of the very ones he refers to now as “the circumcision” who preach the same gospel he preaches. However, now that Jesus Christ had personally taught him, he knew very well how far he and those malicious men of “the Jews’ religion” had departed from the precepts of godliness, trusting too much in their own militant practices of obedience, customs, and traditions. He now clearly understood they were not following the true spiritual intent of the law as taught by God in the first place. He recognizes that it was no longer the religion originally given by God but a cruel burden manufactured by men conscripting its authority from a perversion of the truth. Paul never

suggests that Peter and the “circumcision” were persecuting Christians or consenting to the death of Stephen as these of “the Jews’ religion” had. Stephen was a deacon and among those who were indeed following the teachings of Christ and living according to His example. He was keenly aware that many of the converted Jews (of the circumcision) were also being “derailed” by factions among them who failed to fully embrace Christ and the New Covenant. It was now Paul’s mission to help them see their error in two ways. First, to see that the Messiah they had longed for had come and was indeed Christ. And second, to help them understand the true spiritual observance of the law as the proper way to live following Christ’s example. Christ said, “be ye holy as I am holy,” and Paul

himself said, “follow me as I follow Christ.” Paul wanted them to see obedience as a demonstration of “righteous living” but not to rely on their own efforts to unilaterally achieve salvation, which, he teaches is not possible in the first place.

The epistle to the Galatians is complicated as it deals with the many multi-faceted and “interwoven” cultures of the day. This is not unlike what we see today in traditional Christianity with its many dozens of various sects, each with its own widely different customs and practices yet all claiming to be the true followers of Christ. Even with this difficulty, we find in these writings many plain and simple concepts when seen in light of “all Scripture.” Paul had dedicated himself to learning and

studying the scriptures and achieved a mastery of the content of the written Word of God available in his day. He fully knew the concepts of Scripture. This background formed a solid foundation for Paul in that he knew what he was talking about. Yet he states clearly that it was the “revelation of Christ” to him that drove him to see how these concepts were being misapplied as Christ Himself said in Matthew 15:19: “teaching for commandments the doctrines of men.” Paul (when he was Saul) was himself acting contrary to godliness when Christ struck him blind on the road to Damascus and taught him personally. He now emphatically takes a stand against:

Hard-line Jewish zealots (the malicious and militant “law only” faction) who had

rejected Christ, of which he was formerly a part.

Syncretistic Gnostics who were trying to gain a following by blending the customs of various rites and practices from various groups with astrology and strange pagan customs (the “weak and beggarly elements”) into a dominant Jewish influence.

But also those who were converted Christian Jews even though they persisted in seeing circumcision as an essential sign of the true people of God.

The first two of these groups were trying to get men to focus on traditions and customs, most of which were a militant form of legalism or a perversion of the original intent of the practices of

obedience under the Levitical Priesthood.

But Paul also had to deal with the third group who were actually converted and part of the Church in Jerusalem yet were still affected by cultural and traditional challenges arising from their heritage as Jews. Paul addresses all three of these groups but sees them to varying degrees engaging in behavior or doctrine, which is contrary to the mission of the Gospel.

Wikipedia: Gnosticism (Greek:...gnosis, knowledge) refers to a diverse, syncretistic religious movement consisting of various belief systems generally united in the teaching that humans are divine souls trapped in a material world created by an imperfect

God, the demiurge, who is frequently identified with the Abrahamic God : called “Yahweh” or “Jahveh” for the true name of God is the ineffable Tetragrammaton. The demiurge may be depicted as an embodiment of evil, or in other instances as merely imperfect and as benevolent as its inadequacy permits. This demiurge exists alongside another remote and unknowable supreme being that embodies good. In order to free oneself from the inferior material world, one needs gnosis, or esoteric spiritual knowledge available to all through direct experience or knowledge (gnosis) of God. Jesus of Nazareth is identified by some Gnostic sects as an embodiment of the supreme being who became incarnate to bring gnosis to the earth. In others he was thought to be a gnosis teacher, and yet

others, nothing more than a man. It is the Biblical serpent that promises Adam and Eve the knowledge of immortality: “Nequaquam moriemini; sed eritis; sicut dii; scientes bonum et malum.” The creation of woman as described in Genesis 2:21-22 has a special purpose: she is more susceptible to the demons and in their hands she becomes an instrument against man. By means of concupiscence instilled in her by the demons, Eve seduces Adam not only to lust after the flesh but also to reproduce, the most formidable weapon in Satan’s plan to bring about the fall of man. However, in the hands of the Ophites who were Gnostic sects prevalent in Syria and Egypt about 100 AD, the biblical tale of Adam and Eve took on a new format by linking the Tree of Knowledge to Gnosis and the serpent

became then worthy of worship.

According to the Ophites “...As man was generated in the womb from a “serpent” and an “egg,” so was the universe...

Gnosticism was popular in the Mediterranean and Middle Eastern regions in the second and third centuries, though some scholars claim it was suppressed and was actually popular as early as the first century, predating Jesus Christ as a dualistic heresy in areas controlled by the Roman Empire when Christianity became its state religion in the fourth century.

Conversion to Islam and the Albigensian Crusade greatly reduced the remaining number of Gnostics throughout the middle ages, though a few isolated communities continue to exist to the present. Gnostic ideas became influential in the philosophies of various

esoteric mystical movements of the late 19th and 20th centuries in Europe and North America, including some that explicitly identify themselves as revivals or even continuations of earlier gnostic groups.

Paul is not upset with the Galatians for adhering to any part of the Ten Commandments, which remained as the “law of righteousness” but those things (such as circumcision), which were the ritual practices being forced upon them by outside influences—particularly the Jewish zealots. Paul understood clearly that the administration of the Levitical Priesthood was now done away in the New Covenant and replaced by Jesus Christ our High Priest. Also, some of these ritual practices like circumcision (which identified the nation of Israel, as

the “special people of God”) were no longer valid as a demonstration of righteousness. Paul was dogmatically showing that a person did not need to be a physical Israelite to be saved, as Christ’s sacrifice was offered for everyone—not just physical Israel. This fact was difficult for the “old guard” who still maintained great influence over the communities involved and deferred to the Old Testament writings for their authority. How could he challenge this authority? He had to use the knowledge he gained from the direct and personal teaching he received from Jesus Christ to show the preeminence of the New Priesthood over the Levitical Priesthood and the New Covenant over the Old. The culture of the time was “transitioning” from the Old to the New Covenant. Paul was using the authority

of the New Covenant and the grace offered by Christ's sacrifice to thwart the efforts of the "old guard" who continued to misapply their former authority by elevating laws and rituals no longer necessary to hold onto their former "special" status. Because the context of Paul's arguments are buried in the issues of circumcision and ritual practices of syncretistic Judaism and the zeal of Jewish zealots in this book (epistle) it "appears" that he is militating against all law keeping. A thorough study of all of Paul's writings shows that He supports and upholds the Ten Commandments as the "law of righteousness" given for all time. Paul has no choice but to come down on "legalistic thinking" because the "strength of" this authority came directly from the scriptures being "artfully"

misapplied! Paul “trumps” that authority showing its subordination to the New Covenant in Christ and that it remains but now serves as a foundation of the way to salvation and not the ultimate method by which we will gain salvation. Paul never states that the Ten Commandments are done away. These motivations were the driving force as seen in his words and in the context of what he says in his letter (epistle) to the Galatians.

Chapter One

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

This is one of many examples where

Paul clearly shows that God the Father and Jesus Christ are separate beings—showing that the Father raised Jesus Christ from the dead.

2 And all the brethren, which are with me, unto the churches of Galatia:

3 Grace be to you and peace from God the Father and from our Lord Jesus Christ....

Once again he mentions God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ showing that they are separate beings.

4 Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father....

Notice that we are delivered from “this present evil world.” He doesn’t say that we are delivered from the law, as he fully understood God’s law is given to teach us how to live in accordance with the character of God Himself. We are ultimately “delivered from this present evil world” because Christ had deposed Satan as its ruler and will return to be King of Kings and Lord of Lords. If he had not accomplished this, we would continue to be under the hopeless bondage of this world.

The expression “God and our Father” is the same as saying God who is also our Father.

5 To whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.

6 I marvel that you are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel.

Paul's message to the Galatians by "construct" agrees with the message given by James in James 4:7–8: "Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw nigh to God, and He will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded." John 6:44 says, "No man can come to me except the Father which hath sent me draw him and I will raise him up at the last day."

Paul is disturbed that they are "removed from," separated, taken away, or no longer close to (notice it) Him—GOD

THE FATHER—who called them! We draw near to Him by listening to Him—in other words, doing what He says to do, living the way He says to live, remaining humble before, and obedient to, Him. When we move away from Him we are doing the things that are contrary to righteousness—sinning—and turning away from His instruction and guidance.

Paul is astounded and disappointed that the Galatians had been removed from the Father and are following another gospel. Isaiah 59:1–2 tells how we are separated from God the Father:

“Behold, the Lord’s hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not

hear.”

Paul is certainly not equating the gospel to the “circumcision” with the message of Syncretistic Judaism, which he describes as “the weak and beggarly elements.” This is clarified in Chapter 2, verses 7 and 8, where he states that the gospel given to him and to Peter are the same, and both came from the same source—Jesus Christ. Peter and Paul taught the SAME THING—the SAME GOSPEL! Therefore, it is inaccurate to conclude that the negative comments he makes toward Syncretistic Judaism and the weak and beggarly elements have anything to do with the true and pure gospel to the “circumcision” or the faithful Jews ministered to by Peter. They had the very same message from Christ—the very same message Paul

was preaching. The conflict that does arise between Peter and Paul in this book stems from the personal zeal they demonstrate in fulfilling two very different missions—one to the faithful Jews and the other to the Gentiles. These are two groups with very different cultures and fraught with prejudices. Some of what we witness here is a “clash” of these cultures and customs. However, the “weak and beggarly elements” brought in by the Syncretistic Jews emanates from a very different source than the loyal and faithful Jews he calls “the circumcision,” which were the churches ministered to by Peter and the other apostles.

He mentions the “grace of Christ” as being a foundation of the correct understanding of the gospel, as indeed

it is. Christ's sacrifice provides the unmerited pardon (grace) the Galatians and we receive from God. As a result of Christ's sacrifice, we are no longer under the death penalty for having sinned. Romans 6:23 states, "the wages of sin are death." It is grace because no amount of obedience could have ever overturned the penalty for having broken the law just one time. We were guilty and were under the death penalty. Christ's sacrifice provides the way we are forgiven for those sins.

