

NOTES ON THE EPISTLE TO THE GALATIANS

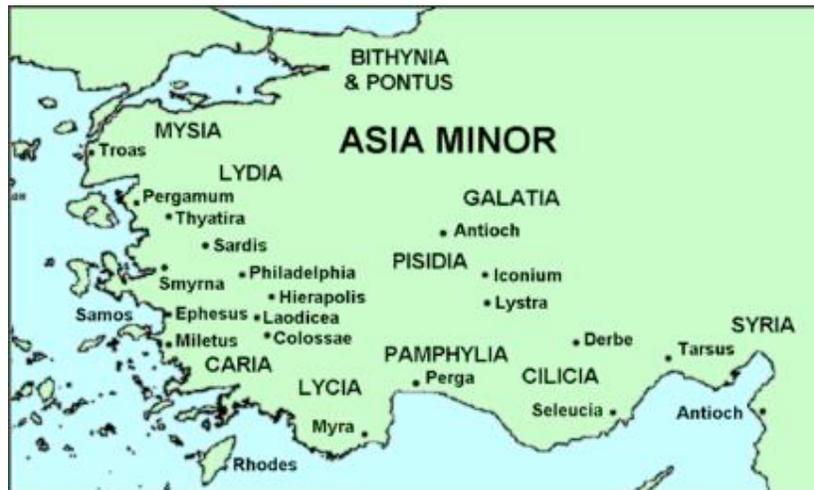
\* \* \* **THE GOSPEL OF PURE GRACE** \* \* \*

S.L.H.  
Soli Deo Gloria!

"Protestant theology, alas, is for the most part, thoroughly *Galatianized*, in that neither law nor grace is given their distinct and separated places, as in the counsels of God, but are mingled together in one incoherent system." **C. I. Scofield**

AUTHOR: Paul (c. 51 AD)

WHO WERE THE GALATIANS? Unlike Paul's other epistles, which were directed to a particular church, this epistle was written to "the churches of Galatia" (Gal1:2); that is, multiple churches in Galatia. Much debate has been engendered, however, regarding what Paul meant by "Galatia" and "the Galatians" (Gal3:1); was it an ethnic designation, or a political one? From an ethnic perspective, the Galatians were a Gallo-Grecian people who had migrated from Europe into Asia Minor (modern Turkey) in the 3rd century BC. There is no record in the Book of Acts that the Apostle Paul ever visited any of the cities of these ethnic Galatians. However, a region larger than that occupied by ethnic Galatians, including much territory to the south, was designated to be the Roman Province of Galatia in the 1st century BC. This was the political situation during the life of the Apostle Paul, and the Book of Acts records extensive ministry efforts of Paul and Barnabas (who is mentioned without introduction in Gal2:13) in the cities of southern Galatia. Thus, it is most natural to regard churches in the southern cities of the Roman Province of Galatia as the intended recipients of this epistle.



DATE OF WRITING. For those who take the position that the recipients of this epistle were the southern, political (not ethnic) Galatians Paul visited repeatedly in the Book of Acts, the epistle is dated at either just before, or soon after, the Council of Jerusalem (Act15:1-29) held in 49 AD. In Acts 1:8-9, Paul seems concerned that the Galatians believe he has himself changed the gospel he preached to them in the beginning. Since Paul emphasized unadulterated "grace" when he established their churches on his 1st missionary journey (Act13:43),

then he delivered to these same churches "decrees to keep, that were ordained of the apostles and elders who were at Jerusalem" (Act16:4) and had Timothy circumcised when he visited them on his 2nd missionary journey (after the Council of Jerusalem), it is reasonable to assume that these actions were [mis]construed by the Galatians as a new and different message from Paul. If the Epistle to the Galatians was written by Paul from Antioch to correct the misunderstanding following the completion of his 2nd missionary journey, it would be dated c. 51 AD.

THEME OF EPISTLE. The overarching theme of the Epistle to the Galatians, permeating every part of it, is **GRACE!** Today, because of contemporary challenges, it is necessary to talk about "pure" grace. But to speak of "pure" grace is redundant, for grace that is not "pure" is not grace. It is impossible to mix law/merit (in any form) with grace; they are utterly incompatible! No one had a better understanding of the Biblical concept of grace than Lewis Sperry Chafer, founder of Dallas Theological Seminary; his book, entitled Grace, is highly recommended.

"**Pure grace** is neither treating a person as he deserves, nor treating a person better than he deserves, but treating a person without the slightest reference to what he deserves." **Lewis Sperry Chafer**

*Galatianism*, a term coined by Scofield, encompasses two errors. The first error is that **justification** is partly by grace and partly by works; this error, which is actually heresy (because it undermines the Gospel), is endemic to all the pseudo-Christian cults today (e.g., Mormonism<sup>1</sup>). The second error is that **sanctification** is partly by grace and partly by works (that is, keeping the Law doesn't save us, but once saved either our salvation is maintained, or our spiritual growth progresses, by Law keeping); this error manifests itself as *legalism* even in evangelical Christian churches. The Apostle Paul's Epistle to the Galatians was written to refute both of these errors. The Law of Moses (in all of its aspects; cf. 2Cor3:1-18) was abrogated for the believer by the death of Christ. The believer is no longer motivated by law, but by grace. Grace is the 'unmerited favor' of God, so that it is incompatible with works or law keeping of any kind. The message of the Epistle to the Galatians is that both our justification and our sanctification are by grace through faith—ALONE! Galatians is the Apostle Paul's defense of the gospel of **pure** grace. Any other gospel than a gospel of pure and unadulterated grace (i.e., that requires a work of any kind on the part of the believer) is a perversion of the gospel revealed by God (Gal1:7), it has no power to save (cf. 1Cor15:1-4), and the preacher of it is a false prophet who will suffer the eternal damnation of God (Gal1:8-9).

ANTINOMIANISM. It is always the case that those who preach a radical concept of salvation by grace alone are charged with "antinomianism" (Lit., 'against law'). If the believer's life is not regulated by Law, doesn't that mean he can do anything he wants, thus leading to a life of licentiousness? Of course, the answer is no. Suffice it to say that in preaching the gospel of grace the Apostle Paul himself had to refute the charge of antinomianism in his own day (Gal5:20-6:1), so we should not be alarmed that we have to do so in our day as well.

KEY VERSE. When the prophet Habakkuk could not make sense of God's revelation to him, the LORD told him, "**The just shall live by faith**"

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<sup>1</sup> Article of Faith #3: "We believe through the Atonement of Christ all mankind may be saved, by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the Gospel." (in *The Pearl of Great Price*)

(Hab2:4). That is, there are things about an infinite God and His plans and purposes that a finite creature will never understand from his limited human perspective. In such cases, it is the duty of "the just" (i.e., the justified, those who know God) to believe the revealed Word of God (which is faith) and order his life according to it. Habakkuk 2:4 is quoted 3 times in the NT (Rom1:17; **Gal3:11**; Heb10:38), and the 3 epistles that include these quotations seem to be elaborations of the 3 elements of this truth revealed to Habakkuk. In Romans, Paul is concerned to define "the just"; in Galatians, Paul is concerned with how those justified by grace through faith "shall live" apart from the Law; and in Hebrews, the writer [Paul] is concerned with how genuine "faith" manifests itself.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians was written to a group of churches in southern Asia Minor, which included the cities of Antioch (in Pisidia), Iconium, Derbe and Lystra. Paul's preaching of the gospel during his 1st missionary journey (Act13:14-14:25) led to the founding of churches in these cities, and Paul visited these churches again on both his 2nd and 3rd missionary journeys (Act16:1-6; 18:23).

At some point, likely following Paul's passing through Galatia on his 2nd missionary journey, Judaizers came into the churches of Galatia with their false teaching, the heart of which included (cf. Act15:1-5):

1. Salvation was by faith in Christ plus keeping the Law, with special emphasis on circumcision.
2. Salvation was maintained by keeping the Law, and it could be lost by failure to keep the Law.
3. Acceptance with God came by identification with Israel.

The churches in Galatia were succumbing to this false teaching of the Judaizers (Gall:6; 3:1). Hearing of their apostasy, Paul wrote his Epistle to the Galatians from his home church of Antioch, probably after the completion of his 2nd missionary journey (Act18:22), making Galatians either Paul's 1st or 2nd (possibly after 1 Thessalonians) inspired epistle.

OUTLINE OF GALATIANS. A high-level outline of the Epistle to the Galatians would be:

- I. **Gal. 1-2** PERSONAL: Defense of Paul's Authority as an Apostle
- II. **Gal. 3-4** DOCTRINAL: Defense of Justification by Grace through Faith
- III. **Gal. 5-6** APPLICATION: Christian Living Apart from the Law

HISTORICAL INFLUENCE OF GALATIANS. It would be hard to underestimate the influence this short epistle of Paul's has had in the history of the Church. It was, in a certain sense, that portion of the Word of God that ignited the Protestant Reformation, since the serious study of it was what led to the conversion of Martin Luther (who called Galatians his 'wife'). The great accomplishment of the Reformation was the recovery of a Biblical understanding of the Gospel (i.e., justification by grace through faith alone), which is the theme of Galatians. It has been viewed by many as a miniature Epistle to the Romans, since both Galatians and Romans deal primarily with the theme of justification by grace through faith. The apparent distinction between the two epistles is that in Romans Paul's concern is to accurately define the Gospel, whereas in Galatians he defends it. It is interesting that since Galatians was written first, Paul defends the Gospel before he defines it!

