

# Studies In *Galatians*



• • *Tom Wacaster* • •





# **Studies In Galatians**

*By  
Tom Wacaster*

Tom Wacaster  
511 Southgate Drive  
Mt. Pleasant, TX 75455  
903-575-9950

---

This book was printed in the United States of America  
by

**Sain Publications**

Pulaski, TN 38478  
(931) 363-6905

---

## **Preface**

**T**his commentary is the fruit of several years of my personal study in the book of Galatians. I originally shared these notes with my students at the Houston College of the Bible (now called Spring Bible Institute). A number of brethren, after receiving a copy of these notes, encouraged me to place them into print for wider distribution. This I have done. I must confess that few of my thoughts are really original. I have borrowed from a number of sources so as to come up with a suitable outline. I have been liberal in my quotes from others whose comments were worth sharing. I have sought to provide adequate references and to give credit where credit is due. But, like so many other students of God's word, we often jotted something down for our own benefit, failing to copy the source from which we obtained the quote or outline, never realizing that down the road we might be called upon to produce that source.

My sincere thanks is due to so many of you who encouraged me in this work. I am thankful to the ladies at the Cedar Bayou congregation in Baytown, Texas who helped proofread. I am thankful to my students at Spring who expressed their appreciation for my massive amount of notes that I provided them each class session, and who threatened to tar and feather me if I did not put some of these into print. I am thankful to my wife who has constantly encouraged me to publish some of my notes for others to read and study. And I am thankful that God has allowed me to serve in this capacity in His Kingdom.

I hope you derive some benefit from this little book. If it serves to give just one precious soul a better

understanding of this wonderful letter of Paul to the churches of Galatia, then it will have been worth the time spent in preparing and publishing.

## Introduction

**G**alatia was a part of Phrygia, located in central Asia Minor. Under the reign of Augustus Caesar, about 26 years before our Lord, this area was made a Roman colony, and was governed by Roman governors, or '*propraetors*,' appointed by the emperor. Galatia is bounded on the east by Cappadocia, the west by Bythynia, and the south by Pamphylia. The student should consult a map. Originally this area was inhabited by the Phrygians, deemed by Homer as "*one of the finest races of mankind*."<sup>1</sup> In the early part of the 3rd century B.C., hordes of Gauls crossed the Hellespont and poured into this area, bringing with them havoc and destruction. They renamed the area after themselves, having wrestled the land from the Phrygian occupants. Adam Clarke tells us that the Galatians were divided into three tribes, namely the *Tectosages*, the *Trocmi*, and the *Tolistobogi*.<sup>2</sup> Ancient Galatia was populated with an extremely corrupt and superstitious people. They are said to have worshipped the "*mother of the gods*," and to have offered as human sacrifices the prisoners they took in war. Physically, they were unusually tall people, and went about nearly naked. It would appear from Luke's record that Paul visited Galatia on more than one occasion (see Acts 16:6; 18:23). From Paul's letter to the Galatians we get the distinct impression that he was the first one to preach the gospel to these people (Gal. 1:6).

**The letter** to the Galatians is a heated, vigorous, uncompromising defense of (1) Paul's own authority as an apostle of Jesus Christ, and (2) the gospel of the grace of God. Brother McClish points out that this letter is "*a last ditch effort on the part of Paul...to salvage several congregations*

from apostasy. Because of the urgency of the subject-matter this epistle begins more abruptly than any other in the New Testament. No letter is launched with greater frankness. No saints are addressed more directly or reproved more boldly for their journey toward apostasy than those in Galatia."<sup>3</sup> The background of the letter is rooted in the attempt on the part of the Judaizing teachers to bind certain aspects of the law of Moses, and to deny, by implication, the all-sufficiency of Christ's atoning work. Brother Wharton has pointed out that *"the message of Galatians is more than a simple refutation of justification by the law of Moses. It is in principle a study of the system of grace versus any system of merit like Judaism."*<sup>4</sup> The problem among the Galatian brethren was a misconception of the role of faith and grace in God's scheme of redemption for mankind. Any system which emphasizes trust in works above trust in the Savior falls under the principle of condemnation in this letter. The specific issues may change from generation to generation, but the principle with which the Galatians struggled has troubled the church from her inception to the present. This inspired letter gives us some wonderful insight into the part that grace plays in our salvation. The Galatians seemed to have lost sight of that wonderful grace, and came to depend instead upon observance of the rites and laws of the Mosaic law. Every generation wrestles, in a sense, with the same problem. While the specifics may not center around the Mosaic law, circumcision, or Sabbath keeping, the problem is there nonetheless. We are speaking of extremes. One end of the spectrum has a loose regard for those things which are plainly taught. On the other hand, there are those who have made laws which God has not made, binding where He has not bound. It is this latter extreme which is addressed in this letter to the Galatians. The key word here is *"dependence."* The Judaizing teachers *depended* upon keeping the law to save them. Paul teaches

---

us that we are to *depend* upon Christ. Herein is the difference between a "law of grace" and a "law of works." The former depends upon the Lord for salvation, while seeking to submit to His will for their life. The latter depends (and I emphasize "*depends*") upon obtaining salvation through obedience to commands. Again, it is a matter of **in whom or what** one places his trust and confidence.

**Who wrote this letter?** The letter to the Galatians is generally believed to have been written by the apostle Paul, as indicated in 1:1. "*No breath of suspicion as to the authorship, integrity or apostolic authority of the Epistle to the Galatians has reached us from ancient times.*"<sup>5</sup> Brother Steven Lloyd has pointed out that "*the authenticity of this letter is so readily accepted (along with Romans and Paul's two letters to Corinth) that it has been used as a standard by which to authenticate the other letters written by him.*"<sup>6</sup> Even some of the most rabid critics, who generally deny the traditional authorship of other New Testament books, agree that Galatians is genuinely Pauline.

**What is the background and date of the epistle?** The argument set forth in the epistle, in some measure, sets its date and proves its antiquity. The very error addressed in this letter suggests an early date. We must not forget that the author and early preachers of this "*new*" religion were Jewish, and that Christianity had a strong background in Jewish history and prophecies. It would not be unreasonable, therefore, for uninformed converts to the faith, or false teachers, to present Christianity as a sect and modification of Judaism. Given the likelihood of this happening, it is apparent that it would have to occur in the early years of the church's history, before the churches had opportunity to be grounded in the faith. From the letter itself, it appears that certain Judaizing teachers had crept into the churches of Galatia and had persuaded the brethren that they had been taught improperly, and perhaps even

second handedly, by an "apostle" who was somewhat inferior to those in Jerusalem. This would account for Paul's defense of his apostleship. The question arises, then, as to exactly when the letter was written.

Luke informs us that Paul and Barnabas together preached the gospel in that region during their second missionary journey (see Acts 16:5-6). Though it is not expressly stated that they had gone into the region at some earlier date, it seems that Luke's statement in Acts 14:5-6 would suggest some earlier work in the area. Albert Barnes noted that "*these circumstances render it probable that when Paul proposed to Barnabas to visit again the churches where they had preached, Galatia was included, and that they had been there before this visit referred to in Acts xvi.6*" In addition, both the letter itself and Luke's account in Acts suggest that this letter centered around those things dealt with in the Jerusalem Conference of Acts 15, while those issues were still fresh on the minds of men. The issues addressed in both Acts and Galatians were the same, the disputants were the same, the city was the same, and the outcome was the same. To deny that Paul's reference in this letter to a meeting to settle this issue once and for all was something other than the Jerusalem controversy recorded by Luke is to imply that the issue arose as a matter of contention among brethren on more than one occasion, which is most unlikely. In an effort to provide a chronological point of reference, let me suggest the following sequence of events following Paul's conversion, and leading up to the writing of this letter:

1) Acts 9:19-30, Galatians 1:15-2:1-Immediately following his conversion, Saul (Paul) preached the gospel in Damascus for a very limited period of time. Shortly thereafter, he journeyed to Arabia where he received his revelation and commission as an apostle. He then returned

to Damascus, where he forcefully preached the truth, and was forced to flee the city. He then made his first trip to Jerusalem and, at the recommendation and support of Barnabas, made contact with the brethren there. Shortly thereafter, Saul departed for Tarsus.

2) *Acts 11:19-26*—Barnabas went to Tarsus to find Saul and bring him to Antioch, where they labored for one year with the church there.

3) *Acts 11:27-30*—Relief was sent to the church in Jerusalem, carried by the hands of Saul and Barnabas. This would be Paul's second visit to Jerusalem.

4) *Acts 12:25*—Saul and Barnabas returned to Antioch taking John Mark with them.

5) *Acts 13:1-14:28*—Paul's first missionary journey.

6) *Acts 15:1-35*—The "*controversy on circumcision*" arose in Jerusalem. This was Paul's third trip to Jerusalem. After the issue was settled, Paul returned to Antioch. Shortly thereafter, Peter made his visit to Antioch, where he acted hypocritically with regard to fellowship and association with the Gentile brethren. See Galatians 2:11-16.

7) *Acts 15:36-18:32*—Paul's Second Missionary Journey, in which he and Silas revisited the churches established on the first missionary journey. It is specifically stated in 16:6 that they "*went through the region of Phrygia and Galatia,*" leading to the conclusion that initial work in Galatia may very well have occurred during the first missionary journey.

8) *Acts 18:23-21:16*—Paul's Third Missionary Journey, in which he visited the churches of Galatia and Phrygia, before coming to Ephesus (19:1ff). We believe that it was while working in Ephesus that Paul received word about the Judaizing teachers who were troubling the churches in Galatia, and dispatched this letter to that area.

This would place the date of the letter somewhere between 53 A.D. and 57 A.D., and probably closer to the earlier date.

### Introduction Endnotes

1 Huxtable, E., **The Pulpit Commentary**, Volume 20 (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1962); page 1.

2 Clarke, Adam, **Clarke's Commentary**, Volume VI (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press).

3 McClish, Dub, Editor, "Preface" in **Studies In Galatians**, *'The Fifth Annual Denton Lectures'* (Denton, Texas: Valid Publications, 1986); page 11.

4 Wharton, Ed, **The Constitution of Christian Freedom** (Gospel Teachers Publications, Inc., 1976); page 3.

5 Findlay, George G., **International Standard Bible Encyclopedia**, ed. James Orr (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Co., 1962); page 1156.

6 Lloyd, Steven: *'Introduction to Galatians'*; **Studies In Galatians**, *'The Fifth Annual Denton Lectures'* (Denton, Texas: Valid Publications, 1986); page 17.

7 Barnes, Albert, **Barnes Notes**, *'II Corinthians and Galatians'* (Baker Book House: Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1972); page 279.

## **Outline Of Galatians**

**T**he book is easily outlined. Most of our sources presented something similar to that which we will be using in our study.

### **I. Personal Section in Which The Doctrine of Liberty is Stated, chapters 1-2**

1. Introduction, 1:1-5
2. A different gospel—perverted and troublesome, 1:6-10
  - A. The seriousness of their defection, vs. 6-7;
  - B. Paul's gospel admits no addition, vs. 8-9;
  - C. Paul not a man pleaser, v. 10;
3. Paul's gospel received by Divine revelation, 1:11-2:21
  - A. His claim for Divine revelation from Jesus, vs. 11-12;
  - B. Evidence for Divine Revelation from Jesus, 1:13-2:21
    - (1) His manner of life in the past, 1:13-14;
      - a. He persecuted the church of God "*beyond measure*";
      - b. He advanced in the Jews' religion;
      - c. He was "*exceedingly zealous*" for the traditions of his fathers;
    - (2) No contact with human teachers in the gospel, 1:15-24;
    - (3) His endorsement by the Apostles in Jerusalem, 2:1-10;
      - a. Titus was not compelled to be circumcised, vs. 1-3;

- b. The Apostles' united stand against the false teachers, vs. 4-5;
- c. The Apostles could add nothing to Paul's gospel, vs. 6-8;
- d. The Apostles endorsed Paul and Barnabas, vs. 9-10;
- (4) His rebuke of Peter, 2:11-21;
  - a. Peter's dissimulation, vs. 11-13;
  - b. Paul's censure, vs. 14-15;
  - c. Grounds for the rebuke, vs 16-21;

## **II. Doctrinal Section In Which The Doctrine of Liberty Is Defended, chapters 3-4**

- 1. The past experience of the Galatians, vs. 1-5;
- 2. The case of Abraham, vs. 6-9;
- 3. The deficiency of the law in regard to justification, vs. 10-14;
- 4. The promise made to Abraham, vs. 15-18;
- 5. The purpose of the law, vs. 19-24;
- 6. The faith is now come, vs. 25-29;
- 7. Bondage under the law for Jew or Gentile, 4:1-11;
- 8. Paul's personal appeal, 4:12-20;
- 9. Allegory of Hagar and Sarah: Contrast of Bondage and Freedom, 4:21-31;

## **III. Practical Section In Which The Doctrine of Liberty is Applied, chapters 5-6**

- 1. Christian liberty is imperiled by legalism, 5:1-12;
- 2. Christian liberty is perverted by license, 5:13-26;
- 3. Christian liberty is perfected in love, 6:1-10;
- 4. Paul rebukes these false teachers, 6:11-13;
- 5. Paul's brands as an apostle, 6:14-18;

The following "*skeleton outline*" may help some who prefer simplicity in their outlines. I cannot recall the source from

which I obtained this outline, only that it was quite a number of years back when I first entered this into my personal notes:

- I. Introduction, 1:1-10;
- II. Defense of the Gospel-An Analogy, 1:11-2:21;
- III. Declaration of the Gospel-An Argument, 3:1-5:1;
- IV. Demands of the Gospel-An Appeal, 5:2-6:10;
- V. Conclusion, 6:11-18.



## **Galatians Chapter One**

**T**his first chapter is actually a defense of the apostleship of Paul. It is a part of the PERSONAL SECTION, in which the doctrine of liberty is stated (chapters 1-2). The introduction of this book is especially unique in that the apostle Paul immediately launches into a statement of the first point he is trying to make, that of the divine origin of his authority as an apostle. Chapter One can be divided into the following:

- I. Personal section in which the doctrine of liberty is stated, chapters 1-2**
  1. Introduction, 1:1-5
  2. A different gospel-perverted and troublesome, 1:6-10
    - A. The seriousness of their defection, vs. 6-7;
    - B. Paul's gospel admits of no addition, vs. 8-9;
    - C. Paul not a man pleaser, v. 10;
  3. Paul's gospel received by Divine revelation, 1:11 - 2:21
    - A. His claim for Divine revelation from Jesus, 1:11-12;
    - B. Evidence for Divine Revelation from Jesus, 1:13-2:21
      - (1) His manner of life in the past, 1:13-14;
        - a. He persecuted the church of God  
"beyond measure,";
        - b. He advanced in the Jews' religion;
        - c. He was "exceedingly zealous" for the traditions of his fathers;
      - (2) No contact with human teachers in the gospel, 1:15-24;

- (3) His endorsement by the Apostles in Jerusalem, 2:1-10;

## Introduction

1:1-5

*1:1 ~ "Paul, an apostle (not from men, neither through man, but through Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead)"*

*"Paul, an apostle"* – An apostle, strictly speaking, is one sent with a message. The word is used in a general sense to describe Barnabas in Acts 14:14, *"But when the apostles, Barnabas and Paul, heard of it, they rent their garments, and sprang forth among the multitude."* In the official sense, however, the word describes those men selected by Jesus to whom He delegated authority for the proclamation and initial spread of the gospel. See Matthew 10:2-4. Paul was an apostle *"untimely born"* (1 Cor. 15:8), chosen and selected as a special minister to the Gentiles (Acts 22:21; Gal. 1:8).

*"not from men, neither through men"* – Immediately Paul defends his apostleship as being neither *FROM* man, nor *THROUGH* man. It did not originate from the minds of men, nor was the message passed along to him by human agency. It would be impossible for one of these characteristics to exist in the absence of the other, but in the absence of BOTH, it is only possible that the message Paul received could come by divine revelation.

*"but through Jesus Christ, and God the Father"* – If it came NOT by man, but by Christ, then it is implied that Jesus Christ is NOT mere man. As to why reference is made here to God *"who raised him from the dead"* it seems quite natural that such a statement would show the acquaintance Paul had with the very essence of the Gospel, ie. the

resurrection of Christ. And it was upon the basis of Christ's resurrection that the authenticity and authority of the Gospel rests. As Ridderbos noted, *"What the readers must do first of all is grasp the divine and glorious in Christ's work, for the Judaizers have blurred these things."*<sup>1</sup>

**1:2 ~ *"and all the brethren that are with me, unto the churches of Galatia:"***

*"churches of Galatia"* – This epistle is unique in that it addresses neither an individual nor the church in any specific location, but rather all of the churches in a general province. The fact that it addressed so wide spread an audience shows (1) that the letters from the apostles were intended to be read and studied by all the churches, and (2) that the problem addressed in this letter had infected a number of churches in the area.

**1:3 ~ *"Grace to you and peace from God the Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ,"***

Grace originates from God the Father, and finds its availability in and through Jesus Christ (Ephesians 1:3). The result of an accepted and applied grace is the *"peace which passes all understanding"* (Philippians 4:7). It is important to note that the *"grace and peace"* of which Paul here speaks is that which comes from *"God the Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ."* Separated from God as a consequence of sin (Isaiah 59:1-2), man stands in need of reconciliation. Once reconciled, the creature once again has peace with the Father. Such a peace does not, and cannot, be found in this world, or the things which this world offers. Jesus promised us, *"Peace I leave with you; my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth"* (John 14:27).

**1:4 ~ “who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us out of this present evil world, according to the will of our God and Father:”**

*“who gave himself for our sins”* – The expression, *“who gave,”* is one that occurs in relation to the work of the Savior and represents a *“gift”*, thus suggesting:

(1) That Christ’s giving of Himself was completely voluntary on His part. *“The active verb suggests the voluntariness, and the reflexive pronoun speaks of the personal and the total in His surrender.”*<sup>2</sup> No one forced or coerced Him to come and die for us, and He Himself said, *“I lay down my life, that I may take it again. No man taketh it away from me, but I lay it down of myself”* (John 10:15-18).

(2) God did not compel Jesus to give His life for the guilty. God may compel the guilty to give his life for his own sins, but never does God demand that the innocent suffer for the guilty.

(3) Such action demonstrates the benevolent character of Jesus, and consequently, of God.

(4) Without that benevolent, loving and merciful act, mankind would be lost forever.

These things thus considered, is it any wonder that our hearts swell with deep gratitude for the price that Jesus paid for each one of us?

*“himself”* – is rendered *“his life”* in the Syriac and is, in fact, the sense of the Greek.

*“for our sins”* – Here the original means the same as *“on account of,”* suggesting that the cause or reason why He gave Himself to die was, in fact, our sins. He took our

place, suffered for us regardless of the fact that He was sinless. Sin was the cause of His death.

*"that he might deliver"* – The word here means *"to tear out; to take out from a number; to select; then to rescue or deliver."*<sup>3</sup> It is not used in the sense of removal to another world, but in the sense of effecting a separation between us and what is called *"the present evil world."* The idea is that we are to be separate from the world, *"blameless and harmless, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation"* (Phil. 2:15). When we consider the present evil world, we come to learn that it refers to the evil influences and actions of those who live in rebellion to God. Notice Matthew 13:22, Luke 16:8, 1 John 2:15, etc. It would appear that the message of the apostle is very clear. As followers of Jesus, we constitute a peculiar community (1 Peter 2:9), and we are to *"come out from among"* the world and be separate and *"touch no unclean thing"* (2 Cor. 6:17). If there is no such separation, then the purpose of the Redeemer's death, insofar as that any one individual is concerned, has not been effected. Such a one is still a part of that great and ungodly community, the world. The ONLY way we can gain the benefit of the death of Jesus is to apply the blood through obedience, and then make application to our lives by being faithful until death.

Adam Clarke suggests another interpretation, which we find interesting:

These words cannot mean created nature, or the earth and its productions, nor even wicked men. The former we shall need while we live, the latter we cannot avoid... The apostle, therefore, must mean the Jews, and their *system of carnal ordinances; statutes which were not good, and*

*judgments by which they could not live...* Schoettgen contends that the word...which we translate *evil*, should be translated laborious or oppressive.. The apostle takes occasion, in the very commencement of the epistle, to inform the Galatians that it was according to the will and counsel of God that *circumcision* should cease, and all the other ritual parts of the Mosaic economy; and that it was for this express purpose that Jesus Christ gave himself a sacrifice for our sins, because the law could not make the comers thereunto perfect.<sup>4</sup>

1:5 ~ *"to whom be the glory for ever and ever. Amen."*

*"to whom be the glory"* - The goal of Paul, and every one of us, should be the glory of God the Father. He deserves the glory because of His great characteristics: His wisdom, His love, and other Divine attributes. No man should EVER strive for the glory that belongs solely to God the Father. This truth should be strongly stamped upon the hearts and thinking of those who find themselves in positions of prominence and influence, particularly preachers and teachers of the word. Gospel preachers must stand behind the cross of Christ and preach Him crucified, not self. When John the Baptist prepared the way for the Lord, it was his intention that Christ would increase, but that he himself should decrease (John 3:30). When a man preaches in such a manner as to obtain glory for himself, he has rendered a great disloyalty to the Christ Who died for him.

*"Amen"* - The word served as an affirmation of some statement as being certain or valid, hence binding. David Miller, quoting from the Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, published by Eerdmans, pointed out that *"amen*

*[is] an acknowledgment that the divine word is an active force: may it happen in just this way."*<sup>5</sup>

## **A Different Gospel – Perverted And Troublesome** 1:6-10

In this section Paul speaks of "A different gospel – perverted and troublesome," 1:6-10 , in which he...

- A. Addresses the seriousness of their defection, vs. 6-7;
- B. Points out that his gospel allows no addition, subtraction, or change, vs. 8-9;
- C. Points out that he is not a man pleaser, v. 10;

**1:6 ~ "I marvel that ye are so quickly removing from him that called you in the grace of Christ unto a different gospel;"**

*"I marvel" – The word signifies to "wonder at." Barnes notes that the word is a mild term. "He does not employ the language of severe reproof, but he expresses his astonishment that the things should have occurred. He was deeply affected and amazed, that such a thing could have happened."*<sup>6</sup> Evidently their initial obedience and zeal suggested that they would remain faithful, and yet within a short period of time they had been persuaded to turn aside *"unto a different gospel."*

*"so quickly" – This would indicate that only a short time had passed. As for their "removing," the word implies that a foreign substance had been used to turn their minds away from the truth. The original word used here means to "transpose, put in another place; and then, to go over from one party to another."*<sup>7</sup>

## GALATIANS CHAPTER ONE

---

*"from him that called you"* – This has been interpreted in different ways. Some think it has reference to their teacher Paul. The Syriac renders it, *"away from that Messiah (Christ) who has called you."* The interlinear reads, *"are being changed from him who called you in grace Christ's to a different glad tidings."* It would seem redundant to have the *"him"* refer to Christ, and I think the idea is *"him, Paul."* See also 2 Thessalonians 2:13 and Romans 8:28-30 wherein it is affirmed that God is the One Who actually calls. Men are just agents used in that calling.

We should learn here that men who profess the name of Christ, and embrace the gospel, may easily be misled and drawn away from the truth if not properly grounded in the faith. The word of God should be our sole guide in determining the truth in matters pertaining to the soul.

*"different"* – The words used in verse 6 and 7, both translated in the King James with the English word *"another,"* are actually two different words in Greek, and so expressed in the American Standard of 1901. The Greek *"allos"* expresses a numerical difference and denotes another of the same sort, while *"heteros"* expresses a qualitative difference and denotes another of a different sort. Thus Paul was saying that they were *"so quickly removing...unto a different (heteron, a **different** sort) gospel, which is not another ('allos', another like the one Paul gave) gospel...."* The different Greek words are also used in these passages:

John 14:16 – Christ promised to send *"another (allos, i.e. of the same kind) Comforter";*

Romans 7:23 – *"I see a different (heteros, a different kind) law...";*

Acts 7:18 – *"there arose another (heteros, a different kind) king..";*

Galatians 1:19 – “but other (*heteros*, of a different kind) of the apostles saw I none..”;

*“different gospel”* – From Luke 1:1 it seems evident that there must have been a number of spurious gospels in circulation during the early years of the church while the inspired record was being produced. Clarke admits to *“more than seventy of these spurious narratives still on record, and in ancient writers many fragments of them remain.”*<sup>8</sup>

Implied in these verses is the responsibility of each individual to diligently examine those things which they hear, and to determine to follow only that which can be verified by the ancient gospel. Those who pay no attention to that given by the apostles, but instead choose to turn away from that truth, place themselves in a most precarious position.

1:7 ~ *“which is not another gospel: only there are some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ.”*

*“which is not another gospel”* – That is, the spurious gospels in circulation did not contain the “good news” of that originally delivered by the apostles, *“for it loads you again with the burdens from which the genuine Gospel has disencumbered you.”*<sup>9</sup>

*“would pervert”* – The Greek here means to “cut off.” The warning contained therein is a sobering one in that it shows the completeness and finality of the gospel which we preach.

*“pervert”* – We agree that with regard to any false teacher, *“the tendency of their doctrine is wholly to turn away, to destroy, to render useless the gospel of Christ. It would lead to the denial*

*of the necessity of dependence on the merits of the Lord Jesus for salvation, and would substitute dependence on rites and ceremonies.*"<sup>10</sup> The intent of these Judaizing teachers was nothing less than a desire to overturn the gospel that had Christ as its content and faith as its procuring means of salvation. When the cross of Christ is no longer recognized as the all-sufficient means of salvation, it turns the gospel upside down and robs it of its strength. Such would be the end result of their gospel, though it may not have been their intention originally.

*1:8 ~ "But though we, or an angel from heaven, should preach unto you any gospel other than that which we preached unto you, let him be anathema."*

In these next two verses, Paul writes that the true gospel does not allow any additions or subtractions from that originally preached by him (vs. 8-9). The finality of heaven's revelation is implied here. Not even an "angel" can alter that which has been given. *"The Galatians and all men since, therefore, may know that if Gabriel from heaven, or Paul back on earth, should come to preach, they would have nothing to add to what Paul had already preached to them."*<sup>11</sup> Paul's own reference to any possibility of himself bringing some "different gospel," suggests at least the possibility that some accusation may have been laid against Paul that he had somehow changed his mind, or had, in fact, defected from his original gospel. Paul says that even if he himself were to bring a different gospel, he would be "anathema," or "devoted to destruction." David Brown wrote, *"The term 'anathema' meant originally 'devoted to God.' But as an animal, for instance, 'set aside, doomed to death, so the special sense of the word came to be 'accursed,' a thing devoted to destruction... It is thus the strongest possible form of condemnation."*<sup>12</sup> In light of these verses how are we to treat those who "preach

*another gospel*”? (1) We are to withdraw from their teaching; having nothing to do with it, nor in any way endorsing it; (2) we are to regard their doctrine with abhorrence; (3) we are not to extend any fellowship unto them (Eph. 5:11); (4) we are to mark them (Rom. 16:17-18). Paul’s desire was to express the strongest sense of abhorrence at the preaching and teaching of something other than that which the Galatians had originally received.

*1:9 ~ “As we have said before, so say I now again, if any man preacheth unto you any gospel other than that which ye received, let him be anathema.”*

The teaching and implications of the previous verse are here repeated, with slight variation, so as to express the seriousness and importance of the heavenly warning given by the apostle. Notice also, that not only had the gospel been preached to them, it had been “received” or embraced by them. That one could “receive” something and then stand in danger of becoming “anathema,” sounds forth the clear teaching of the possibility of apostasy.

*1:10 ~ “For am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God? or am I striving to please men? if I were still pleasing men, I should not be a servant of Christ.”*

Finally, Paul points out that he is not a man pleaser. The word “now” is used to express a contrast between his present and former purposes in life. Paul had turned away from his former manner of life, as he would point out in this chapter. The apostle was saying, “Take a look at my life. Look who I seek to please. Look at what I have given up. Is such the evidence of a man who seeks to take advantage of others, or to advance the doctrine of men?”

*"persuade"* - The word is rendered *"am I now seeking the favor of men..."* in the ASV and is the better rendering. It follows, then, (1) that a Christian is not to EXPECT to please men; (2) that a Christian should be concerned when the world flatters him in that either he is not living as he ought to, and that sinners love him because he is so much like them, or that they mean to make him betray his religion; (3) that at least one difference between the child of God and the world is that others AIM to please men; (4) that any man or woman who would follow Christ must forever cease, as their object in life, to please men. Ridderbos concluded that Paul's statement here...

...should be enough to prove that Paul was not out to win people-by telling them what they like to hear. Besides, his preaching of this gospel had brought him into sharp conflict with others....The last part of the sentence confirms all this by pointing to the fact that human desire and the service of Christ are incompatible...The service of Christ goes straight against the grain of what people naturally love to hear and demands precisely a readiness to surrender everything for His sake, and most particularly this favor of men.<sup>13</sup>

### **His Claim For Divine Revelation From Jesus**

1:11-12

Continuing the defense of his apostleship, Paul will now present evidence to show that his reception of the gospel was by Divine revelation (1:11-2:21). We will note...

- A. His claim for Divine revelation from Jesus, vs. 11-12;
- B. Evidence for Divine Revelation from Jesus, 1:13-2:21

First, His claim for Divine revelation from Jesus, 1:11-12. Here is Paul's assertion of Divine Revelation. As to WHY Paul's defense was so important to the purpose of the epistle, brother Ed Wharton has pointed out that,

...in Galatians the line of self-defense exposes the line of attack which false brethren used against Paul to destroy his influence with the churches. Making it appear that he was not an apostle would naturally cause the Galatians to lose confidence in the gospel as he preached it. This personal attack was necessary for these false teachers in order to make headway with their particular doctrine where the apostle had been. So successful were these Judaizers at Galatia that Paul spent the first one third of his epistle in re-establishing his divine appointment to the apostleship and the integrity of his gospel.... A mere denial of the charges made against him would not disprove them. The evidence for his genuine apostleship would have to be placed in a context which would satisfy anyone who wished to check it out. Paul chose to sustain his apostolic claim by contrasting certain relevant events of his life against the charges of his enemies. It had to survive the acid test of any historical writing—that of being written at a time when the many people involved in Paul's evidence, including the apostles themselves, were still living to either verify or deny its genuineness.<sup>14</sup>

Paul would, therefore, present four events from his own personal life which would prove to any honest investigator, that his apostleship was genuine.

(1) His **first line of defense** is a reference to his manner of

life in time past, 1:13-14. Paul would address his life before his conversion. His witness? The entire church in Jerusalem would attest to the fact that before his conversion, Paul was a persecutor of that faith which he now preached.

(2) His **second line of defense** was the fact that he had no contact with human teachers in the gospel, 1:15-24. Here Paul would address his conversion, and those years immediately following. His witnesses? Peter, James the Lord's brother, and the churches throughout Judaea.

(3) His **third line of defense** would be the endorsement by the apostles in Jerusalem, 2:1-10. Paul would provide a record of his life some fourteen years after his conversion, and specifically his trip to Jerusalem during the controversy over circumcision and the Mosaic law. His witnesses included the apostles in Jerusalem, and Titus. He would point out that (a) Titus was not compelled to be circumcised, vs. 1-3; (b) that the apostles stood united against the false teachers, vs. 4-5; (c) That the apostles could add nothing to his gospel, vs. 6-8; and (d) that the apostles endorsed Paul and Barnabas, vs. 9-10.

(4) His **fourth line of defense** would be his rebuke of Peter, 2:11-21, showing (a) Peter's dissimulation, vs. 11-13; (b) his censure of Peter, vs. 14-15; and (c) the grounds for the rebuke, vs. 16-21;

*1:11 ~ "For I make known to you, brethren, as touching the gospel which was preached by me, that it is not after man."*

*"not after man"* – Paul wanted them to understand that the gospel which he preached did not, in any way, originate from men. See these passages regarding the matter of

revelation: 1 Corinthians 2:6-13; 2 Peter 1:16-21. Paul was simply defending his apostleship on the grounds that the revelation of the gospel came to him in exactly the same manner that it came to other inspired men, by being "*moved by the Holy Spirit*" (2 Peter 1:20-21). He was not "*taught*" of men, neither did he receive it from men. The Greek here means to "*receive from another.*"

*1:12 ~ "For neither did I receive it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came to me through revelation of Jesus Christ."*

Paul sets forth an argument in which he utilizes what is commonly called the "*law of the excluded middle.*" This simply means that something either is, or is not. Eliminate one of the possibilities, and you establish the other. For example, were we to say that a desk is either wood or non-wood, we are suggesting that it can only be one or the other, not both, and not neither. Paul seeks to show that his gospel did not, in fact could not, have come from men. The only alternative is that it "*came to me through revelation of Jesus Christ.*" He sets forth the only possibilities. Either (1) he received it from man, via letter or some other communication; (2) he was taught the gospel by some man; or (3) it came by revelation. He will now set out to disprove the first two, leaving only "*revelation*" as an acceptable explanation for the origin of the gospel which he preached.

*"but it came to me through revelation of Jesus Christ"* - Revelation denotes an uncovering and is used in the New Testament of (1) the drawing away by Christ of the veil of darkness covering the Gentiles, Luke 2:32; (2) the mystery, the purpose of God in this age, Romans 16:25; (3) the communication of the knowledge to the soul, Ephesians 1:17. When reference is made to something coming by

"revelation," it infers some miraculous working of God in imparting knowledge (notice carefully Ephesians 3:1-5). It is important to note in this passage (Gal. 1:11-12) that revelation stands in stark contrast to the apostle having received it from men, or being taught in any fashion by men. The evidence for such a revelation having come from God and not men now follows.

### **Evidence For Divine Revelation From Jesus**

1:13-2:21

Here Paul begins a presentation of the "*Evidence for Divine Revelation from Jesus*" (1:13-2:21). He first speaks of his "*manner of life in the past*," 1:13-14, showing that (a) he persecuted the church of God "*beyond measure*," (b) he advanced in the Jews' religion, and (c) he was "*exceedingly zealous*" for the traditions of his fathers. To give all that up would imply some motivation of extraordinary nature.

Paul was implying that his background and zeal required a special revelation in order to convert him. He reasons that no human being could have reached him with the gospel, making it reasonable to believe that he could only have been diverted from the course which he was pursuing by Jesus Christ Himself. It was this dramatic change in the course of Paul's life that evidenced SOMETHING of extraordinary means.

It is interesting to note that Paul makes reference to his "*manner of life in the ... Jews' religion*" and being "*zealous for the traditions of the fathers*." Rather than study the Bible, Paul majored in the "*Jews' religion*." Had he concentrated on the scriptures, rather than tradition, he may have recognized the Messiah had come in fulfillment of the prophecies. When one studies "*human tradition*," or the

religion of *"the fathers,"* rather than the Bible, he will have a veil cast over his eyes blinding him from the truth.