The Galatians were Gentiles, not Jews —they did not have the law previously. They had not practiced the law in observance of the first (old) covenant. This is made clear in Galatians 4:8: "... when you knew not God you did service unto them which by nature are not

Gods.” Later in chapter 4, he states that they were returning to the “weak and beggarly elements.” Note: They could not be returning to a place (or a practice) where they had never been! What they were “returning to” in Galatians 4:9, and what Paul is alluding to here, were practices which were reminiscent of the elements of Syncretistic Judaism, Zodiac Astrology, and the like. Paul was not calling any part of God’s law or even the old covenant “weak and beggarly elements.” He was referring to a focus on ritualistic customs and practices that were creeping back into and mixing with the true gospel he had preached to them. He could not logically complain that they were returning to (again observing) things they never observed. But rather, they were perverting this new

gospel he had preached to them by mixing into it things from their past ritualistic practices, traditions, and customs as well as the infection of customs from other cultures that crept in. Those are the “weak and beggarly elements” Paul is referring to. An element of Syncretistic Judaism was infecting their understanding of the gospel and was perverting it. They were also “infected by” the Jewish Zealots (Judaizers—Paul himself had been one of these before his conversion), which demanded that one cling to customs and that their personal unilateral effort was “the only way” one could be saved. It supplanted Christ and His sacrifice as “the way” salvation is achieved. That is why he says they were “perverting” the gospel of Christ. They were following “a gospel” but it had been polluted with a

“cocktail” of customs and practices, which Paul had never instructed or taught. This point is made clear in the very next verse.

7 Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ.

It is ludicrous to suggest that Paul is referring to the Old Covenant, the Ten Commandments, or any part of those things as perversions! He would never call those things that “pointed to Christ” as being perverted. In the truest and most comprehensive way, those things were part of the gospel message in that they were foundations of it. And it is of note that we are instructed in 2 Thessalonians 1:8, “...taking vengeance on them that know not God and that

obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.” We know God if we obey Him and have a relationship with Him. First John 5:2 states, “By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments.”

8 But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.

It is important to reemphasize here that Paul himself says that the gospel he preached **WAS THE VERY SAME GOSPEL** Peter was preaching to the faithful Jews who Paul refers to as “the circumcision.” Paul was not preaching that the Galatians (the Gentiles) should come out of or depart from what the

faithful Jews (“the circumcision”) were practicing.

9 As we said before, so say I now again, if any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received let him be accursed.

Paul dramatically says (and repeats it for emphasis) that anyone who changes what He had preached to them should be “cursed.” So what did Paul preach previously that he is referring to here?

In Romans we have an important example of what Paul was preaching. This passage is important because it discusses works, the law, the deeds of the law, and the law of faith: “Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all [we are “blanketed”

by His grace] and upon all them that believe” (Romans 3:22). Notice that it is the faith of Jesus, not in Jesus, by which we are brought into a condition of salvation. It is His faith, not ours, that opens the door to salvation for us. Those who say it is our faith seem to suggest that it is by something we do! IT IS NOT!

Critics of those who do their best to obey God’s law often accuse them of somehow trying to “earn” salvation through works. Some claim that obedience itself is trying to “earn salvation” or an attempt to “pay for Christ’s sacrifice” for us. Yet, we know that there is nothing we could ever do that could rise to the value of Christ’s sacrifice for us. Simply put, it is impossible to pay for this gift. The price

is too high—we have nothing of equal value to it. It cannot be purchased for any price! It is clear that Paul is emphasizing that trusting in anything that comes from within us falls woefully short and is the wrong approach. But understanding and believing that Christ was fully faithful in what He did for us is the correct path and is what makes all the difference. Not just believing in Him but believing what He said and what He said we should do with our lives and how we should live should be the focus of true Christians. Not following Him and not living the way He directs we should live is rejecting Him. It is neither our faith nor our works that save us but Christ's faithfulness in fulfilling His role as Messiah and in becoming a perfect sacrifice—paying our penalty for sin and qualifying to be King of Kings!

It wasn't what we did or what we do that opened the door to salvation—IT WAS SOLELY WHAT CHRIST DID! It was Christ's faithfulness in obedience to God's law (not ours) that allows us to be the recipients of His grace. Our keeping of the law did not ever make us righteous. Christ's obedience did! We are made righteous when we accept Jesus Christ's sacrifice by faith that we are forgiven and therefore righteous. So indeed, our righteousness is "by faith"—but it is because of the faith of Jesus, not our own and not by "doing the deeds of the law." The importance of faith is clear, but this does not say that "righteousness"—which is defined by the law—is somehow invalidated. Rather, it magnifies Christ's faithfulness in keeping the law! WE ARE SAVED BY

HIS FAITH (faithfulness)—not by our own. Christ was perfectly faithful and kept the law perfectly. He now wants us to be faithful, too, and to follow His example. But the difference is we are not capable of doing it perfectly—that's why He and the Father have given us their grace. "For there is no difference: For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). How could all have sinned if the law is no longer in force? All is ALL—it includes everyone who lived before Christ's death and after it. ALL— every human being that has ever lived—have sinned! If the law is somehow no longer valid after Christ's death how could these people have sinned, as they too are part of the "all" mentioned here? Verse 21 says, "Even the righteousness of God is witnessed by the law and the prophets."

“Witnessed by” means attested to, described as, explained in, testified to, or demonstrated by. When we sin, we “come short of” the glory of God”—so when we are not sinning we are moving in the direction of God’s glory. But since we cannot live a sinless life, Christ’s sacrifice removing our sinfulness completes the journey that we could not complete on our own through the deeds of the law. So it is not our faith or our keeping of the law that saves us. That is why Paul is explaining here that we have no reason to boast. It is the faith of Christ in keeping the law and paying our penalty for our sins that saves us, so we can only “boast in Christ.”

Notice further: Romans 3:24–27 states, “Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ

Jesus: Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his [not our] righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness [not ours]: that he [not we] might be just, and the justifier of him which believes in Jesus [here is what we are required to do—believe in Jesus]. Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law—of works? Nay: but by the law of faith.” Notice that faith and law are bound-up together. We are to have faith that we are righteous (considered to have kept the law) through the grace of God if we accept Christ’s sacrifice and believe that we are forgiven (from our past sins) and can be forgiven sins we now commit in our weakness. If we sin “we have an advocate with the

Father” (1 John 2:1), and He is our Mediator and intercedes in heaven for us as our High Priest. If striving to overcome sin is no longer necessary then we do not need an intercessor or a high priest.

“Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law” (Romans 3:28). Well of course! Christ did it—we can’t—yet He justifies us anyway. That is the definition of grace— unmerited pardon. We have been justified even though we were unable to complete the deeds of the law, as we should. So we are “justified by faith [of Christ] without the deeds of the law.” This is not speaking about how we should live but rather how we are justified. It is not saying that the deeds of the law are not valid or important,

only that they cannot justify us. Our effort to live according to every word of God shows our willingness and acceptance of God as Lord of our life. He is Lord; we are not! We are not of our own! We are “the church of God, which He hath purchased with His own blood” (Acts 20:28). We obey Him because we recognize that He has the right to ask it of us. What He asks of us is defined in the whole of Scripture. “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness” (2 Timothy 3:16). We freely and willingly do what He asks, doing our best to be faithful to Him because He is our Lord!

“Is He the God of the Jews only [who strove to keep the law]? Is He not also

of the Gentiles [who never strove to keep the law]? Yes, of the Gentiles also” (Romans 3:29).

Paul is stating emphatically that God is God of all—He is breaking down the “exclusive” attitude that the Jews had toward the Gentile nations. This was an important part of his message and his apostleship. He is showing that the New Covenant includes all. There are two main “thrusts” in Paul’s message – one to the Jews, and one to the Gentiles. However, he is “sent to” the Gentile nations and therefore concentrates and focuses on the message to them. Because of this, he emphasizes an approach that is not “law focused”. He does not want them to take up where the Jews had “left off” he wants them to go forward in a balanced approach to

obedience and faith. Paul is clearly “jealous over” the Gentile churches in the same way that God is jealous over those who are His. Notice the difference in the two “thrusts”:

“Seeing it is one God, which shall justify the circumcision [the Jews] by faith...” (Romans 3:30a).

Notice it is “by faith” here. The Jews had to accept that Christ had done what they who had the law could not do—keep it perfectly—it was Christ’s faithfulness that allowed for “a way” to salvation—not their own.

“...and uncircumcision [the Gentiles] through faith” (verse 30b).

Notice it is “through faith” here. The

Gentiles had to believe (verse 26) and have faith in Christ if they were to be saved. They had to have faith that Christ had also accepted them and would do for them what He said He would. Paul goes on to make a dramatic and vital statement. Did any of these things “make void” the law? No! Rather, they established the law!

According to Webster, the word “established” means to make stable or firm; to set up; to found; to enact or decree by authority; to confirm; to prove; to verify; to substantiate. The Greek term means to uphold. Christians, then, far from invalidating the law, uphold the law.

But which law? The entire basis of the faith of Christ was that He was faithful in

fulfilling all of the law perfectly. We can't "fulfill" it as He did. Paul is rhetorically asking, Since Christ did it for us—and we are justified by His faith—does this somehow mean that the law is empty (void)? The answer: Emphatically, NO! The whole process actually establishes the importance of the law in that the law defines the "righteousness of God" (see verse 22).

The key point is that there is nothing we do or can do that gives rise to boasting. Christ was the "faithful One" who "fulfilled" what we could not, who did what we could not do.

The expression, "establish the law," refers to the law Christ kept in our stead. This is the law that is "established" here! This is the law that is the context of this

discussion. The “law of faith” is introduced by Paul to emphasize the faith of Christ as the KEY ELEMENT in what He did for us. Paul separates the concept of the law (which requires works) and the law of faith when he says, “Do we make void the law through faith?” For if he were saying, “Do we make void the law of faith through faith,” that would make no sense! He is showing that faith is a vital part of the process of fulfilling the requirements of the law.

He is clearly saying that the law defines “the righteousness of God,” but only Christ has kept it perfectly. Therefore, we should never boast as a result of even our very best effort to obey His laws. Though Scripture implores that we live according to every word of God, it

also teaches that we all have fallen short of perfection (“all have sinned and come short of the glory of God”)—no matter how noble the attempt. That is why it is only by Christ’s faithfulness in doing what we could not that we can be saved! In all of this, the law is not voided; its very importance is established. If anyone preaches differently—he is accursed!

10: For do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ.

11 But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man.

Paul is clearly emphasizing that his

message is not designed to win him any popular support among men. He was delivering a message to them directly given to him by Christ. He understood and proclaimed that if he deviated from Christ's message to please men he would not be acting as Christ's servant (minister).

At this point, one should ask a question: Which do you suppose would be the more "popular" message: that you no longer have to keep the law but just believe or have faith? Or, that in order to demonstrate your faith it is important to diligently keep the law but be humble about it, for your law keeping gains you nothing? It was Christ's PERFECT obedience that opens the door to our salvation. So, obey God, but don't boast about it. Rather, have your confidence in

what Christ did on your behalf. This is Paul's message here.