CONTEMPORARY APPLICATIONS. 1. Arminianism (a.k.a. semi-Pelagianism) has been a challenge to the gospel of grace for virtually the entire Church

Age. By making one's salvation dependent on a believer's post-salvation behavior, it essentially brings works into the back door of the gospel itself; this continues to be an issue today. 2. Proponents of so-called "Lordship Salvation", in redefining faith as necessarily producing works, similarly add an element of works to faith as a requirement for justification; they would not say one's salvation can be lost, as the Arminian would assert, but if your life does not produce sufficient works they conclude your faith was never genuine (i.e., saving). 3. The contemporary version of Reformed Theology tends to see a role for works of the Law in the process of progressive sanctification; that is, one is saved by grace, but once saved the believer only grows spiritually by keeping the Law. 4. Less developed, but coming on the theological horizon, is the so-called "New Perspective on Paul" which rejects the understanding of justification as the righteousness of Christ imputed to the believer (in common with Roman Catholicism, the believer must be made righteous rather than "reckoned" righteous), thus opening the door to works as part of a believer's process of justification. Other less obvious examples could be given. As we stand at the beginning of the 21st century, the gospel of pure grace is being challenged (the Apostle Paul would say "perverted"; Gal1:7) as never before. A fresh understanding of the message of Galatians is again desperately needed within Christendom today.

## CHAPTER 1

### THE GOSPEL OF PURE GRACE

Paul opens the epistle by identifying himself and introducing his concern. His concern is for the churches of Galatia, which he has instructed in the principles of grace (Act13:43), but which are succumbing to teaching of the Judaizers to add works of the Law of Moses to their faith as a requirement for salvation; thus, the gospel of pure grace is being perverted.

- [1] Paul has to assert and defend his apostleship, since the Judaizers were claiming he wasn't a 'real' apostle. As one personally called by the risen Lord Jesus Christ (Act9:3-15), Paul's apostleship was authentic; Paul will go into an extensive defense of his apostleship in Galatians 1:10-2:14.
- [2] The Epistle to the Galatians was probably written from Antioch, Paul's home church. That the epistle was also from "all the brethren which are with me" means the message comes with validation of the church at Antioch.

Note that the epistle is written to "the churches of Galatia" (plural) rather than to a particular, individual church. This is unique to Galatians among all of Paul's epistles.

- [3] Paul's benediction on the Galatians is "grace", then "peace". Peace only comes when we are justified before God (Rom5:1), and the message of Galatians is that justification comes by grace. Thus, the order is significant; if there is no grace from God, there can be no peace with God. Any [so-called] "gospel" that includes works of any kind means one can never have assurance of personal salvation (which is why all the Popes, who subscribe to Roman Catholicism's perverted gospel, when asked always testify that they are not sure they will get to heaven!).
- [4] Right up front, Paul's mention of "Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for our sins" is an allusion to the genuine GOSPEL (1Cor15:3-4). The gospel concerns Christ's work, not ours! The basis of the

believer's salvation is the finished work of Christ, not any human work.

- [5] The gospel of pure grace, in which the work of our salvation is Christ's alone, gives all the glory to God.

Note on Structure. As part of the salutation in Paul's epistles, he normally expresses thanks to God for the believer(s) who are the recipient(s) of his letter immediately following his opening benediction (e.g., Rom1:8; 1Cor1:4; Eph1:16; Philip1:3; Coll:3; 1Thess1:2; 2Thess1:3; 2Tim1:3; Phil4). Such an expression of thanksgiving is absent in Galatians. It would seem that the error Paul is writing to correct is so egregious that he dispenses with the customary pleasantries in his rush to get to the heart of the matter, which his concern over their potential perversion of the Gospel.

- [6] Paul is surprised that the Galatians are so quickly turning from the gospel of "grace" to "another gospel". The Greek word translated "another" is *heteros*, which means 'another of a different kind'.  
[7] This different gospel is "not another", where the Greek word here translated "another" is *allos*, meaning 'another of the same kind'. Paul is saying that the gospel to which the Galatians are now turning is not a gospel of grace, but something different. The issue is not one of semantics; it's not a case of saying the same thing using different words—the heart of "the gospel" has been changed.

The comment that "there be some that trouble you" is an allusion to the Judaizers, who "pervert the gospel". Perversion means mixture or corruption. The perversion of the Judaizers was in mixing (i.e., adding) works into the gospel of grace (cf. Act15:5).

- [8] Paul's original message to those who were converted in Galatia was the gospel of grace (cf. Acts 13:38-43).

But apparently the Judaizers claimed that even Paul had changed his gospel to one that was no longer pure grace, but included works of the Law. Why were the Galatians, who knew Paul personally, tempted to believe this? Perhaps because Paul's message and actions when he visited them on his 2nd missionary journey were misunderstood.

Consider Acts 16:1-6. FIRST, when Paul visited the churches of Galatia the second time, he brought with him the exhortation of the apostles at Jerusalem, James and Peter (i.e., the 'real' apostles), that Gentile believers should observe certain requirements of the Law of Moses (Acts 15:28-29). These requirements were "necessary" (v28), not for salvation, but to enable fellowship between Jewish and Gentile Christians; this may have been exploited by the Judaizers and misunderstood by the Galatians. SECOND, when Paul encountered a young Jewish believer in Lystra, Timothy, whose mother was a Jew and father a Gentile, Paul circumcised him. The circumcision of Timothy was not performed as a requirement of the Law of Moses, nor as a requirement for his salvation. Rather, as a Jew, circumcision is necessary to identify with the Abrahamic covenant (Gen17:9-10), and Paul circumcised Timothy for this reason. Paul will explain in Galatians 2:3 that Titus was not compelled to be circumcised because he was a Gentile. Nevertheless, Timothy's circumcision

was an act that the Judaizers used to confuse the Galatians (Gal5:11-12).

Authority Resides in the Message, not the Messenger. Paul asserts in Galatians 1:8 that divine authority resides in the message, not the messenger. Paul considers two hypothetical situations; even if it were true that Paul (a divinely ordained apostle) had changed his preaching (which he had not), or if an "angel from heaven" (normally a divine messenger; e.g., Moroni) appeared preaching a different gospel, both Paul and the angel would be false prophets. God gave the gospel of grace, God does not change His Word (Num23:19; Mal3:6), and no prophet has the authority to do so. In the Bible, the prophets and apostles are under the authority of the Word of God, even that revelation which God gave uniquely through them; in stark contrast, the prophets and apostles of all pseudo-Christian cults and false religions are always above their own (so-called) revelation and can change it. For this reason, only in Biblical Christianity is there is a stable, unchanging foundation of revealed truth on which to build a comprehensive worldview.

- [9] Thus, if anyone comes preaching a gospel other than the gospel of grace, which was given from the beginning, "let him be accursed". The word translated "accursed" is the Greek *anathema*, which means 'turned over to God for judgment' (i.e., eternal damnation).

## PAUL'S DEFENSE OF HIS APOSTLESHIP

The Judaizers were not only preaching a false gospel, contrary to Paul's gospel of grace, they were challenging Paul's authority as an apostle. Paul wasn't a 'real' apostle, like Peter and James in Jerusalem; he had not been with Jesus during His earthly ministry, so he didn't meet the apostles' own criteria for apostleship (Cp., Act1:21-22). He had merely declared himself to be an apostle after Jesus was already dead. This was an *ad hominem* attack, seeking to invalidate the message by discrediting the messenger. At this point, Paul takes up a defense of his office as a genuine apostle personally called by the Lord Jesus Christ.

- [10] Apparently the Judaizers accused Paul of preaching grace (i.e., freedom from the Law of Moses) in order to win the favor of Gentiles. However, Paul's message of grace is received no better by the Gentiles than the Jews, so the charge is unfounded; Paul preaches grace to please God, not men.
- [11] From where did Paul's message of salvation by grace through faith, apart from works of the Law, come? It did not come from "man".
- [12] Man would never invent the gospel of grace; it is an offense to him (1Cor1:18-25). Paul did not receive the gospel of grace by the teaching of any "man". He received it by "revelation" directly from the Lord "Jesus Christ". The gospel of grace is of divine, not human, origin. In this verse, the pronoun "I" is emphatic in the Greek text; it is "I", Paul, who received this revelation from God, in contrast to the other apostles. By emphasizing this revelation given uniquely to him, Paul is preparing to launch into a defense of his apostleship.