*1:13 ~ "For ye have heard of my manner of life in time past in the Jews' religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and made havoc of it:"*

*"beyond measure"* - The original word here means the highest possible degree. The apostle uses this language frequently to denote anything that is excessive or that cannot be expressed in the ordinary use of language. Notice the use of the word in Romans 7:13; 1 Corinthians 12:31; 2 Cor. 1:8; 4:7, 17. It is Paul's fanaticism which comes into view here. *"The very fact of Saul's fanaticism placed Saul out of reach of any effort on the part of any Christian to convert him."*<sup>15</sup>

*"made havoc of it"* - Or *"laid waste,"* the Greek word meaning to destroy; as when a city or country is ravaged by an army; Paul's goal was to utterly destroy this rival of Judaism called *"Christianity."* Wharton points out that *"it is the extraordinary measure to which Saul persecuted the church that gives this part of the argument its force"*<sup>16</sup>

*1:14 ~ "and I advanced in the Jews' religion beyond many of mine own age among my countrymen, being more exceedingly zealous for the traditions of my fathers."*

*"The Jews' religion"* - Twice in as many verses Paul makes reference to the *"Jews' religion."* This is precisely what the law had become; nothing more than a religion developed by the Jews over a long history of rebellion and disobedience. The simplicity of the Mosaic law had become encumbered with rites and ceremonies, all of which were human in origin, added to that law over several hundred

years. Paul's words are much like those of Jesus when He rebuked the Pharisees and told them, "*Behold, your (emphasis mine, TW) house is left unto you desolate*" (Matthew 23:38). The religion Paul rejected was not the religion "*ordained through angels by the hand of a mediator*" (Gal. 3:19), but the apostate religion of the Jews.

*"advanced...beyond many of mine own age"* – He profited in it; by his zeal he was able to make higher attainments than those of his "*own age*," or of equal age. It is likely that reference is made to those who were of the same age and sat in the classes of Gamaliel. Paul had much to lose by renouncing the religion of his fathers. The question that comes into view here is, "*What could have produced such a change that this man would give up such a position in the Jewish religion?*"

*"more exceedingly zealous"* – The word "*zealous*" means to take a warm interest in something; to seek or desire eagerly. But, again, notice the object of his zeal – "*the traditions of his fathers*" rather than the word of God.

**1:15 ~ "*But when it was the good pleasure of God, who separated me, even from my mother's womb, and called me through his grace,*"**

Paul would next show that **he had no contact with human teachers in the gospel** (vs. 15-25). This argument "*reasons that he could not have received further instruction in the gospel from either the apostles or the churches in Judaea after his conversion.*"<sup>17</sup> This would leave only revelation as an explanation for what he was teaching. Paul's argument would point to the fact that he had no contact with (1) the original apostles (vs. 17-19) or (2) the churches throughout Judaea (vs. 22-24).

*"separated me"* – It is important to note that Paul was separated *"to reveal his Son in me...that I might preach among the gentiles"* (vs. 15-16). Paul was not separated for salvation in any way peculiar to others. Similar language is found in Jeremiah 1:5; Luke 1:15, etc.

*"and called me through his grace"* – In 2 Thessalonians 2:14 we read that *"he called you through our gospel."* We also read in Titus 2:11, *"For the grace of God hath appeared, bringing salvation to all men."* Paul is, therefore, using the term *"grace"* here as a synonym for *"gospel."*

*1:16 ~ "to reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the Gentiles; straightway I conferred not with flesh and blood:"*

*"to reveal his Son in me"* – Revelation was given to Paul to equip him to *"preach him [Christ] among the Gentiles."*

*"conferred not with flesh and blood"* – This is the first of Paul's two-pronged argument in which he sought to authenticate his apostleship. Upon his conversion he did not meet with any of the apostles (*"flesh and blood"*); they did not come to him, nor did he go to them. Instead, upon his conversion, he *"went away into Arabia."* We think this journey was at the direction of God in order to give Paul the revelations which he speaks of here and in 2 Corinthians 12:1ff. After receiving the revelation, Paul then returned to Damascus, where he began his work as an apostle, preaching and teaching the gospel.

*1:17-18 ~ "neither went I up to Jerusalem to them that were apostles before me: but I went away into Arabia; and again I returned unto Damascus. [18] Then after three*

*years I went up to Jerusalem to visit Cephas, and tarried with him fifteen days."*

By comparing Galatians with Acts 9, it would appear that the following sequence of events took place:

- (1) After his conversion, Paul began immediately to preach and teach in the synagogues in Damascus, though at that time without apostolic authority;
- (2) He then went away into Arabia, most likely to receive the revelations necessary to equip him to do the work of an apostle;
- (3) He then returned to Damascus; these events seemed to have consumed approximately three years (Cf. Gal 1:18);
- (4) He next made a trip to Jerusalem to visit Cephas, the stay lasting 15 days;
- (5) After the visit to Jerusalem, Paul went to Syria, and especially Tarsus (Acts 9:30);
- (6) Barnabas went to Tarsus and compels Paul to go to Antioch (Acts 11:25-26);
- (7) Paul and Barnabas next visit Jerusalem for the purpose of taking relief to the poor saints (Acts 11:29-30);
- (8) Upon returning to Antioch (Acts 12:25), they depart for the first missionary journey (Acts 13:1ff);
- (9) After that first journey, having returned to Antioch, they are faced with the controversy that arose over circumcision, and by revelation they go to Jerusalem (Acts 15:1ff; Galatians 2:1ff); this appears to have been fourteen years after his original trip to Jerusalem in Acts 9:30;

There were three visits to Jerusalem during the first 17 or 18 years of Paul's conversion. The first trip was three years

after his conversion to visit with Cephas, Acts 9 and Galatians 1:18. The second trip was before his first missionary journey, for the purpose of taking the relief. The third trip was to deal with the controversy over circumcision. Paul omitted any reference to his second trip to Jerusalem in this letter to the Galatians.

***1:19 ~ "But other of the apostles saw I none, save James the Lord's brother."***

There is an apparent discrepancy regarding Paul's mention of James. He in fact, was not an apostle in the official sense of the word. The matter is a little clearer when we consider the following facts:

- (1) Often, the word apostle is used in a very general sense. The word actually means "*one sent with a message.*" Notice Acts 14:14 where Barnabas is also called an apostle;
- (2) Also recall that, in Greek there are two different words which we translate "*other.*" One of these means "*other of the same kind,*" while the second means "*other of a different kind.*" Paul actually says, "*but other of the apostles (of a different kind) saw I none, save James the Lord's brother.*"

***1:20 ~ "Now touching the things which I write unto you, behold, before God, I lie not."***

Paul was very solemn in his avowal regarding his apostleship. With the words, "*Before God, I lie not,*" he was calling God to witness the integrity of his heart.

***1:21 ~ "Then I came unto the regions of Syria and Cilicia."***

More specifically, he came to Tarsus (Acts 11:25). It was at a later date that Barnabas went to Tarsus to get Saul and bring him to Antioch. The ministry to the Gentiles had already started, as is apparent from Acts 11:19ff.

*1:22 ~ "And I was still unknown by face unto the churches of Judaea which were in Christ:"*

This verse simply emphasizes that Paul did not confer with men so as to learn this "gospel" which he was preaching. Although he had not met with the churches in Judaea, the word had traveled far and wide of his conversion.

*1:23 ~ "but they only heard say, He that once persecuted us now preacheth the faith of which he once made havoc;"*

*"persecuted"* - The word means "to put to flight, drive away; to pursue" (Vine). Paul admitted that he had "shut up many of the saints in prisons" and that he "strove to make them blaspheme" (Acts 26:10-11).

*"preacheth the faith"* - He that once persecuted, now preached. Of this verse, brother Robert Taylor notes:

Here we have Biblical anticipation of error of which there is an abundance within Holy Writ. It is highly unlikely anyone in the first century accused Paul of preaching a different gospel to the Gentiles than Peter and the eleven apostles had preached to the Jews. Yet religious errorists have done that in modern times. Galatians 1:23 is a death knell to that egregious error. Paul preached the same faith he once destroyed. What is the faith he once sought to destroy? What Peter and the eleven had preached in the first third of the book of Acts.<sup>18</sup>

1:24 ~ *"and they glorified God in me."*

Paul uses a tense which actually says they continued to glorify God in him.

Some lessons from chapter one:

- (1) It is significant that Paul wears no titles of a religious nature.
- (2) To tamper with the truth is mighty dangerous; it is to call upon us an eternal curse from God;
- (3) Paul learned at the time of his conversion that one religion is NOT as good as another; and here he points out that one "*gospel*" is not as good as another;
- (4) It was a marvel that people who once knew the truth could so quickly turn away from it;
- (5) Paul would have no sympathy for those who deny that we can know the truth. He knew the truth, and so preached it;
- (6) Zeal without knowledge is vain; Paul was zealous in the religion of his fathers; a zeal which put him in conflict with God;

### Chapter One Endnotes

- 1 Ridderbos, Herman, **The Epistle of Paul to the Churches of Galatia** (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1964); page 41.
- 2 Ridderbos, page 43.
- 3 Barnes, page 286.
- 4 Clarke, Adam, page 388.
- 5 Miller, Dave, **Piloting The Strait** (Pulaski, TN: Sain Publications, 1996); page 235.
- 6 Barnes, page 286.
- 7 Barnes, page 286.
- 8 Clarke, page 388.
- 9 Clarke, page 388.
- 10 Barnes, page 286.

- 11 Wharton, page 10-11.
- 12 Brown, David, *"Paul's Greeting And Purpose for Writing"; Studies In Galatians*, 'The Fifth Annual Denton Lectures' (Denton, Texas: Valid Publications, 1986); page 47.
- 13 Ridderbos, page 56.
- 14 Wharton, page 10-11.
- 15 Wharton, page 15.
- 16 Wharton, page 14.
- 17 Wharton, page 13.
- 18 Taylor, Robert, *Studies In Galatians* (Ripley, Tennessee: Taylor Publications, 1990) page 26.

## **Galatians Chapter Two**

**I**n this chapter we have a continuation of Paul's argument in which he sets forth evidence for the authority of his apostleship. To keep the chapter in its context we expand our outline as follows:

- I. (con't)
  - 3. Paul's gospel received by Divine revelation, 1:11-2:21
    - A. His claim for Divine revelation from Jesus, vs. 11-12;
    - B. Evidence for Divine Revelation from Jesus, 1:13-21:21
      - (1) His manner of life in time past, 1:13-14;
      - (2) No contact with human teachers in the gospel, 1:15-24;
      - (3) His endorsement by the apostles in Jerusalem, 2:1-10;
        - a. Titus was not compelled to be circumcised, vs. 1-5;
        - b. The Apostles could add nothing to Paul's gospel, vs. 6-8;
        - c. The apostles endorsed Paul and Barnabas, vs. 9-10;
      - (4) His rebuke of Peter, 2:11-21;
        - a. Peter's dissimulation, vs. 11-13;
        - b. Paul's censure, v. 14;
        - c. Grounds for the rebuke, vs. 15-21;

## **His Endorsement By The Apostles In Jerusalem** **2:1-10**

This is Paul's third argument to prove and sustain his apostleship, being this: That when he met the apostles in Jerusalem and laid before them the gospel which he was preaching, they extended to him the right hand of fellowship. There are actually four parts in this argument:

- a. Titus was not compelled to be circumcised, vs. 1-3;
- b. The apostles' united stand against the false teachers, vs. 4-5;
- c. The apostles could add nothing to Paul's gospel, vs. 6-8;
- d. The apostles endorsed Paul and Barnabas, vs. 9-10.

We want to note each of these parts.

**First, Titus Was Not Compelled To Be Circumcised, vs. 1-3;**

**2:1 ~ "Then after the space of fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus also with me."**

*"after fourteen years"* – Is the fourteen years to be counted from the time of his conversion, or from that first visit mentioned in 1:18? Since Paul is using his conversion as a reference point for the events listed in this letter, we are probably looking at fourteen years after his conversion. This particular visit to Jerusalem is identical to Luke's record in Acts 15, where these brethren went to Jerusalem to deal with the controversy over circumcision. This seems reasonable in view of the following:

- (1) The issue in both instances is the same. Cf. Acts 15:1-3 with Galatians 2:3; 4:10; 5:2-4; 6:12-13.

- (2) The same speakers are present in each account;
- (3) In Acts 15:12 it is noted that Barnabas and Paul relate before the whole assembly the *"signs and wonders God had performed through them among the Gentiles."* In Galatians 2:2a and 8, Paul reported that he had *"laid before them the gospel which I preach among the Gentiles,"* and that *"He [God, TW] was...at work in me for the Gentiles,"* referring, we believe, to the miracles which Paul wrought;
- (4) The *"voices"* of the Judaizing teachers are heard in both cases. See Acts 15:5 and 2:4-5;
- (5) In Luke's account there is no ground yielded to the opinions and demands of the Judaizers (Acts 15:8-19). So also in this epistle Paul makes it clear that neither he, nor the other apostles, ever yielded to their demands, *"no, not for an hour, that the truth of the gospel might continue with you"* (2:5);
- (6) In both cases there is perfect harmony between the leaders;

*"Barnabas"* was a close associate of Paul. His name means *"encourager,"* and he was just such a man. It was Barnabas who presented Paul to the brethren in Damascus, affirming his conversion to the Lord. Paul labored with Barnabas in Antioch of Syria, and about the time of the death of Herod, had accompanied Barnabas on a relief mission to Jerusalem. Barnabas also accompanied Paul on his first missionary journey during this interval. There are some other characteristics about this man that we feel are worthy of mention. First, he was a *"good man, and full of the Holy Spirit and of faith"* (Acts 4:36). This would explain his great zeal for the lost, and his willingness to accompany Paul on his first missionary journey. Second, Barnabas was compassionate toward others. When we are introduced to him by Luke, we are told that he owned some property.

When he realizes that many of his fellow saints in Jerusalem and surrounding areas were suffering from the famine, he willingly sold the property and laid it at the apostles' feet for distribution among the poor. Third, his generosity toward others motivated him to dispel the suspicions of the disciples when "*Saul of Tarsus*," known as perhaps the bitterest persecutor of the church, suddenly entered Jerusalem and claimed that he had experienced a conversion. When no one else believed Paul's story, Barnabas stood by his side, and encouraged the brethren to receive their new brother in Christ (Cf. Acts 9:26-28). Also, this man loved the lost and manifested a willingness to leave the comforts of home and brave the dangers of a mission with Paul. In Acts 11:22-23 we are given a glimpse of Barnabas' great love for the lost, when in response to the obedience of the Gentiles to the gospel, it is said, "*who, when he was come, and had seen the grace of God, was glad; and he exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord.*" Perhaps of all the qualities which made Barnabas what he was, none is more pronounced than his example in humility. As he and Paul labored together, Paul, who initially was an assistant to Barnabas, gradually became the leader in their work together. There is not the slightest hint that Barnabas ever resented their relationship, or Paul's prominence in the work. What an amazing man, this Barnabas. He was not without his weakness, for we see him carried away with Peter's dissimulation. But in spite of his momentary weakness, we have before us a man worthy of imitation.

*"taking Titus with me"* – This is the first record of Titus' association with Paul. The reason for Paul's taking Titus with him was in order to demonstrate the liberty in Christ, and the consequent freedom from the law and its requirement of circumcision. It is interesting that Luke does

not mention Titus' presence during the Jerusalem controversy, leading some to conclude that Titus and Luke may have been brothers in the flesh.

*2:2 ~ "And I went up by revelation; and I laid before them the gospel which I preach among the Gentiles but privately before them who were of repute, lest by any means I should be running, or had run, in vain."*

"Went up by revelation" – Luke (in Acts 15) does not mention the "revelation." Instead, he says that *"the brethren appointed that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem."* It is interesting to note that in Luke's account (Acts 15:2), *"the brethren"* is italicized, not being in the original. It should read, *"...questioning with them, appointed Paul."* This is because Paul went up to Jerusalem *"by revelation"* from God.

*"the gospel which I preach among the Gentiles"* was precisely the same gospel preached by the other apostles, a gospel minus circumcision and keeping of the Mosaic law.

*"but privately....lest by any means I should be running or had run, in vain"* – In view of the fact that Paul was instructed by God to go to Jerusalem, we agree with Coffman that *"Paul's reasons for going were not for the purpose of receiving instructions or of getting the apostles in Jerusalem to decide anything. He went there for the purpose of straightening out the error that, for the moment, was rampant in the church in that city."*<sup>1</sup> There was a great deal of wisdom, then, in securing a private meeting with the apostles before dealing with the matter in public. Lipscomb noted, *"These private consultations were a wise precaution to avoid misunderstanding. Such private conferences are usually held in connection with public assemblies for the purpose of preparing and maturing*

*business for final action.*"<sup>2</sup> Had the other apostles repudiated Paul's teaching, it would have rendered his journey to Jerusalem of no value. As it turned out, Paul and his teaching were vindicated when the apostles in Jerusalem refused to insist that Greeks be circumcised.

*"them who were of repute"* – This, of course, has reference to the apostles in Jerusalem. It is Paul's reply to those who would question his apostleship. Paul was as much as apostle as those who were well known, and his reference to those who were *"of repute"* is a cloaked reply to their false charges that Paul was some sort of a *"late comer."* Hendriksen has this interesting note:

Since the term 'those of repute' occurs not only once but, in one form or another, no less than four times (2:2; 6a; 6b; 9), it is safe to assume that the apostle is here quoting the phraseology of the opponents. He is, however, not trying to belittle the men of prominence in the church at Jerusalem. He does not use the term to heap scorn upon them or to ridicule them. True, the language he uses here implies a degree resentment, but the latter is not directed at James, Cephas, and John, but at the legalists who have made it a habit to exalt these three at the expense of Paul, a man altogether insignificant in their eyes, a merely second-hand apostle, not even worthy to be called an apostle.<sup>3</sup>

**2:3 ~ *"But not even Titus who was with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised."***

*"not...compelled to be circumcised"* – Why would Paul so adamantly refuse to circumcise Titus, when he had taken Timothy and circumcised him? The difference lay in the

circumstances surrounding each man. In Timothy's case, it was a matter of expediency. By circumcising Timothy, Paul hoped to gain access to the Jews and thereby provide an open door to preach the gospel. In Titus' case, it was a matter of liberty and refusal to bow to the demands of the Judaizing teachers, hence, a doctrinal issue. Had the cases been precisely similar in all essential details, Paul would have been as adamant in keeping Timothy away from the rite as he was with Titus. Paul brought up the case of Titus in order to show that circumcision was not necessary to one's salvation. Had it been necessary, then certainly Paul would have had Titus circumcised. In fact, Paul resisted Titus' being circumcised on the very grounds that such would have been submission to a man-made law. In the case of Titus, the false brethren had demanded circumcision as obligatory, and this Paul could not submit to. However, in the case of Timothy, it was a voluntary compliance on his part with the usual customs of the Jews. We learn that it is not wrong to participate in the social customs of the day, so long as they do not violate any of God's laws. But when men make laws binding where God has not bound, then we are to resist efforts to bind those things that may, in fact, be right in and of themselves, but not obligatory. The reason for Paul's taking Titus with him to Jerusalem is summarized by Hendriksen:

If a Christian of unalloyed Gentile extraction, though present here in the very heartland of the Jews, and in an assembly which Jewish Christian leaders filled an influential role, was not compelled to be circumcised, then surely there could be no objection to waiving this requirement in the case of other non-Jewish converts who were living in a partly or wholly Gentile environment.<sup>4</sup>

**Second, The Apostles' United Stand Against The False Teachers, vs. 4-5.**

The refusal to circumcise Titus was due to the threat to Christian liberty. Had the Judaizers succeeded in binding circumcision, Christian liberty would have been lost, and the church would have been brought into bondage.

*2:4 ~ "and that because of the false brethren privily brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage:"*

*"and that because of the false brethren privily brought in" - Paul brands those who would destroy their liberty as false brethren. Such a declaration was not some emotional outburst, but an evidenced fact! There is a great tendency today to shy away from calling someone a false teacher. But we are admonished to "mark them that are causing the divisions and occasions of stumbling, contrary to the doctrine which ye learned: and turn away from them" (Romans 16:17).*

*"privily" - There are two words which we translate "privily." One of these words is "lathra" which means "secretly, covertly, from a root 'lath' indicating unnoticed, unknown, seen in 'lathano,' to escape notice."<sup>5</sup> But here in Galatians 2:4 the word is "pareisaktos," an adjective, "to bring in beside; i.e. secretly, as spies or traitors."<sup>6</sup> Barnes notes that the word "is derived from a verb meaning to lead or bring in by stealth, to smuggle in. The verb occurs nowhere in the New Testament but in 2 Peter 2:1."<sup>7</sup> These intruders had "wormed their way into the assembly from the sidelines."<sup>8</sup>*

*"that they might bring us into bondage" - Perhaps the word "slavery" might express the force of Paul's warning. The*

demands of the law constituted an unbearable yoke as per both Peter (Acts 15:10) and Paul (Gal. 5:1). *"The effort to comply with these demands amounted to a 'bleeding to climb to God' in one's own strength, a tremendous effort to attain salvation by law-works, only to discover that this effort is hopeless, and that, like the fly in the spider's web, the more one struggles, the more he also imprisons himself."*<sup>9</sup>

Whether this verse explains Paul's actions regarding Titus (verse 3), or his meeting with the apostles (verse 2), does not essentially change the force of the message. All of these things were done by Paul in view of the danger of the doctrine being taught by the Judaizing teachers. It was the threat of the loss of Christian liberty which compelled Paul to meet with the apostles in Jerusalem, as well as his refusal to circumcise Titus.

We must, before leaving this verse, call attention to the fact that Paul in no way suggested that Christians are free from the ordinances of the law of Christ. *"It was not freedom from Christ's commandments that Paul taught, but freedom from the forms and ceremonies of Judaism."*<sup>10</sup> Jesus Himself declared, *"If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love"* (John 15:10).

*2:5 ~ "to whom we gave place in the way of subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might continue with you."*

Paul's adamant refusal to give way to the Judaizing teachers was decisive and forceful. Not one single inch of ground was surrendered. The truth and liberty were at stake. There is no room for compromise when it comes to the truth.

*"in the way of subjection"* – Barnes renders this, *"he did not suffer himself to be compelled to yield."*<sup>11</sup> To yield to such pressure would have been paramount to surrender of truth.

*"no, not for an hour"* – There was no compromise, even for the shortest time. Paul opposed their claims in order that the truth might be established that the law of Moses was not to be imposed as being in any way obligatory on the church.

**Third, The Apostles Could Add Nothing To Paul's Gospel, vs. 6-8**

*2:6 ~ "But from those who were reputed to be somewhat (whatsoever they were, it maketh no matter to me: God accepteth not man's person)–they, I say, who were of repute imparted nothing to me:"*

In an effort to show the apostles' endorsement of his doctrine and apostleship, Paul now seeks to show that those who were *"reputed to be somewhat"* did not, nor could not, add anything to Paul's gospel (vs. 6-8).

*"whatsoever they were, it maketh no matter to me..."* – Paul was simply saying that whatever their rank and standing in the church, it did not affect his message in the least. His authority was from God, not man, and the message presented by this apostle to the gentiles was not altered or affected by any sort of *"additional"* information from the other apostles. In fact, he flatly states that the other apostles *"imparted nothing to me."* The council in Jerusalem made no contribution whatsoever to the gospel which Paul preached.

*"God accepteth not man's person"* – We think this is a most significant warning. No man is to be believed solely upon his position in life, or some office which he might hold. It

has been my sad experience through the years that what one's "pastor" says often holds more weight than the Scriptures themselves.

*2:7 ~ "but contrariwise, when they saw that I had been intrusted with the gospel of the uncircumcision, even as Peter with the gospel of the circumcision"*

Not only did the other apostles impart nothing to Paul, but after a careful comparison of their teaching with his, they concluded that the gospel was alike for both "circumcision" and "uncircumcision." The reason being that the source of authority for both Peter and Paul was precisely the same, namely Jesus Christ (verse 8). It is important to note that there were not two different gospels being preached, but the same gospel being preached to two classifications of men, Jew and gentile.

*2:8 ~ "for he that wrought for Peter unto the apostleship of the circumcision wrought for me also unto the Gentiles;"*

The absence of Barnabas' name in this verse, while appearing in the next, is significant. Barnabas was not an apostle in the official sense, as was Paul. We are forced to conclude that Paul was speaking here of his divinely ordained position as an apostle in the official sense of the word. Although Barnabas was associated with Paul, and was even called an "apostle" by Luke (Acts 14:14), he was not an apostle as were Paul and Peter.

*"wrought for Peter unto the apostleship of the circumcision"* - That is, God called Peter to serve as an apostle primarily unto, or in behalf of, the circumcision, or Jew. This was Peter's primary field of labor, though he did preach and teach to the uncircumcision also (cf. Cornelius, Acts 10 and 11).

**Fourth, The Apostles Endorsed Paul And Barnabas, vs. 9-10.**

*2:9 ~ "and when they perceived the grace that was given unto me, James and Cephas and John, they who were reputed to be pillars, gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship, that we should go unto the Gentiles, and they unto the circumcision;"*

The final plank in Paul's argument that the other apostles endorsed his apostleship is the fact that they extended the right hand of fellowship to him and Barnabas.

*"grace that was given unto me"* - Here the word "grace" is synonymous with the gospel. It was something that was capable of being "*perceived*," hence examination and investigation. The word grace is used in a similar fashion in Titus 2:11.

*"reputed to be pillars"* - The word translated "*pillars*" means supports, or persons of authority and influence. "*Among the Jews, persons of great eminence and importance are represented as pillars and foundations of the world.*"<sup>12</sup> Of all the apostles, Peter, James, and John were among the most notable. If Paul had the endorsement of these three men, then certainly that would argue in favor of his acceptance among the apostleship as a whole.

*"that we should go unto the Gentiles, and they unto the circumcision"* - There was a dividing of labor among these men. It is rather interesting that the five men, whose "*handclasp of ringing harmony is here described, produced, between them, no less than twenty-one of the twenty-seven books.*"<sup>13</sup>

*"right hand of fellowship"* - These words describe friendly

---

salutations, agreement and acceptance in matters of belief. The "*right hand of fellowship*" was the mark of confidence, friendship, and fellowship. These men were in agreement with Paul as to what he taught the Gentiles, and hence, extended to him their fellowship. Notice in this connection 1 John 1:6-8. Our fellowship extends from the Father, and when we are in fellowship with the Father, we enjoy fellowship with one another. It should be noted that fellowship is something we **have** with God the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ, and with one another, when we walk in the light, and not so much something we **do**.

*2:10 ~ "only they would that we should remember the poor; which very thing I was also zealous to do."*

Beside the fact that the first century church was instructed to "*visit the orphans and the widows in their affliction*" (James 1:27), there was the special need at this time for Paul to demonstrate his concern and love for his fellow Jewish Christians, lest some get the impression that he had completely separated himself from them upon his call to minister to the Gentiles. It is highly probable that the false teachers, seeking to discredit Paul, would lay such an accusation against his character. "*Nothing could be better adapted to allay this than for him to pledge himself to feel a deep interest in the poor saints among the Jewish converts. Thus he would show that he was not alienated from his countrymen.*"<sup>14</sup> The benevolent work of the church is one of its marks of distinction. Such beneficent attitude and work is commanded by God in both the Old and New Testament. See Exodus 23:10-11; 30:15; Leviticus 19:10; Deuteronomy 15:7-11; Jeremiah 22:16; Daniel 4:27; Amos 2:6-7; Matthew 7:12; Luke 6:36-38; John 13:29; Galatians 6:2. Indeed, a rich reward awaits the generous, Matthew 25:31-40.

## His Rebuke Of Peter

2:11-21

We come now to the fourth argument presented by Paul in defense of his apostleship and revelation, namely.... *"His Rebuke of Peter"* (2:11-21). We will see:

- a. Peter's dissimulation, vs. 11-13;
- b. Paul's censure, vs. 14-15;
- c. Grounds for the rebuke, vs. 16-21;

**First, Peter's dissimulation** (vs. 11-13):

*2:11 ~ "But when Cephas came to Antioch, I resisted him to the face, because he stood condemned."*

Paul's intention in bringing up this most unfortunate incident was to show that he was in no way inferior to the other apostles. Peter was one of the most prominent of the twelve, and yet Paul did not hesitate to rebuke Peter for his hypocrisy regarding treatment of Gentiles. Peter *"stood condemned,"* suggesting something of the serious nature of his actions. Coffman noted, *"Peter was not merely condemned by a fellow-apostle, he was self-condemned, his own conscience reproving and repudiating his actions. Paul stated in Romans (2:1) the principle that holds a man self-condemned if he practices what he condemns in others."*<sup>15</sup> Any suggestion that this Cephas is someone other than Peter the apostle is without a shred of evidence. The argument that Peter, who had spoken with such courage at the Jerusalem conference in Acts 15, would not have made such a quick *"about face,"* fails to give consideration to the following facts: (1) Peter may not have been fully aware of the full implications of his own actions. (2) Peter, like all other men, often did things that were inconsistent to his claims, especially where

fear may have been present. When accused of being "*one of Jesus' disciples*," Peter denied, not once, but three times (Matthew 26:69ff; Mark 14:66-72; Luke 22:54-62; John 18:15-18; 25-27).

The exact time of this incident cannot be ascertained, nor is it important to Paul's argument. It is important to keep in mind that there was no controversy between the two apostles in so far as their doctrine was concerned. Nor was there some difference in a matter of opinion. What we have here is "*a case of indecision in acting up to one's unchanged convictions*."<sup>16</sup> So far as their doctrine was concerned, they were in complete agreement, proving again that Paul's apostleship was authentic, and his authority on an equal plane with that of the other apostles. So what was it that Peter did which deserved such a strong rebuke?

*2:12 ~ "For before that certain came from James, he ate with the Gentiles; but when they came, he drew back and separated himself, fearing them that were of the circumcision."*

*"before certain men came from James"* – It is not certain what role James played in the controversy over circumcision, but Paul clearly points out that "*before*" those men came from James, Peter "*ate with the Gentiles*." Barnes believes that the false teachers who came to Antioch simply had some acquaintance with James, and likely were pleading his authority, and deceitfully operating in his name. This seems most reasonable in view of James' statement recorded in Acts 15:24, "*Forasmuch as we have heard that certain who went out from us have troubled you with words, subverting your souls; to whom we gave no commandment.*"

*"when they came, he drew back"* – His actions were due to

---

his *"fearing them that were of the circumcision."* He separated himself from the Gentile Christians, and refused to eat with them. He may have feared the Jews' reproaches or even the persecution that he would have to endure at the hands of the Jews as a result of such open fellowship with the Gentiles. We think Albert Barnes' comments are worth repeating:

We see in this act the same Peter who trembled when he began to sink in the waves; the same Peter who denied his Lord. Bold, ardent, zealous, and forward; he was at the same time timid and often irresolute; and he often had occasion for the deepest humility, and the most poignant regrets at the errors of his course. No one can read his history without loving his ardent and sincere attachment to his Master; and yet no one can read it without a tear of regret that he was left thus to do injury to his cause.<sup>17</sup>

There is in Peter's example a reminder of the warning of Paul in 1 Corinthians 10:12, *"Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."*

**2:13 ~ *"And the rest of the Jews dissembled likewise with him; insomuch that even Barnabas was carried away with their dissimulation."***

There is a lesson here regarding the power of influence and the consequences of our actions as they pertain to those who might follow our example. The *"rest of the Jews,"* seeing Peter's behavior, likewise *"dissembled....with him."* To *"dissemble"* has the meaning of *"hiding or concealing their true sentiments."* Barnes writes: *"That is, they attempted to conceal from those who had come down from James the fact that they had been in the habit of associating with the Gentiles, and*

of eating with them."<sup>18</sup> Barnabas was evidently "carried away with their dissimulation" in a moment of weakness, though responsible nonetheless. The fact that Peter's actions had the influence it did upon Barnabas made it all the more important that Paul call Peter's hand regarding his behavior. It also helps us to see the contagious effect of fear coupled with peer pressure.

**Second, Paul's censure, 2:14**

*2:14 ~ "But when I saw that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel, I said unto Cephas before them all, If thou, being a Jew, livest as do the Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, how compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews?"*

Notice these important facts about the case before us, and Paul's reaction:

- (1) First, Peter's actions were inconsistent with the "*truth of the gospel*." The very fact that Peter had been instrumental in converting Cornelius, and that he had defended his actions before the other apostles (Acts 11) declared heaven's message that there was to be no distinction between Jew and Gentile.
- (2) Second, we note that behavior is an important part of the gospel. Peter's actions were such that he "*walked not uprightly*." Literally, he was not walking "straight-footing toward, or in accordance with the gospel."<sup>19</sup> Peter, and those who followed him, were deviating from the truth of the gospel on this matter of keeping the law of Moses;
- (3) Third, Peter's actions constitute an example of what is involved in hypocrisy. Peter lived "*as do the Gentiles*," in that he accepted them into fellowship

without any demand that they comply to the old law. But when the controversy arose, and some came from James, Peter then compelled the gentiles to live as the Jews and accept the tenets of the Mosaic law. Peter clearly acted out the part of a hypocrite. Crouch wrote, *"His conduct here illustrates the truth that the great power of the Holy Spirit given to the apostles to guide them in speaking the truth did not inoculate or immunize them against the danger of temptation and their need to struggle against and overcome temptation like all uninspired men must do."*<sup>20</sup> Wharton points out that *"this very action showed Paul's consistency in the gospel, vindicating him of the charge of being a vacillator, as well as proving his independence of the original apostles."*<sup>21</sup> We must point out that the action of Paul is not a violation of Matthew 18:15-20, because Peter's sin was public, and hence, had to be dealt with publicly. The need for, and value of, Paul's public rebuke of Peter can be seen in a simple illustration. Suppose a child is asked to come to the front of the class and provide an answer for a mathematical problem which has been placed on the chalkboard. And, let us further suppose that the child gives an incorrect answer. Is the teacher to ignore the mistake and correct the child only in private? Of course not. The mistake must be corrected before all, so that all may learn the nature of the error.

**2:15 ~ "We being Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles,"**

Having mentioned his rebuke of Peter, Paul now sets forth the grounds for the rebuke, vs. 15-21.

Whether this section contains the words which Paul spoke to Peter, or Paul's instructions to the Galatians, does not change the argument or the lessons to be learned. Barnes suggests the following evidence in favor of this being a part of the rebuke of Peter. (1) It is the most natural and obvious; usually a safe rule of interpretation; (2) There is a change at the beginning of the next chapter, where Paul expressly addresses himself to the Galatians; (3) As to the impropriety of Paul's addressing Peter at length on the subject of justification, we are to bear in mind that he did not address him alone. The reproof was addressed to Peter, but it was "*before them all*" (2:14). It is important to note that this passage announces the theme of the letter, "*Justification by faith in Christ, and not by the works of the law.*"<sup>22</sup>

*"We being Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles" -* The NRSV reads, "*We ourselves are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners.*" Barnes wrote, "*It must mean that the Jews were not born under the disadvantages of the Gentiles in regard to the true knowledge of the way of salvation*"<sup>23</sup> It would seem that Paul was pointing out a distinct advantage that the Jews had over the Gentiles, and because of that advantage, they should have realized that they could not be justified by the works of the law.