12 For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it but [he received it] by the revelation of Jesus Christ.

Paul establishes the authority of his message by pointing out that it was not something he learned on his own; rather, it was taught to him directly by Christ. Paul knew that many of the Jews were rejecting Christ and clinging to their strict customs and traditions that Christ said were not His doctrines (Matthew 15:9). He was now emphasizing that men needed to look to Christ for salvation—trusting in Christ, believing what He said as well as embracing the way of life He taught we

should live—not following traditions, customs of men, and the like. Paul’s authority came directly from Christ.

13 For you have heard of my conversation (conduct) in time past in the Jew’s religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and wasted it.

14 And profited in the Jews religion above many my equal in my own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers.

Paul refers to the time when he was “exceedingly zealous” in following the strict customs and traditions “of his fathers” and had strayed so far from righteous behavior that he himself was persecuting the true church of God,

even consenting to the killing of its saints. Most of these he persecuted were Jews led by Peter and the other apostles, but they were not part of what he refers to as “the Jew’s religion,” and he and those in it were persecuting the converted Jews— “the circumcision.” Christ rescued him from this false way on the road to Damascus. Paul clearly shows that his own behavior was not according to righteousness. He refers to this behavior as “the Jew’s religion,” not God’s religion. He is NOT, however, comparing what he called “the Jews religion” to the way Christ lived, which included obedience to God’s law. Christ lived a perfect life, perfectly keeping God’s law. Paul was NOT referring to this true way of life as being the Jew’s religion. Otherwise he would have been attacking the very excellent life of Christ.

This “Jews religion” he refers to was the religion of the men who sat on the Sanhedrin, who ordered the death of Christ on “trumped-up charges” of blasphemy, accusing Him because He claimed to be the Son of God! He is referring to this religion of the Sanhedrin that had been perverted by “teaching for commandments the DOCTRINES OF MEN.” These are Christ’s own words—and remember it was Christ Himself who taught Paul, as the apostle clearly states next.

15 But when it pleased God,
who separated me from my mother’s
womb, and called me by his grace,

16 To reveal his Son in me,
that I might preach him among the

heathen; immediately I
conferred not with flesh and blood:

17 Neither went I up to
Jerusalem to them, which were apostles
before me: but I went to Arabia, and
returned again unto Damascus.

Paul is saying that what he now teaches
was taught directly to him by Christ and
very different from those perverted
teachings that drove his bad behavior in
the past. And now, having been directly
chosen by God to reveal Christ to the
Gentiles, he did not need to and
therefore did not consult with men (for
three years) in this responsibility but,
rather, just followed the directions Christ
gave him.

18 Then after three years I

went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and abode with him fifteen days.

Note that Paul and Peter stayed together for fifteen days. They were very compatible and of the same faith and beliefs. Paul next speaks of the other apostles, saying he had not spent any time with them except James, Christ's living brother. He refers to them as "apostles" (as they truly were the apostles of Christ), showing that he fully recognizes their position.

19 But other of the apostles saw I none, save James the Lord's brother.

20 Now the things which I write unto you, behold, before God, I lie not.

Paul is emphasizing that his message comes directly from Christ. He is not saying it is exclusive of what the apostles are doing, only that it is directly from Christ Himself.

21 Afterwards I came into the regions of Syria and Celica

22 And was unknown by face unto the churches of Judea which were in Christ:

23 But they had heard only, that he which persecuted us in times past now preaches the faith, which once he destroyed.

24 And they glorified God in me.

When Paul came into this area, they did not recognize him but were aware of his former reputation of persecuting their brothers. Now they witnessed he was preaching the true message of faith, so they glorified God for this “conversion” of a former enemy.

Chapter Two

1 Then fourteen years after I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and took Titus with me also.

2: And I went up by revelation, and communicated unto them that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles but privately to them, which were of reputation, lest by any means I should run, or had run, in vain.

3 But neither Titus, who was with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised:

Upon inspiration (revelation) Paul is compelled and goes back to the disciples and apostles in Jerusalem and “confers with them” regarding the progress of his message to the Gentiles. The context of this discussion shows that many in the culture of the Jews (“the circumcision”) had difficulty accepting the Gentiles (the Greeks particularly) (“the uncircumcision”) as being “grafted-in” and made part of the spiritual Body of Christ. Therefore, he is careful to speak to the leaders privately, understanding that a more public meeting might cause suspicion among their culture. This consideration on Paul’s part allowed the leaders of the

faithful church in Jerusalem to better handle these sensitive issues in the way they saw best. This was not Paul's "turf," so to speak. Paul was showing respect to their position and understood the kinds of problems the leaders in Jerusalem were dealing with. He was inspired to go "by revelation" for the purpose of continuing to unify the church as one body during a difficult transitional period for the Jews. The issue of circumcision had become a major point of contention between these two groups. In all of church history we find arguments over doctrinal issues—in that day, circumcision was a point of argument. The more traditional Jews held to the practice incorrectly as an "essential" point of obedience. They were "clinging to" their national heritage of being the "special people of God."

Titus was taught by Paul and saw no need to be circumcised as the Jerusalem culture practiced. Paul understood clearly that it was not a requirement of obedience and knew that he and the Gentiles were subject to criticism and judgment by the Jews on this point. It was a “highly charged emotional issue” of the day as the Jews’ culture transitioned from their status as the “special” people of God in a national sense to being “part of” the people of God in a spiritual sense, with other nationalities being “grafted-in.” This was difficult for them to understand and has remained a “bone of contention” to this day.

4 And that because of false brethren unawares brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty,

which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage.

5 To whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might continue with you.

6 But of these [the false brethren] who seemed to be somewhat, (whatsoever they were, it makes no matter to me: God accepts no man's persons) for they who seemed to be somewhat in conference added nothing to me:

Paul clearly shows that the men who were causing this "contention" and stirring up the culture over circumcision were FALSE BRETHREN. These were people who came in secretly and were

acting as spies to try to discover fault with Paul and those with whom he met to accuse them and to bring the weight of misapplied doctrine down upon them. Apparently, these false brethren were infiltrating the ranks of the true church and were gaining support and popularity to some degree. It is important to note that these scriptures show that those “of reputation” (the leadership) were not part of these false brethren, but Paul mentions the false brethren to point out that they were causing a problem for the church in Jerusalem—the true “circumcision”—and he is keenly aware of them. These false brethren were playing on the emotions of the people as they transitioned from their once special status as the people of God to being part of the larger Body of Christ with all nationalities grafted in. Simply put, Paul

and the leaders in Jerusalem were dealing with prejudice between the Jews and the Gentiles. You will notice in verse 5 that Paul says he would not “give place” to them or be in subjection to them (the false brethren), not even for an hour. In our culture, we would say “not for a minute”!

You will also notice that Paul says the gospel they already had in Jerusalem—taught to them by the true “circumcision,” led by Peter and the apostles—was the same true gospel. Notice: “that the truth of the gospel might continue with you.” The text here goes on to emphasize these points.

Paul says in verse 6 that these men seem to have some status in the culture, as he says they are “somewhat in

conference” (or in dialogue) with, and having some influence in, the culture in Jerusalem, but they contributed nothing (“added nothing to me”).

7 But contrariwise, when they saw that the gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto me, as the gospel of the circumcision was unto Peter: [NOTICE: It is the same message.]

8 (For he that wrought effectually in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision, the same was mighty in me toward the Gentiles.)

9 And when James, Cephas [Peter], and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and

Barnabas the right hands of fellowship that we should go unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision.

They were “contrary” when they saw that Paul was indeed commissioned with the gospel to the Gentiles. Instead of honoring and accepting the idea, they were “contrary” to it; they opposed it. They continued to reject the idea that the Gentile nations were being grafted in. But, when James, Peter, and John—the pillars of the church at Jerusalem—understood that the gospel committed to Paul was the same as the gospel to them but that each was commissioned to different cultures (“the circumcision” and the “uncircumcision”—the Jews and the Gentile nations), they approved and extended their (plural) “right hands of fellowship.” In other words, they

endorsed the idea of the same gospel going to the two different groups. It was the same inspiration by the same God. “For He that wrought effectually in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision, THE SAME was mighty in me [Paul] to the Gentiles.” There were not two gospels or gospel “givers”; there were two commissions, one to the Jews and one to the Gentiles—but it is clear the message was the same.

10 Only they would that we should remember the poor, the same, which I also was forward to do.

They agreed that the poor should be ministered to.

11 But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face,

because he was to be blamed.

12 For before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles: but when they were come, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them, which were of the circumcision.

13 And other Jews dissembled with him insomuch that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation.

14 But when I saw that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel, I said unto Peter before them all, if you being a Jew live after the manner of the Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, why do you compel the Gentiles to live as do the Jews?

But when Peter came to Antioch, he and Paul had a serious disagreement, or dispute, about the issue of circumcision and how it was being handled. The Jews who were of “the circumcision” were being heavily influenced by those who still held to the former understanding that actual physical circumcision was required as part of obedience. This idea permeated the culture in Jerusalem. Peter and some of the disciples were “compromising” with this issue and now it had even affected Barnabas. They knew that it was no longer “required” but also that it was not “forbidden” or in any way contrary to living according to God’s Word, remaining perfectly acceptable as a custom and tradition of the Jews. Continuing the practice as a part of their culture did not conflict with anything required in the New Covenant.

Therefore, they did not dissuade the Jews from continuing the practice. However, many continued to elevate the practice as “essential” even though it no longer was.

The cultural clash between the Jews and Gentiles was exacerbated by the Jerusalem apostles’ “tolerance” of those who continued to view this practice as an essential part of doctrine even though they (Peter and the other apostles) knew differently. We see this in Paul’s rebuking Peter for compelling the Gentiles to do things Peter did not require of himself. He notes the Jerusalem leadership’s hypocrisy (“dissimulation”) in this. Paul was upset with them for their own behavior but also for not clarifying this issue for the Jews and further by allowing many of the

Jerusalem culture to persist in thinking less of the Gentiles for not adopting and requiring the practice. The attitude of the day was, “Well, if they want to be part of us (Jews), then they should be circumcised as we are!” They were missing that God was not making the Gentiles part of the Jews (in a national sense) but was doing so in a spiritual sense and extending His grace to all mankind. That remained a difficult concept for the Jews to assimilate. Frankly, the Jews could not easily see that they were no longer the sole “special people of God.”

Circumcision was a major symbol of that “special status” by their custom. This was purely an issue of cultural prejudice, haughtiness, and a lack of understanding on the part of the Jews.

However, the problem was made worse by the failure of the leadership (Peter) to make these clarifications. This was the source of the disagreement and the reason Paul was upset with Peter and those who continued to “tolerate” this behavior.

Paul was “lovingly protective” of his congregations and was very concerned that this issue was going to cause division and apprehension among them needlessly. Peter also was “lovingly protective” of his congregations and was concerned that forcing the issue by deemphasizing the practice would cause division and apprehension among his flocks as well. Each had a different vantage point and different cultures to contend with.