**The Offense of Grace.** Grace is an offense to the natural man (both Jew and Gentile), who in his personal pride and desire for autonomy always prefers law of some form (i.e., *religion*, in which the work of man has some merit with God). A gospel of grace gives ALL glory to God, none to man. Even Christians have difficulty accepting the humbling ramifications of salvation by grace, apart from works of any kind. This manifests itself today in proponents of so-called *Lordship Salvation*, who seek to load the back end of justification by grace with works (i.e., you are saved through faith, but if your life does not subsequently manifest good works, then your faith was not 'genuine' and you were never truly saved) in an attempt to avoid what they call 'cheap grace'. God's grace is not cheap (it cost God an infinite price, the death of His only Son), but it is free (to us who believe).

- [13] Paul did not begin his career as one sympathetic to the Church of God being built by the preaching of the gospel of grace. In fact, Paul was the greatest persecutor of the Church, a sin that haunted him all his life (cf. Act8:3; 9:1-2; 22:4-5; 26:11; 1Cor15:9; 1Tim1:13).
- [14] The Judaizers were Pharisees who accepted Jesus was Messiah, but they remained zealous for the Law of Moses (Act15:5); they believed that by keeping the Law they attained merit with God. Paul points out that he was once in the same place they are, only more so (Philip3:5-6). There was never a better Law-keeper than Saul of Tarsus (i.e., Paul).
- [15] Like the prophet Jeremiah (Jer1:5), Paul had been chosen by God, both for salvation and for service, from his "mother's womb" (Act15:18). This is an illustration of election by GRACE; before

he had done anything, either good or bad, Paul had been chosen by God (cf. Rom9:11). Because God's election occurred before Paul was born, God's choice must be by grace.

In time, God "called [Saul/Paul] by His grace", an obvious reference to Christ's appearance to Paul on the road to Damascus (Act9:3-16).

- [16] When God called Paul to be an apostle, he was in the very act of persecuting the Church! This is yet another illustration of election by GRACE. Paul deserved judgment for his actions, but he was chosen by God to be an apostle. Again, God's choice of Paul was not based on any merit in him (there was none), it was made on the basis of pure grace. Remember Dr. Chafer's comment: "**Pure grace** is neither treating a person as he deserves, nor treating a person better than he deserves, but treating a person without the slightest reference to what he deserves."

God's special calling of Paul, a "Hebrew of the Hebrews" (i.e., the greatest of all Jews; Philip3:5) was to be an apostle sent uniquely to "the Gentiles" (Act9:15). This is consistent with the fact that "unto [the Jews] were committed the oracles of God" (Rom3:1-2).

- [17] When Paul received his calling from God (i.e., the glorified Lord Jesus Christ), he sought no validation whatsoever from any man, not even the [real] "apostles" in "Jerusalem". Rather, he went into seclusion in "Arabia", apparently to be alone with the Lord. Perhaps he was led through a study of Scripture by the risen Lord Jesus Christ, much as the two disciples on the road to Emmaus were (Luk24:13-32), in which his eyes were opened to the true identity of Messiah from the Old Testament (cf. Act17:2-3); certainly Paul received that massive body of new revelation for the Church (Eph3:1-21) during this time. While no explicit reference to Paul's sojourn in Arabia is made in the Book of Acts, Acts 9:23 is an apparent allusion to it.

Paul at Mt. Sinai? Because of Galatians 4:25, some argue that the true location of Mt. Sinai is in [Saudi] Arabia (rather than its traditional location in the Sinai peninsula), and that Paul's sojourn in Arabia to receive direct revelation from God occurred at Mt. Sinai. If true, then both Moses (the greatest prophet of the OT) and Paul (the greatest apostle of the NT) received revelation from God at the same place! While this would be an interesting parallel, it may not be correct. It may be that the Biblical concept of Arabia is broad enough to include the Sinai peninsula (and the traditional location of Mt. Sinai), and should not be restricted to what we know as Saudi Arabia today. Paul's point in mentioning "Arabia" is not to reveal his exact location during this period of time, but to emphasize that it was a place far removed from Jerusalem where no apostle could instruct him.

- [18] It was only after Paul's extended time alone with the Lord in Arabia (3 years) that he finally went to Jerusalem for a brief visit (15 days) with the other apostles. His point is that the [real] apostles in Jerusalem did not influence his theology—that he received directly from God.
- [19] Even then, the only "apostles" Paul saw on this occasion were Peter and "James, the Lord's brother". James was the half-brother of Jesus (Matt13:55), born to Mary and Joseph after Jesus, Mary's firstborn (Matt1:25). Apparently James believed in Jesus as Messiah only after His resurrection (Jn7:5; Act1:14; 1Cor15:7). James became a leader in the church at Jerusalem (Act12:17; 15:13)

and is referred to as an "apostle" in the broad sense (cf. Apostleship in the New Testament); this visit to Jerusalem is recorded in Acts 9:26-30. Paul's point is that in going to Jerusalem he was **not** seeking the validation of the apostles as a body.

**Apostleship in the New Testament.** The word *apostle* means "one who is sent [by God], on a particular mission or with a special message". The word is used in both a broad and a technical sense in the NT. In its broad sense, "apostle" is used to refer to many individuals in the NT, including Barnabas (Act14:4), Epaphroditus (Philip2:25), Silas and Timothy (1Thess2:6), and "James, the Lord's brother" (Gall:19). In its technical sense, "apostle" defines a unique office. Only the Twelve (including Matthias who replaced Judas; Act1:25-26) and Paul occupied the office of apostle. Requirements for apostleship in the strict sense included being an eyewitness of the resurrected Christ (1Cor9:1) and being given new revelation to proclaim, which would be authenticated by accompanying signs, wonders and miracles (2Cor12:12). Apostles were given to the Church after the ascension of Christ (Eph4:7-12) in order to build a foundation (Eph2:20). No provision was made for any sort of apostolic succession. When the last apostle (John) died, both the office of apostle and its purpose to lay a foundation of new revelation for the Church ended.

[20] The Judaizers were apparently misrepresenting Paul's relationship with the apostles in Jerusalem. To underscore the truth of Paul's testimony in this regard, he put himself under an oath before God (Lev19:12; Num30:2).

[21] After Paul's brief visit to Jerusalem, he ministered for an unspecified period of time in "Syria and Cilicia", apparently on his way home to Tarsus (Act9:30).

[22] Because Paul ministered in Syria and Cilicia (far from Jerusalem and the apostles), he did not become known to the churches in Judea during the early part of his ministry; for this reason, he would not have been recognized by the Christians there. As a corollary to this, Paul's emphasis on his distance from Jerusalem is meant to imply that his ministry was not subject to the oversight or approval of the other apostles.

[23] Though the Christians in Judea would not have recognized Paul "by face", his dramatic conversion from chief persecutor of Christians to one who "preacheth the faith" was well known to them.

The Faith. In the NT, when "faith" (Greek, *pistis*) is used with the definite article (i.e., the faith), as it is in this verse, it denotes 'the body of doctrine which is believed' (Cp., Jud3) rather than 'belief'.

[24] Paul's conversion ended (for a time) the severe persecution of the churches in Judea, which brought the Christians there "rest" and "comfort" (Act9:31), for which they glorified God.

## CHAPTER 2

### PAUL'S UNITY IN THE GOSPEL WITH THE APOSTLES IN JERUSALEM

In Galatians 1 Paul emphasized his independence from the other apostles. That does not mean, however, that they preached different gospels. In

Galatians 2, Paul will emphasize the essential unity he had with the other apostles in a gospel of grace apart from any work of law. This doctrinal unity did not come without some confrontation, as will be illustrated by Paul in recounting an historical incident between him, Peter, James and Barnabas. Nevertheless, his point is that both he and the apostles in Jerusalem preach a gospel of pure grace, in contrast to the false gospel of the Judaizers which includes requirements from the Mosaic Law. The Judaizers are misrepresenting the doctrine of the apostles in Jerusalem; the apostles are in perfect agreement with Paul, not with the Judaizers.

- [1] There is considerable difference of opinion as to which visit to Jerusalem this verse mentions, and at what time it occurred. I believe it is best to identify it as Paul's visit to Jerusalem following his first missionary journey (Act15:1-29), in which the teaching of the Judaizers was a major precipitating issue (Act15:1-5). Thus, Galatians 2 records events associated with that visit, which led to the so-called Council at Jerusalem at which all the apostles (including Peter and James) agreed that Gentile believers were saved apart from any obligation to keep the Law of Moses (Act15:6-29). The Council of Jerusalem is reliably dated at 49 AD. The note on "fourteen years after" is best understood in context as being measured from Paul's conversion, which was the major event Paul discussed in Galatians 1. This would date Paul's conversion at 34-35 AD, a mere 2-3 years after Pentecost (Acts 2; 32 AD).

At this visit to Jerusalem, Paul was accompanied by "Barnabas, and certain other of [the disciples at Antioch]" (Act15:2); Titus is not identified by name in Acts, but Paul mentions him here because of an important point he will make relative to him in v3.