*2:16 ~ "yet knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, even we believed on Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ, and not by the works of the law: because by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified."*

*"knowing"* - Paul did not intend to say that ALL the Jews knew the truth that "*a man is not justified by the works of the law,*" for all did NOT know it. Paul was referring to those

## GALATIANS CHAPTER TWO

---

who were present, born as Jews, and converted to Christianity, and who had an opportunity to learn this particular truth. They should have acted, therefore, in a manner worthy of their superior knowledge. This, Peter and the others who had been carried away by his dissimulation, were not doing.

*"that a man is not justified by the works of the law"* – It might be good right here to make a few comments relative to the word *"justification."* In a broad sense, justification is the judicial act of God by which he pardons the sinner who believes in Christ and has obeyed the Gospel, thereby receiving him into Divine favor and regarding him as righteous. It should be noted that:

- (1) Justification is an act of God. *"It is God that justifieth; who is he that condemneth?"* (Romans 8:33-34).
- (2) We are *"justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus"* (Romans 3:24).
- (3) Salvation is made possible because we are justified by the blood of Jesus (Romans 5:9).
- (4) We are justified by faith in Christ (Romans 5:1);
- (5) We are justified by works of obedience (James 2:24);

Coffman quotes McClintock and Strong:

The originating cause of justification is the free grace and the spontaneous love of God towards fallen man (Rom. i.5, iii.24; Tit.ii.11, iii.4-5). Our Lord Jesus is the sole meritorious cause of our justification inasmuch as it is the result of his atonement for us. Faith is the instrumental cause of justification, present faith in him who was able to save, faith actually existing and exercised... The immediate results of justification are the restoration of amity and intercourse between

pardoned sinners and the pardoning God (Rom. v. 1); the adoption of the person justified into the family of God, and the consequent right to eternal life (Rom.viii.17); and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit (Acts ii.38; Gal. iii.14, iv.6), producing tranquillity of conscience (Rom. viii.15-16), power over sin (Rom. viii.1), and a joyous hope of heaven (Rom. xv.13; Gal. v.3,7).<sup>24</sup>

The explanation of how God can justify sinful man is to be found in the Biblical doctrine of justification and redemption. Isaiah spake of this when he foresaw the Messiah who was *"wounded for our transgressions ...bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed"* (Isaiah 53:5-6). God would see the travail of His soul and, in some way be satisfied with regard to the penalty having been paid. Peter wrote *"For hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, that ye should follow his steps: who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously: who his own self bare our sins in his body upon the tree, that we, having died unto sins, might live unto righteousness; by whose stripes ye were healed"* (1 Peter 2:21-24). Paul wrote, *"Him who knew no sin he made to be sin on our behalf; that we might become the righteousness of God in him"* (2 Cor. 5:21). All of these passages refer to the Biblical doctrine of righteousness, the end result being justification of those who believe and obey. From such passages we can conclude that justification is:

- (1) The opposite or antithesis of condemnation. See Romans 8:33-34; Deuteronomy 25:1; Job 9:20; Proverbs 17:37; and Matthew 12:37.

- (2) Justification is essential to eternal salvation. Isaiah 59:2 shows why: *"but your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, so that he will not hear."* See also Ezekiel 18:4.
- (3) Our lives are to manifest the fact that we stand justified in the sight of God. Consider 1 Corinthians 6:11, *"And such were some of you: but ye were washed, but ye were sanctified, but ye were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the Spirit of our God."*

The works of the law of Moses could not justify a man. Practically speaking, law cannot justify a man. Law, any law, once violated, can only condemn a man. To illustrate, let us consider a man who receives a traffic violation. The man is guilty as charged, for so speaks the evidence. When he appears before the judge, he does not seek *"justice,"* but rather mercy. If he depends upon the law for his release from the penalty, he seeks in vain. So, if there is to be any release from the penalty attached to his crime, he must depend upon the mercy of the judge.

*"but by the faith of Jesus Christ"* – Some of the modern versions (ASV included) have rendered this *"faith IN Christ."* Of this passage brother Foy Wallace noted:

In this verse, *"by the faith of Christ"* is changed to *"only through faith in Christ"*—but *"the faith of Christ"* refers to the gospel system of faith, and the new writers have manipulated this passage to teach justification by faith only—going so far as to change *"the works of the law"* (the law of Moses) to *"deeds dictated by law"*; yet faith itself is a law (Romans 3:27)...A committee

of text-makers that will artfully twist such a specific gospel passage to implement the false doctrine of faith alone will do anything in the name of translation.<sup>25</sup>

We believe that brother Wallace is correct here, especially in view of the context of the passage. Paul is setting forth a contrast between two "*systems*" of justification. One is a system based upon keeping the law. Were a man capable of keeping the law, without any violation whatsoever, he could and would be "*justified*" by the law. Having no violation of the law on his record, the law itself would declare him "*justified*." The other system is a system referred to by the apostle as "*the faith of Jesus Christ*." It is the system introduced and ratified by our Lord, i.e. the gospel. It is a system of faith (Romans 1:17), not of meritorious law keeping. The object of our dependence is not the law, but Christ. Coffman wrote:

The 'faith of Christ' meaning his perfect fidelity and obedience, is actually the ground of man's redemption. Absolute perfection is required of all who would be saved (Matt. 5:48), a state that is not attainable by any man who ever lived, save only Jesus Christ our Lord, Immanuel. Perfection being the 'sine qua non' without which none shall enter eternal life, how may it be procured and in a sense achieved by man? God's device of making one perfect, in the sense of being absolutely justified, is that of transferring him into Christ, identifying him with Christ.<sup>26</sup>

A careful study of Romans 3:21-31 would compliment the passage now before us. The same subject is under consideration. In Romans 3:28 Paul wrote, "*We reckon therefore that a man is justified by faith apart from the works of*

*the law.*" In Romans 3:27, Paul spoke of precisely the same two systems of justification: *"Where then is the glorying? It is excluded. By what manner of law? of works? Nay: but by a law of faith."* *"Works of the law"* (Gal. 2:16) = *"law of works"* (Rom. 3:27), and *"faith of Jesus Christ"* (Gal. 2:16) = *"law of faith"* (Rom. 3:27).

*"even we believed on Christ Jesus"* - The TYPE of faith here under consideration is active, obedient faith, as described by other New Testament passages. See James 2:14-26. The usual sense of the word is not just mental assent, but rather obedience, reliability, and fidelity. Notice Romans 1:5 and 16:26. While the words *"faith of Jesus Christ"* refer to the system of justification, the words *"we believed on Christ Jesus"* speak of the acceptance and application of that system to our life through obedience to the gospel.

*"for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified"* - Here is the principle restated for emphasis sake. The works of the law simply cannot justify a man. This is because (1) law can only accuse and condemn, and (2) all men violate the law (Romans 3:23).

Consider the following:

- (1) Justification is properly a word applicable to courts of justice, but is used in a similar sense in common conversation. A man is charged with an act or trespass against his neighbor. There are two avenues that he may take to *"justify"* himself. One is to deny that he did the wrong; the second is to admit that he did the deed, and then set up a defense and show that he had a RIGHT to do it. In either case he has justified himself and cleared himself of any wrongdoing with which he might be charged.

- (2) In like manner, man has been charged with doing wrong toward God. *"For we before laid to the charge both of Jews and Greeks, that they are all under sin....for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God"* (Romans 3:9; 23). Man is corrupt, wicked, proud, and has violated the law of his Maker. This charge, in fact, extends to all men for all have sinned (Rom 3:23). This charge is presented in the Bible, and to prove the charges, God has but to show the history of man.
- (3) It is impossible for man to vindicate himself from the charge. He cannot show that the crime for which he is charged was NOT committed, nor can he show that he had a RIGHT to perform the mis-deed. He is guilty. The facts are undeniable. He cannot be justified by the law! Instead of acquitting him, the law holds him guilty. In the strict sense of the word, by the law he cannot be justified—so that justification must come from some other source. It must come, therefore, by some system that is distinct from the law, and by which man may be justified on different principles than those which the law states.
- (4) This *"other system"* is that which is revealed in the gospel of Christ. It is a system of faithful submission to the will of God through Jesus Christ our Lord. By being identified with Him, and by being IN Him, we are then justified by the faith OF Jesus Christ. It is NOT a situation where Jesus pleads our innocence, for we are guilty. It is, rather, a system wherein the offender admits his guilt, and falls upon the mercy of the One wronged.

Keep in mind...

- (1) Paul is not speaking of a system of justification wherein our Advocate takes the side of the sinner against God or against His law. This our Lord cannot do.
- (2) Paul is not saying that we are innocent of the charges. All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23). We are guilty as charged, for so speaks the evidence.
- (3) Paul is not saying that we do not deserve to be punished, for indeed we do.
- (4) Paul is not setting forth a system of merit. We have not "*earned*" the right to be forgiven. Were this the case, then there would be room to "*glory*," and this Paul clearly says is not the case (Romans 3:27).
- (5) Nor is Paul saying that the righteousness of Jesus Christ is in some way TRANSFERRED to us. "*Moral character cannot be transferred. It adheres to the moral agent as much as colour does to the rays of light which cause it.*"<sup>27</sup>

Wherein then lies the justification for man? Very simply, it is the Divine purpose and plan of God Almighty to treat those sinners who believe and obey the gospel (thereby identifying themselves with Christ) **AS IF THEY HAD NOT SINNED**—not on their own merit, but on the merit of Jesus Christ. Again, *it is a matter of in whom or what we depend for our salvation!*

*2:17 ~ "But if, while we sought to be justified in Christ, we ourselves also were found sinners, is Christ a minister of sin? God forbid."*

Paul is here anticipating a possible objection with regard to such a system of faith. The objection would go something

like this: *"First, if what you are saying is true Paul, then it is just such a system which teaches a man that he does not need to observe the law of God to be acceptable unto Him. Second, this system of justification actually goes so far as to pronounce a man justified who has violated the law. Third, this system would imply that a man may be saved, even though he has not conformed to the law. Hence, when a man is therefore guilty of sin, any sin, does it not follow that Christ, with His system of faith, actually becomes a minister of sin?"* To this Paul replies, *"God forbid."* We must keep in mind that the system of justification by faith is not designed to produce freedom from restraint. Liberty in Christ is not absolute liberty. This very point would be expanded in chapters 5 and 6. If it is the case that one lives a life that is *"unrestrained"* (wherein one does not comply to the laws set forth by Christ), then that person's sins are to be traced to a cause other than the gospel. The gospel calls men OUT of sin (2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1). Wharton has this note:

In answering this question [*'Is Christ a minister of sin?', TW*] we ask: (a) What prompted the question, and (b) what is the force of the answer in verse 18? The occasion of the dissimulation of Peter with the rest of the Jews spoke volumes to Paul concerning the effects such action, if allowed to continue, would have with a view toward his all sufficient gospel. If the gospel Paul preached was not sufficient to justify Gentiles without the impositions of Moses then Jesus who *'abolished....the law'* by *'nailing it to the cross'* became a minister of sin by that very act; by abolishing the justifying element of law! This seems to be the argument made by the Judaizers. Thus they sought to argue that Paul's gospel would make Christ a minister of sin.<sup>28</sup>

This, of course, Paul denies.

**2:18 ~ *"For if I build up again those things which I destroyed, I prove myself a transgressor."***

*"build up again those things which I destroyed"* – These would be the ceremonial laws of Judaism. Peter, by his actions, had implied that there was to be a building up of those old laws and regulations. Paul clearly points out that to do such (and by implication he indicts Peter) would make himself a transgressor. Paul was simply saying, *"If I seek to rebuild those things which I in fact tear down [i.e., Judaism and the rites and ceremonies of the Law of Moses, TW], then I prove myself a transgressor."* Ridderbos' comments on this verse were significant: *"When a person returns from the point of view of faith to that of the law, he is only increasing his sin. In other words, he is demonstrating anew that he cannot keep the law. Hence a return from faith does not mean a diminution of sin at all, but rather a renewed surrender to it."*<sup>29</sup>

**2:19 ~ *"For I through the law died unto the law, that I might live unto God."***

*"I...died unto the law"* – It seems clear that he speaks of the law of Moses. Paul had become dead to the law; this was the entire basis behind the rebuke of Peter. The law ceased to have any influence on Paul. But what is meant by *"through the law"*? Some suggest that the meaning is *"by one law, or doctrine, I am dead to another."* This, however, seems to force a meaning on the verse which is not really there. It would appear, rather, that Paul was saying that by contemplating the true nature and character of the law of Moses, and by understanding the extent of its requirements, he had become dead to it. In other words he had laid aside all expectations of ever being justified by

such a system. See Romans 3:20. God, knowing that His children would never be able to render perfect obedience under the law, never intended that the law of Moses be final. So, *"through the law,"* God would teach mankind that any attempt to live the perfect life, was in fact, hopeless; that law simply could not justify, but only condemn. Consequently, man would come to realize that he stood condemned. The realization of this truth, painful as it might be, would lead men to abandon this *"educative system"* (as Wharton calls it), for God's perfect system of grace when it became available. As Ridderbos noted, *"all the law can do is to demand, to forbid, to judge, and to condemn. So it is that man dies through the law: he is beaten to death by it and falls into God's judgment."*<sup>30</sup>

*"that I might live unto God"* – He had not become dead to everything. He had simply replaced his dead life of sin with a life of active service to the one who had set him free.

*2:20 ~ "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I that live, but Christ living in me: and that life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith which is in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself up for me."*

This verse sums up the life of a Christian. It is an amazingly simple proclamation of our life this side of the watery grave of baptism. The same truth was taught by Paul in Romans 6.

*"I have been crucified with Christ"* – We have died to the old man of sin. Notice Romans 6:6. The force of that statement is quite emphatic. If one is crucified, he is no longer sensitive to those things that once surrounded him. We have died with Christ. Those things that once enthralled

us, no longer appeal to us. There are some similarities in our death to sin and the form of death Jesus suffered: (1) Crucifixion is painful. Similarly, giving up those things of our former lives is often painful. But like Paul, we are to count them but refuse for the sake of our Lord (Phil. 3:8). (2) Crucifixion is slow-and as we struggle with our old habits, change will come gradually. God allows time for our growth; but we must maintain the struggle to put away the old man, and put on the new man (Col. 3:5-17).

*"it is no longer I that live" – But we are alive! What then is the meaning? We no longer live to SELF. It is no longer MY life, MY wants, MY desires, or MY plans and purposes; it is no longer the "me" on the throne of my life, but the Christ. It is as if Paul were saying, "As a self-righteous Pharisee, who based his hope for eternity on strict obedience to law, I, as a direct result of Christ's crucifixion, have been crucified and am no longer alive"*<sup>31</sup>

*"but Christ liveth in me" – True religion does not make a man lazy. There must be the putting on of the new man. We still live, but the purpose of our life is changed. Notice in this connection John 15:4-6, Matthew 16:24. One has pointed out, if a man is able to answer two questions affirmatively, there is no way he can be lost. (1) Is he 'in Christ'? (and the only way one can be 'in Christ' is to have been baptized into him), and (2) will he be 'found in him'? (Phil. 3:9). This means, 'will he still be in Christ' when life ends, or the Lord comes?*

Homiletical Outline: "The Riddle of Having Been Crucified With Christ"

- I. The Riddle Propounded: *"I have been crucified with Christ..."*

- 
- II. The Riddle Partly Clarified But Also Partly Intensified:  
*"It is no longer I that live, but Christ living in me";*
- III. The Riddle Fully Explained:  
1. Paul was still alive: *"And that life which I now live in the flesh..."*  
2. Paul's life typified by faith: *"I live in faith which is in the Son of God";*
- IV. The Riddle Applied: *"I do not make void the grace of God; for if righteousness is through the law, then Christ died for nought" (v. 21);*

*2:21 ~ "I do not make void the grace of God: for if righteousness is through the law, then Christ died for nought."*

*"I do not make void the grace of God"* – The word for 'make void' means to displace, abrogate, and abolish. Paul meant that he would not take any action that would nullify the grace of God. To rely upon the Old Law would, in fact, do exactly that. Thus the next statement: *"for if righteousness is through the law, then Christ died for nought."* Indeed! Friend, righteousness does not come through the Law of Moses. If it does, then Jesus shed His blood for nothing. Nor is our salvation dependent upon living a perfectly sinless life. Were that the case, then none will be saved, for all have sinned (Romans 3:23). Thanks be to God that our Jesus died. Let us flee to Him for refuge.

## Chapter Two Endnotes

1 Coffman, Burton, **Commentary on Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians** (Austin, Texas: Firm Foundation Publishing House, 1977); page 33.

2 Lipscomb, David, **New Testament Commentaries, 'Second Corinthians, Galatians'** (Nashville, TN: Gospel Advocate Company, 1972) page 34.

## **GALATIANS CHAPTER TWO**

---

3 Hendriksen, William, **New Testament Commentary: Galatians** (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1968); page 77.

4 Hendriksen, page 77.

5 Vine, W.E., **An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words** (Old Tappan, New Jersey: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1966); page 215.

6 Vine, page 215.

7 Barnes, page 307.

8 Hendriksen, page 80.

9 Hendriksen, page 80.

10 Coffman, page 35.

11 Barnes, page 309.

12 Clarke, page 393.

13 Hendriksen, page 86.

14 Barnes, page 311.

15 Coffman, page 41.

16 Huxtable, page 97.

17 Barnes, page 313.

18 Barnes, page 313.

19 Hendriksen, page 95.

20 Crouch, Charles E., **Studies In Galatians** (Abilene, Texas: Quality Publications, 1993); page 23.

21 Wharton, page 21.

22 Barnes, page 316.

23 Barnes, page 316.;

24 Coffman, page 44.

25 Wallace, Foy E. Jr., **A Review Of The New Versions** (Fort Worth, Texas: Foy Wallace Publications & Journal Book and Teacher's Supply, 1973); page 509.

26 Coffman, page 45.

27 Barnes, page 318.

28 Wharton , page 22.

29 Ridderbos, page 103.

30 Ridderbos, page 103.

31 Hendriksen, page 99.

## **Galatians Chapter Three**

**W**ith this chapter we begin the Doctrinal Section, in which the doctrine of liberty is defended, taking up the whole of chapters three and four. In this chapter, Paul's defense includes an appeal to the following:

- (1) The past experience of the Galatians, vs. 1-5;
- (2) The case of Abraham, vs. 6-9;
- (3) The deficiency of the law in regard to justification, vs. 10-14;
- (4) The promise made to Abraham, vs. 15-18;
- (5) The purpose of the law, vs. 19-24;
- (6) The faith that is now come, vs. 25-29;

Special care must be taken in the study of this epistle that we not view the "*system of justification*" discussed herein as some sort of subjective, better-felt-than-told type of faith, in which obedience is cast by the wayside. We agree that:

...the works vs. faith contrast in this epistle regards the incompatibility of Judaism and Christianity, and absolutely nothing else. The separation of subjective faith from Christian obedience with regard to the ground of justification is not under consideration at all, nor may a single line in the whole epistle be rightfully applied to such a proposition.<sup>1</sup>

*The past experience of the Galatians, vs. 1-5;*

*3:1 ~ "O foolish Galatians, who did bewitch you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was openly set forth crucified?"*

### GALATIANS CHAPTER THREE

---

In calling the attention of the Galatians to their past, Paul actually sets forth five questions for their consideration. This is the first: *"Who bewitched you?"* *"Bewitched"* (from *'baskaino'*) means *"primarily, to slander, to prate about anyone; to bring evil on a person by feigned praise, or mislead by an evil eye, and to charm"* (W.E. Vine). Rather than using reason and sober judgment, the Galatians had been turned away from the truth by the charm of the Judaizing teachers.

The Galatians were of well-known intellectual capacity, and their foolishness in not detecting the fallacious reasoning of the Judaizers was hard to understand. Their conduct was so inexplicable that it seemed as if some bewitching fascination like our modern animal magnetism had been made use of, and even this explanation was hardly sufficient, for Christ had been so clearly and forcibly preached unto them.<sup>2</sup>

It is the case that people are drawn away from the truth, not by a serious study of the scriptures, but by the character and personality of the individual teaching error. It has been my sad experience to witness a major apostasy within the body of Christ, an apostasy now underway among some of those proclaiming to be members of the Lord's church. The most astonishing thing about this departure are the number of so-called Christians who simply refuse to reason with the scriptures, and instead appeal to some subjective explanation for the direction in which they are presently traveling. In many instances I have been told, *"If you knew brother so and so, you would understand why he is doing the things he does."* Jesus told us that we are to judge a tree by its fruit, not by its appearance. When a man teaches error, he brands himself as a false teacher. All the sincerity, friendliness, congeniality, or sweetness that might exude

from his person are not to be the determining factors as to whether or not one follows his lead.

Someone has well stated that there are three senses: (1) non sense; (2) common sense; and (3) revealed sense. The Galatians had been *"bewitched (charmed, fascinated) by the non-sense of the Judaizers."*<sup>3</sup> The Galatians were *"foolish"* because they had yielded to the teaching of the false teachers. The Phillips Translation reads, *"You dear idiots...."* Quite emphatic, but right on target. Hendriksen tells us that *"the original indicates an attitude of heart as well as a quality of mind. It refers not to bluntness but to a sinful neglect to use one's mental power to the best advantage."*<sup>4</sup>

*"before whose eyes..."* – Paul had so effectively preached Christ and Him crucified, that it was as if they had seen the crucifixion themselves. The Syriac renders it, *"Christ has been crucified before your eyes as if he had been represented by painting."*<sup>5</sup> The Greek word which has been rendered *"openly set forth"* means properly *"to write before; and then to announce beforehand in writing; or to announce by posting upon a tablet."*<sup>6</sup> In this first argument Paul suggests that they had been told the truth in such vivid and plain speech, that it was rather amazing that they would allow themselves to be drawn away by some *"charmer."*

**3:2 ~ *This only would I learn from you. Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?***

Here is Paul's second question. Paul asked them to reflect upon the past.

*"This only"* – The argument Paul was presenting was actually enough to settle the question once and for all. They had been converted; they had received the Holy Spirit and

the accompanying miraculous gifts (see verse 5). Exactly WHEN did this occur? Was it when they heard the gospel (and obeyed), or when they received the Law of Moses? The doctrine being espoused by the Judaizing teachers was a "*late comer*." The argument of Paul was this: If it is the case that Paul's gospel was lacking, or deficient, then God would not have given them the miraculous capabilities which they had evidently received. But they had received the Spirit upon the hearing of the faith. Hence, Paul's doctrine was, in fact, the truth. If the law of Moses is so important, then why was the Spirit given before they mixed the gospel with this new doctrine? In passing, let us note that "*the hearing of faith*" has reference to their obedience of the faith. The word "*hear*" is often used in the Scriptures to speak of hearing and applying. See Revelation 2:29.

**3:3 ~ "*Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now perfected in the flesh?*"**

The third question contains a rebuke. "*Are ye so foolish?*" Any man who acts in a manner contrary to available evidence is foolish. For example, the Psalmist said, "*the fool hath said in his heart, There is no God*" (Psalms 14:1) The man who affirms that God does not exist does so despite the evidence. The Galatians, by their actions, were playing the part of the fool. The evidence clearly pointed to Paul's preaching and teaching as being authentic and authoritative. The miraculous gifts bestowed upon them should have forever settled the question as to whether it was Paul's doctrine that was false, or that of the Judaizing teachers.

The fourth question is an argument from the greater to the lesser. "*Having begun in the Spirit, are ye now perfected in the flesh?*" The original word for "*perfected*" means "*completed*;

to bring forth to an end; to finish." The argument of the apostle is this: "You began your Christian life under the influences of the Spirit. Do you expect now to finish your course, to carry it to completion, to find the 'perfection' under the influence of the fleshly ordinances of the Mosaic Law?" "In the Spirit...in the flesh' is another way of contrasting Judaism and Christianity, 'the Spirit' being the endowment of all Christians, and 'fleshly descent' being the total basis of Jewish confidence."<sup>7</sup> The problem with the Galatian brethren was that they were "advancing backward," going from that of greater value, to that of the lesser. Albert Barnes wrote:

So many Christians begin their course in a spiritual manner, and end it 'in the flesh' in another sense. They soon conform to the world. They are brought under the influence of worldly appetites and propensities...They build them houses, and they plant vineyards, and collect around them the instruments of music, and the bowl and the wine is in their feasts, and they surrender themselves to the luxuries of living.<sup>8</sup>

**3:4 ~ "Did ye suffer so many things in vain? if it be indeed in vain."**

*"Did ye suffer so many things in vain?"* – This is the fifth question. If their former acceptance of the gospel (without addition of the Mosaic law) was indeed wrong, then the things they suffered were in vain. The suffering here may have reference to the persecutions which Paul and the brethren faced in Antioch of Pisidia, Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe during the first missionary journey. Hendriksen points out that the word "suffered" in the original is neutral. He tells us that "it means no more than to experience. Whether the things which have been experienced were good or bad, favorable or unfavorable, is not indicated by the verb."<sup>9</sup>

3:5 ~ *"He therefore that supplieth to you the Spirit, and worketh miracles among you, doeth he it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?"*

The final question is actually a repeat of that found in verse 2. There is some question as to who the "he" is in this verse. "He that supplied the Spirit," and "he that worketh miracles among you." It is either (1) Paul, or (2) God, and most likely the latter. Paul may have been the agent through whom those things were given, but it is God Who supplies. Either view, however, does not alter the meaning of the text. The "works of the law" refers to the Mosaic law, and the "hearing of faith" to the gospel.

*Abraham Was Blessed Because Of His Faith, verses 6-9.*

3:6 ~ *"Even as Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned unto him for righteousness."*

Paul now turns to Abraham as a "proof text" (Genesis 15:6) in defense of justification by faith and not law. That Abraham was justified by faith is a fact which the Mosaic law clearly taught. But Abraham did not live under the law. It would come some 400 plus years later. It must be the case, therefore, that one does not need to live by the Mosaic law to be justified. Every single Jew on earth is of the physical seed of Abraham. Why in the world would a Jew lay claim to justification through the law, which actually came many years after Abraham died? This being true, why would a Gentile attempt to seek justification through a law that had no bearing whatsoever on Abraham's justification?

An important note in this verse is the fact that "Abraham believed God," the very means by which he obtained favor

with God. It was not simply faith, but obedient faith, which was "*reckoned unto him for righteousness.*" Brother Coffman zeroes in on the absurdity of justification by faith only:

The ridiculous postulations of the 'faith only' advocates to the effect that, since Abraham was justified without obeying the Law of Moses...and without circumcision, therefore he was justified by 'faith only' and without any obedience whatever, is just as illogical as it is ridiculous.<sup>10</sup>

Whenever one reads of Abraham's faith, he should study it in light of James 2:21. Abraham's faith saved him AFTER he was tested, and AFTER he passed the test; not one minute before! See also Genesis 22:1-12.

3:7 ~ "*Know therefore that they that are of faith, the same are sons of Abraham.*"

Having stated the "*doctrine of liberty*" (2:16), and having set forth an example (Abraham), Paul now makes the application. The Jews had great admiration and respect for Abraham. See 2 Chronicles 20:7; Psalms 105:6; Isaiah 41:8; Jeremiah 33:26; Romans 11:1; 2 Corinthians 11:22; Hebrews 2:16. But to be a descendant of the physical seed of Abraham was of no practical value insofar as justification was concerned. Paul wrote, "*We reckon therefore that a man is justified by faith apart from the works of the law. Or is God the God of Jews only? is he not the God of Gentiles also? Yea, of Gentiles also*" (Romans 3:28-29). Paul is using an "*if...then*" argument. IF something is the case, THEN a given conclusion follows. Applied, Paul was saying, "*IF Abraham was justified by faith, THEN it is the case that one can in fact be justified apart from the law. It IS the case that Abraham was*

*justified by faith; therefore it IS the case that one can be justified separate and apart from the law of Moses."*

A second "if...then" argument is included in these verses (6-9). The "IF" clause appears here in verse 7, and the conclusion appears in verse 9. Paul is arguing, *"IF it is the case that those who 'are of faith, the same are the sons of Abraham,' (verse 7), THEN it is the case that those, and those only, who are justified by 'faith are blessed with the faithful Abraham.'"* By inspiration Paul clearly states, *"It IS the case that 'they that are of faith, the same are the sons of Abraham.'"* After a parenthetical statement in which the apostle shows the "gospel" of "justification by faith" was actually preached unto Abraham, the conclusion would follow.

**3:8 ~ *"And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all the nations be blessed."***

*"the scripture, foreseeing..."* – The word "scriptures" refers to the Old Testament, and is personified by the apostle, and represents He by Whom the scriptures were inspired. Looking down the long corridor of time, God clearly set forth His intentions in the Old Testament scriptures that He would justify the Gentiles through faith in Jesus Christ. It was with this purpose in mind that it could be said that God *"preached the gospel beforehand unto Abraham."* The specific words which contained this "good news" was the promise given to Abraham at his call out of the Ur of Chaldees in Genesis 12:1-3, but more specifically in Genesis 22:17-18.

**3:9 ~ *"So then they that are of faith are blessed with the faithful Abraham."***

"So then" points to a conclusion based upon what has gone before. The evidence has been presented; the conclusion is inescapable. The evidence is this: (1) Abraham was justified by faith; (2) the Scriptures foretold just such a system of justification; (3) the promise of Abraham was extended to all nations. This verse, then, sets forth the conclusion, and the case of Abraham has clearly substantiated Paul's defense of the doctrine of liberty.

### **The Deficiency Of The Law In Regard To Justification**

3:10-14

*3:10 ~ "For as many as are of the works of the law are under a curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one who continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law, to do them."*

In order to show the deficiency of the law, Paul seeks first to show that to live under a law system places one under a curse. The law itself plainly states this (Deuteronomy 27:26). If a man seeks to live by the works of the law of Moses (or any law for that matter), depending on that law to deliver him from his guilt after the law is broken, then, upon breaking that law, he will be under a curse. But what is the force of this argument? Simply this. If one breaks the law, he stands as a law breaker and liable to punishment. He is "cursed" in that he must suffer the consequences of his disobedience. The word "curse" means to devote to punishment or destruction. The idea is that all who attempt to secure salvation by the works of the law, must, upon disobedience, be exposed to, and subject to, the penalty of the law. The whole law must be obeyed, or man must be punished. Should he violate ONE aspect of the law, he stands as a "law breaker." He is guilty of breaking the WHOLE of the law. Not that he is specifically charged

with violation of every detail of the law, but that he is then classified as a law breaker. In all matters pertaining to the law, it matters not the integrity of the man. It matters not what good he may have done previous to the infraction. When he commits ONE offense, he is guilty and the penalty must be inflicted. *"The Galatians, by fooling around with circumcision and Jewish festival, had inadvertently obligated themselves, under penalty of God's curse, to keep the whole law, every jot and tittle of it, an achievement which only Jesus Christ accomplished."*<sup>11</sup> Adam Clarke had this most interesting observation:

It is worthy of remark that no printed copy of the Hebrew Bible preserves the word....'all' in Deuteronomy xxvii.26, which answers to the apostle's word 'all' here. St. Jerome says that the Jews suppressed it, lest it should appear that they were bound to perform all things that are written in the book of law.<sup>12</sup>

Essentially the same thing has happened among "*Christian theologians*" who either remove or ignore any reference to works of obedience, lest it "*appear*" that men are obligated to do all that God commands.

**3:11 ~ "*Now that no man is justified by the law before God, is evident: for, The righteous shall live by faith;*"**

In order to show the deficiency of the law to justify, Paul next points his audience back to the Scriptures and the case of Abraham. If the Scriptures be true, then it should be "*evident: for, The righteous shall live by faith.*" The word translated 'evident' properly means something that is visible, or clear to the mind. The quote here is from Habakkuk 2:4. This has always been God's means of

justification. In fact, the situation out of which Habakkuk wrote was remarkably similar to that addressed in this letter. In Habakkuk's case, Israel's great sin was that of trusting in themselves, rather than God. There is no difference between trusting in the law of Moses and trusting in one's self; both are void of faith, and fall under the principle which is addressed in this letter. It is important to note here that, while the law of Moses was given unto the nation of Israel, it was always God's intent to justify all men, even physical Israel, by faith. But Israel missed this and sought to establish a system of righteousness of their own (Romans 10:3).

*"the righteous shall live by faith"* – If we take this statement to be a declaration of the way the child of God is to walk, then it would suggest at least some things relative to the behavioral pattern of the Christian. For one thing, living by faith includes living in harmony with the directions of God's word. *"Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and light unto my path"* (Psa. 119:105). Living by faith means being *"transformed into the image of the Lord from glory to glory"* (2 Cor. 3:18).

**3:12 ~ *"and the law is not of faith; but, He that doeth them shall live in them."***

*"And the law is not of faith"* – That is, it does not require faith to operate as a system of law and order. If one is to live by law, it simply requires unwavering obedience to its precepts. One does not have to have faith to comply to law; he has but to be in submission. Paul's argument seems to be this. *"God has always decreed that the righteous shall live by faith. But one can keep the law, and strive to live by its precepts, while being totally void of any faith in God."* Brother Robert Taylor agreed: *"Mosaic law and gospel faith are not*

### GALATIANS CHAPTER THREE

*the same is the gist of verse 12. There is a definite distinction between the two. Under Judaism man had to live up to all its precepts with absolute perfection."*<sup>13</sup>

*"but, He that doeth them shall live in them" – The "them" seems to be the ordinances of the law. The man that DOES the ordinances of the law, shall live therein. That is, if a man in fact DOES keep the ordinances of the law, then life would be provided unto him because of his strict and perfect compliance to that law. But the simple fact remains that no man has ever been able to keep the ordinances of the law blamelessly. The inescapable conclusion being, that NO MAN can live within the full demands of the law. It was necessary, therefore, that God provide a different system of justification.*

*3:13 ~ "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us; for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree:"*

The law is deficient because it made no provisions for redemption from the curse of the law. The blood of bulls and goats could not take away sin (Hebrews 10:4). Paul set forth precisely the same argument in Romans 5:7 – *"For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: for peradventure for the good man some one would even dare to die."* Yes, someone might dare to die for a good man. But one who broke the law was under a "curse." Where was the Jew who would step forward and pay the penalty for someone now under a curse? Why, there was none, for the simple reason that all were under that curse.

*"redeemed us from the curse of the law" – This simply means that He has rescued us from the consequences of transgressing the law; he has saved us from the punishment*

which our sins deserve. Jesus paid the ransom with His own blood (cf. 1 Cor. 6:20; 7:23; Rev. 5:9; 1 Pet. 1:18-19).