Paul boldly challenged Peter (blaming him) and those who permitted the Jews to insist on circumcision as an “essential doctrine” of conversion for the Gentiles. Paul was on the “higher ground” and correct about clarifying what was and what was not required even though Peter was doing his best to maintain calm among the Jews on this issue. Paul saw it as hypocrisy for Peter to eat with the Gentiles when he was alone with them (showing that he, Peter, did not agree with the cultural prohibitions regarding fraternizing with the uncircumcised) but refrain from doing so when the Jews were present, not wanting to create a controversy among his own congregations. This upset Paul and he said so to Peter.

15 We who are Jews by

nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles.

16 Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but [except] by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.

Paul states that he and those like him were indeed Jews by birth and heritage. Even though he now ministered to the Gentiles, his background and foundation was of the Jews. He understands that the Jews viewed the Gentile culture as being “outside the framework” of righteous living. His statement here is an implication that his present association with them should not be

used somehow to assign a label to him based on their former heathenistic practices.

They know (and so do Peter and the other apostles) that no one is justified by anything he does. No man but Christ has remained perfectly faithful in obedience. Therefore, we are justified only by the faithfulness of Jesus Christ. Notice that he constantly uses the phrase “the faith of Christ.” Paul is emphasizing that regardless of what we do, whether as a ritual or our efforts to obey the very law of God, nothing we do on our own can justify us—only the blood of Christ can do that. The faith that we individually demonstrate is our belief in Christ and acceptance of what He did on our behalf. Our belief (faith) in Christ is very different than the FAITH

OF CHRIST. This statement simply explains how we are justified—the faith (faithfulness) of Christ. It does not explain how we demonstrate our faith back to Him—which is or our faith in Christ.

Is Paul being contradictory?

Verse 16 presents an interesting challenge for us when compared to Paul's own words to the Romans, where it appears he contradicts this statement. Here, in Galatians 2:16, he clearly says "that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ." But in Romans 2:13, he says that "the doers of the law shall be justified."

How is it possible to reconcile these two

statements? It is important to notice the words “is not” in the Galatians statement and the words “shall be” in the Romans statement. This seeming contradiction is a key point in understanding exactly what Paul is teaching— that the law is still a part of the process, still the way we are to measure our lives and demonstrate our faith toward God.

In Galatians, he says a man is not justified by works—that is, works of his own—but continues by immediately saying a man is justified by the faith of Christ. Notice that justification comes from the faith OF Christ, not IN Christ. This means that justification comes to us by way of the FAITHFULNESS OF CHRIST—His faithfulness expressed in keeping God’s law perfectly. It is by Him, not by us! Then, in Romans, he says the

doers of the law “shall be justified.” These two statements are showing that if a person is focused only on doing the physical points of the law apart from Christ, he is not justified. But if a person commits himself to the tenets of righteous living and is a “doer of the law,” obeying God because He is God and places his faith IN Christ and the promise of redemption through Him, then he “shall be” justified. In all cases, as Paul says to the Galatians, the justification is by the FAITH OF CHRIST —so we, then, should demonstrate that we have faith in His promise, not in our own works.

The Galatians statement is showing that we should obey the things God requires of us and not what men require. We do this because we know that our

obedience in this way actually demonstrates our faith IN Christ. Then and only then are we justified by the faith OF Christ. We believe He is God, so we do what He says we should do and live the way He says we should live —“according to every word of God.”

The Romans statement is showing that Christ will only justify those who are the “doers of the law,” those who demonstrate their faith, not just the hearers. Actually, these two statements together are a strong argument for obedience to the law now that Christ’s faithfulness has created a condition where we can be justified. They are not mutually exclusive—they are actually quite complimentary.

17 But if, while we seek to be

justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, is therefore Christ the minister of sin? God forbid.

If we are looking to Christ for justification and we sin, Paul asks, is Christ then the minister of sin? Certainly not! It is interesting to note that some who seek to invalidate the law claim this section of Scripture is doing just that. But look closely at how Paul uses these phrases. He is speaking here of a person who is seeking justification, and whose quest is expressed through a striving to live according to righteousness—that is, keeping the commandments of God's law. Paul is merely emphasizing that God's grace does indeed exist for a person like this. He shows that Christ is indeed working with this person, ministering grace to him. God does NOT

SEE this person as a sinner. Christ does not become a “minister of sin”—He does not accommodate sinfulness—once grace is imputed to this person and he is seen as justified. But, remember, this person is indeed SEEKING to be justified—striving to obey. This is a person who has been justified by the faith of Christ, not by the person’s own efforts. The grace of God covers us (notice it) IF WE ARE SEEKING HIM—trying to live according to righteousness.

Before His perfect sinless life and His ultimate sacrifice we could not be reconciled or justified, and our sins remained—we stood guilty before God. But now, if we are seeking first the Kingdom of God— doing our best to obey Him, seeking to be justified by Him —we then are justified by God’s grace,

which came as a direct result of Christ's faithfulness to His purpose for coming into the world.

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

Paul is speaking to a culture, which was having difficulty accepting Christ. He is emphasizing that things are different now that Messiah has come. Successful righteous living requires a different approach and a different reliance. He wants them to come out of the guilt of their imperfection and recognize that God was offering a new way to justification through Christ.

Paul states, "Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this

one thing I do forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before” (Philippians 3:13). He is simply saying here that we must no longer rely on our own imperfect ability to obey, for this produces heaviness and guilt.

Rather, we need to put that in the past and have a “forward look” to our lives. Paul consistently teaches that we need to “let go” of our past guilt and accept the grace offered by God through the faith of Christ. He urges us to build (anew) on the perfectly “solid rock” of Christ rather than continuing to rely on the “shifting sand” of our own imperfect efforts alone. We are to replace (cast out) self-reliance with reliance on a new foundation, which is Christ.

Paul uses the word “build” to suggest

that “building” our lives upon this new foundation is better than returning to the former, weaker foundation of the past. This is because the new process brings justification and freedom from guilt if we seek Him and allow Him to be our Advocate with the Father. The issue here is about how to view the process of becoming righteous—not working alone but, rather, through Christ!

In the past our personal effort in obedience was “all there was,” but it could never measure up. However, now our personal effort to obey God no longer stands alone all by itself but rather is buttressed by (or justified by) the work of Christ. God’s plan is “unfolding” just as he designed it. God’s law remains the foundation for righteousness. But righteousness is no

longer solely a matter of effort but a matter of justification in that we are justified through His sacrifice as Christ advocates and mediates in His position as our High Priest before the Father on our behalf.

19 For I through the law am dead to the law that I might live unto God.

Paul says that through the law he is dead to the law. Many who seek to invalidate the law actually turn this statement around and preach that because of grace we are dead to the law and no longer need to observe (or obey) the law. But that is NOT what Paul says! He says it is the law itself that causes him to be dead to the law. Notice that he says it is actually “through” the

law that he has become dead to it! Interesting isn't it? What does this mean? How can obeying the law make you dead to the law? Simply put, if we seek to obey the law and fail, we are worthy of the penalty for sin. Paul writes, "For the wages of sin are death" (Romans 6:23). So if we strive to keep the law alone (apart from grace), and fail, the penalty of death looms over us. But notice further that Paul uses the connective word "that." He says, "...that I might live unto God." Paul is showing that this process of obeying the law as best one can but failing to do it perfectly because of normal human weakness (thus deeming one "dead") is somehow the very process by which he is able to live unto God! Did you get that? By striving to obey and having fallen short he is considered dead. But now, being

dead by that process alone, he is able to live to God by some other process (“that I might live unto God”)—the grace of God. He is showing that the law leads us to grace. Otherwise, if we are not guilty of having broken the law, grace is not needed. It’s an awkward statement for sure but does show that we are now able to live to God (“that I might live unto God”) as a direct result of our attempt to obey the law as modified in the New Covenant, even though we all fall short. He goes on to elaborate that this possibility comes through Christ our High Priest who has replaced the Levitical Priesthood and the administration of the things, which were part of that priesthood.

20 I am crucified with Christ:
nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ

lives in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.

These verses are a continuing iteration of what he says in verse 19. Again he says he is dead. But in this particular statement he says he is dead (crucified) “with” Christ, and yet he remains alive. Paul says it is Christ who now lives in (within) him. By this statement he is declaring that the person who he was in the past is now gone, replaced by the presence or spiritual influence of Christ. In saying it is “by the faith of the Son of God,” he credits the faith (faithfulness) of the Son of God, not his own efforts. He goes on to show appreciation for the love God has bestowed upon him, even expressing that he sees a very personal

aspect in Christ's sacrifice stating that he "gave himself for me."

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

Paul teaches here that when we emphasize the law apart from what Christ did for us we act to "frustrate" grace. He says he himself does not do that! Because righteousness does not come from our ability to keep the law (as our human weakness prevents us from keeping it perfectly); rather, righteousness comes through grace, which is made available as a result of Christ's death and sacrifice in our place. He continues to clarify that righteousness apart from the sacrifice of Christ is simply not possible. He is

explaining and emphasizes that if salvation (righteousness) came by our own efforts, then Christ did not need to die as He did.

Chapter Three

1 O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you?

Notice he speaks of obedience to the truth—obey means to do what you are told. What they were doing was not “true,” not based on “truth.” Apparently, they were NOT obeying what God’s Word defined as proper obedience. They had stopped obeying something that Paul had taught them that they

should! Notice it—they were no longer obeying! They had “turned away” from doing what they were supposed to do and were apparently doing “other [wrong] things” instead. Paul uses the term “bewitched,” indicating that they were deceived into doing things which were not of God, things not taught by Paul, whether in word or by example—things which “derailed them” from doing the things they should do! (“Be ye followers [imitators] of me, even as I also am of Christ.”)

The understanding of the life, death, burial, and resurrection of Christ was a “current event.” It was the greatest event of the time, and everyone was essentially just beginning to comprehend what it all meant and what the ramifications of these things were.

This information was being “taught” to them by Paul and those assisting him. In other words, they were “hearing and understanding what Christ did for each of them personally” for the very first time. It was this hearing that was communicating that grace, which did not come from physical effort alone but was now available as a result of what Christ had done. Prior to Paul’s ministry to them, all they knew was performance of physical rituals, customs, and practices. Now these outside influences were trying to use this “habit” to “convert” these people to “their way,” using a “law-focused” tactic intertwined with a misapplied authority of the Old Testament Scriptures failing to recognize the implications of the New Covenant Christ had established.

2 This only would I learn of you, Received you the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?

The Galatians did not have the law prior to Paul's ministry. Paul's ministry to them began with preaching about the work of Christ. However, we know from the whole body of Paul's writings that he preached they should follow Christ's example with full recognition of the gift his sacrifice had bestowed upon them. They had no prior foundation in the true works of obedience. They received the Spirit by ACTING UPON what they heard from Paul! In speaking to the Romans, Paul said, "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God" (Romans 10:17).