- [2] The purpose of Paul's visit indicated here is consistent with that of Act14:27-15:6, which was a discussion with the apostles and elders at the church in Jerusalem of Paul's ministry to the Gentiles in general, and their conversion by faith only (apart from the Law) in particular. Paul was not seeking Jerusalem's approval of his message, which he had received directly from the Lord Jesus Christ (Gal1:12), but in fact wanted to make sure that the gospel they were proclaiming was consistent with his (and challenged them where their lives appeared inconsistent with their message; Gal2:11-14); if their gospel included works of the Law of Moses, then Paul's preaching of a gospel of pure grace to the Gentiles would appear to be "in vain", in that his ministry among the Gentiles would be set back indefinitely, and Christianity would be reduced to nothing more than a sect of Judaism. Remember, the Judaizers all believed/preached that Jesus was the Messiah; their error was in preaching a gospel that included works of the Law (Act15:5).

Paul indicates he made this visit to Jerusalem "by revelation", meaning he was directed to do so by God (not summoned by the apostles); God Himself precipitated this council because of the importance of clarifying the "gospel" among all His apostles. The important conclusion of the Council of Jerusalem is that both Gentiles and Jews are saved by grace through faith, apart from the Law of Moses (Act15:11,24).

- [3] Paul now validates their consensus in the gospel by noting that Titus, a "Greek" (i.e., Gentile) convert who accompanied him on this visit to Jerusalem, "was not compelled to be circumcised" by either Paul or the apostles at Jerusalem, which the Judaizers asserted was required for his salvation (Act15:1). This is the same Titus who is consistently identified with Paul from the event

mentioned here until Paul's death (2Tim4:10), and who is the recipient of Paul's epistle bearing his name.

- [4] Apparently at this conference there was great pressure brought on Paul and the apostles at Jerusalem to have Titus circumcised. Their reason for this pressure was the belief that, "Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved" (Act15:1). Those who brought this pressure were the Judaizers, who Paul labels as "false brethren" (i.e., they are not genuine believers; cf. 2Pet2:1-3); Paul reveals that their intended purpose was to end the liberty believers enjoy in Christ and put them back in bondage to the Law of Moses. Like many confused Christians today, the Judaizers wanted Christianity to be nothing more than a list of do's and don'ts.
- [5] By use of the plural pronoun, "we", Paul indicates that both he and the apostles in Jerusalem were unified in rejecting this assertion of the Judaizers. Furthermore, this was not a peripheral or secondary issue on which genuine believers could differ, for "the truth of the gospel" was at stake in this matter.
- [6] Paul says that the conclusion of this "conference" with the apostles in Jerusalem (who were held in high esteem by the Judaizers) was that they "added nothing to me" (i.e., they were in perfect agreement with the gospel of pure grace which Paul preached, not changing it in any particular).
- [7] The apostles in Jerusalem recognized at this time that both they and Paul preached the same gospel, but their "apostleship[s]" (i.e., ministries) were directed to different audiences.
- [8] Peter's apostleship was directed to the "circumcision" (i.e., Jews), whereas Paul's apostleship was directed to the "Gentiles". Note that in both cases, the apostles (to both the Jews and the Gentiles) were themselves Jewish, which is consistent with the Scriptural truth that "unto [the Jews] were committed the oracles of God" (Rom3:2). Note also that their respective apostleships were merely a matter of emphasis, not exclusivity, since it was Peter who was first directed by God to preach the gospel to Gentiles (Act10:34-48; 15:7), and Paul in every city he visited first attempted to evangelize the Jews (Act13:46; 14:1; 17:1-4; 18:4,19; 19:8; cf. Rom1:16).
- [9] The result of the conference in Jerusalem was that the leading apostles there, "James" (the Lord's brother), "Cephas" (i.e., Peter's name in Aramaic), and "John", affirmed they were in "fellowship" with Paul and Barnabas, meaning **they agreed on the gospel** (i.e., there is only one gospel, which is a gospel of pure grace appropriated by faith, and it is the same for both Jews and Gentiles; cf. Act15:7-11; Rom3:21-24; 10:9-13), and that they should each continue to evangelize with the audience emphases that God had directed. In effect, the apostles in Jerusalem, who the Judaizers contended differed with Paul and 'his' gospel, explicitly endorsed the veracity of Paul's gospel and the legitimacy of his apostleship.

**The Gospel and Christian Fellowship.** The divine ideal is that Christians be in perfect agreement and harmony in every detail of revealed truth. That being said, Christians (i.e., genuine believers) can, and do, have many doctrinal differences that result from misunderstanding Scripture. We can still have Christian "fellowship", *by which we mean cooperation in ministry*, to varying extent, so long as there is at a minimum doctrinal agreement on the "gospel". However, if disagreement on the

"gospel" exists, there can be no Christian fellowship, since one or more involved are not Christian (1Cor15:1-2).

- [10] The only request of Paul made by the apostles in Jerusalem was that in his mission to the Gentiles he "remember the poor" Jews in Judea who were suffering for their faith (at the hands of their unbelieving countrymen). This Paul did throughout his life (cf. Act11:29-30; 1Cor16:1-3).

#### PAUL'S REBUKE OF PETER

Paul recounts an occasion in which he had to rebuke Peter, the reputed chief of the apostles, over personal conduct that threatened to undermine the gospel of pure grace. This is an additional illustration of the authenticity and independence of Paul's apostleship. It is difficult to imagine that this event would have taken place after the council at Jerusalem (Act15) discussed in the first half of this chapter; it is probably better to understand this as occurring prior to the council at Jerusalem, and may have been one of the key events that precipitated it (Cp., Act15:1-2; Gal2:11-12).

- [11] Paul had to confront Peter regarding personal behavior that was inconsistent with revealed truth and even his own teaching (Act10:34-35; 11:1-18). This occurred in Antioch (a church well integrated with both Jews and Gentiles), perhaps as part of the contingent from Jerusalem that visited after Paul's first missionary journey (Act15:1-2). Note that even the apostles were not perfect in their Christian walk; only the words they recorded under the inspiration of God were perfect (2Tim3:16).
- [12] In the circumstances that led up to the conversion of Cornelius, God had first revealed to Peter that the Gentiles were saved by grace through faith (without keeping the Law), and that Gentile believers enjoyed equal standing before God (Act10; Cp., Act15:7-11). Peter even defended this truth when initially challenged by Jewish believers (Act11:1-18). However, when "certain men came from James" (i.e., legalistic Jews from the church in Jerusalem; this does not mean James himself is implicated in this error), Peter had to make a choice; eating non-kosher meals with Gentile believers would offend these legalistic Jewish believers, while refraining from doing so would offend the Gentile believers. Peter chose to withdraw his fellowship from the Gentiles in order to please the Jews.
- [13] When Peter stopped eating with the Gentiles, his influence was so great that many other Jewish believers in Antioch ceased doing so as well, even Barnabas! This created a serious threat to racially divide the church and so practically destroy the truth of the unity of Jew and Gentile in the Body of Christ (1Cor12:13; Eph2:11-18; 3:1-6). Paul labels this "hypocrisy", which is behavior that does not conform to one's convictions.
- [14] Regarding this hypocrisy which struck at the heart of "the gospel" of grace, Paul confronted Peter "before them all" (i.e., publicly). Paul's question of Peter was, in effect, if he now has the liberty to live free from the Law (like a Gentile), why in the world would he side with those who teach a Gentile must live like a Jew (under the Law) in order to be saved (Act15:1)? No response from Peter is recorded, implying he stood speechless before Paul's rebuke; Peter was in perfect agreement with Paul's doctrine, it was only his behavior that was in question. This verse through the end of the chapter may be a summary of the argument Paul presented to Peter at the time of the confrontation.

THE INSUFFICIENCY OF THE LAW TO JUSTIFY

- [15] Here, by using "we" Paul refers to those believers who are ethnically Jews (himself, Peter, all the apostles, as well as the Judaizers) and who have intimate familiarity with the Law of Moses and life under it.
- [16] **THIS IS THE MOST IMPORTANT VERSE IN GALATIANS!** Paul asserts that very Jew familiar with the Law knows that "man is not justified by the works of the<sup>2</sup> Law"; by using both the Greek words *anthropos* (i.e., mankind in general) and *sarx* (Lit., flesh) in this verse, Paul emphasizes that this is universally true for **both** Jews and Gentiles. There are not two ways of salvation; it is **not** the case that Gentiles are saved by faith and Jews by keeping the Law. Both Jews and Gentiles must be saved by grace through faith. Thus, Paul says that "even we" (i.e., Paul and Peter, Jews who were formerly under the Law of Moses) have "believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith[fulness] of Christ".

Note the translational revision introduced in the brackets. It is not "the faith of Christ" (KJV), nor is it our "faith in Christ" (NASB), but rather "the **faithfulness** of Christ" that is the source of righteousness and the only basis of our justification. Scripture declares that no man (excepting Christ) has ever kept the Law (Rom3:23; Gal3:22), which means perfect adherence in every detail (Gal3:10; Jas2:10). There is no defect in the Law of Moses (Rom7:12), the weakness of the Law is in fallen man's inability to keep it (Rom8:3). Jesus Christ, however, as the perfect human Man did keep it (Matt:17-18), thus meriting genuine human righteousness with God. Christ's righteousness imputed to the believer by God is the basis of our justification (Rom5:10; 2Cor5:21); for this reason, salvation is by grace (God is not obligated to save on this basis, He has merely chosen to do so), through faith (Eph2:8-9). Our faith is the channel by which the righteousness of Christ is personally appropriated, but it is the righteousness of Christ (not our faith) that is the basis of our justification before God. Faith has no inherit value or benefit; it is the object of one's faith that may, or may not, have value (many genuinely and sincerely believe in false gospels that have no power to save; it is not their faith that is defective, but the object of their faith).