*"having become a curse for us"* – In what sense did Jesus *"become a curse for us"*? Let me suggest at least some things that it does NOT mean:

- (1) It does not mean that, in becoming a curse, His character or work was in any way displeasing to God; God approved of what Jesus did, and clearly communicated that approval. See Matthew 17:5.
- (2) It does not mean that Jesus was in any way *"blame-worthy."* He did no wrong; He was holy, harmless, undefiled, and tempted *"in all points like as we are, yet without sin"* (Heb. 4:15).
- (3) Closely connected with this, Jesus was not guilty of sin in any proper sense of the word. When a man is *"guilty,"* it means that he committed the crime. In turn, the guilty man deserves to be punished.
- (4) It cannot mean that He bore the penalty of the law; there were some things that the guilty would suffer, which our Lord did not suffer. For one thing, there is remorse of conscience which generally accompanies the guilt of sin. Jesus had no such remorse for the simple reason that He was not guilty.
- (5) Finally, let it be noted that Jesus was NOT a sinner, in any sense of the word. There are some who would suggest that Jesus, in becoming a curse for us, actually became a vile sinner; a murderer; etc. Albert Barnes gives an extended quote from Martin Luther, from which I quote only a few lines: *"And this, no doubt, all the prophets did foresee in spirit, that Christ should become the greatest transgressor, murderer, adulterer, thief, rebel, and blasphemer, that ever was or could be in the world. For he being made a*

*sacrifice for the sins of the whole world, is not now an innocent person and without sins; is not now the Son of God, born of the Virgin Mary: but a sinner which hath and carrieth the sin of Paul...of Peter...of David."*<sup>14</sup> Such a doctrine is born of the fertile minds of deluded and misled men who simply fail to understand the nature of the atoning work of our Lord.

In what sense, then, did Jesus "*become a curse for us*"? I think the answer is found in the quote given by Paul: "*Cursed is everyone that hangeth on a tree.*" If we can determine what this means, I think we will thereby establish what is meant by Christ's becoming a curse for us. The passage is found in Deuteronomy 21:23. It refers to one who was hung for a sin worthy of death. The victim was to be buried the same day, not being allowed to hang over night. Such a one was considered a "*curse of God.*" When one was executed for a crime under the Old law, which itself was Divine in its origin and nature, it simply showed that he was the object of Divine displeasure. This being the case, it was required that the body be removed from the tree as quickly as possible, and hidden from the view of those who might pass by. It would appear, therefore, that when these words were applied to Jesus, that our Lord was REGARDED as one accursed. In other words HE WAS TREATED IN HIS DEATH AS IF HE HAD BEEN A CRIMINAL. Had Jesus actually committed the vilest crimes (which He did not), and had He been found guilty of those crimes (which He was not), then the death upon the cross would have been the punishment to which He would have been subjected. He could not have been treated in a more shameful way than that which He was treated. Albert Barnes properly concluded:

And it is this which makes the atonement so wonderful and so glorious. Had he been displeased with him; had the Redeemer been properly an object of his wrath; had he in any sense deserved those sorrows, there would have been no merit in his sufferings; there would have been no atonement. What merit can there be when one suffers only what he deserves? But what made the atonement so wonderful, so glorious, so benevolent; what made it an atonement at all, was, that innocence was treated as if it were guilt; that the most pure, and holy, and benevolent, and lovely being on earth should consent to be treated, and should be treated by God and man, AS IF he were the most vile and ill-deserving. This is the mystery of the atonement; this shows the wonders of the divine benevolence; this is the nature of substituted sorrow; and this lays the foundation for the offer of pardon, and for the hope of eternal salvation.<sup>15</sup>

*3:14 ~ "that upon the Gentiles might come the blessing of Abraham in Christ Jesus; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith."*

Why did Jesus have to suffer for us? What are the results of that suffering? First, upon the Gentiles have come the blessing of Abraham in Christ. The very promise of blessing announced unto Abraham was accomplished through Jesus becoming a curse for us. This would, of necessity, stand opposed to any theory that advocates that Jesus' death upon the cross was not in accord with God's plan; it was according to the "*determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God*" (Acts 2:23). Notice also that Paul places this blessing IN Christ, wherein are all spiritual blessings (Eph. 1:3). The great cleavage of mankind is marked by those who

are in one of two spiritual locations. We are either IN Christ, or OUT of Christ. If outside His spiritual body, there are absolutely no spiritual blessings available.

Second, Jesus suffered *"that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith."* This is precisely where Paul began in 3:1. The inescapable conclusion to which Paul was moving was, that those blessings come, not through the keeping of the law of Moses, but from the system of belief set forth in the Gospel. Crouch points out that:

...the article is in the Greek text in the phrase 'through faith,' so that it should be translated 'through the faith.' 'Through the faith' therefore refers to the Christian system, which is a system in which justification from sin is based upon the obedience of faith. The passage does not teach the popular but false doctrine that Gentiles could receive the Spirit and be saved by a personal subjective experience, separate and apart from hearing, believing and obeying the word of Christ.<sup>16</sup>

### **The Promise Made To Abraham**

3:15-18

*3:15 ~ "Brethren, I speak after the manner of men: Though it be but a man's covenant, yet when it hath been confirmed, no one maketh it void, or addeth thereto."*

In order to defend the doctrine of liberty, Paul next points to the promise made to Abraham, verses 15-18. The object in this section is to show the relationship of the law to the promise given to Abraham, and consequently its relationship to faith as a system of justification. The argument goes something like this. The promise was made to Abraham. It was a covenant between God and Abraham.

In order to show the binding nature of this promise, Paul draws from a simple illustration. If a covenant is made with a man, no one can make it void. Such a promise was made to Abraham, and the law, which came four hundred and thirty years after, does NOT make the promise of none effect. It must be the case, therefore, that since the law does not disannul the promise, that the law was for some purpose OTHER THAN the avenue or means by which the promises would be fulfilled. Or to put it another way, since the promise to Abraham was designed to secure the "promises" unto mankind, then the same thing could NOT be secured by the observance of the law. If so, then there would have been two different systems in operation at the same time. God would not have two ways of justifying men. If He had revealed that justification would come through faith (as promised to Abraham), then it could not be by the observance of the law.

*"a man's covenant"* Here is a simple illustration, but most profound. Once a covenant has been confirmed, no one can make it void. It is to remain in force, both parties being faithful thereto. It cannot be changed, whether by addition or subtraction, unless both parties are so willing that a change be affected.

*3:16 ~ "Now to Abraham were the promises spoken, and to his seed. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ."*

*"Now to Abraham were the promises spoken, and to his seed"*  
- Paul was simply pointing out that the promises of blessing came many years BEFORE the law. Why then, should the Galatians be making such a fuss over the keeping of the law?

*"He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ"* – That Paul's intention was to point out that the singular use of the word *"seed"* somehow proved conclusively that Jesus was indeed the Messiah through Whom all nations of the earth would be blessed, is no doubt the case. Objections have been raised, however, as to exactly how Paul's argument on the singular use of the word *"seed"* proves that God, when making the promise to Abraham, had intended that it refer to Christ. The objections center around the fact that the singular use of the word *"seed"* is often used to denote posterity at large. Barnes points out that in fact *"the plural form of the word is never used except in this place in Galatians."*<sup>17</sup> There must be something in the whole of the argument which would prove conclusively that Jesus, and Jesus alone, was the intended *"seed"* spoken of in Genesis 22:17-18. We present the following points for consideration:

First, it is readily admitted that the promise regarding Abraham's seed cannot refer to all his seed in the literal sense of the word. It was only to be through Isaac, Abraham's son by Sarah, that the intended promises were to be granted. We immediately conclude that the promise in Genesis 22:17-18 was limited to a certain portion or line of Abraham's descendants.

Second, further study of the scriptures forces us to conclude that the promised blessings were to come through Isaac and his descendants. See Genesis 17:19-21; 21:12; 25:11; and Romans 9:7 and Hebrews 11:18. The point to grasp here is that, had God intended for the blessings to come through all of Abraham's seed, then surely some term would have been used in the original promise to express this intention. The word *"seed"* then, as used in Genesis 22:17-18, was intended to refer to Isaac and his descendants, not Ishmael.

Third, but the promised "seed" was narrowed even more so as to include only the descendants of Jacob, the younger of Isaac's sons. Later, it was narrowed to Judah, then to the seed of David, and his son Solomon. Barnes correctly concluded that *"the original intention of the promise was that there should be a limitation, and that limitation was made from age to age, until it terminated in the Messiah."*<sup>18</sup>

Fourth, Paul's argument here is based upon a proper knowledge of (a) these "limitations," and (b) the fact that God, in using the singular "seed," rather than "seeds," intended to point out those limitations. Again, we agree with Albert Barnes' conclusion that *"the promise was indeed at first general, and the term used was of the most general nature; but it was shown from time to time that God intended that it should be applied only to one branch or portion of the family of Abraham; and that limitation was finally so made as to terminate in the Messiah."*<sup>19</sup>

The astonishing thing about Paul's argument is his emphasis upon one, single, solitary word in order to prove a doctrinal point so important as the Messiahship of Jesus. His argument lends great credibility to the case for "verbal inspiration." Were the very words of scripture not selected by the Holy Spirit, there really would be no force in Paul's argument here. His entire case is built around the singular use of the word as it appears in Genesis 22:17-18.

**3:17 ~ "Now this I say: A covenant confirmed beforehand by God, the law, which came four hundred and thirty years after, doth not disannul, so as to make the promise of none effect."**

*"which came four hundred and thirty years after"* - How do we reconcile the difficulty between Paul's statement here,

and that of other passages in both the Old and New Testament? For example, Stephen said, "*God spake on this wise, that his seed should sojourn in a strange land, and that they should bring them into bondage, and treat them ill, four hundred years*" (Acts 7:6). It is generally conceded by reputable scholars that Stephen rounded off the figure from 430 to 400. The greater difficulty lies in the apparent discrepancy between Paul and Moses. In Exodus 12:40 it is said, "*Now the time that the children of Israel dwelt in Egypt was four hundred and thirty years.*" But Paul clearly says that the lapse of 430 years was from the promise given to Abraham until the giving of the law at Mt. Sinai. We can calculate the time period from Jacob's descent into Egypt to the giving of the law as follows:

- (1) We will take the call of Abraham as our beginning point, when the promise was first given. At that point in time Abraham was 75 years old (Gen 12:3-4);
- (2) Twenty five years later, when Abraham was 100 years old, Isaac was born (Genesis 21:5);
- (3) Isaac was 60 when Jacob was born (Gen. 25:26);
- (4) Jacob went into Egypt when he was 130 years old (Gen. 47:9);

The total period of time from the call of Abraham to Jacob's descent into Egypt is 215 years. If Paul's figure is correct, this leaves only 215 years for the total captivity in Egypt. We think the heart of the problem is in the textual reading of Exodus 12:40. A number of references point out that the LXX inserts words so as to include the sojourn of the patriarchs in Canaan before the migration, thus reducing the term of residence in Egypt to about half this period. This particular chronology is used in the Vatican and Alexandrian manuscripts, the Samaritan Pentateuch, Josephus' Antiquities II:15, 2, and other ancient documents.

The 215 years in Egypt is also substantiated by consideration of Levi's genealogy. Levi was approximately 49 years old when he went down into Egypt. According to Exodus 6:16, Levi lived 137 years in all: i.e. about 88 (137-49) years in Egypt. But Amram, the father of Moses and Aaron, married his father Kohath's sister Jochebed, who was therefore as expressly stated in Numbers 26:59, *"the daughter of Levi, whom his mother bare to Levi in Egypt."* Therefore Jochebed must have been born within 88 years after the going down into Egypt and seeing that Moses was 80 years old at the Exodus (Ex. 7:7), if we call 'x' his mother's age when he was born, we have  $88 + 80 + 'x'$  as a maximum for the sojourn in Egypt, which clearly cannot be 430 years. If we take 'x' to be about 47 years old, we shall have the sojourn in Egypt = 215 years, which added to the previous 215, will make the required 430.

*"doth not disannul, so as to make the promise of none effect"* – The argument being that the law, given AFTER the promise, in no way voids or annuls the promise to Abraham. The logical conclusion to which Paul was moving was that, therefore, the law MUST have been for some reason OTHER than the means by which justification would come. The law must have been given for some purpose entirely different from that of the promise. No one can doubt the soundness of Paul's argument.

**3:18 ~ "For if the inheritance is of the law, it is no more of promise: but God hath granted it to Abraham by promise."**

The Jews were arguing that the blessings of justification and salvation were to be in virtue of the observance of the law of Moses. Here Paul simply points out that it can NOT

be by two means. It is either one or the other. But since the inheritance is granted to "*Abraham by promise*," then it stands to reason that it could not have been by the law. In other words, there could not be two ways of obtaining the promise. The inescapable conclusion, again, is that the law must have been given for some purpose other than that of securing the promises.

### The Purpose Of The Law

3:19-24

*3:19 ~ "What then is the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise hath been made; and it was ordained through angels by the hand of a mediator."*

"What then is the law?" – Why was the law given? What purpose does it serve? Why so many injunctions to obey the law? Is the law, then, to be regarded as nothing? Does it serve no purpose? To these questions Paul now turns his attention.

*"it was added"* – The Greek means "to put to; to add, or to place beside." The word is used in Luke 17:5, and translated "increase." In this passage the meaning is not that something had been added to the promise with the view to complete it, which the apostle denies; but that something had been given in addition to the promise, as in Romans 5:20, "*the law came in beside*." The late Guy N. Woods pointed out that it was "*not added to complete, but given independently and additionally. It was the apostle's purpose to show...that the law came along after the promise and was added, not to embellish the promise, but to give man a greater awareness of sin.*"<sup>20</sup> It was "*an additional arrangement on the part of God for great and important purposes.*"<sup>21</sup>

*"because of transgressions"* – The law was given to point out sin. It was NOT to reveal a way of justification, but a means of teaching and informing with regard to the nature of sin. It did this by showing the consequences of sin. As Hendriksen pointed out, *"The law acts as a magnifying glass. That device does not actually increase the number of dirty spots that defile a garment, but makes them stand out more clearly and reveals many more of them than one is able to see with the naked eye."*<sup>22</sup> Sin is transgression of the law (1 John 3:4). When one breaks the law, he must suffer the penalty of the law. Hence, the law was designed to bring about a recognition of sin, with its consequences. It did this by...

- (1) Showing men what God required of them. Without that communication, men could not come to understand their obligation toward the Creator.
- (2) Showing man the nature and extent of sin; by showing man how far we have departed from the law.
- (3) Showing the just penalty of sin, thereby revealing the true nature of sin.
- (4) Producing conviction of sin, so as to impress upon our minds how bitter transgression is.
- (5) Showing its inability to justify (see notes on 2:15-18).

In short, the law was designed to show men their duty and remind them of their guilt.

*"till the seed should come"* – There is a definite time limit on the binding nature of the law. When the seed came, the law would no longer be needed. It would have accomplished its purpose, and could thus be taken out of the way. There was nothing wrong with the law insofar as its intended purpose was concerned. But the one thing that

the law could not do was offer pardon. It could point out sin, but it could not remove that sin.

*"and it was ordained through angels"* – The word for ordained usually means to arrange; to dispose in order; and it is commonly used with reference to the marshaling of an army. The idea seems to be that the law was prescribed, ordered, and arranged by the instrumentality of angels. If one will study Deuteronomy 33:2 and Psalms 68:17, along with Hebrews 2:2, I think he will see this to be the case.

*"by the hand of a mediator"* – It was under the direction or control of this *"mediator."* Exactly WHO this *"mediator"* is will affect the interpretation of the next verse. A mediator is *"one who intervenes between two parties, either as an interpreter or 'internunciarius, or as an intercessor or reconciler."*<sup>23</sup> In other passages in the New Testament it refers to Christ (cf 1 Tim. 2:5; Heb 8:6; 9:15; and 12:24). But the *"mediator"* referred to here was, without doubt, Moses. Moses himself declared, *"I stood between Jehovah and you at that time to show you the word of Jehovah: for ye were afraid because of the fire, and went not up into the mount"* (Deut. 5:5). Oran Rhodes points out that,

...this law was ordained by angels, so, unlike the promise, it had not come directly from God to the people. The service of angels is not apparent from a study of Exodus, but this passage coupled with Hebrews 2:2 shows clearly the Scriptural idea. In addition, the law was not given directly but through a mediator, Moses (Deut. 5:5). Paul set forth the idea that Moses' being a mediator shows the temporal nature of the law, because a mediator, being mortal, will pass away; while God is immutable and is eternal. Even in the manner of communication of the law is seen a

confirmation that salvation does not come by the law, but by the promise.<sup>24</sup>

The force of Paul's argument was illustrated by Hendriksen: *"When a ruler...wishes to communicate a message to his people, there are all kinds of indirect avenues by means of which he is able to do this, but when the message is of supreme importance, he will unburden his very heart by addressing his people directly, today by means of radio or television."*<sup>25</sup>

**3:20 ~ "Now a mediator is not a mediator of one; but God is one."**

This verse is, without doubt, one of the most difficult in the letter. The difficulty does not lie so much in what is specifically said, but in its connection to the context of Paul's argument, and the application thereof. Burton Coffman refused to give an opinion, stating, *"The full or even approximate meaning of it is unknown; and as proof of that, it must be pointed out that Huxtable said there are literally hundreds of interpretations... It only remains to be added that this writer has never seen an interpretation of it that is wholly satisfactory."*<sup>26</sup>

The facts before us are these:

- (1) A mediator does not mediate only one party.
- (2) The very fact that such a one is recognized as a "mediator" implies two parties.
- (3) God is one; one in nature, purpose, etc.

The question that remains is, "What meaneth the scripture?" Keep in mind that it was Paul's purpose in chapters 3 and 4 to show the temporal nature of the law, while at the same time upholding the superior nature of

the promise vouchsafed to Abraham. Paul may very well have anticipated an argument in which it is claimed that the very presence of a "mediator," as in the case of the law, and its absence, as in the case of the promise, actually argues for the superiority of the law over the promise. The very presence of the mediator (Moses) argued that the old covenant, being a contract between God and Israel, was actually dependent upon both parties fulfilling their part of the covenant. Of course, God remained faithful. But Israel failed miserably in fulfilling their responsibility. The result was that the covenant was eventually broken, and the kingdom was given to true Israel. The promise, on the other hand, could not, or would not, be annulled due to the unfaithfulness on the part of one of the parties. God would remain faithful in carrying out the promise to all men. As brother Woods stated, *"While we may fail to appropriate the blessings of the gospel, the gospel is not dependent on us; it results from an irrevocable decree of deity and it will continue to be available to the end of the age, whether obeyed or not."*<sup>27</sup> Again, from Oran Rhodes:

Paul here was speaking of Moses as the mediator of the law to all Israel, the idea being either to reconcile or to bear some message from the one to the other. On the other hand, God made no use of a mediator in giving the promise, for he is not only the author but also the one who fulfills it.<sup>28</sup>

When God gave the law, Moses was used as a link between God and the people. The intermediary (Moses) lacked independent authority. But when God gave the promise to Abraham (and through him to all men, both Jew and Gentile), He did so on His own sovereignty, directly, and personally. It becomes clear, therefore, that the promise is

far superior to the law because God represented Himself, rather than going through a mediator.

*3:21 ~ "Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid: for if there had been a law given which could make alive, verily righteousness would have been of the law."*

*"Is the law then against the promise?"* – Does the law somehow nullify the promise? Does the law oppose the promise, or mitigate against it? *"God forbid."* The design of the law was NOT to do away with the promise.

*"if... a law given...could make alive"* – The big word here is IF. Paul does not suggest that such was even remotely possible. He is setting forth a conditional statement. If it were the case that a law could provide righteousness, then it would follow that righteousness would come through law, and not through promise. Such is the implied conclusion. The problem lies in the fact that law simply cannot justify. Let us consider the law of Moses, for example. No greater law has ever been given to man, with the exception of the law of Christ. So far as a social and civil law is concerned, there never has been, nor will there ever be a law like it. If ever a law existed which could justify, surely this one was it. *"If men could not be justified by a law so pure, and equal, and just; so reasonable in all its requirements and so perfect, how could they expect to be justified by conformity to any inferior or less perfect rule of life?"*<sup>29</sup>

*3:22 ~ "But the scriptures shut up all things under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe."*

*"But the scriptures shut up all things under sin"* – The law declared all men to be sinners, regardless of rank or

character. It was obvious that they could not be justified by that law which declared them sinners anymore than the law of the land will acquit a murderer and pronounce him innocent, at the same time that it holds him to be guilty. Such is simply the nature of law.

*"That the promise by faith in Jesus Christ...."* – The proper rendering of this passage is that of the King James Version which reads *"the promise by faith of Jesus Christ."* Of course, the *"faith of Jesus Christ"* is the revealed gospel system of salvation. Keep in mind that in this chapter the apostle was drawing a contrast between the law and the gospel, or justification by or through a system of law vs. justification by or through the gospel. The fulfillment of the *"promise"* given to Abraham, that *"all nations of the earth"* be blessed comes through the gospel of Jesus Christ, *"the faith which was once for all delivered unto the saints"* (Jude 3). We agree wholeheartedly with Albert Barnes that the *"faith of Jesus Christ"* in this passage *"denotes the Christian religion, because faith is its distinguishing characteristic."*<sup>30</sup>

*"might be given to them that believe"* – The promise is given to *"them that believe."* Of course belief is more than simple mental assent, it is *"faith working through love"* (Gal. 5:6).

3:23 ~ *"But before faith came, we were kept in ward under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed."*

Paul's use of the word *"faith"* here simply strengthens our argument that the word is being used in contrast to law, and that it stands for *"the faith,"* i.e. the gospel, and not personal belief. Paul is saying, *"before THE faith came,"* or *"before the gospel came,"* we *"were kept in ward under the*

*law.*" This is the same thing as being "*shut up...under sin.*" Albert Barnes points out that,

...the word which in this verse is rendered 'were kept' usually means to guard or watch, as in a castle, or as prisoners are guarded; and though the word should not be pressed too far in the interpretation, yet it implies that there was a rigid scrutiny observed; that the law guarded them; that there was no way of escape; and that they were shut up, as prisoners under sentence of death, to the only hope, which was that of pardon.<sup>31</sup>

*"shut up unto the faith"* – The design of the law of Moses was to lead men to a realization of the inadequacy of law, and their need for a Savior. The law actually imprisoned men in an effort to point them "*unto the faith.*" Coffman properly concluded,

One great purpose of the Law of Moses was to convict Israel of sin and make the nation conscious of their need of salvation from it. As used by them, however, it became a source of greater pride than ever on their part. The Law's holy commandments were nullified, expanded, contradicted and perverted in countless ways...If Israel had properly responded to the Law by realizing and confessing their inability to keep it, and the crying need of their souls for redemption from sin, there would have been a far different attitude on their part when the true Messiah came.<sup>32</sup>

3:24 ~ "*So that the law is become our tutor to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.*"

The word here rendered "schoolmaster" might better have been translated "slave or freedman," or even more literally, "little boy leader." It refers to a household slave whose responsibility it was to accompany a young Jewish lad to school where he might come in contact with the teacher. His primary duty was not that of instruction but that of watching over the child so as to keep him safe and restrain him from any mischief along the way.

*"that we might be justified by faith"* – We cannot stress too strongly Paul's use of the word "faith" throughout this chapter. Once again, the word speaks of the means of justification and consequent fulfillment of the promise of blessing. The design of the law, like that of the "little boy leader" was to lead Israel to the Christ, keeping the nation safe from corruption while at the same time impressing upon them the inability of the law to fulfill the Abrahamic promise.

### **The Faith That Is Now Come**

3:25-29

**3:25 ~ *"But now that faith is come, we are no longer under a tutor."***

The word "faith" is still being used to refer to the gospel, having no reference whatsoever to the faith of the individual. Well meaning, but misinformed and over zealous teachers see in this verse some reference to personal faith of an individual, and improperly conclude that the law of Moses is still used to guide us to the Master. Paul is simply saying that now that "the faith" has arrived upon the scene, there is no longer any need for the law of Moses. It has fulfilled its purpose completely.

---

3:26 ~ *"For ye are all sons of God, through faith, in Christ Jesus."*

We are convinced that *"sons of God"* is synonymous with the recipients of the Abrahamic promise. Paul, in bringing his argument to a conclusion, reminds the audience that we come to have this relationship with God *"through faith,"* not the law. We still affirm that the apostle is using the word *"faith"* in the same context, and with the same meaning, as in previous verses. James Macknight rendered this verse properly, *"For ye are all the sons of God through the faith published by Christ Jesus."*<sup>33</sup>

3:27 ~ *"For as many of you as were baptized into Christ did put on Christ."*

So far as concerns the *"means"* by which these Galatians came to achieve such a status as that of being *"sons of God,"* Paul reminds them, once again, that it was NOT through the law. Rather the access to the Abrahamic promise was through obedience to the gospel, their having been *"baptized into Christ."* We are amazed at the efforts on the part of otherwise reputable scholars to get around what is so plainly asserted in the text. Adam Clarke thought that these Galatians had *"received baptism as a public proof that ye had received Christ as your Lord and Savior."*<sup>34</sup> The problem with this is that the verse says nothing of the sort. Huxtable is another example of the horrible bias which exists among denominational theologians. He wrote that the words *"'as many of you' allows, if it does not suggest, the surmise that the apostle was aware of there being those among the Christians he was writing to who had not been 'baptized into Christ.'"*<sup>35</sup> Hendriksen's comments that baptism is the *"sign and seal in conjunction with that which is signified and sealed,"*

represents the thinking of most of the religious world on the importance and purpose of baptism. With deep humility, and respect for those who are "*reputed to be somewhat*" among theologians, we must point out that all such conclusions are wrong. If men would let the Bible speak for itself, its message would be seen, believed, and obeyed by many more than currently adhering to its teachings.

"*as many of you*" does not suggest that some of them had not been baptized. Paul is concluding this section by showing the availability of the gospel. The present verse is designed to show that the saving gospel is available to all those who have obeyed the gospel by being "*baptized into Christ*." God will not exclude anyone who, in faith, submits and remains faithful to the commands and obligations set forth in the gospel. "*As many of you*" is simply another way of saying, "*Every single one of you*." The following verse (28) is designed to show that the gospel is not limited to race, sex, or social status.

"*baptized into Christ*" - A careful comparison of this verse with Romans 6:1-6 should clear up any misunderstanding as to the purpose and intent of baptism. It is clearly stated in this passage that we are "*baptized into Christ*." Any attempt to say that what the passage actually means is that these Galatians had been baptized because they were already in Christ is not exegesis, but eisegesis. Why not let the passage speak for itself. Paul readily acknowledged that those who had been "*baptized into Christ*" had "*put on Christ*." If words mean anything, then we can conclude that those who had NOT been baptized into Christ, had NOT put on Christ. But if it is the case that a man is saved before his baptism, then it is the case that a man is saved before he has properly "*put on Christ*." Can any believe it?

3:28 ~ *"There can be neither Jew nor Greek, there can be neither bond nor free, there can be no male and female; for ye all are one man in Christ Jesus."*

This verse has been one of the favorite "sugar sticks" of the modernists who seek to catapult the woman into some prominent role of leadership in the Lord's church. Without proper regard for the context of the passage, a number of ill-informed teachers have suggested that there is to be no distinction between the male and female whatsoever. To begin with, we must protest the total disregard for other passages which clearly teach a subordinate role for the Christian woman. Notice especially 1 Timothy 2:12-15, and 1 Corinthians 14:34-35. The notion has long been prevalent in sectarian circles that there are to be no role distinctions within the body of Christ with regard to sex. The recent push for the Equal Rights Amendment, radical feminist groups, and organizations such as NOW (National Organization of Women) have contributed to the false notion that women are NOT to be subordinate to the male in any sense of the word—socially, politically, or religiously. In recent years some within the body of Christ have accepted the claim that Paul, in this passage, abolished sexual differences so that men and women may function in identical capacities in public church activity, even to the point of ordaining women as preachers, elders, and deacons; or allowing them to lead public prayer or wait on the Lord's Table. Brother Rex Turner pointed out the reality of this growing problem with this quote from a prominent church member: *"Times have changed, and the arguments made concerning women in the New Testament do not carry the same force today...There is no reason to perpetuate the silencing of women from speaking in the worship...Why should not Christ's family be leading out in the liberation of women?"*<sup>36</sup> Any position on this scripture which advocates breaking down the

barriers between male and female, so far as their role in the church is concerned, should be rejected on the following grounds:

- (1) It ignores the context of Galatians 3:28. Paul is here dealing with equality in the matter of salvation. All classes of humanity have the same opportunity to inherit the promise. It is poor hermeneutics to read this passage and assume that women can serve in the same capacity as men. Such reasoning is equivalent to reading the law regarding age requirements for voting, and then assuming that since all 18 year olds can vote, regardless of sex, therefore all 18 year olds can serve as President, regardless of sex. One simply does not follow the other. In the case of Scriptural exegesis, any position advocating equality of authority or role in the church does not allow the natural meaning of the passage to come forth.
- (2) Second, it ignores the fact that subordination does not imply or demand inferiority. There is a growing tendency among brethren to contend that a woman is not to be subordinate to a man because she is equal, as per this passage. This misunderstanding was demonstrated a number of years ago by one brother who wrote, *"It is a contradiction in terms to say that men and women are equal, but men are super-ordinate to women. If woman is not inferior to man, then it follows that man is not superior to woman. Woman, then, cannot be subordinate to man, for one can be subordinate only to a superior."* This argument is easily refuted when we consider the equality of God and Christ, but point out that Jesus was Himself subordinate to the Father (Philippians 2:5-8; Hebrews 5:8). So likewise, the

President and Vice President of the United States are equal in worth and value, but who would affirm that both therefore have equal roles?

*3:29 ~ "And if ye are Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, heirs according to promise."*

*"If ye are Christ's, then...."* – Proper relationship to the Christ is proper relationship to Abraham. It is not the physical seed of Abraham who are the recipients of the promise, but those who, through faith and obedience to the gospel, belong to Christ. Paul's argument regarding the true seed of Abraham will extend well into the next chapter.

### Chapter Three Endnotes

- 1 Coffman, page 51.
- 2 McGarvey, J.W., **Thessalonians, Corinthians, Galatians, and Romans** (Cincinnati, OH: The Standard Publishing Company), page 264.
- 3 Taylor, page 48.
- 4 Hendriksen, page 111.
- 5 Barnes, page 327.
- 6 Barnes, page 326.
- 7 Coffman, page 53.
- 8 Barnes, page 329.
- 9 Hendriksen, page 115.
- 10 Coffman, page 54.
- 11 Coffman, page 57.
- 12 Clarke, page 398.
- 13 Coffman, page 50.
- 14 Barnes, page 334-335.
- 15 Barnes, page 336.
- 16 Crouch, page 35.
- 17 Barnes, page 340.
- 18 Barnes, page 342.
- 19 Barnes, page 342.

### **GALATIANS CHAPTER THREE**

---

20 Woods, Guy N., **Questions and Answers**, (Nashville, TN: Gospel Advocate Publishing Company) Volume II, page 176.

21 Barnes, page 344.

22 Hendriksen, page 141.

23 Barnes, page 346.

24 Rhodes, Oran, *What Then Is The Law*, **Studies in Galatians**, Edited by Dub McClish (Denton, TX: Valid Publications, Inc., 1986) page 126.

25 Hendriksen, page 142.

26 Coffman, page 61.

27 Woods, page 176.

28 Rhodes, page 125-126.

29 Barnes, page 350.

30 Barnes, page 351.

31 Barnes, page 351.

32 Coffman, page 63.

33 Macknight, James, **Apostolical Epistles with Commentary, Volume III** (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House) 1969 page 161.

34 Clarke, page 401.

35 Huxtable, page 143.

36 Turner, Rex, **The Place Of Woman In The Will Of God** (Montgomery, AL: Sound Doctrine Publication, January 1984) page 7.

## **Galatians Chapter Four**

**T**he whole of this chapter is taken up with further arguments in defense of the doctrine of liberty, which discussion began in chapter three. It was Paul's intention to prove beyond any shadow of doubt that the Mosaic law could not co-exist with the system of Christianity, and that therefore, Christianity and Judaism were simply not compatible one with the other. In short, it was the Law of Moses that had to go! The immediate connection with chapter three is to be found in the word "*heir*," which is found in 3:29, and 4:1.

In chapter three we studied...

- (1) The past experience of the Galatians, vs. 1-5;
- (2) The case of Abraham, vs. 6-9;
- (3) The deficiency of the law in regard to justification, vs. 10-14;
- (4) The promise made to Abraham, vs. 15-18;
- (5) The purpose of the law, vs. 19-24;
- (6) The faith is now come, vs. 25-29;

To these arguments, Paul now presents four additional points for consideration. He will...

- (1) Compare the law to an under-aged child, vs. 1-7;
- (2) Point out the weak and beggarly nature of the law, vs. 8-11;
- (3) Reflect upon his past relationship with the Galatians, vs. 12-20;

- (4) Use the account of Sarah and Hagar as an allegory to illustrate the point, vs. 21-31.

The defense of the doctrine of liberty was actually established in chapter three, and this chapter is a further elaboration regarding the superiority of the new law over the old law. Paul wanted to drive his point home, and leave the Galatians fully assured in their own mind as to the foolishness of the course upon which they had embarked. Hendriksen observed that there is a "material difference" between the chapters. *"In chapter 3 the argument from experience centered about the gifts which at their conversion the Galatians had received. In chapter 4 it is rather the joy or blessedness that had accompanied the reception of these gifts that is recounted."*<sup>1</sup>

The following homiletical outline comes from Hendriksen. *"Recapitulation (verses 1-11), Reminiscence (verses 12-20), and Reasoning by means of an Allegory (verses 21-31)."*<sup>2</sup>

### **Comparison Of The Law To An Under-Aged Child**

4:1-7

4:1 ~ *"But I say that so long as the heir is a child, he differeth nothing from a bondservant though he is lord of all;"*

Generally speaking, a child that has not yet come of age, even though he may be the intended heir of his father's promise, does not receive the inheritance until the age of responsibility. This is true, even *"though he is lord of all."* The word rendered *"child"* properly means an infant; but in the passage it likely has reference to any minor.

*"The heir" refers to those who are "heirs according to promise" (3:29). It could not have reference to the physical seed of Abraham, as per Paul's argument in the previous chapter. It was never God's intention to provide the "inheritance" (the "promise") to the Jew based solely upon his relationship to Abraham. But the "child" of this verse is, quite obviously, the "heir apparent." We conclude, therefore, that the "child" spoken of here represents, first and foremost, the "faithful Jew" living under the Old Law. But in addition, it includes the Gentiles "that have not the law," and "do the...things of the law....in that they show the work of the law written in their hearts" (Romans 2:14-15). Hebrews 11 sets forth a number of those "faithful" patriarchs, all of which lived and walked "by faith."*

*"he differeth nothing from a bondservant" – So long as a child is a minor he does not have control of that property which would someday be his through inheritance.*

*"though he be lord of all" – Even though the child is potentially the "lord" of the house, so long as he is a minor he does not have any advantage over a common bondservant. The idea is that the condition of the Jews BEFORE the coming of the Messiah was inferior, much in the same way as the heir is to his father before coming of age and receiving the inheritance. The Jews were indeed the heirs; but they were in a condition of servitude, comparatively speaking, and could be made free only upon the arrival of the gospel dispensation. It must be kept in mind that the "Jew" under consideration is "not a Jew who is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh: but he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God" (Romans 2:28-29).*

**4:2 ~ “but is under guardians and stewards until the day appointed of the father.”**

“Under guardians and stewards” – Both words are suggestive of one who manages the house, i.e. an overseer. The child is under a guardian, so to speak, until the time of his declaration of manhood. It is important to note that the time when the son shall inherit the father’s property must be fixed by the father himself, either while he is living, or through his will in the case of death. The son does not have a right to claim the property on his own. The word translated “guardian,” so far as it is used here, refers to one who had the responsibility of caring for a child, accompanying him to school, etc. The word “governor” refers to a “house-manager,” an overseer, or steward. It “refers to one who actually had authority over the slaves or servants of a family, to assign them their tasks and portions.”<sup>3</sup> The “heir” has no right to claim the inheritance as long as he is a child. The application is clear: The heir [the faithful Jew] has no right to claim the inheritance [the promise of blessing through Abraham] as long as he is a child [as long as the law of Moses was in effect and serving as a “little boy leader”]. It is important to keep this verse in the context with the closing verses of chapter three. There it was plainly stated that the law is a “little boy leader” or our “schoolmaster.” This fact implies that as long as the law of Moses existed, the “heir” had not yet reached the age of maturity, and consequently he had not yet received the promise.