Until Christ came, was sacrificed, resurrected, and returned to heaven, God's Holy Spirit had not been given as it was on the Day of Pentecost. Until these events took place, neither grace nor the Spirit was available to them. But you will notice that "hearing" was an essential part of having this Spirit. It was not universally available without this hearing Paul speaks of, and it was not available prior to these events despite any effort on their part to obtain it through some physical means.

Syncretistic Judaizers, Jewish Zealots, and those who refused to acknowledge that the priesthood had changed from the Levites to Jesus Christ were trying to influence the Galatians into demonstrating their faith through circumcision and other practices. These factions saw the practice as REQUIRED

and ESSENTIAL to proper obedience. Their argument (as it pertained to circumcision) was convincing as the Old Covenant had indeed established the practice. The Old Testament writings remained the “Bible of the day” and continued to carry great weight as the “authority” on the matter. This made it difficult and confusing for the Galatians. To overcome this obstacle, Paul goes beyond just the practice of circumcision to declare emphatically that any physical effort of any kind (especially the rite of circumcision) apart from Christ is vain (or worthless) in bringing us to salvation. The “infiltrating factions” were obsessed with physical practices of various sorts, but circumcision was indeed THE prime point of contention. Paul was using the “higher moral authority” of the giving of God’s Holy Spirit and the grace which

came as a result of Christ's sacrifice to "trump" their misuse of the Old Testament as their authority in the same sense that the New Covenant "trumps" the Old Covenant by magnifying the importance of the spiritual over the physical without destroying its foundation. He was not setting it aside but building upon it and demonstrating that the New Covenant was indeed different in some very specific ways, and he was also showing that God's plan had progressed past physical obedience alone and now entered into a higher spiritual plane. His effort here is to thwart the misapplication of the authority of the Old Covenant in this way. You will notice that Paul never says that circumcision is wrong or a sin—just that it does not get us to salvation. Paul fully understood that the ritual practices of

the Levitical Priesthood had been replaced with the spiritual implications of the new Priesthood of Jesus Christ. Actually, his point is that reliance upon such things alone (as these factions were teaching) actually frustrates the ultimate goal of salvation now that the priesthood had changed.

3 Are ye so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?

4 Have ye suffered so many things in vain? If it be yet in vain.

5 He therefore that ministers to you the Spirit, and works miracles among you, doeth he it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?

Paul chastises them for being foolish to look for “another way” to be “made perfect” which is contrary to understanding that it was the faith of Christ only which justifies us.

His clear use of the word “flesh” refers to the main issue here, which is circumcision—the obvious context and the key issue in the entire discourse of the book. He reminds them that their very conversion could be at stake if they were now embarking on a path different from the one upon which they began, being led by God’s Holy Spirit, as clearly evidenced in Paul’s message and backed up by actual miracles they had all witnessed.

6 Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for

righteousness.

7 Know ye therefore that they, which are of faith, the same, are the children of Abraham.

Abraham is an interesting choice in this discourse. First, because the Jews considered themselves “children of Abraham” and said he was their “father.” Paul cleverly uses Abraham, a patriarch with exceptional credentials in two important ways significant in this discourse. First, Abraham demonstrated impeccable obedience up to and including the willingness to sacrifice Isaac in total obedience to God. And, second, Abraham was a man of faith, having complete confidence that God would grant and fulfill His promises to him. His choice of Abraham further

supports Paul's teaching that obedience and faith were important and not contrary to one another, as Abraham was a man who clearly demonstrated both. He states clearly that those who are Christ's by faith are indeed also the children of Abraham, a thing the Jews liked to claim for themselves alone.

8 And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, in thee shall all nations be blessed.

9 So then they, which are of faith, are blessed with faithful Abraham.

Paul shows that scripture supports that it was always God's intention to include the Gentile nations in His plan. He is

showing them that they (spiritual Jews) need not consider themselves somehow less than physical Jews. But notice that he reiterates that Abraham was FAITHFUL. How was he faithful? Abraham was a man who did what God said to do regardless of the outcome. Then, he also trusted God that everything would come out OK, as he knew God, lived according to every word of God, and fully expected God to fulfill His promises to him. Abraham is the perfect example to show how obedience interacts with faith—how law and grace are in perfect balance AND NOT mutually exclusive!

10 For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continues not in all things, which are

written in the book of the law to do them.

It is worthy of note that Paul uses the expression “of the works of the law.” He is emphasizing that some are of this way of life, relying entirely upon what they do and upon their own ability to obey rather than upon the mercy of God. Paul speaks of those who are “of works” and contrasts them with those who are “of faith.” It is not a comment on what they are doing; rather, it’s a commentary upon what they rely for their salvation. The “curse of the law” was obviously that it carried the death penalty. However, it should be noted that under the Levitical Priesthood there were “atonements” made for the people and there were sin offerings and sacrifices. There was indeed a process in place to deal with sin, and that

process (with its many sacrifices) pointed to the ultimate sacrifice, which was to be made for all mankind by JESUS CHRIST! This section of the text actually clarifies the point that regardless of how we strive to keep the law we will fall short. And, having fallen short, without Christ's sacrifice we would be doomed. But because of Christ's sacrifice, we are forgiven upon repentance and receive grace. That is Paul's entire point. The Jews had difficulty accepting Christ, and it is Christ that makes salvation possible, not works of obedience. If one trusts only in his own ability to obey the law apart from accepting Christ's sacrifice, he is foolish. Paul is pointing out the obvious: that mankind simply is incapable of perfect obedience, so seeking salvation in this way is "suffering in vain" in the attempt.

11 But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, the just shall live by faith.

This is simply the statement of the overarching principle of the book. Notice that it does not say we must stop obeying the law—not at all! It simply clarifies that we are not justified by the law. You will never find in Paul’s writings that he ever says don’t obey God’s Word.

12 And the law is not of faith: but, the man that doeth them shall live in them.

Obedience is “faithfulness” (remaining loyal), but it is not faith (having unswerving belief and trust). Just as

Abraham's obedience wasn't a demonstration of his faith but rather of his "faithfulness." It was his unswerving belief that God would do what He said He would do—that was a demonstration of his faith. It was his faith that actually allowed him to be faithful in his obedience. If Abraham did not believe that God would honor His promise, it is unlikely that Abraham would have been very willing to offer Isaac because he knew that his actions alone by obeying would not save his son. Abraham knew God was God and had every right to demand things of him, so he obeyed. BUT he further trusted and believed that God always operated in his (Abraham's) best interest and that God would indeed honor His promise. It was Abraham's belief and trust that was a demonstration of his faith. If a person is

“of faith,” he trusts in something other than what he can do for himself. If a person is “of the law alone” there is only self-reliance, and he will need to be perfect to inherit the promise.

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

What has Christ redeemed us from? DEATH! “For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Romans 6:23). We are redeemed from death, which is the “curse of the law.” But notice we are not redeemed from dying—we all will die. “And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment” (Hebrews 9:27). You will

further notice that after we die, there still remains a “judgment”! Christ died in our place, paying our sin debt, that we might have eternal life. The “hanging of Christ on that tree” was the curse—it was the penalty for our sins—a death that could not be reversed for those who sinned. But Christ did not sin and so He (and only He) could be resurrected as our Savior and now sits at the right hand of God the Father as our High Priest!

14 That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.

He reiterates that the blessing (of eternal life and entrance into the Kingdom of God) made as a promise to

Abraham comes also upon the Gentiles through Christ, provided they maintain hope and confidence (faith) in Him, allowing God's Holy Spirit to live in them and bolster their faith. "And we are his witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Spirit, whom God hath given to them that obey him" (Acts 5:32).

15 Brethren, I speak after the manner of men; though it is but a man's covenant, yet if it be confirmed, no man disannuls, or adds thereto.

We know that when a covenant is made—if it is agreed to (confirmed)—then it stands. Once it is set in motion, it is final and cannot be added to.

16 Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith

not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ.

The promise (of unlimited eternal generations) was made to Abraham and his descendants. God did not make the promise to other's offspring (seed), but to Abraham's. But Christ is of Abraham's seed, and it is through Christ we are all saved—so the blessing is extended outward from Christ to all by the faith OF Christ to those who have faith IN Christ. The physical Jews who were of Abraham received the promise, but the spiritual Jews who are of Christ also received the magnification of the promise.

17 And this I say, that the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four

hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect.

18 For if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise: but God gave it to Abraham by promise.

The actual law spoken of here (Ten Commandments) given at Sinai was given 430 years after the promise given to Abraham and does not invalidate the original promise to Abraham. That promise stands!

19 Wherefore then serves the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator.

20 Now a mediator is not a mediator of one, but God is one.

The law was added because mankind needed guidelines to live in a godly way, to walk in the paths of righteousness, to understand what sin was and what was expected of them in this covenant relationship. It was given until such time as God would manifest or reveal His Elect—“the Seed” he speaks of here. But the “until” mentioned in this verse does not show that it ends or is done away, but that a change takes place. This transition is spoken of clearly in Hebrews 8:10: “For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a

God, and they shall be to me a people.” Clearly, the law is not done away but made a part of the very way people think and live in the Kingdom of God.

21 Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid: for if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law.

Paul emphatically states that the law of God is not in conflict with God’s promise. The giving of eternal life (“have given life”) does not come by the law, and mankind is unable to be counted as righteous because we are unable to live perfectly by the law. HOWEVER, he is clear that the law is not in conflict with the promise, which is given to those who have His Holy Spirit. But He does not

give His Spirit to those who reject Him by their actions, showing disregard for the very way of life Christ lived to become our sacrifice.

“For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Spirit, And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put Him to an open shame” (Hebrews 6:4–6).

Paul said that he himself was living to “imitate” Christ and that we should follow him as he did so. We are to strive to become “like Him,” reaching toward

the goal of perfection, seeking to be “without spot or wrinkle or any such thing.”

Peter writes, “Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwells righteousness. Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent

22 But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe.

Notice the following scriptures:

Romans 3:23: “For all have sinned [broken the law of God, for sin is the transgression of the law] and come

short of the glory of God.”

Romans 6:23: “But the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

Ephesians 2:8: “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God.”

Mark 16:16: “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.”

23 But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith, which should afterwards be revealed.

Paul starts this section by saying “before FAITH CAME we were kept under the

law.” Let’s analyze what faith he is talking about. Is he suggesting that hope or trust in God were not possible before the institution of the New Covenant? No, not at all! He is clearly pointing to a time when something or someone came. In this case it is a “someone”—Christ. He says, “Before faith came,” because prior to Christ our trust (or faith) in our own efforts to obey the law perfectly was pointless. What happened when He came? Well, He paid the penalty for sin in our place. Prior to that “coming,” grace was not available to us. So the faithfulness of Christ was completed in his successful living according to the law—doing what we could not do “under the law”—fulfilling what we could not fulfill. Mankind—apart from Jesus—has not demonstrated that we are capable of this kind of faithfulness because of our

own weakness and inability to live perfectly as Christ lived. We were “shut up” to that kind of faith. When we were apart from the work of Christ, we had no valid place for our faith to reside. But now we can and do “trust” and “have complete confidence” in Christ and what He did for us. Why does he say it was revealed “afterward”? The completion of the faith of Christ was completed when He finished His mission on earth and died and ascended to heaven and took His place as our Mediator and High Priest. This was all “revealed” in that process which included the giving of God’s Holy Spirit on Pentecost.