**Justification.** The Greek word translated "justification" is a technical, legal term; its meaning is 'the winning of a favorable verdict' or 'the obtaining of a sentence of acquittal'. In the NT, when God justifies the sinner, this does not make the sinner righteous. However, justification is a legal verdict from God's divine courtroom that the sinner is reckoned (i.e., considered) to be righteous (in Christ). Justification is equivalent to positional sanctification; one is reckoned sanctified (righteous) by virtue of his position in Christ.

Why the Law Cannot Save. There is one more important point regarding the inability of the Law to justify. Christ could (and did) merit genuine human righteousness before God by keeping the Law, **but we cannot**. Many Christians today fall into the error of

<sup>2</sup> In Gal2:16, the definite article is not used in conjunction with "law". While the Law of Moses is certainly the context, Paul's argument applies universally to any system of law-works.

believing that the only reason the Law cannot save us is because we do not keep it perfectly. Scripture teaches, however, that even if one kept the Law (i.e., or any system of works) perfectly, it cannot justify a *fallen* creature before God (Christ was not a *fallen* man, but we are). Galatians 2:16 asserts that "for by the works of the Law shall no flesh be justified"; that is, even **keeping** the Law will not justify us (this is not new doctrine from Paul, for he is essentially quoting Psalm 143:2; Cp., Isa64:6). Why not?

All men since Adam are born (even *conceived*; cf. Ps51:5) under the condemnation of God. This is because, in the Garden, all men sinned in Adam (Gen3:6; Rom5:12). Adam was not merely our representative head, he was our seminal head (Cp., Heb7:9-10); this is even true for Eve because of the way God made her from the "rib" of Adam (Gen2:21-23). It is for this reason that **it is impossible** that *fallen* man could be justified by keeping the Law (Rom3:20); even if he perfectly refrained from sin from the moment of his birth until the time of his death, he would still stand condemned before God for his participation in the primeval sin of Adam (Rom5:18). No system of works or law-keeping can ever erase this past event of history, in which all participated, and for this reason salvation must be by grace (Eph2:8-9; Gall:6-9).

For this reason, any denial that the Fall was a real, historical event must be rejected as anti-Biblical. Such a view is not merely error, but heresy—it strikes at the very heart of the gospel of grace. By denying that the sin of Adam was a real, historical event in which all men participated, the basis of the universal need for a Savior is destroyed, and works-based righteousness (in contrast to salvation by grace) becomes a theoretical possibility. BUT SCRIPTURE REJECTS THIS (Gal2:16; Rom3:20)!

Man's need is for a new Head. Just as "in Adam" all men are sinners and stand condemned before God, "in Christ" we can be seen as being just as righteous as He is (1Cor15:22; Rom5:19). Being placed "in Christ" as our new Head is accomplished by the new birth (Jn3:7; 2Cor5:17), appropriated by "faith in Christ".

- [17] Paul asks a hypothetical question. Does the doctrine of justification by grace through faith, apart from keeping the Law, mean that the believer can do anything he wants? Does this mean he can sin indiscriminately without consequences? If this were true, it would make Christ Himself a "minister [i.e., promoter] of sin". This is precisely the charge of antinomianism leveled at those who preach a gospel of pure grace today, and Paul had to deal with it in the 1st century (Cp., Rom5:20-6:2). His response, "God forbid!". Paul denies, with the most forceful expression possible, that justification by grace through faith means that the believer may live a life of sin.
- [18] But if "I build again the things which I destroyed", meaning return to a human attempt to keep the Law after being justified by grace through faith, I only find once again that I'm not keeping it! The context here is Peter, who by withdrawing from fellowship with Gentiles (v12) was returning to a requirement of the Law.
- [19] But keeping the Law is not the rule of life for the believer. The believer is "dead to the Law" by virtue of his position in Christ. In dying, Christ suffered the ultimate penalty of the Law; the debt to the Law has been paid and cannot be required again. This is totally analogous to our law of double jeopardy, meaning one cannot be punished for the same crime twice. If Christ's death

fully paid the price for our crime (i.e., sins), God cannot and will not require payment for them again. The price for violating the Law having been paid, its penalty having been executed, the believer now has no relationship whatsoever to the Law. This does not mean, however, he can live a life of licentiousness; rather, he must "live unto God".

- [20] Paul expands on v19 and calls attention to the paradox inherent in a believer's life. The believer is "crucified with Christ", equivalent to "dead to the Law" (v19); but this is merely a legal construct (i.e., positional truth), because in reality he is still alive. But the life the believer lives after being justified before God is lived on the basis of "the faith[fulness] of the Son of God" (i.e., the righteousness of Christ). In fact, "Christ liveth [present tense, continuous action] in me", which is an allusion to the believer's mystical **union with Christ** (Col1:27) via Spirit baptism (1Cor12:13); the believer is not only united with Christ in His death, he is united with Christ in His resurrected life (Rom6:3-8). Being in union with Christ means the believer is not free to live a life of sin, even though he is free from the Law.

That Christ "gave Himself for me" clearly teaches an atonement that includes **penal substitution**; that is, when Christ died, He offered His perfect, righteous life as a **propitiation** (i.e., a payment that fully satisfies the debt; 1Jn2:2) on behalf of, or as a substitute for, the believer's life (cf. Isa53:3-12). This Christ did because He "loved me" (Jn3:16).

- [21] Peter and the Judaizers were, in effect, making "void the grace of God". Grace is God giving a person something for which he has not worked! If it were possible for a fallen man to be justified by keeping the Law, Christ's death would not have been necessary (i.e., just work harder!). However, Christ's prayer in Gethsemane indicates there is no way possible other than Christ's death (Matt26:39,42,44), so that His death is not in vain.

### CHAPTER 3

#### JUSTIFICATION AND SANCTIFICATION THROUGH FAITH

In Galatians 1-2 the Apostle Paul has demonstrated that the gospel of pure grace he preaches was received by revelation from God, and that he is in perfect fellowship with the apostles in Jerusalem concerning that gospel. In Galatians 3-4, Paul now undertakes a multifaceted theological defense of the gospel of pure grace.

- [1] Paul opens this section with harsh words. He calls the Galatians "foolish" for being tempted to add works of the Law to their faith in Christ as grounds for acceptance with God. Paul alleges they have been "bewitched"; elsewhere Paul asserts that false gospels such as this are literally inspired by Satan (2Cor11:3-4), and that those who preach them are the ministers of Satan (2Cor11:13-15). Paul has clearly presented to the Galatians the work of Christ (i.e., His crucifixion) as complete and sufficient grounds for the believer's justification. How can they be tempted to believe that their personal works can add any additional merit to the perfect work of Christ?

#### HOLY SPIRIT WAS RECEIVED IN RESPONSE TO FAITH

- [2] To drive home this point, Paul asks 4 questions from their personal experiences for them to consider. 1) When they received the "Spirit" (cf. Act13:52), was it in response to works of the Law, or by faith only? The Galatians will be forced to admit it was by faith only, in response to Paul's preaching a gospel of pure grace (Act13:38-39,43); it was only after Paul had left them that the Judaizers came in attempting to pervert Paul's gospel by adding works to it.
- [3] 2) Having been justified (i.e., saved) by grace through faith only, and having been given the gift of the indwelling Holy Spirit, why would they think they could advance in spiritual maturity (i.e., sanctification) in a different way? There was no promise in the Law of Moses by which a believer could receive the Holy Spirit, nor any provision for the Spirit to do a work of sanctification. Paul's point is that the means of justification and sanctification are the same: they are both gracious works of the Holy Spirit in response to faith only.
- [4] 3) Is their suffering (persecution) in vain? Paul and Barnabas suffered much persecution while preaching the gospel in the cities of Galatia (Act13:50; 14:5,19), and Paul had prophesied that the Galatians themselves would also suffer "much tribulation" (Act14:22). This persecution came because of their acceptance and preaching of a gospel of pure grace; if they now forsake the gospel of grace and turn to works of the Law, what is the purpose of their suffering?
- [5] And, 4) the authenticating signs and "miracles" worked among them by Paul as an apostle (2Cor12:12), were they in response to works of the Law, or faith only? In raising these questions, Paul is seeking to illustrate to the Galatians through their own personal experiences that justification and sanctification are by grace through faith only, apart from any works of the Law.

#### ABRAHAM WAS JUSTIFIED BY FAITH

- [6] Whereas the Judaizers were pointing the Galatians back to Moses and the Law, Paul points them back four hundred years before the Law to Abraham (the patriarch of the Jewish people). When "Abraham believed God", his faith was "accounted for righteousness" (cf. Gen15:6). It is important to note that this declaration was made by God before He gave the command for Abraham to circumcise his male descendants (Gen17:12). This point is powerful: in God's very own words, Abraham was justified by grace through faith only, 400 years before the Law of Moses was given.