“The day appointed of the father” is equivalent to the “fulness of time” in verse 4. Again the lesson is quite clear. It was not until the Gospel came that the faithful Jew could ever hope to receive the promise. All of this was according to

God's plan. All of a sudden it dawned upon this student that the statement in Hebrews 11:40 is equivalent to the point being made here. The faithful Jew could not receive the inheritance UNTIL the faith came, i.e. until the Gospel came. That being the case, those faithful saints of old could NOT *"be made perfect"* (Heb. 11:40) apart from *"us,"* that is, the coming of the Gospel.

*4:3 ~ "So we also, when we were children, were held in bondage under the rudiments of the world:"*

*"So we also..."* - Paul makes a comparison here. Just as the *"heir apparent"* was subject to guardians and stewards, so likewise the Jew was kept in *"bondage"* under the *"rudiments"* of the world. The law of Moses was considered *"bondage"* because any attempt to live under the strict rules and regulations of the Mosaic law and to depend upon that Law for salvation and justification must have been frustrating, at best. A casual perusal of the book of Leviticus would make it abundantly clear that the Old Law was, indeed, a type of slavery. Once a Jew had sinned, there was no provision for cleansing the conscience of the sinner from the guilt of his sin. The Law was unable to provide pardon for its adherents. In this sense it was no better than the heathen religions.

*"Under the rudiments of the world..."* - The word rendered *"rudiments"* (ASV) or *"elements"* (KJV), means *"a row or series; a little step; a pin or peg, as the gnomen [sic] of a dial; and then any thing elementary, as a sound, a letter."*<sup>4</sup> The word also included *"The letters of the alphabet, i.e., elementary education in any branch of knowledge."*<sup>5</sup> In the context, the word is used to refer to the elementary teachings, by means of which both Jew and Gentile had, in their own way,

sought to achieve salvation. In the case of the Jew, it was the Law of Moses, encumbered with tradition. As the leaders added their own multitudinous rules and regulations to the Law, that which was intended to lead them to the Messiah became a tyrant. The same was true regarding the Gentile. They sought to achieve redemption by means of the multitude of their 'gods,' and the ordinances and rituals associated therewith. Whether Jew or Gentile, both were locked up under sin, unable to find salvation in these "rudiments" of the world, be it the Mosaic Law or some other system of human wisdom.

**4:4 ~ "but when the fulness of the time came, God sent forth his Son, born of a woman, born under the law,"**

*"God sent forth his Son..." - "This clause teaches: (1) the deity of the Son of God, (2) 'the going forth of the Son from a place where he was before, and (3) His being invested with divine authority.'"*<sup>6</sup> Hence, it most certainly implies that the Son of God had an existence before his incarnation. See John 16:28.

*"born of a woman" - Huxtable believed a better rendering would be, "made to be of a woman," because "such a translation would imply a previous state of existence, whereas born does not."*<sup>7</sup> The use of these words imply that Jesus most certainly could have entered into this world in some other fashion than that of natural birth. Certainly God was not limited to physical birth through the virgin Mary so far as His power was concerned. It suggests, therefore, that we are looking at the choice which Deity selected with regard to the mode of His entrance. It remains, therefore, as to WHY this mode was selected. Since the promise was that Abraham's "seed" would be the source of blessings, then natural birth is quite understandable. But behind even

that promise to Abraham was the desire of the Godhead that Deity should experience the essence of humanity. It was God's plan that our Lord should "*be tempted in all points like as we are*" (Hebrews 4:15). There is, then, in the verse now before us, a clear reference to the virgin birth of our Lord. Brother Coffman wrote,

Since the father of Jesus Christ is clearly set forth as the heavenly Father, pray tell how the Lord could have been born, or entered our earth life, in any other way, except by a virgin birth? [T]here is no way that these words could have been spoken by the blessed apostle unless he truly believed it and so arranged his teaching here as to bear an eloquent witness of it.<sup>8</sup>

Astonishing in this verse is Paul's reference to both the Divine and human nature of our Lord. He was Divine in that He was "*sent forth*" by the Father. He was human, in that he was "*born of woman.*" This dual nature of necessity must have been the case. Being Divine, He could offer Himself as the ultimate sacrifice, so as to deliver us out of the power of darkness into His marvelous light (Col. 1:12-13). Being human, while at the same time being sinless, He could show us how to live. Hendriksen pointed out the necessity of our Lord being human, "*since it was man who sinned it is also man who must bear the penalty for sin and render his life in perfect obedience.*"<sup>9</sup> This our Lord did by keeping the Law perfectly, and paying the penalty for man the sinner.

"*fulness of the time*" – This is the time spoken of by the prophets, and the precise time which the Father had appointed, when everything was ready for the coming of the Messiah. The question often arises, "*Why did God allow*

*4000 years to pass, from the time that sin entered into the world, until the Messiah finally came?"* In answer, it would seem that God's delay in bringing redemption was designed and fitted to provide the best evidence for proper identification and authentication of the promised Messiah. It was important that a sufficient amount of time lapse between any prophecy, and its fulfillment, so as to preclude chance or device of men. But in addition to this, it was important that the world come to understand its **need** for a Savior. This was accomplished by God's delay in order for man to learn that he simply could not save himself. If the culture and wisdom of Greece and Rome could not lift man out of sin and sorrow, then undoubtedly there was no human scheme by which man could be saved. Finally, when Jesus came forth, the world was at peace, and communication between different parts of the world was greater than at any period prior to His advent. The Jews were scattered throughout the known world, and with them the Sacred Scriptures, telling of the coming Messiah and His kingdom. The world had a common language. Travel was not only allowed, but encouraged. The Roman system of roads provided the means for rapid communication and spread of the gospel throughout the known world. It was indeed, the fullness of time.

*"Born under the law..."* - Jesus was born under, and lived under, or in submission to, the Mosaic law. *"He took his place under the law that he might accomplish an important purpose for those who were under it. He made himself subject to it that he might become one of them, and secure their redemption."*<sup>10</sup> The specific purpose for His having lived under the law was that he might *"redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons."*

4:5 ~ *"that he might redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons."*

*"them that were under the law"* – Those *"under the law"* would be the faithful Jew, the *"heir."* The *"inheritance"* is redemption. An added blessing is that we *"receive the adoption of sons."*

This verse is akin to 3:13 where Paul pointed out that *"Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us."* In both verses it is said that we were *"redeemed."* The benefit of being redeemed is that *"we might receive the adoption of sons."* Hence, we were delivered from the greatest evil, and crowned with the greatest blessing. *"For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might become rich"* (2 Cor. 8:9). We are rich because we have been adopted into God's family. The true extent of this blessing may never be known. Hendriksen agreed, and pointed out,

With respect to this adoption it is rather useless to look for human analogies, for it surpasses anything that takes place on earth. It bestows upon its recipients not only a new name, a new legal standing, and a new family-relationship, but also a new image, the image of Christ (Rom. 8:29). Earthly parents may love an adopted child ever so much. Nevertheless, they are, to a certain extent, unable to impart their spirit to that child; but when God adopts, he imparts to us the Spirit of his Son.<sup>11</sup>

4:6 ~ *"And because ye are sons, God sent forth the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father."*

*"And because ye are sons" - What a marvelous blessing is ours in knowing that we are sons of God. "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called children of God; and such we are. For this cause the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not" (1 John 3:1). Look closer at this wonderful truth. Who is it that has received sonship? Galatians! Weak, foolish, erring, Galatians. Paul held out hope for this rag-tag band of babes in Christ.*

*"God sent forth the Spirit of his Son into our hearts..." - Is this "Spirit" the Holy Spirit, as suggested by the capitalization of the word in the ASV? And if the "Holy Spirit," to what extent, and in what measure, do we receive the Holy Spirit into our hearts? We note: (1) It is *because* we are "sons" that this "Spirit" is sent forth; (2) It is *God* Who sends forth this "Spirit"; (3) This "Spirit" is sent *"into our hearts."* There are varying opinions as to the precise meaning of Paul's words. There are those who conclude that this passage is equivalent to the promise of the *"gift of the Holy Spirit"* in Acts 2:38. So says Coffman, that *"it coincides with the promise of the apostle Peter (Acts 2:38) that the reception of the Holy Spirit is to be expected after faith, repentance, and baptism into the name of Christ, and as a promise to be fulfilled subsequently to such faith and obedience....That is why Paul referred to the same gift as 'the Holy Spirit of promise' (Eph. 1:13)."*<sup>12</sup> Those who hold to the literal, personal indwelling of the Holy Spirit believe this passage lends support to their position.*

Second, there is the argument that the *"Spirit"* here has reference to the miraculous endowment bestowed upon the first century church, and these Galatian Christians, through the laying on of the Apostles' hands. While it is

said in 3:2 that they "*Received ye the Spirit,*" here is it said that "*God sent forth the Spirit.*" Both refer, in our opinion, to the reception of the miraculous gifts. The reference in 3:2, when studied in light of 3:5 is, without doubt, the reception of the miraculous gift of the Holy Spirit. Why then does it seem so unreasonable to assume that Paul is speaking of the same thing here? The late Franklin Camp held this position. For the benefit of our readers we provide this lengthy quote from his comments on this passage:

The contrast between the law and the gospel is made in Galatians 4:5. The contrast between the bondage of the law and the privilege of the gospel is summed up in Galatians 4:7 in the words of "servant" and "son." Question: From whom did you receive the Spirit—from Paul or the Judaizing teachers? Answer: "He therefore that ministereth [supplieth, ASV] to you the Spirit, and worketh miracles among you, doeth he it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?" Question: Who confirmed his teaching by imparting miraculous gifts and working miracles—Paul or the Judaizing teaches? Answer: "And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts." Question: Why did God give you miraculous gifts by me (Paul)? Answer: "Because you are sons of God." When one puts Galatians 3:2, 3:5, and 4:6 together there is no difficulty. The statement in Galatians 4:6 is the answer to the questions that Paul had raised in Galatians 3:2. The statement in 4:6 is a further argument that develops from the previous chapter. Let us trace the argument backward instead of forward: (1) The Galatians are sons. (2) The Judaizing teachers were denying that the Galatians were sons of God. (3) Proof that they are sons of God: The Galatians had

received miraculous gifts. (4) From whom did the Galatians receive miraculous gifts? Answer: Paul (Galatians 3:5). (5) Since the Galatians had received the Spirit from Paul, Paul was an apostle of Christ as he claimed in Galatians 1:1. (6) Since Paul had proved his apostleship, the gospel he preached to the Galatians was a genuine gospel (Galatians 1:13). (7) The gospel of the Judaizing teachers was another gospel, which was not the gospel of Christ (Galatians 1:6). This is the very heart of the Galatian letter. Who are the sons of God, Paul's converts by the gospel, who had received miraculous endowments through his hands as proof of his apostleship and the genuineness of the gospel he preached or the converts of the Judaizers with their circumcision and the law? The statements about the Spirit in 3:2, 3:5 and 4:6 are in support of Paul's apostleship and the gospel he preached, thus showing that the Galatians were sons of God and heirs of the promise to Abraham (Gal. 3:26-29). The miraculous operation of the Spirit in an apostle, and the imparting of spiritual gifts, are the very foundation of establishing their apostleship. This is plain to any Bible student. Now as Paul was proving these very points in the book of Galatians, it should be evident that only a miraculous reference to the Spirit could establish this. As already mentioned, a non-miraculous indwelling could have been used as well by the false teachers as by Paul.<sup>13</sup>

*"crying, Abba, Father..."* - Who is it that does the *"crying"*? The subject under consideration in the chapter is the *"child"* that has arrived at the *"fulness of time"* and has thus received the inheritance, i.e. *"redemption."* Having received the inheritance, the *"redemption,"* we at one and the same time

receive "*adoption of sons*" by the Father. The only conclusion we can come to is that the ones who cry "Abba, Father" are those who have thus received this "*adoption of sons....*"

In an effort to help our readers get a "*handle*" on the passage, please permit us to re-arrange the sentence thusly: "*And because ye are sons crying 'Abba, Father,' God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts.*" The inheritance did not come through the law! That law was nothing more than a "*little boy leader*" to get those Jews TO the teacher. But now that the teacher has come, and that "*in the fulness of time,*" those who are the heirs, though at one time nothing more than "*bondservants,*" have now received that inheritance. We have received the "*adoption of sons,*" and as a consequence we have the blessed privilege of calling God our "*Father,*" and that in a most endearing way! It is because these Galatian brethren had embraced the gospel that God thus "*sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts.*" i.e. provided them with the miraculous gifts to prove to those who listened to their message that they WERE the "*sons of God,*" recipients of the Spirit, as provided, preached and promoted by a genuine apostle. We are open for suggestions and comments on our interpretation of this most difficult verse.

"*Abba, Father...*" – The term "Abba" is a most endearing term. Barnes had this note: "*It is said in the Babylonian Gemara, a Jewish work, that it was not permitted slaves to use the title of 'Abba' in addressing the master of the family to which they belonged. If so, then the language which Christians are here represented as using is the language of freemen, and denotes that they are not under the servitude of sin.*"<sup>14</sup> And while we are privileged to call upon our Father in a most personal way, we are appalled that some would take this passage

and go so far as to suggest that we can address our heavenly Father as *"daddy."* We agree with Coffman that *"it is ridiculous to equate this word with the English word 'Daddy,' which in current usage has lost a lot of the reverential respect which pertained to the Aramaic word, 'Abba.'"*<sup>15</sup> A more favorable term when addressing the Almighty God, and which expresses the same close relationship while at the same time showing respect, is that which Jesus instructed us to use, namely *"Father"* (Matthew 6:9). We will leave this point with a quote from Hendriksen:

By means of this expression of filial trust and closeness to the Father believers echoed the words of their Lord, spoken at a time when, in order to obtain this closeness of fellowship for us, he himself was being driven into isolation, was losing this very sense of nearness to his Father. It was in Gethsemane that Jesus, in deep anguish, said, 'Abba,' which by the evangelist Mark is similarly rendered into the Greek equivalent for 'Father' (Mark 14:36).<sup>16</sup>

***4:7 ~ "So that thou art no longer a bondservant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir through God."***

There is some conclusion being drawn. The Spirit was given to them *"so that"* something might attain. That something was the realization that each one of them was *"no longer a bondservant, but a son."* If taught by Paul, and if Paul's apostleship was genuine, as attested by the imparting of spiritual gifts, then they could know, without doubt, that they were sons of God. Otherwise, they could NOT verify the genuineness of their teacher AND/OR their relationship with God. Lacking also would be the confidence that they were heirs through God.

It is interesting to note that Paul changes his form of address here. Rather than speaking of the Galatians as a group, he now uses the singular word "you," or "thou." Each and every individual to whom Paul was writing (and by implication each Christian living today) enjoyed the blessing of sonship.

*"No longer a bondservant, but a son" – Whether it be the Law of Moses, or some humanly devised system of religion, those who submit thereto are actually "bondservants" to that system. Those who have obeyed the Lord are born into the family of God, and enjoy all of the privileges and blessings attached thereto, not the least of which is sonship. It should also be noted that there is in these verses (Gal 4:1-4) the implication of spiritual maturity under the dispensation of Christ. The dawning of Christianity and the spread of the gospel has brought light to a world in darkness. Paul wrote, "but hath now been manifested by the appearing of our Saviour Christ Jesus, who abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel" (2 Tim. 1:10). As Coffman noted, "The world, at least that portion of it which accepts Christianity, has come of age in Christ. The idols, liturgical externals, pageantry, regalia and all other visible external spectacularism of pagan worship are not merely unnecessary, but destructive of genuine worship and service of Christ."<sup>17</sup> Indeed, "Every valley has been raised, every mountain and hill made low, the crooked turns have been straightened, and all rough places have been made smooth. There are no longer any obstructions. Grace has removed them all."<sup>18</sup>*

*"And if a son, then an heir" – The Abrahamic promise shines so brightly throughout this section, and it is that promise which the children of God shall inherit. As is always the case, intended blessings from the hand of our Eternal Father*

are conditional. IF someone is a son, then and only then, is he an heir.

### **Point Out The Weak And Beggarly Nature Of The Law**

4:8-11

*4:8 ~ "Howbeit at that time, not knowing God, ye were in bondage to them that by nature are no gods:"*

Having thus passed out of immaturity into maturity, out of darkness into light, why would they want to return to their old ways? Look at what they left behind.

*"Howbeit at that time"* suggests that Paul is speaking of those Galatians who had a heathen background as opposed to those who were Jews. If the Jew, living under the Mosaic Law, was in bondage, how much more those who did not *"know God."* How absurd it would be, then, to go back to a system which would again place them in servitude to that which could not provide justification and salvation. The word *"bondage"* adequately describes the subjection of the pre-Christian pagan world to the devices and practices of idolatrous priests.

*"not knowing God...in bondage"* - Ignorance keeps one in bondage. Knowledge sets us free (cf. John 8:32-34). This is true in any walk of life. The higher degree of one's knowledge and education, the greater are the opportunities.

*"to them that by nature are no gods"* - Idols have no power. They are like scarecrows in a cucumber patch. Yet, the servitude of those who bowed down to them was real nevertheless. It demanded their time, limited their thinking,

robbed them of their wealth and property, and kept them separated from the God of heaven. Why in the world would anyone want to give up the only system that could provide salvation, and go back to such a rigorous and useless system resembling those seen in the heathen world?

*4:9 ~ "but now that ye have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, how turn ye back again to the weak and beggarly rudiments, whereunto ye desire to be in bondage over again?"*

"Now that ye have come to know God" – Paul had introduced them to the only true and living God. The word "know" is more than a simple factual knowledge of the Almighty. It is knowledge that has been accepted and applied.

"to be known by God" – Coffman quotes Leon Morris, "*The really important thing is not that we know God, but that he knows us.*"<sup>19</sup> It is one thing to simply "know" God. It is quite a different thing to be "known by God." Suppose there was a "braggart" in the community who laid claim to knowing the President of the United States. Skeptics might ridicule the man for his exaggerated claims and proliferate name-dropping. But let the President of the United States make a visit to our "braggart," claiming him as a friend and close associate, and the picture is entirely different.

"How turn ye back again?" – "How is it that you could even entertain the idea of returning to your former manner of life?" Barnes points out that "*the question implies surprise and indignation that they should do it.*"<sup>20</sup> One can almost sense the emotion of the apostle at this point. Hendriksen saw this and wrote, "*There is thunder in the sky, and the lightning flashes again, as it had done in 1:6-10 and 3:1ff.*"<sup>21</sup>

The *"weak and beggarly rudiments"* are the rites and ceremonies of the Mosaic law. They are *"weak"* in that they had not the power to save the soul. Hendriksen noted, *"Luther, commenting on this verse and applying the lesson to his own day, tells us that he had known monks who zealously labored to please God for salvation, but the more they labored the more impatient, miserable, uncertain, and fearful they became."*<sup>22</sup> They were *"beggarly"* because they could not impart the true riches available through Christ. As Coffman noted, *"They were on the verge of becoming entangled again with observing the regulations, Sabbaths, etc."*<sup>23</sup> Their submission to the Judaizing teachers was not so much a return to idolatry, as it was a turning aside to an imperfect and rudimentary religion. Perhaps one of the great mysteries of all time is how anyone can come to experience the glorious life of a Christian and then turn his back on it and return to his former manner of life. Such people are, as Hendriksen pointed out, *"Like Aesop's dog who let go of the meat to snatch at the shadow in the water...The law is weak and poor, the sinner is weak and poor: two feeble beggars trying to help each other. They cannot do it. They only wear each other out. But through Christ a weak and poor sinner is revived and enriched unto eternal life."*<sup>24</sup>

*"Whereunto ye desire"* - The primary reason for the great division in Christendom is that of selfish *"desire"* on the part of the multitudes who do not *"like"* what God has to offer. It is the *"desire"* for instrumental music, above any other defense which men will offer, that explains the wide scale acceptance of it among religious denominations. *"I like it"* are the three words which have opened the doors for a great number of innovations to be introduced into the worship of the Almighty. So many things have been introduced into worship of our God that one wonders if

any one is concerned anymore as to whether or not God likes it!

*"to be in bondage over again?"* – Any violation of the law held the law breaker in bondage because no effort on his part could save him from the consequences of breaking that law. *"It is in the nature of law to condemn and it is not in the nature of the law to justify (Gal. 3:10-12). Any appeal to a legal law for justification is futile."*<sup>25</sup>

**4:10 ~ "Ye observe days, and months, and seasons, and years."**

The *"days, and months, and seasons, and years"* are no doubt, in reference to the Jewish holy days, some of which were nothing more than traditional laws set forth by the religious leaders of Israel. Huxtable noted that the words used here were used by Josephus for the keeping of sabbath days. When compared with Colossians 2:16 there cannot be any doubt that the sin of the Galatians was simply that of keeping, after the Jewish manner, the sabbaths, festivals and special days of the Old Covenant, which if persisted in, would mean their total loss to Christianity. We agree with Coffman that *"the whole thesis of this epistle is that Judaism and Christianity do not mix."*<sup>26</sup> In fact, Christianity does not mix with any philosophy or any religious system devised by men.

**4:11 ~ "I am afraid of you, lest by any means I have bestowed labor upon you in vain."**

Paul's fear for these brethren was a deep concern for the state of their souls. Any continuation in the direction in which they were presently traveling could only end in

disaster. It was not so much a matter of his being afraid OF them as it was being afraid FOR them.

### **Reflect Upon His Past Relationship With The Galatians**

4:12-20

**4:12 ~ "I beseech you, brethren, become as I am, for I also am become as ye are. Ye did me no wrong:"**

These verses contain Paul's personal appeal. We agree with Albert Barnes that *"there is a great deal of brevity in this passage, and no little obscurity."*<sup>27</sup> At the same time, this passage is one of the most gripping of any of Paul's writings. Paul agonizes because he cannot endure the thought of losing these brethren. That Paul's plea is earnest appears from his use of the word "brethren." I will not bore our readers with the numerous renderings of the verse, but present as best I can the meaning of the passage. That verses 12-20 contain a personal appeal to the Galatians is, without doubt, the gist of the passage. In an effort to convince the Galatians that they must not abandon the faith, he now appeals to himself as an example. He simply says, "become as I am." Paul's life manifested a rejection of all of those things pertaining to the law of Moses. To the Philippians he wrote, *"though I myself might have confidence even in the flesh: if any other man thinketh to have confidence in the flesh, I yet more: circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; as touching zeal, persecuting the church; as touching the righteousness which is in the law, found blameless. Howbeit what things were gain to me, these have I counted loss for Christ. Yea verily, and I count all things to be loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but refuse, that I may gain Christ."* (Phil. 3:4-7).

*"Ye did me no wrong"* – It would appear that the actions of the Galatians was not a personal offense to the apostle; he did not consider himself personally injured. Brother Denman paraphrases, *"The things that I am writing to you are not the results of vengeance because of unkindness shown to me. Just the opposite is true."*<sup>28</sup> When men reject the truth it is not an attack upon the one who brings the message, but it is a rejection of the message itself, and He Who speaks from heaven. *"Therefore he that rejecteth, rejecteth not man, but God, who giveth his Holy Spirit unto you"* (1 Thess. 4:8).

**4:13 ~ *"but ye know that because of an infirmity of the flesh I preached the gospel unto you the first time:"***

Exactly what this *"infirmity of the flesh"* is, we cannot say with any degree of certainty. It is useless, therefore, to conjecture. The words *"first time"* have led some scholars to conclude that Paul had in fact made two missionary journeys to the Galatians before writing this letter. But such a conclusion is not warranted when we consider the fact that Paul made two visits to every city in South Galatia (with the exception of Derbe) during his first missionary journey.

J.W. McGarvey summarized Paul's argument thusly:

Though I have spoken severely to you, it is for no personal reasons. Ye have done me no wrong. On the contrary, your actions have been very gracious, for you will remember (and here the apostle refers to facts that are nowhere recorded, but which we presume to run thus:) that my journeying was providentially delayed as I was passing through your land, by my sickness; and so it came about that I preached the gospel unto you; and though my sickness was of so revolting a nature that ye might well have yielded to the

temptations to ridicule or despise me, and reject me because of it, ye did not.<sup>29</sup>

Of particular interest are the words, "*because of an infirmity....I preached.*" Some interpreters prefer the rendering, "*amid,*" or "*while suffering from,*" rather than "*because.*" In favor of this view that Paul's preaching the gospel to them was not the cause but rather the accompanying circumstance is the fact that Luke makes mention of Paul's afflictions received while working in Galatia. See Acts 13:50, 14:5-6, 19. Either position does not materially affect the message contained in the passage, and caution should be exercised lest we become so enamored with such details as to miss the intent of the letter.

*4:14 ~ "and that which was a temptation to you in my flesh ye despised not, nor rejected; but ye received me as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus."*

There is a considerable variety in the manuscripts on this passage. Some read "*my temptation,*" while others read "*your temptation.*" We do not consider the difference of any consequence. The point is that Paul was afflicted with some infirmity but it did not hinder his preaching or their reception of the Gospel. There are two ideas combined in the passage. The first of these is the fact that the Galatians did not despise Paul because of his physical condition. The second idea is that they did not yield to the temptation to reject Paul on the same grounds. Hendriksen's comment on this passage provides us with a good summary:

All we can really affirm is that when, during this first missionary journey, the Galatians saw Paul, they saw a man who was afflicted with a grievous physical illness. But even though such

bodily infirmity was regarded by the Jews, and even more so by the Gentiles, as a token of God's displeasure (Job 4:7, John 9:2, Acts 28:4), so that the Galatians had been tempted to treat Paul with contemptuous scorn, they had done nothing of the kind.<sup>30</sup>

As brother Coffman pointed out, *"There is always a temptation to belittle a sick man, especially one seeking to change one's whole manner of life, but the Galatians did not yield to it."*<sup>31</sup>

*"ye received me as an angel of God"* – The Galatians had evidently received Paul, and the message which he brought, with a great deal of joy and excitement. So thrilled were they over their newfound hope that they considered Paul as an angel sent from heaven. There is no indication in the passage as to whether they literally considered Paul as an angel, or if Paul was using figurative language to describe their ready acceptance of the gospel.

**4:15 ~ "Where then is that gratulation of yourselves? for I bear you witness, that, if possible, ye would have plucked out your eyes and given them to me."**

Some have suggested that this passage points to temporary blindness, or some other disease of the eyes. Likely the expression is proverbial. Paul was simply saying, *"You thought so highly of me at that time, and felt so happy in our presence, that, had it been possible, you would have given me the most precious member of your body."* Barnes summed up the verse like this:

This is not to be regarded as a question, asking what had become of the blessedness, implying

that it had departed; but it is rather to be regarded as an exclamation, referring to the happiness of that moment, and their affection and joy when they thus received him. 'What blessedness you had then! How happy was that moment...' So Tindal well renders it, "How happy were ye then?"<sup>32</sup>

**4:16 ~ "So then am I become your enemy, by telling you the truth?"**

It is utterly amazing that so many react in such a violent way to the preaching of the truth. Were such reaction confined to an unbelieving world, it might not surprise us so much. But fellow Christians oft times become angry when we attempt to address their sin and error and call them to repentance. *"How apt are we to feel that the man who tells us of our faults is our enemy! How apt are we to treat him coldly, and to 'cut his acquaintance,' and to regard him with dislike. The reason is, he gives us pain; and we cannot have pain given us, even by the stone against which we stumble... Hence, men become offended with their ministers when they reprove them for their sins. See Proverbs 27:6 - 'Faithful are the wounds of a friend; But the kisses of an enemy are profuse.'"*<sup>33</sup> Truth should be loved and cherished by each and every child of God, and a pursuit of that truth should burn deep within the heart of each and every one of us, no matter what the cost might be to obtain it. Abraham Lincoln once said, *"If it is decreed that I should go down because of this speech, then let me go down linked to the truth."* A number of years prior to the writing of this commentary I came across the following. Unfortunately I do not have the original source from whence it came.

**"Give Me The Truth!"**

If you are my friend, if you are concerned about my soul, give me the truth. Do not flatter me. Do not praise my virtues while remaining silent about my vices. Do not fear the truth will offend me. Do not treasure our friendship, our friendly relations, above my salvation. Do not think that by ignoring my sins, you can help me. Do not think that being blind to my sins will prove yourself charitable. However I may react to it, whatever may be my attitude toward you after you have done it, Give Me The Truth. For the truth, and only the truth, can make me free from the shackles of sin, strengthen me in the pathway of righteousness, and lead me to heaven's joy. If I am wavering, weak, lukewarm, indifferent, neglectful; if I have been overtaken in a trespass; if I have been drawn into the pleasure of the world; if I have left my first love; if I have been led astray by error; or if I have done none of these, but simply need to grow in grace and be edified, Give Me The Truth!

**4:17 ~ "They zealously seek you in no good way; nay, they desire to shut you out, that ye may seek them."**

"They" are the Judaizing teachers who sought to mislead the Galatians. Paul had just asked the Galatians if he were to be their enemy because he had told them the truth. He now turns his attention to who it was that were their real enemies.

*"They seek you in no good way" is a figure of speech, called 'litotes,' which is "the 'affirmation of a truth by denying its opposite,' the meaning being that the Judaizers were hypocritical, and that their motives in cultivating the Galatians were*

*impure.*"<sup>34</sup> The Judaizing teachers gave the appearance of being zealous for the Galatians, as is often the case of those who are demagogues seeking to gain proselytes. Though it is possible to "*seek*" someone in a good way, such was not the case with these Judaizers. Their intention seemed to shut the Galatians out of any contact with Paul or his associates. By doing this, there would be no contact with the truth, and the Galatians could be easily led astray. We witness the same thing today when unscrupulous "*pastors*" discourage their members from reading and studying for themselves. The following article appeared in 'The Southwesterner,' the weekly bulletin published by the Southwest Church of Christ in Austin, Texas:

### **"The Cardinal's Advice"**

Of all the counseling we can possibly give to your Holiness, we reserve the more important of it to the last. We must hold our eyes well open and intervene with all of our power in the affairs we have to consider. The reading of the Gospel must be permitted as little as possible (especially in the modern languages, and in the countries under your authority). The very little that is read generally as the Mass should be enough and it should be prohibited for anyone to read more. (As long as the people are content with that small part, our interests will prosper, but from the moment that the people desire to read more, our interests will begin to suffer.) Here is the book that more than any other provoked rebellions against us, storms that have been risky in bringing us loss in fact; if anyone reads accurately the teaching of the Bible and compares what occurs in our churches, he will soon find out the contradictions and will see that our teaching is far removed from that of the Bible and more often yet is in opposition to it. If the

people realize this, they will provoke us without rest until all become unveiled and then we will become the object of ridicule and universal hate. It is necessary that the Bible be taken away and snatched from the hands of the people, however, with much wisdom in order not to provoke trouble" (This advice was given to Pope Jules III of Rome in 1550 by his Cardinals. It is found in the National Bibliotheque in Paris, France. The Volume is Reserve 22719, Pages 101-102).

It has been the plea of the churches of Christ throughout their existence that men read and study the Bible for themselves. Inspired writ demands that we *"prove all things, hold fast to that which is good"* (1 Thess. 5:21). We are warned by the beloved apostle John, *"Believe not every spirit, but prove the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets are gone out into the world"* (1 John 4:1). If we cringe at such unholy and deceitful tactics as those espoused in the above article, what shall our reaction be to those who have access to the Holy Bible, and yet never take the time to read it? In the final analysis, there is no practical difference between the man who CANNOT read (for whatever reason that might be), and the man who WILL NOT read.

*"They desire to shut you out"* - We are not certain the exact meaning here, but since Paul was speaking of the false teachers, the only conclusion we can come to is that these false teachers were seeking to exclude the Galatians from any fellowship or association with Paul. If they could succeed in shutting the Galatians out from any influence that Paul might have on them, they could successfully draw them into their error. As Barnes rendered it, *"If they can once get rid of your attachment to me, then they will have no difficulty in securing you for themselves."*<sup>35</sup>

**4:18 ~ “But it is good to be zealously sought in a good matter at all times, and not only when I am present with you.”**

Paul was not discounting zeal, pointing out that “it is good to be zealously sought in a good matter at all times.” Zeal is good if it is channeled in the right direction. It would appear that Paul is saying, “You were exceedingly zealous in a good cause when I was with you. But since I left you, and as soon almost as I was out of your sight, your zeal died away, and your ardent love for me was transferred to others.” True love and appreciation for another will remain alive in our hearts, whether our friends are with us or apart.

**4:19 ~ “My little children, of whom I am again in travail until Christ be formed in you—”**

“My little children...” – See 1 Corinthians 4:15; John 13:33; 1 Thessalonians 2:7; 1 John 2:1, 12, 13; 4:4; 5:21. Paul’s love for the Galatians is evident from passages such as this one. The natural love that a parent has for his child was existent in Paul’s love for the churches of Galatia. As for Paul’s claim to the Galatians as “my children,” it should be pointed out that, even IF Paul did not labour by himself in these areas, it was he who was the most prominent among those who laboured in Asia Minor. “The Jews of south Galatia, who knew the real power of both Paul and Barnabas, as regards the founding of those churches, tried to kill Paul, not Barnabas.”<sup>36</sup>

“again in travail” – Paul had agonized over the founding of these churches. The afflictions which he suffered in their behalf was once and again being experienced on the part of the apostle. Acts 13 and 14 provide many of the details of his sufferings.

*"until Christ be formed in you" – Until they reach maturity; until they grow up. Their drift into Judaism had actually "distorted" the image of Christ that had been formed in them at their conversion. The word "formed" in the Greek means to give outward expression of one's inward character. We use the English word 'form' in the same way when we say, "I went to a tennis match yesterday, and the winning player's form was excellent." We mean by that, that the outward expression which he gave of his inward ability to play tennis, was excellent. When we say Christ is "formed" in someone, we are simply saying that the character of Christ is manifested in their life. Paul's desire was that the Galatians might manifest their faith in their lives. One writer put it this way:*

Where is the blessedness I knew  
When first I sought the Lord?  
Where is the soul-refreshing view  
Of Jesus and his Word?  
  