24 Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.

The law indeed shows us (teaches us as a schoolmaster) what is and what is not sin. Observing the law does not justify us, but it teaches us what is and what is not righteousness. It teaches what is needed to BE justified. We learn (as we do our best to obey) that perfection is elusive and we all fall short of it. Knowing this, we are “under” the law’s penalties if left to our own devices and apart from Christ’s work of living a perfect life and becoming the pure sacrifice for all mankind.

25 But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster.

But now that “faith is come”—and we can have full and complete trust and confidence that the work of Christ is established on our behalf—we are no

longer left to our own imperfect efforts. We are not alone—no longer relying upon what level of perfection we can achieve apart from Him. We are now under His grace. The word “under” simply shows what process justifies us. It does not invalidate the criteria upon which righteousness is defined. So the rendering of this verse in plain language would be:

“Now that Christ has faithfully lived a perfect life and paid our debt on the cross, we are no longer under the penalty of the law because we fall short of it, but rather we are under the grace offered by God through Christ as we strive to live as Christians according to every word of God.”

26 For you are all the children

of God by faith in Christ Jesus.

Simply put, our reliance has shifted from our efforts to complete trust and confidence in Christ and what He did for us. Notice we are His children—part of the very family of God! We should live our lives as members of that family and subject to the very words of our Father and our King.

27 For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

Notice that he clearly states that those who “have been baptized” into Christ have put on Christ! Part of the baptism process is to repent of one’s sins! There is actually a commandment to BE BAPTIZED! It is a requirement—a

prerequisite to receiving His grace and His approval—and it is to precede baptism. More than just thought or belief is needed here—action is called for! This is a very clear example that doing something is actually necessary. The newly baptized believer “puts on” Christ. He or she lives according to every word of God, putting off the old man and putting on the new! Notice in Paul’s words to the Ephesians that he mentions directly two of the Ten Commandments and alludes to several others in these few verses. (You will find all of the Ten Commandments mentioned in the New Testament—mostly in the writings of Paul—clearly showing that he is certainly not militating against living according to them.)

Ephesians 4:22–32: “That ye put off

concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness. Wherefore putting away lying (Ninth Commandment), speak every man truth with his neighbor: for we are members one of another. Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath: Neither give place to the devil. Let him that stole (Eighth Commandment) steal no more: but rather let him labor, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needed. Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that, which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers. And

grieve not the Holy Spirit of God,
whereby ye are sealed unto the day of
redemption. Let all bitterness, and
wrath, and anger, and clamor, and evil
speaking, be put away from you, with all
malice: And be ye kind one to another,
tenderhearted, forgiving one another,
even as God for Christ's sake hath
forgiven you.”

28 There is neither Jew nor
Greek, there is neither bond nor free,
there is neither male nor female: for ye
are all one in Christ Jesus.

Paul here is emphasizing the “all
inclusiveness” of the grace of God. God
sees all as potential children, and
Christ's sacrifice was intended for
everyone who has lived. No one is left
out, and there is no longer a “special

people” just because of heritage. An entrance to all is available to the Kingdom of God by the grace of God through Christ. He is “the way, the truth, and the life.”

Second Peter 1:10–11: “Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”

John 14:6: “Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.”

29 And if ye are Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs

according to the promise.

First Corinthians 6:20: “For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s.” (We BELONG to Christ—He bought and paid for us—we are Christ’s!)

First Corinthians 15:20–23: “But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the first fruits; afterward they that are Christ’s at his coming.”

Chapter Four

1 Now I say, that the heir, as long as he is a child, differs nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all;

2 But is under tutors and governors until the time appointed of the father.

3 Even so, we when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world.

Paul uses the analogy of how a child is in subordination to his teachers just as a servant is subject to his masters even though the child may be born of great means. Still, when he remains a child, he must be subject to those who teach him until such time as he has gained the discipline of maturity and is able to take

his place among the adults—living the way he was taught. Mature and proper adults do not turn their back on what they have learned—they “build upon it.” When we are children, we learn to behave because those in authority will take disciplinary action against us if we do not comport ourselves properly—according to their guidance. We are therefore “bound” by the force of their authority to do what they tell us to do. Good parents or teachers guide their children or students in doing the correct and proper things, which lead to a successful life.

Paul uses the expression “bondage under the elements of the world.” What are these “elements” which place us in this “bondage.” Earlier in the book Paul refers to this world as evil! Notice

Galatians

1:4: “Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father.” The clear intent of Paul’s comment addresses something in this world that is causing this bondage!

Notice that the bondage comes from these “elements of the world,” not from the law of God. Later, in Galatians 6:12, Paul writes, “For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against the powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.” He is showing that the influence of Satan and his demons upon us places us in a “wrestling match” in this world, which oppresses us. He is clearly not saying, in any way, that the

law is bad or that it is the “cause” of our problems. To clarify this, we can see what he writes to the Romans.

Romans 3:20 states, “[B]y the law is the knowledge of sin,” showing that though obedience does not “justify us,” he clearly shows the law remains as the place where sin is defined. It tells us what is and is not sin, what we should and should not do. He is consistently clear that the law teaches us how to live according to righteousness. He also writes, “Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? God forbid! How shall we that are dead to sin live any longer therein?” (Romans 6:1–2). Could it be any plainer? Paul says we should NOT live in sin (contrary to God’s law) any longer! He is clearly emphasizing that living in harmony with and

according to God's law is how we are to live! He then goes on to say, "Let not sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in the lusts thereof" (Romans 6:12).

There is no doubt that Paul is showing that this "bondage" is the result of evil forces acting upon us to tempt us to live "contrary to" God's law. A person who persists in living this way is rebelling against God and turning his back on the grace provided by the sacrifice of Christ. When he does this, he is left only with the law alone and falls squarely under its penalties. But if a person comes to God and confesses and repents, Christ intercedes as the Mediator of the New Covenant and, as our High Priest, advocates for this person before the Father administering grace.

4 But when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law,

5 To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.

6 And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.

7 Wherefore you art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.

When the time was right, God sent His Son who was flesh (“made of a woman”) and who lived according to the law (perfectly) — “made under the law.”

“Under the law” is a statement that clearly means that the force and penalty of the law was fully in place when He came as Jesus, and His presence did not change that. He was now fully in the flesh. He came into that state as all human beings do having a natural birth. He was physical, fleshly, human. He was (by His choice) now subject to His own laws in every way—including the penalty for failing to keep them. But, the purpose in what He was doing by this is expressed in verse 5: “to redeem them.” He was on a mission—we call it “His passion”—to live a perfect life and then be sacrificed on behalf of all mankind. He was positioning Himself to be the perfect, all encompassing, Lamb without spot or blemish—as foreshadowed by the sacrificial laws administered by the priesthood of the Old Covenant.

He came purposefully to be sacrificed to pay the penalty for all sin of all time and to replace the Old Covenant priesthood, taking its place as the High Priest of the New Covenant. He replaced the priesthood and its practices, NOT the law that defines what it means to be righteous and to have godly character!

Christ's value as God was supreme—much higher and more awesome than anything that could ever be offered to pay this price. But to accomplish this, He had to live under the very laws He created. He had to remain subject to and under the penalty of the law or to live according to the law. Having lived perfectly, never sinning, He was not worthy of death—yet He subjected Himself to death willingly, taking our

place and paying the penalty for all mankind. Because of who He is, the value of the sacrifice was more than sufficient to cover our debt. No one else could do it, but He was more than sufficient in this role. He fulfilled the obligation that we could not.

When the sacrifice was given by Christ, we are then able to be reconciled to the Father and accepted into His family. That is why Paul uses the phrase “adoption of sons.” Paul adds “and because you are sons” to emphasize that he is not speaking in some kind of analogy but is making a clear declarative statement that we are actually viewed by God as His children — His sons. He further emphasizes this by saying that God actually sends His Spirit into us, which recognizes this new

relationship, and we cry “Abba Father,” which is the same meaning as crying “Daddy!” This is intended by Paul to show the intimacy that Christ’s work had facilitated—bringing us into this very close and intimate relationship with God the Father. He paid the penalty, taking it away—nailing it (the penalty, not the law) to the cross—so we now are reconciled to the Father and “adopted” into the family as His children. Christ is now our High Priest and “advocates” for us before the Father on our behalf.

Now, knowing that Christ has paid the penalty and now operates as our High Priest, notice that there remains a need to “confess” and strive to overcome sin, which John defines as “the transgression of [notice] the law” (1 John 3:4). John writes, “If we say that

we have no sin [acting as though we are no longer capable of “sin” or that it doesn’t matter anymore or that somehow when we live unrighteously it is no longer seen by God as sin] we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. [Notice that a confession of sin is necessary.] If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar and his word is not in us” (1 John 1:8–10).

John further states, “My little children, these things I write unto you that you sin not. And if any man sin we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. And He is the propitiation of our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world. And

hereby we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments” (1 John 2:1–3).

Paul continues to even more dramatically emphasize that this Father–son relationship exists between God the Father and us by saying that we are no longer “servants but a son” (His children) and “an heir of God through [the work of] Christ.” Because of what He did— not because of what we have done or will do. It is entirely through Christ! The entire discourse of this section of Galatians is dramatically emphasizing that because of what Christ did—not what we do—we are seen as “sons of God,” heirs to the Kingdom of God. Certainly not in God’s family at the same level as the Father or Christ but, nevertheless, sons and heirs.

Paul is very clear on this point and strongly emphasizes it throughout this book.

8 Howbeit then, when ye knew not God, ye did service unto them, which by nature are no gods.

9 But now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage?

Paul is drawing a familiar comparison to their past vain practices in heathenism with the current pressure they were receiving from the Jewish zealots who continued to cling to circumcision and were trying to impose it upon them. In this analogy, Paul is saying that those

who would impose circumcision upon them are acting much the same as the intent of their past heathenistic practices which contained an element of bondage to physical rituals. Paul is reminding them of the false gods they once served and that those practices were purely physical rites, which were vain, purposeless, and of no effect. In the next verse he labels those things as “the weak and beggarly elements.” However, it is important to understand exactly what he is calling “the weak and beggarly elements.” Paul is clear in saying these are the things they did prior to the time when he taught them about the true God. Those who would force them to be circumcised were reminiscent of the intent of those heathenistic practices of the Galatians in the days of old and, as such, this was

something the Galatians could relate to. Paul is not referring to the Old Covenant or the law of God as “weak and beggarly”; he is simply drawing an analogy to the purpose of circumcision now being falsely applied to “establish their status” as being grafted into the community of the people of God by the Jewish zealots when in fact it is no longer part of the law of God as administered by the Priesthood of Christ. Circumcision had become a national physical rite, and it was nothing more. Many Jewish zealots had difficulty accepting this and continued placing a heavy emphasis (burden) on the requirement of this practice.