"The *basis* of salvation in every age is **the death of Christ**; the *requirement* for salvation in every age is **faith**; the *object* of faith in every age is **God**; the *content* of faith **changes** in the various dispensations." [Charles C. Ryrie, Dispensationalism Today, 1965]

Paul will subsequently explain the purpose in giving the Law (Gal3:19-25), but it was not added as a new or different means of justification (i.e., way of salvation). Salvation is, always has been, and always will be by grace through faith alone.

- [7] Abraham is the prototype for justification by grace through faith. All who would find acceptance with God must come to Him in the

same way. All who come to God by faith, as Abraham did, are called "the sons of Abraham"; this is not to say, however, that all believers become Jews or members of the nation of Israel. All who believe become spiritual "sons of Abraham", but only the *physical* descendents of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob comprise the nation of Israel.

- [8] God, knowing that part of His divine plan was to "justify the Gentiles through faith", in a certain sense even "preached before the gospel" of grace to Abraham. God did this by including in the covenant He made with Abraham (an unconditional covenant that required no works on the part of Abraham) the provision that "in thee shall all nations [i.e., Gentiles] be blessed" (Gen12:3).
- [9] However, this promise to justify the Gentiles is not universal. Though provision has been made for the salvation of all (by the death of Christ; Jn3:16; 1Jn2:2), that provision must be individually appropriated by personal faith as Abraham illustrated. The Reformed doctrine of 'Limited Atonement' (i.e., that the provision for salvation was made for the elect only) is not Biblical.

Having demonstrated that justification is through faith from the experiences of both the Galatians and Abraham, Paul now considers why even the possibility of justification by works of the Law makes no sense.

#### CHRIST SUFFERED THE CURSE OF THE LAW ON OUR BEHALF

- [10] Contrary to the claims of the Judaizers, the testimony of the Law of Moses was quite clear. Everyone under the Law, who does not keep each and every requirement of the Law perfectly, is "under the curse" of the Law (Deut27:26). The Law was a unit; either you kept all of it, or you got credit for none of it (Jas2:10). The assertion of the Judaizers that one could earn merit with God by keeping parts of the Law (e.g., circumcision, dietary restrictions) is nowhere taught in the Law itself; rather, the Law explicitly teaches the opposite—it is a case of all or nothing!
- [11] That the Law had no power to justify is not a brand new revelation given to Paul. Even the Old Testament consciously recognized that "no man is justified by the Law" (Paul has already quoted Ps143:2 in Gal2:16), because it expressly taught that "the just[ified] shall live by faith" (Hab2:4; quoted in Rom1:17, Gal3:11 and Heb10:38). Living by faith reaches beyond mere justification and includes the sanctification of the believer.
- [12] The Law of Moses was not based on faith. It didn't matter whether one had personal faith in God or not. One only enjoyed the blessings promised in the Law by actually keeping the commandments (Lev26:1-13; Deut28:1-14). Failure to keep the commandments, irrespective of personal faith, brought the curse of the Law (Lev26:14-39; Deut28:15-68). Law and faith were never compatible with one another.

#### RELATIONSHIP OF WORK TO GRACE, FAITH, AND ELECTION

(from Paul's Epistle to the Romans)

1. Work **is not** compatible with grace (Rom11:6).
2. Faith **is** compatible with grace (Rom4:4-5,16). Thus, faith cannot be compatible with work. *Faith is not a work.*
3. Election **is** compatible with grace (Rom11:5). Thus, election cannot be compatible with work. God's choice is not based on our work.

4. The exclusion of boasting relative to salvation is never said to be because of the principle of election, but because of the principle of faith (Rom3:27).
5. **CONCLUSION:** Work is not compatible with grace, faith, or election. However, both faith and election are compatible with grace. Faith cannot be viewed as a work; rather, **faith is totally compatible with election.** Paul never concerns himself with an individual's election, but always their faith. This should be true for us: we preach the gospel and leave all aspects of election in the hands of God.

[13] But when Christ was crucified, He suffered "the curse of the Law" (Deut21:23). In doing so "for us" (i.e., on our behalf), the righteous for the unrighteous, He has "redeemed us" from the penalty of the Law. The life of Christ as the God-Man has infinite value, so His one righteous life can pay the debt an infinite number of unrighteous creatures owe.

[14] The "blessing" promised to Abraham, that the Gentiles would be justified "through faith", is possible only because of Christ's work on our behalf. God is just, and He cannot simply dismiss sin; but He can accept payment for our sin made by another, if that payment is truly a propitiation (a payment that completely satisfies the debt). In offering salvation on the basis of the work of Christ on our behalf, God is both "just, and the justifier of him who believeth in Jesus" (Rom3:26). But again, while the propitiation on our behalf is available for all (1Jn2:2), it must be personally appropriated "through faith".

THE LAW DID NOT ADD NEW CONDITIONS TO THE  
PROMISE GOD MADE TO ABRAHAM

[15] Paul asks the Galatians to think about the nature of a covenant (which is nothing more than a contract between two parties). Even from a the human perspective, "after the manner of men", we understand that once a contract has been "confirmed", it remains in force exactly as written. It cannot simply be "annulled", nor can conditions be "added" to it.

[16] Paul calls attention to the detail that God's covenant was made with "Abraham and his seed", emphasizing that "seed" is singular, not plural. The "Seed" of Abraham, through with the blessing of justification by faith would come "is Christ"; the New Testament opens with "Jesus Christ . . . the son of Abraham" (Matt1:1) for this precisely this reason.

[17] Now God's unconditional covenant with Abraham was made 430 years before the giving of the Law through Moses at Mount Sinai. Once the Abrahamic covenant was confirmed (Gen15:7-18), it cannot be annulled, nor can the terms be altered. Since the Abrahamic covenant included the promised blessing of justification by faith (for both Jews and Gentiles), the Law that came later cannot "annul" this "promise".

[18] God's "promise" to Abraham was salvation for all on the condition of faith, not works. Whatever the purpose of the Law was, it could not be a requirement, added to faith, for justification, because **the terms of the Abrahamic covenant cannot be changed.**

THE PURPOSE OF THE LAW WAS CONDEMNATION, NOT JUSTIFICATION

[19] If the Law of Moses was not intended to be a means of justification (i.e., a way of salvation), why was it given and what was its purpose? Paul declares that "the Law" was "added" to "the promise" made to Abraham (not as a replacement for it) "because of transgressions". That is, it was given as a restraint to sin (1Tim1:8-11) and to expose the sinfulness of men (Rom3:20; 7:7-14). But its applicability in time had a finite duration, "till the Seed [Christ; v16] should come". Here, Christ's "com[ing]" should be understood as beginning with His incarnation and including the entirety of His perfect human life and propitiatory death, by which He fulfilled the Law (Matt5:17; cf. Gal4:4).

Furthermore, Paul notes that the Law was "ordained by angels" (not given directly by God Himself) through a human "mediator" (Moses); thus, in the giving of the Law God was represented by the "angels", and man was represented by Moses. Both of these aspects of the Law put distance between God and men; it was an arms-length relationship. This is in contrast to the promise of God to Abraham, which He made Personally and directly without the use of a mediator, and implies that "the promise" is superior to "the Law".

[20] The fact that the Law had a "mediator" meant that it was a contract between two parties (not "one"), with obligations imposed on both parties. Under the Law, Israel had obligations which they could (and did) fail to keep, thus nullifying the covenant. This represents a major deficiency of the Mosaic covenant-Israel as a nation could forfeit the blessings of God by disobedience.

In the Abrahamic covenant, however, God **unilaterally** and **unconditionally** obligated Himself to keep His promise to Abraham, with no obligations put on Abraham whatsoever (Gen15:7-18). Thus, no disobedience on the part of Abraham or his descendants could nullify God's promise. In this verse, "but God is one" calls attention to this particular, that the promise of God to Abraham depends on the faithfulness of God alone and cannot be forfeited by the disobedience of men!

[21] When understood correctly, there is no contradiction between "the Law" (i.e., the Mosaic covenant) and "the promises of God" (i.e., the Abrahamic covenant); Paul rejects such a notion with the strongest of all possible language—"God forbid". The Law had no power to "give [eternal] life", which Paul equates to "righteousness", since righteousness is God's requirement of the creature for eternal life. The Law only exposes sin, which brings condemnation; that was its purpose. Read **the Law** carefully (Lev26:1-39; Deut28:1-68); it **contains no promise of eternal life for keeping it!** Those who teach that righteousness comes by works of the Law (whether Judaizers in Paul's day or legalists in ours) attribute a power to the Law that the Law never asserts for itself, and which both the Old Testament prophets and New Testament apostles expressly reject (Isa64:6; Ps143:2; Ezek33:12; Rom3:20; Gal2:16).

[22] The purpose of the Law was to illustrate "all under sin" (Eccl17:20; Rom3:10-12; 23). Thus, if God justifies (declares righteous) any, it must be by grace rather than works, or by "the promise" rather than the Law. With all condemned, God offers justification according to "the promise" (to Abraham) to "them that believe" on the basis of "the faith[fullness] of Jesus Christ" (i.e., the righteous work of Christ on behalf of the sinner).