What peaceful hours I once enjoyed!  
How sweet their memory still!  
But they have left an aching void  
The world can never fill"

by William Cowper

*4:20 ~ "but I could wish to be present with you now, and to change my tone; for I am perplexed about you."*

There is tenderness in Paul's note, as well as deep concern for what might become of them. He is *"perplexed"* about the Galatians. I like brother McGarvey's summation of these last few verses:

Here the apostle breaks suddenly off and at once  
explains why he did so. If the Galatians had come

to look upon him as an enemy, how ridiculous such affectionate language would sound to them. He did not, as he viewed them at a distance, and as they were pictured to him by report, feel free to use such tender speech; but still, trusting that matters were better than reported, he wished that he might be present, and, finding them indeed loyal, lay aside the perplexity which was now hampering him, and change his tone from rebuke and reserve to the accents of loving persuasion. No language could be devised that would more fully reveal the apostle's heart in all its contending emotions.<sup>37</sup>

### **Allegory Of Hagar And Sarah: Contrast Of Bondage And Freedom**

4:21-31

In this section:

- (1) Paul introduces his argument by asking a question, *"do ye not hear the law?"*
- (2) Paul turns their attention to the case of Abraham's sons, Isaac and Ishmael;
- (3) Paul points out that one of the two sons [Ishmael] was *"by the handmaid,"* while the other [Isaac] was *"by the free woman."*
- (4) Paul reminds them that *"the son by the handmaid"* was born *"after the flesh"* while the *"son by the free woman was born through promise."*
- (5) Paul then uses this historical account as an *"allegory,"* the facts of which are as follows:

- A. Hagar is the covenant *"from mount Sinai"* (v. 24);
- B. This *"Hagar...answereth to the Jerusalem that now is";*

- C. The covenant which Hagar represents is *"in bondage with her children"*;
  - D. The second covenant is represented by *"the Jerusalem that is above"*;
  - E. We [Christians] are *"children of promise,"* as was Isaac;
  - F. He that was born after the flesh [Ishmael] persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, or according to the promise [Isaac];
  - G. The same kind of persecution exists between the Judaizers and Christians at the time of this writing;
  - H. Hagar was to be *"cast out"* along with her *"son"*;
  - I. Those who are *"of the handmaid shall not inherit with the son of the free woman."*
- 6) Paul concludes that *"we [Christians] are not children of a handmaid, but of the freewoman"*;

Coffman summarized the essential details of this allegory with the following chart:

Judaism	Christianity
The bondwoman, Hagar	The freewoman, Sarah
Son of the bondwoman	Son of the freewoman, Isaac
Natural birth	Supernatural birth by promise
Mount Sinai, the Law	Mt. Zion, the Law of Christ
The earthly Jerusalem	The heavenly Jerusalem
Enslaved	Free
Fruitful	Barren (at first)
Small offspring	Large offspring
Persecuting	Persecuted
Expulsion	Inheritance
Judaism a bondage	Christians free

Having set the facts before us, let us take a closer look now at its meaning.

**4:21 ~ "Tell me, ye that desire to be under the law, do ye not hear the law?"**

*"Ye that desire to be under the law"* - There were some who had been persuaded by the Judaizers that it was necessary to obey the law of Moses. Paul's intention was to get them to listen to what that law actually taught with regard to the law and the descendants of Abraham.

"There has always been a basic natural appeal in visible, ceremonial, liturgical, external and spectacular religion, as witnessed continually by the church of all ages in the persistent drifting into those very things. Paul's argument here seems to say, 'Do not merely look at it, listen to what it teaches!' There is a lot in religion today that needs to be analyzed in the same way. The Judaizers were talking about being 'sons of Abraham,' which in a sense (carnal) they were; and the thunderbolt in the next verse is that 'Abraham had two sons' which kind were the Judaizers?"<sup>38</sup>

**4:22 ~ "For it is written, that Abraham had two sons, one by the handmaid, and one by the freewoman."**

*"Abraham had two sons"* - The record can be found in Genesis chapters 16 through 21. Though Abraham had other sons by Keturah after Sarah's death, it is Ishmael and Isaac to whom Paul refers. The events of their lives provided an illustration of the truth Paul wished to communicate. Of these two sons (Isaac and Ishmael), the birth of one (Ishmael) was *"by a handmaid."* Hagar was an Egyptian slave whom Sarah gave to Abraham in order to provide posterity. See Genesis 16:3. Hence, Ishmael was the son of a *"handmaid,"* or *"bondwoman."* The other son

(Isaac) was born *"by the freewoman."* Sarah gave birth to Isaac according to the promise of God to Abraham. The Hebrews writer tells us that Sarah *"received power to conceive seed when she was past age"* (Heb. 11:11). Hence, her conception of Isaac was a miracle. Paul's argument is clear and concise. Those who were boasting about their descent from Abraham were forgetting that Abraham had TWO sons. If it was the case that physical descent was all important, then those who were Jews by birth were no better off than the Ishmaelites. But admittedly, there IS a difference, and that difference was one of a spiritual nature. These two sons represent the contrast between those who sought to be justified by law, and those who lived by faith in the promise of God. The basic differences between Isaac and Ishmael, as well as the two groups which they represented, are the differences in their contrasted birth (verses 23-28), their relationship to each other (verse 29), and their right to the inheritance (verse 30).

***4:23 ~ "Howbeit the son by the handmaid is born after the flesh; but the son by the freewoman is born through promise."***

*"the son by the handmaid is born after the flesh"* – Here is the first contrast between Ishmael and Isaac, namely a contrast in their births. There was nothing out of the ordinary in the birth of Ishmael. He was born as the result of the natural law of procreation on the part of Abraham and Hagar. As Coffman pointed out, *"God was simply not in the arrangement."* But the birth of Isaac, the *"son by the freewoman,"* was the result of God's miraculous intervention in fulfilling the promise made to Abraham that of his seed all nations of the earth would be blessed. See Genesis 18:10; 21:1-2; Hebrews 11:11-12. But we think there is added strength to Paul's argument when we consider the fact that

not only was Ishmael born as a consequence of physical act, but also of sinful deliberation on the part of Abraham and Hagar. Unwilling to abide by God's promise, Abraham and Sarah took matters into their own hands, and Abraham, at the consent of Sarah, went in unto Hagar, who in turn conceived Ishmael. This being the case, Ishmael fittingly represents all those who strive to attain salvation by their own cunning devices. Isaac, on the other hand, was born as a result of Abraham's faith, and is a fitting representative of those who, like Abraham, strive for salvation based on their faith in God to keep His promises.

*4:24 ~ "Which things contain an allegory: for these women are two covenants; one from mount Sinai, bearing children unto bondage, which is Hagar."*

*"Which things contain an allegory" - The birth of Isaac and Ishmael were real historical events. Paul was not saying that the story is mythical, or fictitious, but that the actual events surrounding their births serve as a fit illustration of the two covenants. An "allegory" is a continued metaphor. It is a figure of speech in which the principle object is described by another subject resembling it in its particulars. Barnes says that "allegories are in words what hieroglyphics are in painting. The distinction between a parable and an allegory is said to be, that a parable is supposed history to illustrate some important truth [and] an allegory is based on real facts."*<sup>39</sup>

*"Bearing children unto bondage" - Coffman noted that "this was, first of all, true literally, as Jerusalem itself was subjected to Rome at the time of this writing; and it was also true spiritually."*<sup>40</sup>

*"one from mount Sinai, bearing children unto bondage" - This has reference to the law of Moses. That law, or covenant,*

was given to Israel on Mount Sinai through Moses the prophet. The characteristic of that law which Paul wishes to emphasize is the fact that it could not produce freedom. There was no provision for forgiveness in the law of Moses. Hence, those living under that law were in bondage. He closes this verse by pointing out that Hagar is a fit representation of that covenant.

*4:25 ~ "Now this Hagar is mount Sinai in Arabia and answereth to the Jerusalem that now is: for she is in bondage with her children."*

*"answereth to the Jerusalem that now is"* – Paul is using a part of speech known as a synecdoche, where a part of something is mentioned for the whole. The city of Jerusalem, with her religious and political leaders, is a fair representation of the bondage that is associated with the old law. Jerusalem, as it stood at the time that Paul was writing this letter, was *"subject to laws, and rites, and customs, bound by a state of servitude, and fear, and trembling, such as existed when the law was given on mount Sinai."*<sup>41</sup> With regard to the word *"answereth,"* Barnes had these enlightening comments:

The word *"answereth to"* means properly to advance in order together; to go together with, as soldiers march along in the same rank; and then to correspond to. It means here that mount Sinai and Jerusalem as it then was would be fitted to march together in the same platoon or rank...Both were connected with bondage, like Hagar. On the one, a law was given that led to bondage; and the other was in fact under a miserable servitude of rites and forms.<sup>42</sup>

These Judaizing teachers were in the same category as Ishmael, in that both were characterized by slavery and bondage that comes from trusting in the flesh. Like their predecessors, the Judaizers were in bondage; they had enslaved themselves to Sinai's law and were intent on returning thereto.

*"Her children"* are those who desire to live under the law, specifically physical Israel, but inclusive of those among the Galatians who had been persuaded to follow the false teachers.

**4:26 ~ *"But the Jerusalem that is above is free, which is our mother."***

*"The Jerusalem that is above" - Brother McGarvey's summary is quite clear: "Leaving out the preliminary steps, Paul rushes at once to the comparison of the two cities, for the emissaries of Jerusalem were constantly disparaging him as not the equal of those who were the heads of the church there (2:6-7). Filling in all the steps, according to the analogy of the apostle's reasoning, the full allegory would run thus: Sarah, the free woman, represents the gospel covenant, which, like Sarah, bears freeborn children according to God's promise, and she is now represented by the celestial Jerusalem, which, with her free children, is our mother."*<sup>43</sup>

The *"Jerusalem that is above"* is the church of our Lord. The same analogy is used in Revelation 12, where the *"woman"* stands first for Israel, and finally as the church of the Lord. See Revelation 21:2; Colossians 3:1; Hebrews 12:22; et al. Likewise, there is some similarity to Revelation 3:12, 21:2 and 10. The church originates from above; it is the product of God's wisdom and the shedding of Christ's blood (Eph. 3:10-11; Acts 20:28). Our lives are governed from heaven;

we seek heavenly things; our thoughts and hopes are pointed toward heaven. This contrast between the two women, the two laws, and the two spiritual homes are indicative of the great divide that stands between all Christians and the world here below.

*4:27 ~ "For it is written, Rejoice, thou barren that bearest not; Break forth and cry, thou that travailest not: For more are the children of the desolate than of her that hath the husband."*

This passage is found in Isaiah 54:1. By calling attention to this Old Testament passage, Paul was showing that the Gentiles as well as the Jews would partake of the privileges connected with the heavenly Jerusalem. The mention of Jerusalem as our "mother" would naturally remind Paul of this passage because of the realization that once heaven's invitation was extended to the multitude of Gentiles, the influx would far exceed the small Jewish "remnant" who truly lived by faith. Coffman makes the following application: "*Sarah at first had no child, but when the promise of Isaac was fulfilled, her posterity exceeded that of Hagar; but in the instance of the spiritual fulfillment of this, the numberless 'sons of Sarah' in the church of the living God even more overwhelmingly outnumber those of Hagar.*"<sup>44</sup>

*4:28 ~ "Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are children of promise."*

Those who are of the seed of Abraham, members of the Lord's church, are the result of God's gracious promises, foretold in the Old Testament and realized in the New. Notice again Paul's use of the word "brethren." He had not given up hope on these brethren. They were members of the same spiritual family, born of the same parentage.

## GALATIANS CHAPTER FOUR

---

**4:29 ~ “But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, so also it is now.”**

The words “*after the Spirit*” are equivalent to “*according to promise*” in verse 28. In this verse Paul points out that yet another difference between Ishmael and Isaac was the relationship between the two. He that was “*born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit.*” The persecution referred to by the apostle was the opposition which has existed between the Arabs and Jews throughout history. The particular reference is likely to Genesis 21:9, “*And Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, whom she had borne unto Abraham, mocking.*” Hagar was then expelled from the house of Abraham at the request of Sarah (Genesis 21:10).

“*so also it is now*” – Even a casual perusal of the book of Acts shows that the Jews were behind most of the persecutions that came upon Paul. “*It does not appear that the apostle Paul was ever set upon by the Gentiles, unless they were first stirred up by the Jews, except in two instances. One of these was at Philippi, after the cure of the Pythoness (Acts 16:19); and the other at Ephesus, at the instance of Demetrius, Acts 19:24.*”<sup>45</sup> Paul intended to drive home the point that the Judaizers intended to do them harm, and not good.

**4:30 – “Howbeit what saith the scripture? Cast out the handmaid and her son: for the son of the handmaid shall not inherit with the son of the freewoman.”**

Finally, the apostle points out that a difference between Ishmael and Isaac was the right to the inheritance. When Sarah cast out Hagar, along with Ishmael, it was a strong statement that Ishmael was not to inherit with his half-

brother Isaac. The action of Sarah, in casting Hagar out of the house, was intended by Paul to represent the expulsion of the Mosaic Law. See Ephesians 2:11-15; Colossians 2:14.

*"The son of the handmaid shall not inherit..."* – What else could Paul have meant other than the truth that physical Israel shall not inherit the promises. Only spiritual Israel, the church, shall inherit. The truth cannot be any plainer. Yet, for some unexplainable reason, the majority of the denominational world still thinks that physical Israel are still God's chosen people, and they shall, along with every faithful Christian, inherit some *"promise"* when all is said and done. The bottom line in this simple letter is this: Either Christianity or Judaism had to go, and it was NOT Christianity! The truthfulness of this would come to light in 70 A.D. when God would destroy the city of Jerusalem.

*4:31 ~ "Wherefore, brethren, we are not children of a handmaid, but of the freewoman."*

The *"heirs"* of whom Paul had been speaking throughout chapters 3 and 4 are NOT of the *"handmaid."* How can language be any clearer! The inheritance would NOT come through physical descent, or through the LAW given through a physical nation.

### Chapter Four Endnotes

- 1 Hendriksen, page 155.
- 2 Hendriksen, page 188.
- 3 Barnes, page 359.
- 4 Barnes, page 358.
- 5 Coffman, page 72.
- 6 Coffman, page 73.
- 7 Huxtable, page 183.
- 8 Coffman, page 73, 74.

## GALATIANS CHAPTER FOUR

---

- 9 Hendriksen, page 159.
- 10 Barnes, page 361.
- 11 Hendriksen, page 160.
- 12 Coffman, page 75.
- 13 Camp, Franklin, **The Work of the Holy Spirit In The Scheme of Redemption** (Birmingham, AL: Robertson and Sons, 1974), page 144-146.
- 14 Barnes, page 361-362.
- 15 Coffman, page 75.
- 16 Hendriksen, page 162.
- 17 Coffman, page 75.
- 18 Hendriksen, page 163-162.
- 19 Morris, Leon, **Tyndale Commentary, 1 Corinthians** (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1958), page 93, as quoted in Coffman, page 78.
- 20 Barnes, page 363.
- 21 Hendriksen, page 163.
- 22 Hendriksen, page 165.
- 23 Coffman, page 77.
- 24 Hendriksen, page 165.
- 25 Wharton, page 41.
- 26 Coffman, page 78.
- 27 Barnes, page 364.
- 28 Denman, Byron, **Paul's Personal Appeal to the Galatians**, *Studies in Galatians*, Edited by Dub McClish (Denton, TX: Valid Publications, Inc.; 1986) page 157.
- 29 McGarvey, page 274.
- 30 Hendriksen, page 172.
- 31 Coffman, page 80.
- 32 Barnes, page 366.
- 33 Barnes, page 367.
- 34 Coffman, page 81.
- 35 Barnes, page 367.
- 36 Coffman, page 82.
- 37 McGarvey, page 276.
- 38 Coffman, page 82.
- 39 Barnes, page 370.
- 40 Coffman, page 84.

- 41 Barnes, page 372.
- 42 Barnes, page 372.
- 43 McGarvey, page 277.
- 44 Coffman, page 85.
- 45 Barnes, page 374.



## **Galatians Chapter Five**

### **III. Practical Section in which the doctrine of liberty is applied, chapters 5-6**

1. Christian liberty is imperiled by legalism, 5:1-12;
  - A. The alternatives of not following Christ and remaining free, vs. 2-5;
  - B. An appeal to return to the perfect law of liberty, vs. 7-9;
  - C. The judgment of the false teachers, vs. 10-12;
2. Christian liberty is perverted by license, 5:13-26;
  - A. They were to be servants one to another, vs. 13-15;
  - B. They were to walk by the Spirit, vs. 16-26;
3. Christian liberty is perfected in love, 6:1-10;

Analysis: This chapter is designed to induce the Galatians to renounce their conformity to the heretical teaching of these false teachers. Barnes suggests that this chapter *"...seems to be designed to meet a charge that had been brought against him [Paul, TW], that he had preached the necessity of circumcision, or that he had so practiced it as to show that he believed that it was obligatory on others."*<sup>1</sup> We think there is much more to this chapter than a mere defense on the part of the apostle to justify his having circumcised some (such as Timothy), while adamantly refusing to circumcise others (as was the case with Titus). This chapter, along with chapter six, is a plea from the apostle that the Galatians not use their freedom in Christ to return to some system of bondage, or to run to the other extreme and indulge in the works of the flesh.

## **Christian Liberty Is Imperiled By Legalism**

5:1-12

In this section (verses 1-12), Paul....

- (1) Exhorts the brethren to stand firm in the faith and liberty which they presently enjoyed in Christ, and not to be brought under a yoke of bondage (v. 1);
- (2) Warns them that if they depended on circumcision (or any other part of the law) for their salvation, then they would derive no benefit from Christ (vs. 2-6);
- (3) Tells them that the doctrine which they had accepted did not originate from himself, but must have come from some outside influence, and that such was like a leaven, affecting the whole lump (vs. 7-9);
- (4) Expresses confidence in them; that they would obey the truth and turn away from the error which they had embraced (vs. 10-12).

***5:1 ~ "For freedom did Christ set us free: stand fast therefore, and be not entangled again in a yoke of bondage."***

The first verse in this chapter is closely associated with the previous chapter, and actually serves as a "*transition*" from the defense of the doctrine of liberty to the application of that doctrine to their lives. In fact, some of the modern versions print 5:1 as a paragraph by itself in order to show this transition into the thoughts contained in chapters 5 and 6. A casual observance of the chapter before us, when compared with those previous chapters, will reveal a contrast between the argumentative style of chapters 1-4 and the hortatory language that characterizes the remainder of the letter. The truth stated and defended in the preceding chapters is applied to life in chapters 5 and 6.

*"For freedom did Christ set us free"* – It should be pointed out that our freedom is nothing short of deliverance from guilt and the power of sin (Romans 6:18), from an accusing conscience (Hebrews 10:22), from God's wrath (Romans 5:1; Hebrews 10:27) and from the tyranny of the devil (2 Timothy 2:26; Hebrews 2:14). And while all of this is certainly encouraging to those of us who are striving to live faithfully to our Lord, the *"freedom"* of which Paul was speaking here is freedom from the Old Law in order that we might become united to the Christ (cf Romans 7:1-6). The argument is that Christ did not set these Galatians free simply to have them return to some *"weak and beggarly"* system under the guidance of these false teachers. It should also be pointed out that there is a *"positive endowment"* about this freedom from the law of Moses. It is, as Hendriksen noted, *"the state in which a person is walking and living in the Spirit (Gal. 5:25), so that he produces the fruit of the Spirit (5:22, 23), and with joy and gratitude does the will of God (5:14; Rom. 8:4), in principle fulfilling the law of Christ.... The person who is truly free no longer acts from constraint but serves his God willingly, with cheerfulness of heart."*<sup>2</sup>

*"stand fast therefore"* – Paul calls for the brethren to remain loyal to the truth which they had received from him. Other passages stressing the same call for steadfastness include: (1) Philippians 1:27–*"Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ: that, whether I come and see you and be absent, I may hear of your state, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one soul striving for the faith of the gospel;"* (2) Philippians 4:1–*"Wherefore, my brethren beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, my beloved."* (3) 1 Thessalonians 3:8–*"for now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord."* (4) 2 Thessalonians 2:15–*"So then, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye were taught, whether by word,*

or by epistle of ours." (5) Psalms 89:28—"My lovingkindness will I keep for him for evermore; And my covenant shall stand fast with him." (6) 1 Corinthians 16:13—"Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong." (7) 2 Corinthians 1:24—"Not that we have lordship over your faith, but are helpers of your joy: for in faith ye stand fast." This courageous stand which Paul calls for is "that of the soldier on the field of battle, not fleeing but offering stout resistance to the enemy and defeating him."<sup>3</sup>

"and be not entangled again" – Tindal renders this, "And wrap not yourselves again." They were not to allow a yoke of bondage to be placed upon them as they had done to this point. The "yoke of bondage" was the law of Moses, with its rites and ceremonies. Paul was reminding the Galatians that they had been delivered out of a prison, so to speak, and set free to serve their God. He issued a strong warning that, having obtained freedom, they were not to be overtaken and imprisoned in the burdensome system being espoused by the Judaizers. The "yoke" to which these Galatians had previously been enslaved was probably the practice multitudinous pagan rituals by which they had previously sought salvation. Having come out from under that burdensome yoke of pagan practices so prevalent in Galatia, why in the world would they again want to be entangled in yet another yoke, namely that of Judaism?

"a yoke of bondage" – These words make it clear that freedom under consideration is freedom from the slavery of the law of Moses. In addition, it shows that freedom from law does not mean that we are free from our Christian obligations, be they obedience to the primary ordinances of God or the moral and ethical commandments set forth in His word. There simply is no such thing as absolute freedom, and

those who seek just such liberty have used their freedom as a cloak of wickedness, turning the grace of our Lord into lasciviousness.

5:2 ~ *"Behold, I Paul say unto you, that, if ye receive circumcision, Christ will profit you nothing."*

*"Behold, I Paul..."* – The words are intensely personal and dramatic. The words are *"intended to affirm in the most dogmatic and positive way the truth which he was uttering."*<sup>4</sup> There is an authoritative tone in Paul's words, and the apostle stopped just short of claiming full apostolic authority in this matter, though it was certainly implied. See in this connection 2 Corinthians 10:1; Ephesians 3:1; Colossians 1:23; and 1 Thessalonians 2:18.

*"if you receive circumcision"* – (that is, as an ordinance to salvation): If the Galatians had received circumcision with such a view as that maintained by the false teachers, with the idea that it was necessary to salvation, then Christ would profit them nothing. It was not the keeping of proper commandments which are authorized and commanded under the law of Christ which the apostle here repudiates, but the acceptance of laws and ordinances which would once again place them in bondage to the Old law. We completely reject any notion that the keeping of the commandments of our Lord are non-essential. Though usually scholarly in his analysis and application of scripture, Albert Barnes is among those who jump ship here. He wrote, *"Rites and ceremonies in religion may be in themselves well enough, if they are held to be matters not essential; but the moment they are regarded as vital and essential, that moment they begin to infringe on the doctrine of justification by faith alone, and that moment they are to be rejected."*<sup>5</sup> His

conclusion derives from his false premise that men are justified by "*faith alone*," a premise which James clearly refuted (James 2:14-24).

*"Christ will profit you nothing"* – Paul did not mince words. The danger was too great to beat around the bush, and so the apostle set before the Galatians the ultimate end of the choices which then lay before them. If they were to receive circumcision, then Christ would be of no value whatsoever to them. Their whole religion was in danger of becoming nothing more than that of *"ritualism with a slightly Christian tinge,"* as Hendriksen called it.<sup>6</sup> Urgency demanded this forceful conclusion, for *"a Christ supplemented is a Christ supplanted."*<sup>7</sup>

5:3 ~ *"Yea, I testify again to every man that receiveth circumcision, that he is a debtor to do the whole law."*

It is important to notice that Paul *"testifies to every man,"* and not only to the churches *en masse*. Each individual must now act in accord with the truth. We see in these words Paul's call to each individual to make the choice for himself, and to separate, if necessary, from those who would cast their lot with the Judaizers.

If the Galatians *"receive[d] circumcision,"* it would be an indication of their acceptance of the legalistic attitude of those false teachers. Here Paul points out that such an action would place them under a legal system, and thus obligate them to keep ALL the law in order to be justified. If salvation is by the law of Moses, then why stop with circumcision? Why is it that a man would be obligated to keep one aspect of the old law (circumcision), and neglect the others? Indeed, if the way to salvation is through some

law, then it is only logical that one should be ready and willing to travel that road to the very end. This was, of course, an impossibility, and the very thing Paul was attempting to show in this letter.

*5:4 ~ "Ye are severed from Christ, ye would be justified by the law; ye are fallen away from grace."*

*"Ye are severed from Christ"* - The word here means to render inactive, idle, useless; to do away, to put an end to, and here it means that they had withdrawn from Christ.

*"ye are fallen away from grace"* - It is astonishing how men of otherwise capable scholarship can ignore the plain teachings of this passage. In the context, Paul was pointing out the consequences of the CHOICE they had to make. It was his intention to encourage them to make the RIGHT CHOICE. If they received circumcision (indicating that they chose to follow the false teachers), then (1) they would be entangled in a yoke of bondage, (2) Christ would profit them nothing, (3) they would be debtor to keep the whole law, (4) they would be severed from Christ, and (5) they would be fallen from grace. On the other hand, if they chose to renounce the teaching of the false teachers they would (1) be free, (2) gain the benefits (or profit) of Christ's work, (3) be released from the whole law, (4) continue to be joined to Christ, and (5) they would be justified by grace rather than by some legal system. If it were impossible for these Galatians to *"fall from grace"* then why in the world was Paul writing this letter? The very nature of the letter was to PREVENT an apostasy among the churches in Galatia. As brother Coffman noted, *"The present tense in this verse must be read as indicating that some of the Galatians had actually defected from Christianity in the same manner*

*indicated, with the result that they had 'fallen from grace.'*"<sup>8</sup> Occasionally we find a denominational commentator who gets very close to stating the truth on this matter. Hendriksen, for example, correctly noted that *"if the Galatians...should seek to be justified by way of law, and should persist to the end in this error, the cord that binds them to Christ would not be able to bear that strain. It would snap! They would then have fallen away from the domain of grace, would have lost their hold on grace."*<sup>9</sup> We are surprised, however, that after so plainly stating the truth of the matter, he would then suggest that Paul's message in no way conflicts with the doctrine of *"preservation of the saints,"* since Paul was speaking here *"from the standpoint of human responsibility."*<sup>10</sup> His explanation is typical of those who hold to the Calvinistic doctrine of *"once-saved-always-saved."* He then wrote,

It must ever be borne in mind that divine sovereignty does not abrogate human responsibility, and that God, accordingly, carries out his eternal purpose by so operating through his Spirit in the hearts of backsliders that they give heed to the earnest appeals that are made to them. Individuals who until their last breath persist in their disobedience prove that they had never embraced Christ with a true and living faith, even though they may have been church-members outwardly.<sup>11</sup>

In the final analysis, however, such a doctrine does NOT respect individual responsibility, but rather removes any responsibility of the child of God to maintain faithfulness, since God will, in the end, move in such a way as to bring the *"backslider"* back to his senses. And who, may we ask, is to blame if such a *"rescue"* is not effected on the

backslider? Why, God, of course. Never has a more blasphemous, and God-degrading doctrine ever arisen from the pits of hell.

**5:5 ~ “For we through the Spirit by faith wait for the hope of righteousness.”**

“For we” – Paul is careful to include the Galatians at this point. The word would have reference to all those who are faithful.

“through the Spirit” – The words are similar to 3:1-3. The hope of righteousness was given to the Galatians through the preaching of the gospel, not the keeping of the law.

“By faith” – expresses man’s part in salvation. That for which we hope was revealed through the Spirit, and accepted and appropriated through obedient faith. The Bible never even suggests that saving faith is “faith only.” It is always an active, obedient, working faith which saves. Notice verse 6.

### **Are Men Saved By Faith Only?**

The Methodist Discipline, article 15 states, “*We are accounted righteous before God, only for the merit of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, by faith, and not for our own works or deservings; wherefore, that we are justified by faith only, is a most wholesome doctrine, and very full of comfort.*” In the Warren-Ballard debate, the prominent Baptist preacher and debater, L.S. Ballard, defined his proposition and declared that salvation from the penalty of sin is by “*faith, without further acts of obedience...no act of obedience intervenes between faith and salvation.*” In the Elkins-Ross debate, Bob Ross affirmed that

the Scriptures teach *"that salvation comes at the point of faith alone before and without any further acts of obedience."*<sup>12</sup> Ross further declared that *"spiritual life comes at the point of faith and is not contingent upon some subsequent act such as baptism, joining the church, observing the Lord's supper, or living the Christian life."*<sup>13</sup> The advocates of "faith only" are quick to point out the abundant number of passages which affirm salvation by faith. They include John 3:16; John 5:24; Luke 7:48-50; Acts 10:43; Romans 3:25-26; 5:1-2; 1 Corinthians 1:21; and 1 John 5:1. These passages which refer to justification by faith serve to bolster their position. Little care is given, however, to other passages which serve to define not only the **kind** of faith under consideration, but exactly **when** such faith avails the promised blessings. The doctrine of justification by faith alone may be a doctrine *"full of comfort,"* but it is not a doctrine with Biblical authority. May we suggest a five-fold error in this fallacious doctrine:

- (1) *It demonstrates a failure to consider when faith avails.* When studying those passages which speak of justification by faith, the student must seek to ascertain exactly when the faith of an individual under consideration received the promised blessings. A careful analysis of Hebrews 11 will show that the recipients of God's blessings were always obedient to the word. *"By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed...."* (Hebrews 11:8). *"By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents..."* (Hebrews 11:23). *"By faith, Moses ...refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter ...choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season"* (Hebrews

11:24-25). *"By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they were compassed about seven days"* (Hebrews 11:30). Abraham, sometimes referred to as *"the father of the faithful,"* serves as an example of the principle under consideration. A careful study of James 2:21-23 and Romans 4:9-25 will show that Abraham's faith was *"imputed for righteousness"* after he obeyed. Friend, Abraham's faith was imputed unto him for righteousness when his *"faith wrought with his works"* and not one minute before.

- (2) *Second, the doctrine of faith only demonstrates a failure to understand the different uses of the word "faith."* Brother George Beals refers to this as the *"fallacy of equivocation."* Irving Copi illustrates this fallacy in a formally structured, but humorous, arrangement: *"Some dogs have fuzzy ears. My dog has fuzzy ears. Therefore, my dog is some dog."* Words are capable of being used in a number of different ways. In the Sanders-Wall debate the following argument was presented in defense of *"faith only"*: *"You who believe, can know that you have eternal life, 1 John 5:13. You must believe before you are baptized, Acts 8:37. Therefore, you who believe, can know that you are in possession of eternal life before you are baptized."* It is obvious that the word *"believe,"* as used in Acts 8 and 1 John 5, does not have the same meaning. For one thing, John was writing to people who had already been baptized and had their sins forgiven, while Philip was encouraging the Ethiopian eunuch to confess Jesus as the Son of God.
- (3) *The doctrine of "faith only" demonstrates a failure to distinguish between the different types of works*

*mentioned in the Bible.* The familiar argument goes something like this: *"Works do not save. Baptism is a work. Therefore, baptism does not save."* This would be true were it not for the fact that, once again, the fallacy of equivocation occurs, and the one presenting the argument fails to distinguish between works of merit and works of obedience. There are, in fact, various types of works in the New Testament. There are works of the flesh (Gal. 5:19-20), works of righteousness which we do ourselves (Titus 3:5), works of the law (Rom. 3:28), and works of faith (Jas. 2:20-23). Since men are said to be justified by faith and not by works (Eph. 2:8-9, Rom. 3:27), while at the same time being justified by works (Jas. 2:24), then obviously the inspired writers spoke of two different types of works.

- (4) *The doctrine of "faith only" demonstrates a failure to recognize that a part can be mentioned for the whole.* Passages which refer to salvation by grace, repentance, confession, etc, which do not mention other elements involved in salvation, do not **exclude** other necessary elements involved in our salvation. In Acts 11:18 the record declares that *"when they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life."* Am I to conclude that man is saved by *"repentance only"*? Or what about 1 John 4:2 and 2:23 wherein the writer speaks of confession? No mention is made of faith or baptism or repentance in these verses. Am I to conclude that man is saved simply by confession alone? 1 Peter 3:21 declares that men are saved by baptism, but we do injustice to the Scriptures if we conclude that men are saved by

*"baptism alone."* So it is with faith. The faith that saves is an inclusive faith.

- (5) *The doctrine of "faith only" demonstrates failure to understand that "saving faith" is a live, active, obedient faith.* The classic example is that of Naaman the leper. When Naaman heard the word of God, he went away in a rage, declaring that the rivers of Damascus and Pharpar were far better than the Jordan. His faith was not active. Thank God for the words of the servants who came unto him and spake the simple truth contained in 2 Kings 5:13, *"My father, if the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldest thou not have done it? How much rather then, when he saith to thee, Wash, and be clean?"* Naaman's faith led him to obedience, and upon dipping seven times in the Jordan, the captain of the host of the king of Syria came forth pure and white. Until the faith we possess drives us to obey the simple commands of God, it will remain a dead faith. But when faith compels us to obey, then, and only then, is our faith a saving faith.

*"the hope of righteousness"* – It is through faith and obedience that we confidently claim the reward that awaits us. Anything short of obedient active faith will not produce the reward that is promised for all those who are God's children.

5:6 ~ *"For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision; but faith working through love."*

*"but faith working through love"* – Paul defines that which *"avails."* One will find a study of the word *"avail"* to prove

interesting. Paul was making a comparison as to what would and what would not *"avail anything."* Coffman suggests that *"this means neither circumcision nor uncircumcision is relevant to Christianity."*<sup>14</sup> Circumcision (as it represents the keeping of the law) would not avail anything. It was useless to bring one nearer to God. On the other hand, *"faith working through love"* would accomplish much. It would truly *"avail,"* or accomplish its purpose.

We reject any suggestion that Paul intended to say *"faith working through love only,"* as if the only thing that is important in our walk in life is love. To begin with, such a doctrine is no better than the *"faith only"* doctrine, or the *"grace only"* doctrine. But more important, love does not establish authority, but rather motivates one in the application of authority to his life. We like Huxtable's comments on this verse: *"'Faith operative through love' must be identical with, or involve, 'the keeping of the commandments of God,' and 'a new creature.' A close examination of the first of these three sentences will show that it is so."*<sup>15</sup> A comparison of this verse with some of Paul's other writings will reveal, we think, the meaning and intent of this verse:

*"Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision...but faith working through love"* (Gal 5:6);

*"Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision....but a new creature"* (Gal. 6:15);

*"Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision....but the keeping of the commandments of God"* (1 Cor 7:19).

Hence, *"faith working through love"* is the same thing as being baptized into Christ, and keeping the commandments of God.

## An Appeal To Return To The Perfect Law Of Liberty

5:7-9

5:7 ~ *"Ye were running well; who hindered you that ye should not obey the truth?"*

*"Ye were running well"* - The Christian life is compared to running a race; cf 1 Cor. 9:24-26; Phil 2:16; 1 Tim. 4:7-8; Hebrews 12:1-2. These Galatians had started the journey in a most wonderful fashion. Notice Acts 13 and 14 where Luke provides us with the details of their conversion and early growth.