Paul was not only comparing this false application of circumcision but also other heresies (like astrology) that were

creeping back into their belief system to the same type of bondage the Galatians knew before he taught them. He is expressing his disappointment that they were now returning to those things (a “mindset”) he had hoped they had already overcome. That is why he was “upset” with them. We see some clues of these other (than circumcision) issues in the next verse.

10 Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years.

Notice that Paul is talking about observances. In the list he mentions years. One could make the argument that people under the Old Covenant “observed” days and times (or seasons), but you will not find that they “observed” years other than land Sabbaths for

agrarian purposes or the Jubilee year for relief of debt. It is highly unlikely that Paul would be militating against land Sabbaths or debt relief—both good things. Neither of these would in any way detract from the message of Christ and had no penalty in unrighteousness—only self-contained ramifications. So his inclusion of “years” is interesting. It is more likely that this is a reference to the practice of astrology, which places emphasis on the importance of certain years. The cultures of the day were “infested” with many belief systems, all competing for a following. Syncretism, Gnosticism, many pagan practices, and various forms of astrology were all circulating at the time. Readily available, they began creeping back into their customs having once been a big part of their belief system. Every religion,

including the true religion, has observances of some kind at certain times. Therefore, it is easy to falsely assume Paul is speaking about the observances of the Sabbath or the annual festivals and holy days. The inclusion of “years” in the list gives some indication that he is not. Most likely, he is referring to these false religious observances.

11 I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labor in vain.

Paul is saying he is afraid for them, not of them. The Ferrar Fenton Translation renders the verse: “I fear for you, that I have worked among you in vain.” He is afraid because they returned to their old ways so quickly. Paul is jealous for them and wants to see them succeed.

12 Brethren, I beseech you, be as I am; for I am as ye are: ye have not injured me at all.

13 Ye know how through infirmity of the flesh I preached the gospel unto you at the first.

14 And my temptation, which was in my flesh, ye despised not, nor rejected; but received me as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus.

15 Where is then the blessedness ye spoke of? For I bear you record, that, if it had been possible, ye would have plucked out your own eyes, and have given them to me.

Paul wants them to follow his example

—“be as I am”—in living according to “the way” Christ taught him and he was now teaching them. He comments, “For I am as you are,” meaning, I am a person just like you, facing the same trials of life. He goes on to mention appreciatively that they showed him kindness and acceptance as though he was Christ himself or an angel, even though he had physical weaknesses and particularly poor vision. He says of them that their fondness was such that he perceives they would have given him their very own eyes if it were possible.

16 Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?

Paul asks—now that he is correcting them—whether the relationship has changed and he is now

to be considered their enemy?

17 They zealously affect you, but not well; yea, they would exclude you, that ye might affect them.

18 But it is good to be zealously affected always in a good thing, and not only when I am present with you.

19 My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you,

20 I desire to be present with you now, and to change my voice; for I stand in doubt of you.

Paul notices that these zealots are having an effect on the Galatians and

creating a kind of zeal in them. He says those who would place this burden of circumcision on them are doing so for the wrong reasons. Paul knows that the zealots were not happy that his Galatians were being “grafted in.” To some extent, he says, the zealots would rather exclude the Gentile converts. The zealots thought less of them than of other disciples and felt they would have polluted their “specialness” if they were included with them.

The apostle observes that zeal, in and of itself, is good if it is for a good purpose, but he tells the Galatians he wants them to be zealous for good things at all times, not just when he was with them. Paul calls them his “little children,” and he feels as though he is in birth pangs waiting for them to mature

and have the mind of Christ. As he writes to them, he says he wishes he were actually present with them so that by his own voice he could convince them because, as it stands, he has his doubts that they are on the right track.

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

22 For it is written, that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondmaid, the other by a freewoman.

23 But he who was of the bondwoman was born after the flesh; but he of the freewoman was by promise.

24 Which things are an allegory: for these are the two

covenants; the one from the mount Sinai, which genders to bondage, which is Agar.

Paul asks of those who want to be UNDER the law if they truly understand what that means for them. Again, he uses the expression “under the law” to differentiate those who saw the law as the means of salvation from those who understood that when we confess our sins we find grace through Christ as a result of His faithfulness and His sacrifice. He then shows the analogy found in Scripture of Abraham’s two sons, one born of his bondmaid Hagar and the other born of His wife Sarah. In the story of the actual historical account, Hagar was indeed in bondage (the handmaid or bond servant) and Sarah was indeed free. The son born to Hagar

—Ishmael—had no claim to the promise of the inheritance God made to Abraham. God had said, “By myself have I sworn, saith the LORD, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son: That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice” (Genesis 22:16–18).

So we see that God had made a promise to Abraham of a great inheritance for his seed, but this promise was to come only through Isaac, born of Sarah the free woman, which

represented heavenly things, not through Ishmael, born of the bondmaid, which represented the physical. This analogy shows that it is only by what God does—in this case, offer His promise—that His children should inherit His Kingdom. It was a promise made after Abraham had proven he was willing to sacrifice his only begotten son—as God Himself did—and it was through Isaac and his descendants that we actually have Jesus Christ appear, born to facilitate the promise that God would indeed redeem mankind and establish a Kingdom with no end. This was to be a kingdom with its throne in Jerusalem—the New Jerusalem that comes down from heaven. The Jerusalem that exists at the time Paul speaks these words and even now is physical and offers no hope of this

promise.

Christ says, “Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name” (Revelation 3:12).

Through Ishmael no such progeny was given to redeem mankind. So Sarah represents the plan of God fully executed by the sacrifice of Christ and the grace that it brings to all mankind. Hagar represents only the physical part of the plan—incomplete and without redemption from the penalty of death that only physical obedience can

produce. Paul writes, “For when ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness. What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death. But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life. For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Romans 6:20–23).

25 For this Agar is mount Sinai in Arabia, and answers to Jerusalem, which now is, and is in bondage with her children.

Hagar represents a “condition without promise”—the promise of redemption. “She” is subject to all the physical

limitations of her condition and represents those who do not have the promise of redemption—those who remain in bondage to (or under the penalty of) the law, who have not accepted Christ and what He accomplished. She is analogous to all the physical things of this life, physical obedience, and even the physical Jerusalem. When the law is broken, there can be no redemption through these things because they are without the promise. She therefore represents a condition that lacks the promise of redemption. This part of the plan of God is cast away and replaced with the “better” covenant, which offers grace to those who accept Christ as their personal sacrifice and see Him as Lord—those who accept without reservation His authority in their lives.

26 But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all.

He refers to the NEW spiritual Jerusalem (symbolic of the inheritance of the Kingdom of Heaven), which is now made freely available to us. Paul continues the analogy pointing forward to this spiritual Jerusalem and the Kingdom of Heaven, which comes as a direct result of the promise made to Abraham through Isaac and his ultimate descendant Jesus Christ. Christ is the very one who is the Head of this Kingdom and serves in the role of the Husband of the Church, which is the New “Eve,” “mother of us all,” and bride to the second “Adam,” Jesus Christ our KING!

27 For it is written, Rejoice, thou barren that bears not; break forth and cry, thou that travails not: for the desolate hath many more children than she, which hath an husband.

This is a reference to the prophecy of Isaiah 54:1–8: “Sing, O barren, thou that didst not bear; break forth into singing, and cry aloud, thou that didst not travail with child: for more are the children of the desolate than the children of the married wife, saith the LORD. Enlarge the place of thy tent, and let them stretch forth the curtains of thine habitations: spare not, lengthen thy cords, and strengthen thy stakes; For thou shalt break forth on the right hand and on the left; and thy seed shall inherit the Gentiles, and make the desolate

cities to be inhabited. Fear not; for thou shalt not be ashamed: neither be thou confounded; for thou shalt not be put to shame: for thou shalt forget the shame of thy youth, and shalt not remember the reproach of thy widowhood any more. For thy Maker is thine husband; the LORD of hosts is his name; and thy Redeemer the Holy One of Israel; The God of the whole earth shall he be called. For the LORD hath called thee as a woman forsaken and grieved in spirit, and a wife of youth, when thou wast refused, saith thy God. For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee. In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the LORD thy Redeemer.”

Paul's ministry was to the Gentile nations—those who were not the physical descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Israel)—and he is showing by these verses that God has not rejected them even if it appeared that way for a time. Now that they are “grafted in,” they too are part of the promise. He cites the prophecy of Isaiah 54 to underscore that this was always the plan of God. Those who have this husband—Christ—can rejoice, whether they are the descendants of Israel or not, as they too are part of the promise being brought into fruition as the Kingdom unfolds and expands with many children— just as God promised: “I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore”

28 Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise.

So Paul says that the Gentiles, just the same as the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Israel), are also the children of promise by the grace and faithfulness and sacrifice of Jesus Christ tying it all together as Christ was descendant from Israel upon whom the promise was given. They were now “joined” into the promise by spiritual marriage to Christ.

29 But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now.

30 Nevertheless what saith the scripture? Cast out the bondwoman and

her son: for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman.

31 So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman, but of the free.

Paul concludes the chapter by pointing out that the Ishmaelites and the Israelites have been at odds with one another and were, as he says, “to this day,” still at odds with each other. And even in our day, if we consider current events, we find that this wrangling of cultures exists even now.

In this analogy Paul is contrasting purely physical obedience alone with obedience supported by the spiritual things. Paul often speaks of the battle

between the physical and the spiritual plane. He writes, “For to be carnally minded [focused on physical things] is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God” (Romans 8:6–7).

Paul refers to the time when Hagar and Ishmael were “cast out” of the camp of Abraham so that Isaac could alone receive the inheritance promised to the son of Sarah, Abraham’s true wife. But now God has “grafted in” the Gentile nations—facilitated through the ministry of Paul so that they too are part of this promise. They understood and could relate to this historical account, as it was truly part of “their history.” This was then the basis of the analogy that the slavery of the past is now over and they—the Gentiles—are seen in the same favor by

the “husband,” Jesus Christ! The analogy serves to explain the difference in the covenants—one to Israel alone, which relied on physical obedience and carried the bondage of the penalty of death; and the new and better covenant to all mankind, which relied on the faithfulness of Christ and the promise of redemption. Paul is telling them that they must not go back to rites and rituals to seek their redemption, but to cast that way of thinking aside for the new and better way of accepting the sacrifice, authority, and advocacy of Christ as Lord—walking in the way that He said to walk, “and living according to every word of God”—not according to the doctrines of men.

Chapter Five

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

2 Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing.

3 For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law.

4 Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace.