[23] Israel was "kept under the Law" until the "faith[fulness]" (i.e., the work) of Christ was manifest in His incarnation, perfect life, and propitiatory death, at which time Christ had fulfilled the Law (Matt5:17).

[24] Paul's grand CONCLUSION: The purpose of the Law was to serve as a "schoolmaster" (which is a poor translation, although it is difficult to translate the Greek work in a concise way). The Greek word *paidagogos* (from which we get the English 'pedagogue') refers to a servant-slave charged with the moral training, guarding, and disciplining of the master's children prior to their reaching the age of [approximately] puberty (this analogy will be expanded by Paul in Gal4:1-7). In an analogous way, the Law served the function of moral training and disciplining of the children of Israel "until Christ".

The chart below summarizes the major contrasts Paul draws between "the Law" (Mosaic covenant) and "the promise" (Abrahamic covenant).

MOSAIC COVENANT – "the Law"	ABRAHAMIC COVENANT – "the promise"
Given to highlight personal sins, thus condemn (v19)	Given to justify men by grace through faith in the work of Christ (vv16,19,24)
Was temporary, did not annul the promise (vv17,19)	Is permanent (vv17,18)
Was given via agency of angels (v19)	Is administered by God Himself (v20)
Was received through a human mediator, Moses (vv19,20)	Is received directly by individuals via personal faith (vv22,24)
Required faithfulness of both parties, God and men; thus, based on works (v20)	Is dependent only on faithfulness of God, independent of men; thus, a provision of pure grace (v20)

BELIEVER'S RULE OF LIFE IS GRACE, NOT LAW

[25] But just as the "schoolmaster" (pedagogue) was no longer needed when the master's children reached maturity, so the Law was no longer necessary once the children of Israel were "justified by faith" (v24).

[26] Paul now changes from using first person pronouns ("our", "us", and "we" in Gal3:24-25, which referred to the nation of Israel) to the second person pronoun ("ye" and "you" in Gal3:26-29, referring to the Galatian believers). The conclusion Paul draws from the nation of Israel under the Law applies to Gentile believers! Those believers, whether Jewish or Gentile, who have been justified "by faith in Christ Jesus" become "sons of God"; here, the concept of a "son" (as will be developed in Galatians 4:1-7) is the Roman concept (appropriate as the Galatians are Gentiles of the Roman empire), which denotes the child who has matured to the point where the "schoolmaster" (pedagogue) is no longer needed. This reflects a radical change unique to the Church Age and the Body of Christ, as OT believers were never called "sons of God" (rather, servants of God).

[27] This baptism is not water baptism, but the spirit baptism (Matt3:11; Act1:5) that incorporated these Galatian, Gentile believers into the "body of Christ" when they believed (1Cor12:13). Spirit baptism effects a mystical union of the believer with Christ (Coll:27). It is this union with Christ and the indwelling Holy Spirit of God that become a believer's restraint over sin (Rom6:1-10; 1Cor6:9-20), not the external rules of the Law of Moses. A believer justified by grace through faith has "put on Christ", that is, **the righteousness of Christ** imputed to the believer. Though a believer in the Church Age is not under

the Law of Moses as a rule of life, he is now expected to live (by grace) a life consistent with the character of God who now dwells within him.

- [28] A Pharisee man would daily offer a prayer of gratitude to God, "LORD, I thank Thee that I am not a Gentile, a slave, or a woman", since in the nation of Israel under the Law of Moses these human classifications resulted in lesser spiritual privileges. In contrast, spiritual privileges of those "in Christ Jesus" (i.e., members of the Body of Christ) are independent of these human distinctions. This does not mean, however, that there are not divinely defined roles that differ between men and women even in the Church Age, for the New Testament clearly teaches that there are (e.g., 1Cor11:3-16; 14:34-36; 1Tim2:11-3:13).
- [29] Those, whether Jews or Gentiles, who have been justified by grace through faith in Jesus Christ are "Abraham's seed" by virtue of being 'in Christ', who is "the Seed" (Gal3:16) of Abraham. Unfortunately, Reformed/Replacement theology has taught from this verse that Christians are the 'New Israel', or 'spiritual Israel', or 'true Israel', meaning that God's purpose for a national Israel comprised of ethnic Jews who are physical descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob has ended, being replaced by God's purpose for the Church (with the Church now heirs of all the promises of the Abrahamic covenant); nothing could be further from the truth (cf. Rom11:1-32)! Christians (members of the Body of Christ) are "Abraham's seed" only in a spiritual sense, not in a physical sense. Notice that Christian, spiritual "heirs" are said to inherit "the promise" (SINGULAR!) given to Abraham, which was the "blessing" of justification by faith for people **of all nations** (Gal3:6-9); the Abrahamic covenant included additional promises, all the rest of which are reserved for Abraham's physical descendants (i.e., ethnic Jews in a regenerated and restored nation of Israel to be realized in the Millennial Kingdom, not the Church Age; Rom9:6,8; 11:25-27).

#### CHAPTER 4

Galatians 4 continues the development, begun in Gal3:25, of the concept that the believer's rule of life is grace, not law. The motif of children being reared in a Roman lord's home, under the guardianship of a *pedagogue* (Gal3:25) until reaching maturity, is used as an analogy/illustration of Israel under the Law of Moses. That the Apostle Paul used an illustration from Roman culture (rather than Jewish culture) is appropriate, as the Galatian believers were predominantly Gentiles who lived in the Roman province of Galatia—it was an illustration they would easily understand.

- [1] Paul asks the Galatians to consider the "child" (*nepios*, which can mean either 'infant' or 'young child'; i.e., a minor) born into the home of a Roman lord. By birthright, the child is "heir" to one day "be lord of all" (i.e., inherit the entire estate of his father and personally rule over it). Nevertheless, as a "child" he "differeth nothing from a servant [lit., slave]" in that he did not enjoy the freedom to make decisions for himself—his life was regulated and disciplined by the *pedagogue*.
- [2] As a child, he is under "tutors" (*epitropous*, better translated 'guardians', which would include the *pedagogue*) and "governors" (*oikonomos*, meaning stewards or administrators who managed or protected the estate on his behalf) "until the time appointed of the father". Whereas the time of a male child's maturity was set at age 13 in Jewish culture (and celebrated with a *Bar Mitzvah*),

in Roman culture the time of maturity was not set at a prescribed age. Rather, the time was determined by "the father" and recognized in a public ceremony in which the child was **adopted**.

Roman Adoption. Adoption in Roman culture did not mean what it means in our modern culture. In Roman culture, **adoption** was the formal procedure in which the Roman lord's heir was named and publicly recognized. The Roman lord was free to adopt as a son one who was not his biological offspring (e.g., Octavius, who became Augustus Caesar, was adopted by Julius Caesar as his heir, though he was not his biological son), but the procedure of adoption was necessary even if the child to be named as heir was the lord's biological son.

- [3] With "even so", Paul now applies the illustration from Roman culture to Israel relative to the Law (by use of the pronoun "we", Paul means the Jewish nation). The nation of Israel was "in bondage" to (i.e., as a slave; v1) "the elements [*stoicheia*, meaning 'basic premises or principles upon which life is built'] of the world", which is a reference to the Law of Moses. But this was "when we were children", with the implication from the Roman analogy that once Israel reached spiritual maturity, the Father would release them from accountability to the *pedagogue* (v25).
- [4] The precise time of the first advent of Christ was not chosen randomly, but providentially. In v2, "the time appointed of the father" from the Roman analogy is equivalent to "the fullness of time" in this verse. "God sent forth His Son" relates to the deity of Christ, as the Son has existed from all eternity; "made of a woman" relates to the humanity of Christ, which began at the time of the incarnation and will have no end (Cp., Isa9:6).

It is critical to recognize is that the human life of Jesus Christ (prior to His resurrection/glorification) was a life lived "under the Law [of Moses]". The Gospels are a record of Christ living as a Jewish Man under the Law of Moses. For this reason, direct application of the life of Christ as recorded in the Gospels to the believer today must be carefully considered; Christ lived a life in absolute obedience to the Mosaic Law, keeping every provision and fulfilling it once and for all (Matt5:17-18), whereas the believer today is not under the requirements of the Mosaic Law (cf., Rom6:14-15; Gal3:23-25).

- [5] Israel had failed to keep the Law, and as a result fell under its curse (Gal3:13). The Man Jesus Christ had to live a life under the Law in order to "redeem them that were under the Law". When Jesus Christ fulfilled the Law (meriting perfect *human* righteousness), then vicariously suffered its curse in Israel's place, a way was opened for God to show grace to sinners without compromising His justice (Rom3:24-26). By believing, Israel can now "receive the adoption of sons", whereby they are declared spiritually mature and freed from the requirement of the Law (*pedagogue*). Since Israel was now freed from obligation to the Law, why would Gentile converts desire to be placed under it?
- [6] In changing from "we" to "ye", Paul includes the believing Gentiles along with Israel. By faith, both Jews and Gentiles can "receive the adoption of sons" (v5), thus totally changing our relationship with God. Whereas before we were servants, now we are "sons". Believers now have the unspeakable privilege of addressing our Creator, the God of the universe, as "Abba, Father" (intimate Aramaic and Greek expressions for father). These are precisely the terms Jesus Himself used to address God, His Father (Mk14:36).