*"who hindered you"* - The word used here means to beat or drive back. Hence, the idea of hindering, or retarding one's progress. They were *"running well"* and someone or something retarded that progress. Doddridge remarks that Paul's language is *"an Olympic expression, and properly signifies coming across the course while a person is running in it, in such a manner as to jostle, and throw him out of the way."*<sup>16</sup> Quoting William Sanday, Coffman says the phrase has the meaning *"to break up a road, as an army before the advance of hostile forces."*<sup>17</sup> He paraphrases, *"Who tore up the race track in front of you?"* The Galatians were pursuing a course which would lead them to ruin.

*"that you should not obey the truth"* - Again it is important to note that Paul emphasizes man's responsibility to reciprocate God's love. The truth is not just some fact for our casual observance. The truth is something to be obeyed. See in this connection 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9. Of particular interest is that Paul does NOT accuse the Galatians of ceasing to believe in Christ. It was, rather, the cessation of obedience which concerned the apostle.

5:8 ~ *"This persuasion came not of him that calleth you."*

"*This persuasion*" is the false teaching that had led them away.

"*him that calleth you*" is not Paul, but God. Elsewhere Paul wrote, "*Whereunto he called you through our gospel...*" (2 Thess. 2:14).

5:9 ~ *"A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump."*

We can see one of three possible meanings here. (1) The tendency to conform to rites and customs had, like leaven, permeated the lump, i.e. the congregations in Galatia; (2) The false teachers, like leaven, being few in number, had influenced the mass of churches in Galatia; (3) Conformity to the Jewish law was like leaven; if they practiced circumcision it would not stop there. The second of these ideas seems to be the more reasonable. The lesson is obvious: "*Seemingly insignificant causes can lead to momentous consequences, whether for good or evil.*"<sup>18</sup> Benjamin Franklin was credited with writing, "*For want of a nail the shoe was lost; for want of a shoe the horse was lost; for want of a horse the rider was lost; for want of a rider the battle was lost; for want of a battle the kingdom was lost. All this for want of a horseshoe nail.*" Brother Lipscomb wrote, "*Evil spreads surely and rapidly, and must be opposed in its beginning if it is to be opposed successfully. It is a serious mistake to despise the day of small things whether of good or evil (Zech. 4:11). Just as one plague-infected person may bring devastation upon a city, so may one teacher of doctrine subversive of the gospel corrupt a whole community of believers.*"<sup>19</sup> The lesson is well taken. When we tolerate impurity, false teaching, immorality, etc. the problem will not go away, but will in fact get worse.

A small amount of error in the church, if tolerated, will lead to a great apostasy.

*5:10 ~ "I have confidence to you-ward in the Lord, that ye will be none otherwise minded: but he that troubleth you shall bear his judgment, whosoever he be."*

*"I have confidence to you-ward"* – Many a person has been moved to do great things simply because of encouraging words of confidence such as these penned by the apostle. The great man of God was confident that the Galatians would act properly to the instruction and guidance which he was now sending to them. It behooves those of us who preach and teach to maintain our confidence in the brethren that they will listen to the word and make proper application to their lives.

*"he that troubleth you shall bear his judgment"* – Barnes points out that *"he does not believe the defection is to be traced to themselves."*<sup>20</sup> Some outside force had influenced them to turn away from the gospel. The false teachers would answer for their harmful influence upon the churches in Galatia. The truth of a coming judgment should make each of us think soberly on our actions and our teachings. It makes no difference WHO we are; we will face the Lord and give an account. Hendriksen renders this verse, *"And the one who is throwing you into confusion will have to pay the penalty, whoever he may be."*<sup>21</sup> Implied in Paul's words is the fact that those who were taken in by the error of these false teachers would likewise bear the responsibility for following such error. This truth is taught elsewhere. See 2 Peter 2:17-22; Galatians 5:4; 2 Corinthians 5:10; et al.

*5:11 ~ "But I, brethren, if I still preach circumcision, why*

*am I still persecuted? then hath the stumbling-block of the cross been done away."*

There must have been some attempt on the part of these false teachers to convince the Galatians that their doctrine was not any different than that which Paul preached; that Paul, in fact, practiced circumcision. They may have appealed to the case of Timothy to bolster their claims. But IF it was the case that Paul was himself preaching the necessity of circumcision, then why was he being persecuted? Paul could have spent time explaining why he circumcised some and yet refused to circumcise others, but that would have involved a lengthy argument. The best argument in his defense was the persecution which he received at the hand of these false teachers. IF Paul had, in fact, preached circumcision as being necessary, then he would have been on the side of the Judaizers. But it was evident that they were persecuting Paul. It is obvious, therefore, that Paul stood in opposition to these false teachers.

If Paul had been preaching the necessity of circumcision, then the "*stumbling block of the cross*" would not exist. The Jews would not have stumbled over this preaching IF in fact Paul had been preaching a co-joining of Christianity and Judaism.

**5:12 ~ "*I would that they that unsettle you would even go beyond circumcision.*"**

*"go beyond circumcision"* - The KJV reads "*would they were even cut off which trouble you.*" Barnes evidently accepts that rendering and suggests that Paul's desire was that the false teachers would be cast out of the church. Libscomb agreed:

*"They insisted on cutting off the foreskin. He would that they, as the useless foreskin, were cut off from them...Paul desired that those who troubled the church in turning away from the truth should be cut off, turned over to Satan."*<sup>22</sup>

But we think much more is meant. A number of commentators have pointed out that certain cults practiced sacral castration, and with such public knowledge of those vile and disgusting practices, *"none of the Galatians...could misunderstand Paul's ironic, and perhaps, humorous remarks."*<sup>23</sup> Hendriksen agreed and rendered this verse, *"Would that those who upset you might make eunuchs of themselves."*<sup>24</sup> The argument of the apostle is this: *"Since circumcision has lost its religious value, it is nothing more than a concision differing only in degree but not in essence from the practices of pagan priests, practices well known to the Galatians. But since the Judaizers who are upsetting the Galatians believe a little physical mutilation is of spiritual value, let them be consistent and cut away more radically. Let them go all the way, and castrate themselves, thus making eunuchs of themselves like the priests of Cybele in their wild 'devotions.'" If one should cringe at the forcefulness of Paul's words, let us remind ourselves that righteous indignation is proper, regardless of how unpleasant heaven's message might sound to us. Instead of saying, "Shame on you, Paul, for wishing such a thing!" should we not rather say, "Shame on ourselves, that when in our own day and age the soundness of the gospel is being sacrificed upon the altar of ecumenism, liberalism, and a host of other 'isms,' that we have lost the ability to manifest some righteous indignation?" We agree, however, that "the remark is a protest, not any sort of recommendation."*<sup>25</sup>

### **Christian Liberty Is Perverted By License**

5:13-26

5:13 ~ *"For ye, brethren, were called for freedom; only use*

*not your freedom for an occasion to the flesh, but through love be servants one to another."*

The argument set forth in the remainder of the chapter is that our liberty in Christ is perverted by any doctrine which would give license to indulgence in sin. It may be that these instructions were given in anticipation that the Judaizers would charge Paul's rejection of the law as a license to sin. The word "use" does not appear in the Greek text, and the idea "is, 'You are called to liberty, but it is not liberty for an occasion to the flesh.'"<sup>26</sup> There is no such thing as absolute freedom, whether it be freedom politically, socially, or religiously. Our freedom in Christ is not freedom from restraints imposed by the law of Christ. It is, rather, liberty from the servitude of sin, and the consequences of bondage thereunto.

*"but through love be servants one to another"* - Our freedom should be used to serve and love one another. Jesus taught precisely the same lesson when, after washing the feet of His disciples, He admonished them to do even as He had done. See John 13:12-16. The great desire of our selfish generation is that of being served, rather than serving others. More often than not, a person seeks a congregation with which to be identified upon the basis of, *"What do they have to give me,"* rather than, *"What can I do for the Lord in this location."* We suppose that heaven's charge that we *"be servants one to another"* is, in the final analysis, one of the great challenges presented to the child of God. It is much easier to remain passive, criticize the church, and use one's liberty as license. See also Romans 12:21; 13:14; 1 Corinthians 6:18-20; Ephesians 4:28-32; Colossians 3:5-17.

*5:14 ~ "For the whole law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."*

---

Paul here expresses the substance of the whole law. Our love of neighbor will lead men to accomplish precisely the same thing that the law, if perfectly kept, would accomplish. Barnes has this interesting note: *"The turn here in the discussion is worthy of particular notice. With great skill he changes the subject from a doctrinal argument to a strain of practical remark, and furnishes most important lessons for the right mode of overcoming our corrupt and sensual passions, and discharging our duty to others."*<sup>27</sup> A careful study of Romans 13:8-10 would serve as an inspired commentary on the remarks found here. Hendriksen has pointed out that *"the believer's incentive to obey this summarizing command is gratitude for the redemption accomplished by Christ."*<sup>28</sup>

**5:15 ~ "But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another."**

*"But if ye bite..."* – The word here translated "bite" means to bite, to sting, and *"here means to be used in the sense of contending and striving—a metaphor not improbably taken from dogs and wild beasts."*<sup>29</sup> Paul was speaking specifically of the contentions which must have existed among the brethren of Galatia. We like brother Coffman's comments here: *"Christian faith and behavior are never more frustrated and disgraced than by spiteful criticisms, derogatory remarks, snide observations and poison-tongue fulminations of Christians against each other. The fate of any group permitting such a development issues inevitably in that of 'The Gingham Dog and the Calico Cat: 'The Truth about the cat and pup is this: they ate each other up.'"*<sup>30</sup>

The attitude toward 'one another' described and condemned in this passage is the opposite of the one that was urged upon them and so addressed in verses 13 and 14. It reminds us of the story of 'two snakes that grabbed

each by the tail and each swallowed the other.' And "Cole refers to the 'two Kilkenny cats of Cromwellian times who fought so furiously that not a scrip of fur remained of either.'"<sup>31</sup>

*"Take heed that ye be not consumed..."* - By their contentions they would destroy the happiness and harmony which was found only in Christ, and ultimately lead to their own ruin, spiritually speaking. Indeed, the quickest way to destroy the spirituality of a congregation and nullify the influence of religion is to excite a spirit of contention among the members.

### **They Were To Walk By The Spirit**

5:16-26

*5:16 ~ "But I say, walk by the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh."*

The Christian life is often spoken of as a "walk." See in this connection Romans 4:12, 6:4, 8:1, 1 John 1:6-8, et al. To walk "by the Spirit" is simply to walk as the Spirit directs in His word. A faithful and consistent walk led by the directions provided by the Holy Spirit in the word will serve as a strong prohibitive against seeking and fulfilling the "lust of the flesh." The only way to overcome the lust of the flesh is to faithfully abide in the word. See also 1 John 3:9. It is important to note the "battlefield" where the struggles considered in this passage take place. The "lust of the flesh" arises in a mind that is uncontrolled by the word of God, and allowed to drift into sin. It is for this reason that Paul admonished the Corinthians to exercise the control of every thought and imagination, and to bring all things into captivity to the will of Christ (2 Cor. 10:5). By the same token, a mind controlled by the word of God will think on things that are good, holy, just, and of good

report (Phil. 4:8). These two verses (16-17) serve as a summary and introduction to the things that will follow.

*5:17 ~ "For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are contrary the one to the other; that ye may not do the things that ye would."*

The desires of the flesh draw men away from God. Christians are not exempt from the constant tug of the world and the Spirit, and every effort should be put forth to abstain from the lust of the flesh. Quite obviously, the flesh and the Spirit are *"contrary the one to the other."* They are opposite in their nature and simply cannot harmonize. The expression *"may not do"* (ASV), or *"cannot do"* (KJV), is actually much stronger in the original. The phrase is rendered by Dodridge, *"So that ye do not the things that ye would,"* and by Locke, *"You do not the things that you propose to do."* Also, the Vulgate and the Syriac give a literal translation of the Greek, *"So that you do not what you would."* The apostle sounds a strong warning that any attempt to walk after the flesh, even in the most remote sense, will lead to ultimate defeat and loss of any influence that the Spirit would otherwise have on us through the word. Here is a divine commentary on the words of our Lord, *"No man can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon"* (Matthew 6:24). Christian growth, and eventually victory, takes time. It is a constant struggle with one's self. Someone has correctly noted that we are our own worst enemy. Similar language is used in Romans 7:14ff.

*5:18 ~ "But if ye are led by the Spirit, ye are not under the law."*

A clearer statement of the cessation of the law, and any obligation on the part of the Christian thereto, simply cannot be imagined. IF it is the case that one is "*led by the Spirit*," then it is the case that "*ye are not under the law*." To extend the argument further, it IS the case that the child of God is led by the Spirit; therefore it IS the case that the child of God is NOT under the law. Brother J.W. McGarvey has this interesting analysis of the verse now before us:

By as much as the Spirit triumphs within us, by that much are we freed from feeling the presence of the law. So long as we have two wills we are sensible of conflict, and so of the restraint of law, but when our nature is merged in the will of the Spirit, so that there is but one will within us, then we lose all consciousness of restraint. We attain to that true rule of liberty which Augustine condenses in the saying: 'Love God, and do what you please.' God himself leads the life of perfect righteousness, yet God can never be said to be under law. He knows no law but his own choice, but his choice is ever righteousness because of the perfect holiness of his character. So the Christian should strive to bring his own will into such perfect accord with the will of the Spirit that he does not feel the constraint of law resting upon him.<sup>32</sup>

To be "*led by the Spirit*" is to "*walk by the Spirit*" (verse 16). Those who have been set free (5:1; 4:31; 4:26), and who consequently belong to Christ (3:29) are the same ones who walk and who are led by the Spirit. The leadings of the Spirit are not some "*better-felt-than-told*" feeling which produces subjective and illogical reasoning in the mind of the Christian. The leading of the Spirit is that which He

has revealed and delivered unto us through the apostles and prophets of the New Testament.

*5:19 ~ "Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these: fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness,"*

The "*works of the flesh*" provided here is not an exhaustive list of all the works of the flesh, as indicated by the words "*and such like....*" Similar lists appear in 1 Corinthians 6:9-10; Romans 1:18-32; Colossians 3:5-9; 2 Timothy 3:1-8. The list which follows was given by the apostle Paul for the simple reason that they NEEDED to be given to the Galatians specifically, and to all men generally.

*"are manifest"* - They are made known, or are "*well known.*" Most of the sins catalogued require little comment. But we will make at least a few passing observations along the way.

*"fornication"* is sexual impurity of any kind. The word is very general. Thayer says that the word means "*illicit sexual intercourse in general.*"<sup>33</sup> It has its root in 'porneia,' which means "*properly, a harlot, one who yields herself to defilement for the sake of gain.*"

*"uncleanness"* - This word means lewdness, or impurity of motive. Synonyms include vileness, foul desires, base motives, indecency and sexual immorality.

*"lasciviousness"* - The Greek word (*aselgeia*) means "*intemperance; licentiousness, lasciviousness...insolence, outrageous behaviour.*"<sup>34</sup> It indicates a love of sin so reckless and so audacious that a man has ceased to care what God or man thinks of his actions. This man makes no attempt to hide or cloak his sin; it is sin lost to shame.

5:20 ~ *"idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousies, wraths, factions, divisions, parties,"*

"idolatry" is the worship of idols. This includes the worship of money, or covetousness (Colossians 3:5).

"sorcery" comes from the Greek, "*pharmakeia*," and it is the use of medicine or drugs, the use of drugs for magical purposes, magic, sorcery. The practice of sorcery has existed in almost every age, but this is not to suggest that sorcerers can do those things which they lay claim to. Coffman concluded that *"the claims and devices of such practitioners are fraudulent, untruthful, deceitful and powerless to do anything either good or evil, except in the sense of causing evil in the people having resort to such things."*<sup>35</sup> It should be noted that many of these works of the flesh are perversions of things that are good in themselves.

"enmities" is discord, feuding, or a state of enmity or animosity. The lusts of the flesh produce discord among men. It should be pointed out that racial prejudice is condemned in this word.

"strife" is a contentious disposition that more often than not breaks out in violence.

"jealousies" includes malice, envy, wrath. The original word here (*zelos*) is elsewhere used in a good sense to denote zeal.

"wraths" is a *"strong passion or emotion of the mind; anger, wrath...swellings of anger."*<sup>36</sup> It is *"the blaze of temper which flares into violent words and deeds."*<sup>37</sup>

"Factions" is the party spirit that leads to loyalty to the party, and which produces feuding, disobedience, and any other contentious disposition. It is interesting that in three

of the four instances in which this word appears in the New Testament, it is found in the context of competing parties within the church.

*"divisions"* is the result of factions. Once the faction has run its course, it manifests itself in open division.

*"parties"* is different from *"divisions"* in that the parties are the result of the former divisions organized into cliques. The Greek is *"hairesis"* which means *"heresies"* and denotes a belief that is contrary to orthodoxy. *"It carries with it the idea of brethren dividing up into selfish, self-contained, exclusive fragments: breaking into cliques who shut their circle to all but their own number."*<sup>38</sup>

5:21 ~ *"envyings, drunkenness, revellings, and such like; of which I forewarn you, even as I did forewarn you, that they who practise such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God."*

*"envyings"* – This is the desire to appropriate what another possesses. The word 'jealousy' in verse 20 refers to the desire of being as well off as another; the word 'envy' refers to the desire to deprive another of what he has. Hendriksen has pointed out that our English word *"envy"* is from *"the Latin in-video, meaning 'to look against,' that is, to look with ill-will at another person because of what he is or has."*<sup>39</sup>

*"drunkenness"* is the absence of temperance and abstinence with regard to strong drink. It is *"a debauch in drinking."*<sup>40</sup>

*"revellings"* is festive procession, merry-making. In the New Testament it is lascivious feasting, carousing, drinking, partying, etc. It has the idea of unrestrained participation in those things.

## GALATIANS CHAPTER FIVE

---

*"and such like"* - meaning those things similar to the sins listed above. Paul did not intend to give an exhaustive list of those things that are included in the works of the flesh, but to present a suitable list so as to enable the child of God to determine what KIND of actions might fall into that category. Those who participate in such practices *"shall not inherit the kingdom of God."* The warning has been sounded. Who will heed?

5:22 ~ *"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,"*

The student is immediately struck with the contrast between the works of the flesh and the fruit of the Spirit. Coffman had this interesting note regarding this list:

Most of these wonderful virtues are subjective, lying within the hearts of Christians, but kindness, goodness and faithfulness are, at least in their manifestation, objective qualities. Significant especially in this list are the things left out of it. The apostle Paul did not list tongue-speaking, charismatic experiences, visions, premonitions and things like that as being connected in any manner with the 'fruit of the Spirit.' Strangely enough, some who believe that those omitted things are the fruit of the Spirit very frequently stop being faithful to the church.<sup>41</sup>

*"love"* - The Greek word in this passage is *'agape,'* and is, in fact, the greatest of the fruit listed. Though there are at least three words in the original which we translate with the English *"love,"* this *"has to do with the active seeking of the highest good of another person."*<sup>42</sup> *'Agape'* is unconditional and positive in its character. While *'philia'* involves

tenderness and warmth, 'agape' is unconquerable benevolence and undefeatable goodwill.

"joy" - The interesting thing about this word is that it *"most often describes that joy which has a basis in religion."*<sup>43</sup> Men often equate satisfaction with joy, but it is much more than that. Dick Sztanyo has pointed out that *"it has nothing to do with external circumstances. It is, rather, a deep happiness, born of a personal relationship with God (Phil. 4:4), which includes a sense of both fulfilling and having fulfilled His will."*<sup>44</sup>

"peace" - The Greek ('eirene') describes serenity, tranquillity, perfect contentment. In contemporary Greek this word has two interesting usages. First, it describes the serenity that a people enjoyed under the beneficent government of a good ruler. Villages had an official who was called the *"superintendent of the village's eirene."* He was, literally, the keeper of the public peace. Second, it is the equivalent of the Hebrew 'shalom,' and means tranquillity of heart that arises out of the realization that, even in times of trouble, we are in the hands of God. It is interesting to note that Chara and Eirene became common Christian names in the early church.

"Longsuffering" - The Greek word is used to describe the attitude of God towards man. Notice in this connection Romans 2:4, 9:22, 1 Timothy 1:16, and 1 Peter 3:20. While God had it within His power to exterminate man, the fact remains that He patiently bore with the weak creature so as to fulfill the Divine purpose in providing salvation, showing Himself to be *"just and the justifier of him that hath faith in Jesus"* (Romans 3:26). The word is used to describe a certain attitude toward people and events. Dale's comment is worthy of note:

It expresses the attitude to people which never loses patience with them, however unreasonable they may be, and which never loses hope for them, however unlovely and unteachable they may be. It never loses hope. It is the power 'to see things through.' ...It is not clad with romance and glamour; it has not the excitement of sudden adventurous action. But it is the very virtue of God himself.<sup>45</sup>

*"Kindness"* - The Greek word is sometimes translated 'gentleness.' The Greek word expresses a sympathetic kindness or sweetness of temper which puts others at ease.

*"Goodness"* - The word which Paul uses here does not appear in secular Greek. The original expresses the idea of generosity toward others. It is a generosity that springs from a heart that is kind.

*"Faithfulness"* - Fidelity is a synonym, and some translations have the word *"loyalty."* One is *"faithful"* if he is dependable, trustworthy, and loyal to his word, and the word of God. Inherent in *"faithfulness"* is the fulfilling of one's obligations in every walk of life.

5:23 ~ *"meekness, self-control; against such there is no law."*

*"Meekness"* - Barclay says that the Greek *'praotes'* is perhaps *"the most untranslatable of words."*<sup>46</sup> The numerous and diverse explanations suggest that his conclusion is correct. One has pointed out that the Greek word means *"attitude devoid of harsh intolerance and bitterness."*<sup>47</sup> It is strength and gentleness, all at the same time. Barnes says that the word means *"properly self-control, continence...It denotes the self rule*

which a man has over the evil propensities of his nature."<sup>48</sup> Barclay says "it means to be teachable, being not too proud to learn."<sup>49</sup> "Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth" (Numbers 12:3). Jesus referred to Himself as being "meek and lowly in spirit" (Matthew 11:29). William Barclay adds this note: "Aristotle defined 'praotes' as the mean between excessive anger and excessive angerlessness, the quality of the man who is always angry at the right time and never at the wrong time. What throws most light on its meaning is that the adjective 'praus' is used of an animal that has been tamed and brought under control."<sup>50</sup> See Psalms 22:26; 147:6; 149:4.

"Self-control" – The same Greek word is used to describe the athlete's discipline of his body (1 Cor. 9:25). Barclay tells us, "Secular Greek uses it of the virtue of an Emperor who never lets his private interests influence the government of his people. It is the virtue which makes a man so master of himself that he is fit to be the servant of others."<sup>51</sup> The word is sometimes translated "temperance," as in the KJV. Finally, Dale concludes that "it is that great quality which makes a man...able to live and to walk in the world, and yet keep his garments unspotted from the world."<sup>52</sup>

"against such there is no law" – There is no divine law that interferes with the exercise of these traits and virtues; nothing that condemns any of these "fruit of the Spirit." Here, then, is true freedom. The redeemed man is free to serve God, and to allow the Spirit to bear this precious fruit in the Christian's life.

**5:24 ~ "And they that are of Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with the passions and the lusts thereof."**

*"In Christ...they have crucified the flesh with its passions, and so have consented to cut themselves off from the indulgence of*

*the same.*"<sup>53</sup> Those who exercise the fruit of the Spirit will have, in fact, "*crucified the flesh with the passions and the lusts thereof.*" To be "*OF Christ Jesus*" is to belong to Him, and to obtain and maintain a proper relationship with Him by obedience to the Divine commands set forth in His law. It is the active, willful, submissive application of the law of Christ to one's life which, at one and the same time, produces the crucifixion of the flesh. See Romans 6:1-18 for an inspired commentary on this passage.

**5:25 ~ "*If we live by the Spirit, by the Spirit let us also walk.*"**

"*If we live in the Spirit*" (as per the KJV) is preferred over the ASV rendering here. To "*walk*" by the Spirit means to apply the teachings of the Spirit to our life. Since it is the case that the Christian lives in the Spirit, then the only logical conclusion is that he lives according to the word of God.

Difference of opinion has long existed among Bible scholars with regard to the indwelling and work of the Holy Spirit. Even among members of the Lord's church there has been an on-going give and take on the subject, and I am not sure that any position will ever triumph over another. Brother Coffman has pointed out that "*there are no less than eight designations in the NT of a single condition.*"<sup>54</sup> We have taken the liberty to "*consolidate*" his remarks on this subject.

- (1) 1 Corinthians 3:16; Philippians 2:13; 1 John 4:11-16; 1 Thessalonians 1:1. These passages clearly point out that *Christians are in God, and God is in them;*
- (2) 2 Corinthians 5:17; Romans 8:10; Galatians 2:20; Ephesians 3:17. These passages say *Christians are in Christ, and Christ is in them;*

- (3) 1 Corinthians 3:16; Romans 8:11; Galatians 4:6; Revelation 1:10; Galatians 5:16; and 5:25. These passages clearly teach that *the Holy Spirit is in the Christian, and that Christians are in the Spirit.*
- (4) Philippians 2:5; Colossians 3:16; 1 Corinthians 2:16 all point to the undeniable truth that *we are to have the mind of Christ, and that the word of God dwells in us.*

It should also be pointed out that "in Christ," "in whom," and "in him" appear in Paul's writings more than 150 times. Brother Coffman then concludes:

These are descriptions of ONE CONDITION, the saved condition; and there is no stretch of philosophical doodling that can find one iota's difference in the true meaning of the above descriptions of the state of enjoying the salvation of God through Jesus Christ. A full understanding of this, with all of the implications of it, will eliminate the mystical nonsense which has been advocated in this connection. The perfect identity of all the above as various expressions meaning the same thing is perfectly and glaringly obvious; but in addition, all of the above expressions are used interchangeably in the New Testament.<sup>55</sup>

5:26 ~ *"Let us not become vainglorious, provoking one another, envying one another."*

The "vainglory" and "envying" among brethren has been a most effective tool in the hands of the Devil.

The word "vainglory" means "proud or vain of empty advantages, as of birth, property, eloquence, or learning."<sup>56</sup>

*"Provoking one another"* - There is a good sense in which these words are used. See Hebrews 10:24-25. It is the context which helps us determine the meaning of the words. Vainglory and jealousy among brethren will provoke others to hard feelings, or even hatred.

As we close this chapter we thought it might be good to share with our readers the following list of *"seed thoughts"* from William Hendriksen in his commentary on this chapter:

1. Freedom is a precious gift. It is also an immense responsibility.
2. Christ is either our complete Savior or is not our Savior at all.
3. Whoever would be saved by works must render perfect obedience to the whole law. Nothing less will do.
4. Those who would be saved by their good works have lost their hold on grace...
5. For the Christian it is true that 'the best is yet to be'.
6. Faith without love is not true faith.
7. 'Excelsior' is the Christian motto. He should allow no one to throw him off his course.
8. "Consider the source" whenever one urges you to do that which is morally or spiritually questionable.
9. An evil intention, if unchecked, leads to a shameful deed. A shameful deed, if unrepented of, becomes a bad habit. A bad habit, if not discarded, will grow into a depraved character, which, in turn, leads to perdition.
10. Showing that you have confidence in a person, if you are at all able to do this with candor, is excellent psychology.
11. The Devil does not persecute those whom he already has captured.

12. Are we becoming so selfish that our cheeks no longer glow with indignation when harm is being done to those whom, supposedly, we love?
13. True liberty is not the privilege to do whatever one's evil heart desires to do, but is the Spirit-imparted ability and desire to do what one should do.
14. The Christian's law is love.
15. Bitter (biting) words harm the biter as well as the one bitten. They tend to destroy the fellowship.
16. Overcome evil with good.
17. Satan has a 'fifth column' in our hearts. But the Holy Spirit also resides there. Hence, the conflict.
18. A person enjoys true freedom when the Holy Spirit has taken the helm of the ship which bears him over the troubled sea of life.
19. What today is often called "sickness" is by Scripture called "*obvious work of the flesh.*"
20. We should practice self-denial, not self-indulgence.
21. "*Private*" sins, such as jealousy and envy, are not any better than "*public*" sins, such as drinking bouts and revelries.
22. Love heads the list of virtues.
23. The true Christian is loyal to his God, gentle to his neighbor, and has himself under control.
24. Be in practice what you are (have confessed to be) in principle.
25. You derive all your strength from the Spirit. Then let the Spirit lead you in every phase of your life and conduct.
26. Rude self-assertion is displeasing to the Lord.

### Chapter Five Endnotes

- 1 Barnes, page 375.
- 2 Hendriksen, page 192.
- 3 Hendriksen, page 193.

- 4 Coffman, page 87.
- 5 Barnes, page 377.
- 6 Hendriksen, page 195.
- 7 Hendriksen, page 195.
- 8 Coffman, page 88.
- 9 Hendriksen, page 196.
- 10 Hendriksen, page 196.
- 11 Hendriksen, page 38-39.
- 12 **Elkins-Ross Debate on Baptism and Faith Alone**  
(Parkersburg, WV: Therefore Stand Publications, 1980), page xiv;
- 13 Elkins-Ross Debate, page xiv.
- 14 Coffman, page 89.
- 15 Huxtable, page 242.
- 16 Barnes, page 379.
- 17 Coffman, page 91.
- 18 Hendriksen, page 202.
- 19 Lipscomb, page 260.
- 20 Barnes, page 380..
- 21 Hendriksen, page 203.
- 22 Lipscomb, page 262.
- 23 Coffman, page 93.
- 24 Hendriksen, page 205.
- 25 Coffman, page 93.
- 26 Barnes, page 381.
- 27 Barnes, page 382.
- 28 Hendriksen, page 212.
- 29 Barnes, page 382.
- 30 Coffman, page 94-95.
- 31 Hendriksen, page 212.
- 32 McGarvey, page 283.
- 33 Thayer, page 532.
- 34 Harper, page 55.
- 35 Coffman, page 97.
- 36 Harper, page 179.
- 37 Dale, page 135.
- 38 Dale, page 137.
- 39 Hendriksen, page 221.
- 40 Mac Deaver, **"Spiritual Freedom Is Not Fleshly**

**License,"** *Studies in Galatians*, Edited by Dub McClish (Denton, TX: Valid Publications, Inc., 1986) page 196.

41 Coffman, page 97.

42 Dale, page 137.

43 Barclay, page 50.

44 Sztanyo, Dick, "*The Fruit Of The Spirit Is Joy*," **Spiritual Sword**, Volume 13, October 1981 (Memphis, TN: Getwell Church of Christ) page 7.

45 Dale, page 138.

46 Barclay, page 51.

47 Deaver, Mac, "*The Fruit Of The Spirit Is Meekness*," **Spiritual Sword**, Volume 13, October 1981 (Memphis, TN: Getwell Church of Christ) page 19.

48 Barnes, page 288.

49 Barclay, page 51.

50 Barclay, page 52.

51 Barclay, page 52.

52 Dale, page 139.

53 McGarvey, page 284.

54 Coffman, page 97.

55 Coffman, page 99.

56 Barnes, page 389.



## **Galatians Chapter Six**

**C**hapter six is a continuation of the "*Practical Section*," in which the "*Doctrine of Liberty*" is applied. In this chapter we will see:

1. Christian liberty is perfected in love, 6:1-10;
2. Paul rebukes these false teachers, 6:11-13;
3. Paul's brands as an apostle, 6:14-18;

### **Christian Liberty Is Perfected In Love**

6:1-10

*6:1 ~ "Brethren, even if a man be overtaken in any trespass, ye who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; looking to thyself, lest thou also be tempted."*

Having discussed that which would imperil Christian liberty, the apostle Paul now turns his attention to the fulfillment of Christian liberty, namely that of faith working through love.

*"Overtaken in a trespass"* - The key word in this verse is *"overtaken."* The word suggests surprise, the victim being entrapped and led away without warning. It is not a case of some Christian overtaking a trespass, but that of the trespass overtaking him. Paul is not referring to someone who has committed a deliberate or willful sin. Nor is he describing someone who is beyond the point of no return. The one described here is a *"dislocated member"* of the body of Christ. Here is someone who, without deliberately planning to engage in some evil deed, embarks upon a course that ultimately leads him into some trespass. Before

he realizes it, he has participated in that thing, and been overcome by its deceptive nature. The fact that a man can be overtaken in a trespass implies the possibility of apostasy. Why in the world some would deny such a possibility is quite astonishing. The Bible states plainly that some Christians **DID** fall (1 Timothy 1:18; Galatians 5:4-7), that a child of God **CAN** fall (Luke 8:13), and that some indeed **WILL** fall (1 Timothy 4:1-3). It should also be emphasized that Christians can be guarded from falling. Proper safeguards have been given unto us by God for our protection. Notice in this connection Jude 21, 24; 2 Peter 1:10; Ephesians 6:10-18. Finally, once a child of God has fallen, he can then be restored provided he seek God, repent, pray (Acts 8:22), and work (Revelation 2:5, 16, 21).

*"Ye who are spiritual" - Every Christian sins (1 John 1:8-9), but there is a far cry difference between sinning on occasions due to human weakness, and living a life of sin, or being "overtaken" in a sin. The faithful child of God bears a responsibility toward his brother who, for one reason or another, might slip into sin. Should it be the case that a brother finds himself overcome, then those who are spiritual have the sacred obligation to restore the erring brother. It should be pointed out that the "spiritual man is the man who walks by the Spirit (5:16, 25), and who himself manifests the fruit of the Spirit in his own life... Spirituality is not a fixed or absolute condition, for the evidence of true spirituality is: 'Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ' (2 Pet. 3:18)."*<sup>1</sup> See in this connection Romans 8:4, 6, 14; 1 Peter 2:5; 2 John 4; 1 John 1:7. Nor is spirituality to be determined subjectively. It makes no difference how one might "feel." *"In the New Testament the word 'spiritual' is never used to refer to some ethereal, non-material thing, or something that is 'better-felt-than-told,' or some quality or feeling that is ecstatic or that gives one a 'holy glow,'*

*but always refers to something that was produced or directed by the Spirit of God. The way to be more 'spiritual' in our worship is not by turning on a glow of red lights to remind us of the blood of Christ when we take the Lord's Supper, dimming the lights during prayer, or going through some other psychological gimmick, but by making sure our thinking, talking and acting is produced by the Spirit of God."*<sup>2</sup> The only true means of determining if someone or something is spiritual is whether or not it is taught and authorized in the word of God.