Paul is not shy about standing up against those who would try to impose circumcision upon the Galatians. He implores them to **STAND FAST** and hold

onto what he has taught them—that they are already “grafted in” to the promise through Christ, and there is no need to go back to the ritual of circumcision to establish their status as being part of the promise. He is not telling them that they must reject the principles of the law but they must understand what about the law had changed. The priesthood, as administered by the Levites, was now replaced. It was replaced by the Priesthood administered by Christ and by what He had done and is doing for ALL mankind—not just for the Israelites. The Jewish zealots had not accepted Christ and continued to administer a system that focuses on the law ONLY to the exclusion of grace. Paul is emphatic—there is no need to go back to a system that Christ had replaced and

certainly not any of the rituals contained in that system, which were not part of the New Covenant. But the issue here is not about what established righteousness—the law of God, which always remains in place—but rather, it was about who is and who is not included in the promise of redemption and inheritance in the Kingdom of God. Paul establishes that if you believe that it is only by physical things that you receive redemption then you are going backwards. You are missing the point and forsaking the grace provided by the perfection of Christ and His once-for-all sacrifice— you might as well go back to the Levitical system that Christ had replaced and do all the things contained in it. But you will find no hope there, and having rejected Christ you are left only with your own weak efforts to achieve

perfection and avoid the penalty for coming up short.

5 For we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith.

6 For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision avails anything, nor uncircumcision; but faith which works by love.

Paul notes that we are not dependent upon physical things but upon the spiritual and, as such, we should have faith as we wait for our redemption, which we trust fully is now set firmly in place. It is not by some “identifying mark” such as circumcision that we are made part of the promise of redemption but by the faithfulness of Christ having fulfilled and achieved what we could not.

It is through Him that we have this hope.

7 Ye did run well; who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth?

8 This persuasion comes not of him that calls you.

Paul notes that, at first, they were doing well, but now he asks who is responsible for their failure to OBEY the truth. It is important to note that Paul actually stresses the importance of obedience here—but obedience to “the truth.” He says clearly that this “persuasion” that had taken hold among them was not coming from God—was not of Christ.

9 A little leaven leavens the

whole lump.

10 I have confidence in you through the Lord, that ye will be none otherwise minded: but he that troubles you shall bear his judgment, whosoever he be.

In the analogy of making bread, it does not take much leaven for it to spread and leaven or “puff-up” all of the dough. Paul is concerned that these wrong ideas were beginning to infect and permeate the Galatian churches and that it would continue to spread if not dealt with. He says he is confident that they would be affected by all of this,

11 And I, brethren, if I yet preach circumcision, why do I yet suffer persecution? Then is the offence of the

cross ceased.

Paul is saying, “Look at what I am doing and saying!” He was concerned that some might have thought that he actually endorsed the idea of circumcision when he clearly did not. He explains that he was even being persecuted BECAUSE he was against such things. He was actually “getting into trouble” with the Jewish zealots because he preached Christ and Him crucified. The ramifications of these teachings were offensive to these Jewish zealots, as they never had accepted Christ in the first place, and if he were “in league” with them then his continual persecution by them would make no sense. His point was to dispel any suggestion that he supported the idea of circumcision. Paul is not saying

he was persecuted by Peter and the Jerusalem churches but only by those Jewish zealots who refused to accept Christ. He had clearly stated that the gospel Peter preached was THE SAME gospel that he (Paul) preached.

12 I would they were even cut off which trouble you.

The Fenton Translation renders this verse: “And I wish those who mutilate you would maim themselves.” Paul is showing his anger and mincing no words, directing his statements toward the zealots saying overtly that he wishes they would castrate themselves. In order to understand just who Paul is speaking about, one should ask this question: Would Paul make such a statement toward Peter and the Jerusalem

apostles? No! It is clear he is speaking of those zealots who were perverting the gospel.

13 For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another.

14 For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.

Paul continues to emphasize grace but cautions that grace does not give license to sin—“use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh.” But he does emphasize that LOVE was of high importance along with service to one another. He goes on to say that loving your neighbor as yourself fulfills the

LAW. The “one word” he is referring to is LOVE— and he goes on to use that “one word” as it applies to your neighbor. Notice that, by this discourse, he is saying THAT THE LAW EXISTS— is not done away, cast away, or set aside—that it is still important and actually “MAGNIFIED” by the concepts of love. Paul was taught directly by Christ and understands very well the importance of the relationship of love to the law.

When a rich young ruler asked Christ, “Master, which is the great commandment in the law?” Christ answered, “Thou shall love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy

neighbor as thyself.” On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets” (Matthew 22:36–40). Again, Christ himself summarizes the Ten Commandments and shows that the concept of LOVE does not set aside the law but supports, buttresses, and magnifies it.

15 But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another.

Paul admonishes them that arguing back and forth over these issues is destructive and would “consume them,” destroying the spiritual work of faith he had begun in them.

16 This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of

the flesh.

17 For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.

18 But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law.

19 Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness,

20 Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies,

21 Envy, murders,

drunkenness, raveling, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.

Paul consistently shows that “tapping into the Spirit of God” aligns us with the will of God, and by following that course we are not led to commit sin. If we do not sin then we do not come under the penalty of sin—“under the law.” He is talking about a “life direction,” not a weakness here or there but a pattern of behavior that manifests itself and is evidenced by these things some of which he lists here. They are “fruits” of a carnal mind. This is a reiteration of his theme in the letter he wrote to the Romans where he says that “the carnal mind is enmity against God” (8:7). It is

important to note that this list contains many of the things that are addressed in the Ten Commandments, such as idolatry, adultery, and murder. Idolatry is part of the first four commandments, which express love toward God. Murder and adultery are part of the last six commandments, which express love toward our fellow man. He shows that these things are evidence of a person who is not following the lead of God's Spirit but is living a carnal life. He is clear that if a person does these things they are excluded from entry into the Kingdom of God showing that one could most definitely lose out and fall from grace and that grace is NOT AVAILABLE to those who willfully sin. And, remember, sin is the transgression of the law.

22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith,

23 Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.

24 And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.

25 If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.

He shows the fruits of living a spiritual life—that these things are evidence of that and that there is no law of God that militates against these things. If we are truly “grafted in” to Christ then we will not want to sin and God's law will be written in our hearts.

Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 3:3,
“Forasmuch as ye are manifestly
declared to be the epistle of Christ
ministered by us, written not with ink,
but with the Spirit of the living God; not
in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of
the heart.”

In Romans 2:12–15, he writes, “For as
many as have sinned without law shall
also perish without law: and as many as
have sinned in the law shall be judged
by the law; For not the hearers of the
law are just before God, but the doers of
the law shall be justified. For when the
Gentiles, which have not the law, do by
nature the things contained in the law,
these, having not the law, are a law unto
themselves: Which show the work of the
law written in their hearts, their

conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another.”

26 Let us not be desirous of vainglory, provoking one another, envying one another.

The chapter ends with Paul directing everyone involved in this controversy to employ the LOVE of God as evidenced by the fruits that God’s Spirit is in them and “back off” from provocation or envy.

Chapter Six

1 Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.

2 Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.

Paul goes on to show that we are to use the spiritual guidance we receive to love our fellow man to help our brother—not out of vanity but in humility. Because, taking a vain approach would only make us vulnerable once again to the carnal mind, which is the enemy of the Spirit of God.

3 For if a man thinks himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself.

4 But let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in

another.

5 For every man shall bear his own burden.

Paul exhorts that we should not examine or judge our own spiritual progress by comparing ourselves to one another, thinking we are somehow better than others. Rather, we should examine ourselves alone and keep it as a private matter between us and God. Each of us alone is responsible for our own spiritual growth. Then if we are found to be doing well based on God's Word and His guidance, rejoice! But rejoice to ourselves.

6 Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teaches in all good things.

Let those who are benefiting from the teachings share these good things with his teachers. Paul is directing that the good results, which come for those learning the truth, should be communicated to the teachers. It appears he is asking for “feedback” on their progress.

7 Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man sows, that shall he also reap.

8 For he that sows to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that sows to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.

Here Paul gives a dire warning. We cannot fool God—if we are living a

carnal life, we will reap the results of that way of life. We cannot take the grace of God and abuse it by sinning and having a wholesale disregard for His law. God knows our heart and our actions and judges accordingly. If we follow the correct path and live a “spiritual life” then the reward of everlasting life awaits us.

9 And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. 10 As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.

As he reaches the end of the letter, Paul exhorts the Galatians to remain faithful and not to tire of doing good works, and that they should be patient, for if they

continue faithfully they will indeed reap the reward God has promised to them. He reminds them that they must always hold the church in special and high regard—doing good “especially to them who are of the household of faith.”

11 Ye see how large a letter [large letters] I have written unto you with mine own hand.

Paul’s letter was written in “large letters” because of the problem he had with his vision.

12 As many as desire to make a fair show in the flesh, they constrain you to be circumcised; only lest they should suffer persecution for the cross of Christ.

13 For neither they themselves who are circumcised keep the law; but desire to have you circumcised, that they may glory in your flesh.

The Jewish zealots who saw themselves as “special” because of their heritage were imposing the ritual of circumcision upon the gentile churches when, apparently, some of them were not actually observing the tenets of the law. They were forcing this imposition because they wanted to nullify the significance of what Christ had done on the cross in the minds of the Galatians, as they did not fully accept Christ in the role of Messiah. Therefore, they continued to cling to their own doctrines (doctrines of men) and were misappropriating the law to force their ideas on the Gentiles. In this argument,

they were certainly hypocritical as they were using the law to press the point of circumcision when they themselves were not keeping it. They were doing this to “win the argument” (to “glory in your flesh”) on the matter that one could not be part of Israel unless it was through heritage or by accepting circumcision as part of the “grafting in” process.

14 But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.

15 For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision avails anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature.

16 And as many as walk

according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God.

Paul shows disdain for the vanity of “winning the argument” and says that he would not “glory” in it but only that he would feel glory in what Christ had done for all of us. He says that he sees himself as separate from the world and the world as separate from him. He clearly saw his “citizenship” in a different place—in the Kingdom of God. For when we consider what Christ has done, we realize that circumcision or uncircumcision amounts to nothing—it really doesn’t matter. Christ is totally sufficient for any and all who come to him— regardless of heritage. If people would accept this idea (rule) there would be peace and we could more

abundantly experience the mercy upon both physical and spiritual Israel, which God has given to all of us, Jew and Gentile alike.

17 From henceforth let no man trouble me: for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus.

Paul asks finally that he not be “troubled” with this anymore—he came to them after being personally taught by Jesus Christ and bears the evidence of that in his body. Essentially Paul is saying “that is that”—let’s have an end to this! It is not clear what he means by this but it could be that after he was struck blind on the road to Damascus his vision problems remained as evidence of that event. This was something that was apparently obvious

to all who saw him.

18 Brethren, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen.

Paul concludes the letter by praying that the grace of Christ would be with them in their spirit, which is the very doctrine and point of the entire letter.

About the Author

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