The Holy Spirit is God's agent in conversion and sanctification, and the word of God, the truth, is the **instrument and medium** of sanctification and conversion (John 17:17, Ephesians 6:17; 2 Thessalonians 2:13, 14). If something is neither authorized or commanded in the words of the Spirit, the New Testament, it cannot be spiritual in the Bible sense, and the belief and practice thereof cannot make one spiritual (1 Peter 4:11; Acts 14:24; 2 John 9). Spirituality is the state of one who is led and ruled by the Spirit of Christ, through the word of God.<sup>3</sup>

The Spirit led child of God will demonstrate his relationship to the Father by his good works, and obedience to the commands of his Lord. David Miller has some good comments regarding the meaning and application of what it means to be 'spiritual':

Spiritual worship' entails responding rationally to God's will with worship that is approved by Him (Rom. 12:1-2). 'Spiritual songs' (Eph. 5:19) are songs whose lyrics convey correct biblical concepts. The 'law is spiritual' (Rom. 7:14) because its source is the Spirit and it constitutes an accurate expression of the Spirit's will. Yet current proponents of change leave the

impression that our worship assemblies would be more 'spiritual' if we would begin employing lifting up arms, dramatic presentations, handclapping, female worship leaders, solos and choirs, etc. They simply have not grasped the biblical meaning of 'spirituality.' Such innovations cannot be 'spiritual' since they are not authorized by the Spirit in the New Testament. They may well create more emotional excitement among participants, but such pleasurable sensations are not what the Bible designates 'spiritual.'<sup>4</sup>

*"Restore such a one in a spirit of meekness"* – This word 'restore' means to *"mend, to bring something or someone back to its or his former position of wholeness or soundness."* Adam Clarke points out that the word *"restore"* is a metaphor taken from a dislocated limb, set and restored back to its proper place by the hand of a skillful and tender surgeon.<sup>5</sup> The same word is used with respect to mending nets (Matt. 4:21; Mark 1:19), and even perfecting human character (2 Cor. 13:11, 'be perfected'). See also Luke 6:40 and 1 Thessalonians 3:10. As spiritual persons admonished to *"restore"* those who have been overtaken in a trespass, we are being directed to follow a positive course with respect to the trespasser. The responsibility resting upon each child of God is clear. This is as much a command as the Great Commission, or the obligation on the part of the alien sinner to be baptized into Christ. We are neglectful of this responsibility when we (1) ignore a brother's sin, (2) make light of his sin, (3) excuse his sin, (4) or think that in some way it will go away or *"take care of itself."* The neglect of fulfilling this most important responsibility in the way that God has instructed has led to a toleration of sin within the body of Christ unprecedented in years gone by. Unfortunately,

it has long been the practice of many to ignore, defend, excuse, and make light of sin. It is also the common practice of some to talk more **about** backsliders than **to** them, and to tell others the weaknesses and sins of others rather than to help them overcome spiritual failure. When one is already down and in misery, such is no time for heartless, brutal, unkind words of abuse and condemnation. It is not our duty to step on, trample or stamp one who is down: Our God given duty is to try to help him get up! Yet the attitude of some tends to keep one down, to hinder his restoration, and their condition thereby becomes worse than their fallen brother.<sup>6</sup>

It is important to note here that sin must be dealt with no matter the reason for a brother's being caught up in that sin. In the final analysis, any man overtaken in sin is in danger of losing his soul.

*"Looking to thyself lest thou also be tempted"* - Notice the change from plural ('you who are spiritual') to singular-*"lest also you be tempted."* There is an ever present danger that the child of God can become so concerned with others, that he fails to take inventory of himself. There is a two-fold warning in this verse. He who seeks to restore the erring must not be like the Pharisee who looked down upon the lowly publican. Meekness must characterize our approach to those overtaken in a trespass. In addition, we must avoid overconfidence in our own spiritual status, as if we cannot be overtaken like this erring brother. A haughty attitude toward one who has fallen into sin has no place in the life of a Christian. Meekness, and a *"spirit of gentleness"* must characterize our attempt to help the brother overtaken in sin. Brother David Lipscomb put it this way: *"Nor is it to be undertaken by anyone lacking the*

*qualification of spirituality, for it must be done in a spirit of gentleness, and there is danger of falling into a sense of superiority...But it is to be done in an humble and unpretentious and gentle spirit.*"<sup>7</sup> In this connection see 2 Timothy 2:24-26. There is a grave danger that one might, in the process of restoring another, develop a Pharisaical attitude, thanking God that he is not as *"this other man"* (cf. Luke 18:9-14). Such, of course, is sinful, and should be avoided. Notice also 1 Corinthians 10:12.

And why it is so important that we restore the fallen?

- (1) First, *"to save a soul from death"* (James 5:19-20);
- (2) Second, by doing so we *"cover a multitude of sins"* (James 5:20);
- (3) Third, when we restore the fallen we are following the example of Jesus (Mark 1:17; Luke 9:23; 1 Pet. 2:21; Luke 19:10);
- (4) Our salvation depends upon doing what God's word tells us to do. Faith only will not save us. The obligation is set forth here; we must obey it.

**6:2 ~ *"Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ."***

The Law of Christ is far superior to the law of Moses, and why in the world the translators did not capitalize the word here, while doing so with reference to the law of Moses is simply inexcusable. It is imperative that we point out the fact that there is such a thing as a *"law of Christ."* Christ is our example here. Notice how He dealt with the sinful woman (John 8:11), the penitent thief (Luke 23:43), Simon Peter (Luke 22:61), etc.

There are a number of sacred obligations that challenge the child of God and test the genuineness of his faith. In

the previous verse there is the obligation to "*restore the backslider.*" In this verse there is the obligation to "*bear ye one another's burdens.*" There is no contradiction between this verse and the instruction that "*each man shall bear his own burden.*" The Greek words translated "*burden*" in verses two and five are different. One word in verse five is *baros*, denoting a weight, and is applicable to a *spiritual burden*; whereas the other is *phortion*, which means load. The later word is used in Acts 27:20 to refer to the cargo of a ship, and thus has something to do with the purpose of being. It is clear that in this verse Paul is speaking of the responsibility that each one of us has to help one another in their sorrows due perhaps to some misfortune of life. Evidently the burdens contemplated here are those pertaining to the daily struggles of life that come our way in the form of suffering, temptation, and/or trials of life. Or,

...the burden is the sense of weakness and shame, the sense of dishonor done to the name of the Lord Jesus, which is the portion of a believer who has been overtaken in a trespass...When we see a brother overtaken in any trespass, weak and struggling to rise again, we should with genuine sympathy render him all the assistance possible.<sup>8</sup>

In verse 5, Paul speaks of the obligation that each Christian has to bear his own responsibility of Christian faithfulness. Neglect in this area of rendering assistance to the weak and fallen brother is inexcusable. One might think he is a pretty good Christian, but if he does not put his shoulder under the burdens of others who need him, he is, like the Corinthians who lacked love (1 Cor. 13), only sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal.

*"So fulfill the Law of Christ" – Paul's clear reference to a "law of Christ" stands opposed to those modern day antinomians who deny its existence. If there is no "law" for the child of God living this side of the cross, then the obligation set forth here has no meaning whatsoever. We agree with brother Coffman here: "As for the allegation that the 'law of Christ is not a law in the legal sense,' there is no way to read 'Law of Christ' except in the sense of 'God's Law'; and how could divine law be defined as not being in a legal sense? The very term legal means 'pertinent to our conformity to law.'"*<sup>9</sup>

**6:3 ~ "For if a man thinketh himself to be something when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself."**

Who is this "man" that "thinketh himself to be something"? It is that man who thinks he is above others, free of sin, and in need of no correction. Rather than being "spiritual," he manifests that he himself is in need of restoring by one who truly is spiritual. Beyond this there is the warning to those who might presume that in helping those who have "fallen," that they themselves are somehow beyond any such apostasy. Crouch said it so well:

A chief hindrance to the sympathetic bearing of the burdens of others is an overconfident spirit which is a product of self-deception. When one feels he is too good or safe to commit certain sins or even associate with and help those who do, he is likely to be guilty of harsh censure of the weak and fail to restore them.<sup>10</sup>

This does not mean that we should lose courage and conclude that we cannot amount to anything, deeming ourselves unfit to perform any work in the Lord's kingdom. Paul is addressing the spirit of overconfidence in oneself.

**6:4 ~ "But let each man prove his own work, and then shall he have his glorying in regard of himself alone, and not of his neighbor."**

The work spoken of here is "practical behavior contrasted with profession." See in this connection Philippians 2:12. William Hendriksen renders this as follows: "Let each one test his own work; then his reason to boast will be in himself alone, and not in (comparing himself) with someone else." A man can "test" his own work only by comparing it with the word of God and, by proper discernment, determine if it is approved in the sight of God. Nothing should be taken for granted in the Christian life. We are to prove all things (1 Thess. 5:21), and we are prove ourselves (1 Cor. 11:28). An old proverb stated, "He who mirrors himself in the mirror of another person's conduct mirrors himself gently."

"and then shall he have glorying in regard of himself..." - We think brother Lipscomb's analysis of this passage is right on target:

Self-examination will lead to a true estimate of oneself, ascertained not by comparison with the attainments of others, but with the requirements of the law of Christ...He will judge his own actions by the word of God, and will find as much ground for boasting as it will give him, and no more. His standard will be absolute and not relative, and the amount of boasting will be proportioned accordingly."<sup>11</sup>

**6:5 - "For each man shall bear his own burden."**

Although one may help another out of his difficulties, in the final analysis that brother who is in need of assistance, and has in fact received help from others, must give an

account of himself before God. No man can excuse himself from his personal responsibility before the Almighty because others failed to do their duty to help him.

Here the word "*burden*" is translated from "*phortion*," and it means a load which no one can transfer to another. It signifies personal responsibility and duty. Every child of God has the personal obligation to (1) study, 2 Timothy 2:15; (2) pray without ceasing, 1 Thessalonians 5:17; (3) grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord, 2 Peter 3:18; (4) fight the good warfare, 2 Timothy 4:7-8. There is a great advantage in one bearing his own burden. Just as a soldier is strengthened by carrying his backpack, so the child of God is strengthened by bearing his own burdens (James 1:2-4).

Responsibility cannot be transferred. Each man will be judged in accordance with his own deeds (Jer. 17:10, 32:19, Ezek. 18:20, Matt. 16:27, Rom. 2:6, Rev. 2:23, 20:13)... Burdens should be carried jointly, but the load of responsibility differs for each individual, and in the Judgment Day the manner in which brother A has assumed his responsibility will not make things easier or harder for brother B.<sup>12</sup>

Beyond the burdens which we must bear ourselves, and those which we must help others bear, there are those burdens which only the Lord can help us bear. The burden of sin (Romans 6:23), the burden of anxiety (James 4:13-15), and trust in God regarding those things that we simply cannot do for ourselves (Proverbs 3:5-6, Isaiah 26:3). Leslie Thomas (as quoted by brother Crouch) wrote:

It is impossible to obey one part of this law without obeying the other. No one can bear his own burdens without at the same time bearing

the burdens of others; and neither can he realize the awful responsibilities of his own being without at the same time realizing the claims of his brethren. No one can find his own true life without giving up his own individual will, without merging his personal interests in those of the human brotherhood.<sup>13</sup>

**6:6 ~ *"But let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things."***

The language in this verse cannot be construed to mean anything other than the fact that every child of God has the Divine obligation to financially support those who teach and preach the gospel. R.E. Howard, in the Beacon Bible Commentary pointed out that the word translated "*communicate*" is *koinoneo*, and means to share, to participate as a partner. Lipscomb summed it up thusly: "*When the sympathetic union that God requires is maintained between the taught and the teacher, the matter of the temporal support of the teacher comes in as a necessary detail to be generously and prudently arranged, but which will not be felt on either side as a burden or a difficulty.*"<sup>14</sup> See also 1 Corinthians 9:1-14; 2 Corinthians 8:7-9; 1 Timothy 5:8.

**6:7 ~ *"Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."***

This verse, and that which follows, refer to the sin of living after the lusts of the flesh and participating in the works of the flesh mentioned in 5:18-19. With regard to sowing and reaping, see Job 4:8, Hosea 8:7, Proverbs 22:8. Note Carefully that the principle of sowing and reaping was established by God Himself. "*Wherever men or nations today obey their own foolish philosophies instead of the word of God*

## GALATIANS CHAPTER SIX

---

*they are sowing to the wind; and already the whirlwind gathers dark and threatening upon the horizons of all the troubled earth. It might be almost time to reap the whirlwind."*<sup>15</sup>

*"God is not mocked" – This is another way of saying, "Don't think for a moment that you can make fun of or in any way ridicule the warnings that God gives." If a man sows his "wild oats," he can be sure that he will reap a harvest of the same. David Lipscomb's words are as good as any we have found here: "If we should think that we can sow one thing and reap another we would be thinking that we had the power to mock God—that is, defy him by overriding his plans and arrangements."*<sup>16</sup> Men may think they can "break God," or break His commandments without incurring God's wrath upon them, but in the final analysis it is the foolish lawbreaker who shall be broken by God.

*"soweth...reap" – Here is the Divine law of seedtime and harvest. When we sow grain, we reap grain; when we sow tares, we reap tares. One cannot sow "wild oats" and expect to reap righteousness and eternal life. It has been proven repeatedly that one hour of wild oats may produce ninety-nine years in prison. It is also noted here that according to the law of sowing and reaping, we always reap MORE than we sow.*

*6:8 ~ "For he that soweth unto his own flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth unto the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap eternal life."*

The words "corruption" and "life everlasting" must be understood in both the quantitative and qualitative sense. So far as the **quantitative** sense is concerned, there is no difference; both last on and on. "Corruption" does not refer to annihilation, but everlasting destruction (cf. 2 Thess. 1:9).

"Life everlasting" is equal in duration to the "corruption." See John 3:16; Acts 13:46; 48; Romans 2:7; 5:21; 6:22-23; 1 Timothy 1:16 and 6:12, Titus 1:2; Titus 3:7; 1 John 3:15; Jude 21; Matthew 25:46. But so far as the **qualitative** sense is concerned, these two words, "corruption" and "life everlasting," present a striking contrast. Those who have sown to the flesh will awaken unto shame and everlasting contempt (Dan. 12:2). They will find themselves in that place where the worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched (Mark 9:48). They will be outside the banquet hall of the heavenly feast (Matt. 8:11-12; 22:13; 25:10-13). On the other hand, those who have sown to the Spirit will shine as the brightness of the firmament and as the stars forever and ever (Dan. 12:3). They will bear the image of the heavenly (1 Cor. 15:49), and physically will be conformed to the body of Christ's glory (Phil. 3:21).

6:9 ~ *"And let us not be weary in well-doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not."*

Here is yet another obligation resting upon every child of God. Christ went about doing good, and we are to be like Him. "Well doing" is literally "doing that which is beautiful." Not only is such expected of the child of God, but persistence in the same is the dividing line between faithfulness and denial. We should keep in mind that our work in the kingdom of Christ will produce rewarding fruit. See Isaiah 55:11. Hendriksen had this discerning note:

When the apostle says, 'Let us not grow weary in well doing, he is pointing his finger at a well-known weakness of human nature. Well-doing requires continued effort, constant toil; but human nature, being fond of ease, lacks staying power, is easily discouraged. This is especially

true when results are not always apparent at once, when those who should help refuse to co-operate, and when no reward seems ever to be coming our way.<sup>17</sup>

*"In due season we shall reap"* - God's "season" is not measured by the changing of colors or the new foliage that comes each Spring. This "season" is the time of God's appointment, and that according to His schedule. Keep in mind that Paul was making reference to the relation between sowing and reaping. Reaping is related to sowing, not only in the QUALITY of the seed (kind after kind), but also in regard to the QUANTITY of that which is sown. It is fact that we will reap, and we will likely reap more in quantity than that which we have sown.

*"If we faint not"* - See in this connection Hebrews 12:1-2. The promise of reward whether it be in this life, or in that which is to come, is conditional. The promise here follows on the heels of the principle of sowing and reaping, and would suggest that we shall reap the fruits of our sowing if, and only if, we do not faint along the way. Souls are won by persistent well-doing in teaching; churches are built by well doing in teaching the gospel to the lost and in strengthening those who are babes in the faith.

*6:10 ~ "So then, as we have opportunity, let us work that which is good toward all men, and especially toward them that are of the household of the faith."*

The great danger in fulfilling our obligation to do good unto others is the idea that God intended for His church to be a social organization designed to meet the physical needs of the whole of humanity. Brother Coffman addressed this problem thusly:

Although the Christian must do good and not evil to all men, there is a special and prior obligation to Christian brothers, as elaborated by Jesus in the passage cited [Matthew 25:31-46, TW]. 'Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these MY BRETHREN...' was the test of receiving or losing eternal life. The savage humanism of the current era which would tie the full resources of the church of God to every social scheme that comes along cannot be justified by a proper respect to what Jesus said there and what Paul said here.<sup>18</sup>

It seems that with every passing year there is a growing tendency on the part of congregations of the Lord's church to turn His church into a soup kitchen.

*"As we have opportunity"* - Opportunities are seldom duplicated. Someone has pointed out that an opportunity is a fit or convenient time, a favorable juncture of circumstances, a good chance for advancement or progress. The child of God should exercise stewardship and grasp the opportunity when it comes along (cf. Matthew 25:1-13; 14-30), while remembering that opportunity plus ability equals responsibility.

*"Let us do good unto all men"* - See Matthew 7:12; Romans 12:21; 1 Thessalonians 5:15; 1 Peter 3:10-11; etc. While the obligation rests upon us to do good to all men, there is a special obligation that rests upon us with regard to our brethren, described here as *"those that are of the household of the faith."*

### **Paul Rebukes These False Teachers**

6:11-13

6:11 ~ *"See with how large letters I write unto you with mine own hand."*

Paul's letters were usually written by the hand of an amanuensis, and authenticated by his own signature. See in this connection Romans 11:22; 1 Corinthians 16:21; Colossians 4:18; 2 Thessalonians 3:17. While there is some question as to whether Paul wrote the entirety of this letter, or merely wrote the closing portion of this epistle, we simply cannot see how to avoid the conclusion that the words of this verse apply to anything less than the whole of the epistle. As to the meaning of these words, we have followed the direction of those who see in this a reference to the size of the epistle rather than the size of the letters themselves. James Macknight noted, "*The phrase is rightly translated how large a letter. The first word [large, TW] properly signifies of what size; and the second [letters, TW] denotes an epistle, as well as the letters of the alphabet.*"<sup>19</sup> There is simply no logical reason to assume that Paul was here referring to the size of the letters which appeared in the epistle. What would be the purpose for such an emphasis? In addition, the words "I write" are better rendered "I have written," suggesting that the reference is to the whole of the epistle itself. Those who might object to this interpretation on the basis that Romans is much larger than Galatians fail to understand that this relatively short epistle was written before Romans.

6:12 ~ "*As many as desire to make a fair show in the flesh, they compel you to be circumcised; only that they may not be persecuted for the cross of Christ.*"

"to make a fair show in the flesh...." – These words are a direct frontal attack on the Judaizing teachers. Their converts were a "fair show in the flesh." Charles Crouch wrote,

The popularity of Judaism in Galatia evidently set the stage for insincere teachers to make an

outward show or carnal appeal. Paul thus exposed the real objective of the Judaizers in trying to compel Gentiles to be circumcised. They were not truly concerned about the spiritual welfare of the people, but were greatly concerned in showing their loyalty to Jewish rites and customs by winning proselytes to Judaism through the church. When a Christian yielded to them, it was another trophy of which to boast to Jews or proselytes.<sup>20</sup>

Coffman points out that *"this verse is valuable as showing that this whole chapter still deals with the Moses vs. Christ theme."*<sup>21</sup> We still have those in our midst who are mesmerized by numbers rather than a genuine love for the truth and the souls of men.

*"only that they may not be persecuted"* – The Judaizing teachers modified their teaching so as to escape the persecution that comes with preaching the truth of the Gospel, namely the truth that Jew and Gentile alike find entrance into the kingdom separate and apart from the rites of the law of Moses. This verse was designed to show that the Judaizers were nothing more than insincere hypocrites. It is doubtful that they really cared anything at all for the law of Moses and were more concerned about finding favor with the Jewish community for the sake of self-gratification and glory. In the next few verses Paul will draw the attention of his audience to the cross of Jesus. We will follow brother Wendell Winkler's homiletic outline here: *"Relative to the centrality of the cross in the text being studied, let us observe that the passage (verses 12-14) speaks of the following: (a) Persecution 'for' the cross (v.12); (b) Glorifying 'in' the cross (v. 14); (c) Crucifixion 'by' the cross (v. 14)."*<sup>22</sup>

With this in mind, think for a moment upon *Persecution 'FOR' the Cross of Christ*. Winkler wrote:

If the Judaizers had insisted on complete dependence on the blood of the cross, renouncing all dependence on the merit of external rites, they would have been persecuted by the Jews. So, to escape such, they sought to blend Judaism with Christianity...Today, to escape ridicule and ostracism, there are some who would seek to blend the church and the world, the church and denominationalism, etc.; but there are some things that do not mix (Deut. 22:10-11). In fact, in the case of Judaism and Christianity, the latter was to displace the other! There can be no place for compromise... There is no peaceful coexistence with evil and error! Accordingly, let us cease trying to placate denominationalism by compromising Truth in order to escape the taunts of 'narrow,' 'bigoted,' etc. ...Furthermore, let us cease trying to maintain the approbation of worldly associates by compromising our convictions, doing such to escape the derision of 'prude,' 'holier-than-thou,' or 'trying to play God.' Let us remember that 'he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds (2 John 11). 'And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them' (Eph. 5:11).<sup>23</sup>

*6:13 ~ "For not even they who receive circumcision do themselves keep the law; but they desire to have you circumcised, that they may glory in your flesh."*

The Judaizing teachers who were so emphatic in stressing the keeping of the law, and especially the act of circumcision, did not themselves keep the law. This, of

course, exposes their insincerity and the weakness of their position. In order to remain consistent, they would have had to keep the whole of the OT law faithfully, and, we might add, perfectly.

*"they desire to have you circumcised, that they may glory in your flesh"* – The aim of these false teachers was to gain converts to Judaism for the purpose of glorying in numbers, while they themselves had no intention of keeping the whole of the Mosaic law. As Crouch points out, *"Their policy was dishonorable in aim, motive and spirit."*<sup>24</sup> Brother Crouch then makes this practical and most important observation: *"And he who pretends today that those who are friends of truth and followers of Christ and the New Testament will preach only a positive gospel and never deal in controversial or negative aspects of the true gospel of Christ has not read Galatians or the remainder of the New Testament very carefully."*<sup>25</sup>

These Judaizers were not concerned about law keeping, as evidenced by the fact that they themselves did not keep it. The motivation for their evangelistic zeal was nothing more than an egotistical *"head counting."*

Brother Coffman's interpretation of this passage is most interesting.

Something of the strategy of the Jerusalem hierarchy is detected in these two verses. They evidently had persuaded certain Christians who had become Judaizers to procure, by any practical means, the circumcision of as many of the Gentile converts as possible, leaving out of sight the ultimate amalgamation of all of them as proselytes to Judaism, which they doubtless envisioned as coming at a later phase of the effort. This accounts for the fact that the Judaizers

neither kept the Law themselves nor sought to bind any of its more objectionable features upon their followers. The hypocrisy of such a device Paul exposed in this verse.<sup>26</sup>

If his view is correct, it would point to the deceitfulness and stealth of the false teachers' operations in an attempt to obtain their desired goal.

### **Paul's Brands As An Apostle**

6:14-18

**6:14 ~ *"But far be it from me to glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world hath been crucified unto me, and I unto the world."***

*"far be it from me to glory..."* – The sin of our generation is the fact that they glory in their own achievements and capabilities. Humanism has become the predominant philosophy among those who are *"in the know,"* and pride is the fuel that fans the flame. Paul would not glory but in one thing, namely *"the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ."* If there was ever a man who could glory in personal attainment, it was this man Paul. How grateful we are that he gave it all up for the cause of Christ. He told the Philippians, *"Yea verily, and I count all things to be loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but refuse, that I may gain Christ, and be found in him, not having a righteousness of mine own, even that which is of the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith"* (Philippians 3:8-9). While some may glory in human attainment, or their party or sect, some favorite doctrine or tradition handed down from their fathers, let us, like Paul, determine that we will glory in nothing, save the cross of Christ.

In the study of these verses, let us now consider, *Glorifying 'IN' the Cross*:

All that surrounds the cross is "glory." Again from brother Winkler:

A glorious Savior died thereupon (Acts 2:22 ff). A glorious love prompted it (John 3:16; Rom. 5:8; 1 John 4:9-10). Innumerable glorious blessings flow therefrom (Eph. 2:16). A glorious church was made possible by it (Eph. 5:25-27). The glorious coming, with its attendant heavenly reward, was made possible by it (Tit. 2:13; Eph 5:25-27; 1 Cor. 15:22-26; Phi. 3:21); and the glorious Gospel became a reality through it (1 Tim. 1:11; 2 Cor. 3:16-18).<sup>27</sup>

The cross was a symbol of shame in Paul's day. Only the worst criminals were crucified. In fact, it was such a horrible means of punishment that the Roman citizen was exempt from crucifixion. But to Paul there was a certain sense of glory in the cross. On the other hand, here are some false standards in which men glory:

a) **Educational acumen**: I have taken the liberty to quote Winkler's reference to a statement by the beloved G.C. Brewer:

Yet men today are depending on everything except the blood. Statesmen are depending on moral legislation to save the people. Educators are depending on education and scientists are depending on scientific researches and discoveries. Philosophers are depending upon the potency of their philosophical speculations. All these things may be good in their own places; they may bring benefits into our earth life, but they only embellish and build up the outer man

and leave the heart untouched and unsaved. Wisdom could not save Solomon from idolatry and polygamy. Philosophy could not save Bacon from bribery. Poetry could not save Byron from immorality. Education could not save Leopold and Loeb from crimes of the most shocking, brutal and atrocious nature. Ah, yes, they had education, art, philosophy and science before Jesus came to save a ruined world. The philosophy of Socrates, Seneca, Phthagoras, Plato, Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius has never been excelled except by the principles of the gospel. Yet the conditions of society at the time these men lived have been depicted in as dark colors by Seneca and other non-Christian writers as it is by Paul. Licentiousness and cruelty ruled the age and ruined their nations. Art attained such a height in Athens that it is said the birds of the heavens pecked at the grapes which Appelles painted on the canvas. But art and philosophy could not save Athens from eternal ruin.<sup>28</sup>

b) **Financial affluence:** The rich man gloried in his material possessions. See Luke 12:6-12. Then, there was the rich young ruler (Matt. 19:16-22), and the rich man who was buried while Lazarus was carried away by the angels into Abraham's bosom (Luke 16:19-31). But financial affluence cannot buy happiness, and all the money and gold in the world cannot save a man's soul from hell.

c) **Numerical strength:** *"There is not restraint to the Lord to save by many or by few"* (1 Sam. 14:6). It is unfortunate that our brethren have, of late, sought to imitate the denominations, and in our *"egotistical competitiveness"* we have adopted many of their questionable and unscriptural methods.

d) **Meritorious goodness:** Here is the very thrust of this letter, and the heavenly message that *"works of law"* simply cannot save. See Titus 3:3-7; Isa. 64:6.

And why do we glory in the cross? Because...

- (a) IT IS HEAVEN'S PLEDGE;
- (b) IT IS THE SINNER'S PLEA;
- (c) IT IS THE CHRISTIAN'S HOPE;
- (d) IT IS THE DEVIL'S DEFEAT.

*"And I unto the world" - We are particularly impressed with Macknight's comments: "The cross of Christ crucifies Christians to the world, by inspiring them with such principles and leading them to a course of life which renders them in the eyes of the world as contemptible, and as unfit for their purposes as if they were crucified and dead."*<sup>29</sup>

**6:15 ~ "For neither is circumcision anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature."**

Circumcision contributes nothing to one's salvation. Nor does uncircumcision. The only way any man can ever hope to receive salvation is by becoming a *"new creature."* This is the underlying message throughout this letter, and one now repeated for emphasis as the apostle nears the completion of this epistle.

**6:16 ~ "And as many as shall walk by this rule, peace be upon them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God."**

*"shall walk by this rule" - What is "this rule"? It is the law of Christ, the heaven inspired constitution of the Lord's church, and all that is involved in the keeping of it. Winker wrote, "This rule is the repudiation of the fleshly, carnal*

*ordinances of the old law and the acceptance of the new life in Christ with its accompanying detachment or death to the world.*"<sup>30</sup>

The consequence of walking by "this rule" is "peace and mercy." Men seek for peace, but unfortunately they are looking in all the wrong places. Peace is not derived from material possession. It is the portion of all those who have been justified by faith. But peace and mercy are inseparable. Without mercy there would be no peace.

What, or who, is the "Israel of God"? Some have suggested that the conjunction 'kai' can be rendered by our English, "and," "so," "also," "likewise," "even," "nevertheless," "and yet," "but," etc. This being the case, when the conjunction is rendered 'and,' it suggests after the apostle Paul pronounces God's blessings upon those who "are of faith" (3:9), those who "belong to Christ" and who "walk by the Spirit" (5:16), and are "led by the Spirit" (5:18), that he then turns his attention to those of Jewish heritage and pronounces peace and mercy, not only upon those who walk by faith, but upon the Jewish nation of Israel. But this interpretation defeats the whole of Paul's argument in this letter. We cannot separate Paul's words from the context, and especially in light of the overall argument of the letter. This being the case, the "Israel of God" upon whom Paul announces blessings can only be the church of our Lord.

The conjunction 'kai' must be translated "even" or else left untranslated. The verse should read, "As many as walk by this rule, peace be upon them, and mercy, upon the Israel of God."

*6:17 ~ "Henceforth, let no man trouble me; for I bear branded on my body the marks of Jesus."*

*"let no man trouble me"* – Paul is asking that these congregations take his message to heart, and that he be not troubled with such departures from the faith the likes of which he deals with in this letter.

*"for I bear branded on my body the marks of Jesus"* – Those who would "trouble" Paul were those questioning his apostleship. This much is evident from the overall thrust of chapters 1 and 2. Paul is speaking here of the physical scars that had been left on his body as a result of the persecutions he endured during his preaching ministry. No doubt, the marks that branded Paul as a slave of Jesus were, among other things, the deep cuts from the beatings he received in Philippi and the bruises stoning in Lystra. See Acts 13:50; 14:19; 2 Cor. 11:25; 2 Tim. 3:10-11; et al. Hendriksen had this interesting note: *"It is just possible that Paul's emphatic, 'I, on my part,' forms a contrast with 6:13, where Paul tells the Galatians that the purpose of the Judaizers is 'that they may glory in your flesh.' If that be so, then the apostle is, as it were, saying, 'I, too, have marks or scars, namely those that link me with my Savior.'"*<sup>31</sup>

**6:18 ~ "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brethren. Amen."**

Paul had a genuine love for those whom he had introduced to the Lord Jesus. His great desire was that the grace of Jesus Christ might ultimately bear their souls home to the Father. For this cause he would uphold the gospel of Jesus, and oppose every false way. We can do no less. Regarding the closing of this letter, J.W. McGarvey had this note: *"We may say, then that it [this letter, TW], with 2 Corinthians and Romans, were three blows which staggered Judaism, and restrained it, till, smitten by the hand of God himself at the destruction of Jerusalem, A.D. 70, it ceased to trouble the church*

*till its forms were again revived in the days of the great apostasy.*"<sup>32</sup>

It is notable that this closing benediction is rather brief. This may be due, at least in part, to the urgency with which he wrote the letter. Here are a couple of observations regarding this benediction. First, it concentrates the attention of the Galatians on the wonderful grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. In tune with the theme of the letter, Paul contrasts the wonderful grace of God with the system of works under the law of Moses. Second, the full name and title of our Lord appears in this benediction. Hendriksen observed: "*As Lord he owns us, governs us and protects us, and we belong to him and should do his bidding. As Jesus he [sic], he alone, is our Savior (Matt. 1:21, Acts 4:12). And as Christ he was appointed and (as to his human nature) gloriously qualified to be, in his capacity as our Mediator, 'our chief Prophet, only Highpriest, and eternal King.'*"<sup>33</sup>

In view of the greatness of this epistle, we can think of no better way to close this commentary, than with the words of Paul in closing the epistle itself: "*Amen.*"

### Chapter Six Endnotes

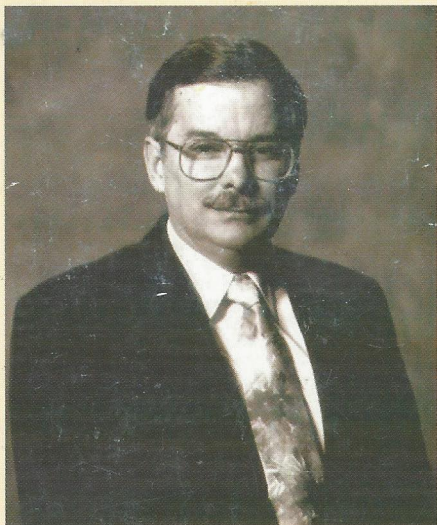
- 1 Lipscomb, page 275.
- 2 T. Pierce Brown, "*Spiritual Or Material?*" **The Restorer**, October 1992 (Mesquite, TX) page 10.
- 3 Crouch, page 89.
- 4 Miller, Dave, **Piloting The Strait** (Pulaski, TN: Sain Publications, 1996) page 59 ff.
- 5 Clarke, page 414.
- 6 Crouch, page 90;
- 7 Lipscomb, page 276.
- 8 Lipscomb, page 276.
- 9 Coffman, page 104.
- 10 Crouch, page 94.

- 11 Lipscomb, page 278.
- 12 Hendriksen, page 278.
- 13 Thomas, Leslie, "A Third Hundred Sermons," page 130,  
as quoted by Crouch, page 96.
- 14 Lipscomb, page 277.
- 15 Coffman, page 108-09.
- 16 Lipscomb, page 277.
- 17 Hendriksen, 280.
- 18 Coffman, page 109-110.
- 19 Macknight, as quoted by Coffman, page 110.
- 20 Crouch, page 104.
- 21 Coffman, page 111.
- 22 Winkler, "The Quintessence Of The Cross," **Studies in Galatians**, Edited by Dub McClish (Denton, TX: Valid Publications, Inc., 1986) page 244.
- 23 Winkler, page 244-245.
- 24 Crouch, page 104.
- 25 Crouch, page 104.
- 26 Coffman, page 111.
- 27 Winkler, page 245.
- 28 Brewer, G.C., **Brewer's Sermons** (Nashville, TN: B.C. Goodpasture, , n.d.) pages 145-146, as quoted by Winkler, page 248-249.
- 29 Macknight, as quoted by Coffman, page 112.
- 30 Winkler, page 242;
- 31 Hendriksen, page 249.
- 32 McGarvey, page 288.
- 33 Hendriksen, page 249.









**Tom Wacaster** received his education from East Central University in Ada, Oklahoma and Brown Trail Preacher Training School in Bedford, Texas. He has done local work in Texas and Oklahoma. His mission work includes labor in South Africa, Botswana, Zimbabwe, Russia, Ukraine and Mexico. He has written for a number of brotherhood periodicals, and speaks frequently on a number of lectures throughout the

USA. He and his wife, Johnnie Ann, have two children, and five grandchildren. Tom presently labors with the North Jefferson church of Christ in Mt. Pleasant, Texas.

## **Tom Wacaster**

511 Southgate Drive  
Mt. Pleasant, TX 75455  
903-575-9950