Notice that God (the Father) not only "sent forth His Son" (v4) to redeem men, He also "sent forth the Spirit" to indwell the believer; thus, the entire triune Godhead (Father, Son and Spirit) are involved in the work of salvation.

- [7] Sonship brings great privileges, but equally great responsibilities. Those whose relationship with God is defined by law are servants; a servant works for meager wages from his master. Those whose relationship with God is defined by grace are sons; a son labors out of love for his father expecting to inherit all that his father possesses (cf. Rom8:14-17).

Concluding the Roman analogy, the child (servant) was required to obey every demand of the *pedagogue*, whereas the son enjoyed the freedom to make his own decisions. However, while the son was no longer accountable to the demands of the *pedagogue*, he was now expected to live so as to please his father. Freedom from the demands of the Law does not mean freedom to live a life of licentiousness.

#### PAUL'S PERSONAL PLEA FOR GALATIANS NOT TO TURN FROM GRACE TO LEGALISM

Up until now, Paul's argument for the superiority of grace/faith over legalism/works has proceeded as reasoning from the truth of Scripture. Now, Paul includes a more personal, intimate appeal for the Galatians to consider the ramifications of what they are doing. Remember, Paul knows the Galatian believers well, and they know him well. They were converted under his ministry, so he is their 'spiritual father', so to speak. This is not an abstract, impersonal theological debate for Paul; it involves the eternal destiny of people Paul loves, so it's immensely personal for him.

- [8] Before their conversion, the Galatians worshiped the Roman/Greek pantheon of so-called gods (e.g., Jupiter/Jupiter and Mercury/Hermes; cf. Act14:11-13).
- [9] But now, "after ye have known God" (i.e., salvation from man's perspective), or rather "are known by God" (i.e., salvation from God's perspective), why would the Galatians be tempted to return to religious bondage (legalism) that was: 1) "weak", in that the Law had no power to either justify the sinner or sanctify the saint; and 2) "beggarly" (poor), in that it provided no eternal inheritance.
- [10] As pagans, the Galatians had observed all sorts of "days, and months, and times, and years" (i.e., religious festivals at appointed times on the calendar). Similarly, the Law of Moses, which the Judiazers were encouraging the Galatians to keep, required the keeping of the weekly Sabbath as well as observing 7 annual feasts and the sabbatical/jubilee years.
- [11] Paul expresses fear and frustration. He is fearful that all his hard work with the Galatians (remember, Paul had even been stoned to death for his preaching in Galatia; Act14:19) in instructing them in grace (Act13:38-39,43) will be "labor in vain" if they now turn to the bondage of keeping the Law of Moses.
- [12] Paul implores the Galatians to "be as I am; for I am as ye". By this Paul means that as a Christian he is living free from the Law of Moses, and they should be also. Paul had turned from keeping the Law (as an unregenerate Jew) to being free from the Law as a Christian (like the Gentiles, who were never under the Law).

Ironically, the Galatian Gentiles were turning to keeping the Law after their conversions.

- [13] Paul recalls the circumstances of his "first" occasion of ministry among the Galatians. On that visit, he was suffering from some (undefined) physical "infirmity" (possibly the "thorn in the flesh" which plagued Paul throughout his life; 2Cor12:7).

Greek Note. The prepositional phrase "at the first" in this verse is a translation of a Greek word that strictly means 'former', which means Paul is speaking of the first of two visits; this strongly supports the view that Paul wrote this epistle following his **second** missionary journey, after he had visited the Galatians a second time.

- [14] Despite Paul's visible handicap, the Galatians had not been offended by him and his condition; they did not "injure" him (i.e., treat him with contempt or scorn; v12) in any way. They did not "despise" his person, nor did they "reject" his message, but rather received him as an "angel" (i.e., messenger) from God, or even "as Christ Jesus" himself.
- [15] On this previous occasion, the Galatians had professed their "blessedness" at having been in the presence of an apostle of Jesus Christ preaching the gospel. They would have done anything in their power to minister to Paul, including even "pluck[ing] out their own eyes" to give them to Paul (which some have taken as evidence that Paul's physical malady had something to do with his eyes).
- [16] This love for Paul by the Galatians was now changing. They even looked at Paul as the "enemy", because the Judaizers are in the process of convincing the Galatians that Paul's gospel of justification by grace through faith alone, apart from any works of the Law, is a false gospel.
- [17] Paul had preached his gospel to the Galatians from a pure motive. He desired their salvation, and fruitful, Spirit-filled lives apart from bondage to the Law. Paul in no way attempted to create in the Galatians a dependence on himself as a person or an apostle (remember, in Gall:8 Paul had exhorted that Galatians in the strongest of all possible terms to reject him as a false prophet if he ever changed his message!).

In contrast, Paul asserts that "they" (i.e., the Judaizers) ministered "zealously" among the Galatians with impure motives. Their message was that the Galatian Gentiles were "exclude[d]" from favor with God (even salvation) unless they submitted to the Law of Moses, in which they (the Judaizers alone) could instruct them, thus seeking to make the Galatians dependent upon them.

- [18] Paul acknowledges that it is a "good" thing for disciples to be "zealous" for their teacher, but this assumes the teacher teaches truth. Paul was not saying that the Galatians could have no other teachers but himself, but that the Judaizers are teaching falsely, so that the Galatians' "zeal" for them is misplaced.
- [19] Addressing the Galatians as "my little children" (the only use of such an expression in all of Paul's epistles), Paul's genuine love for them is revealed. Paul compares his ministry among the Galatians to the labor a mother must endure to give birth to a child—it was long, hard, painful, and extremely personal. His desire for them is that "Christ be formed in you", which is much more than justification (i.e., salvation) only, but includes their

perfect sanctification/glorification, which is God's purpose for every believer (Rom8:29-30).

- [20] The "tone" of Paul's voice in this epistle has been harsh (necessarily so, due to the gravity of the error he is addressing). By its nature a letter is impersonal, so it undoubtedly makes Paul's "tone" even harsher than he desires it to be. Paul desires to be present with them so that he can talk to them in a more personal and gentle way, so that his love and concern for them would be apparent.

#### LAW AND GRACE CANNOT COEXIST—A BIBLICAL ILLUSTRATION

Paul concludes his two-chapter (Galatians 3-4) argument for justification by grace through faith alone with an illustration (a type; v24) from the life of Abraham (the father of the Jewish race) showing that it is impossible for law and grace to coexist.

- [21] To the Galatians who "desire to be under the Law", Paul calls their attention to an illustration that comes from the very "Law" they desire to honor (in the broader sense that includes the book of Genesis in the *Torah*).
- [22] Paul begins his illustration with the observation that "Abraham had two sons". Paul is not ignorant of the fact that Abraham had more than two sons (Gen25:1-2), but his illustration involves only Isaac and Ishmael (i.e., Paul is not saying that Abraham had 'only' two sons, so there is no contradiction with Scripture). Ishmael was Abraham's son born by Hagar (Gen16:15), a "bond-woman" (i.e., slave); in contrast, Isaac was Abraham's son born by Sarah (Gen21:2-3), a "free-woman".
- [23] The son born of the "bond-woman" was "born after the flesh" (i.e., Ishmael was born of Hagar by **natural** means); in contrast, the son born of the "free-woman" was "by [the] promise" of God (i.e., by **supernatural** means, in that the birth of Isaac of Sarah was a miracle of God; Gen17:15-19; 18:1-14; 21:2).
- [24] Paul says the contrast between these two sons of Abraham born of two different mothers are an "allegory", which is a transliteration of the underlying Greek word (*allegoreo*), but is a poor translation; a better translation would be "type". Hagar/Ishmael and Sarah/Isaac are **types** of two covenants. Hagar the bond-woman (i.e., slave) is a type of the Mosaic covenant given at "Mount Sinai". When Hagar the bond-woman brought forth a son, he (Ishmael) was also a slave. In a similar way, the children of Israel under the Law of Moses lived in "bondage". Though this typological thinking is not continued by Paul, it is expected that the reader understand that in contrast, Sarah the free-woman is a type of the Abrahamic covenant, which was a promise of God that required no works of Abraham or his seed to inherit; when Sarah the free-woman brought forth a son, he (Isaac) was also free, and he stood in the seed-line of Abraham that would inherit the promise of God.

Allegory or Type? An allegory makes use of a fictional story to teach spiritual truth, whereas a type is an historical person or event used to illustrate spiritual truth. Clearly, Paul's use of the sons of Abraham (and their mothers) in Galatians 4:22-31 is typical (historical) rather than allegorical (fictional).

- [25] Paul now brings in another typological contrast, not of two covenants but of two cities. "Hagar . . . answereth [i.e.,

corresponds] to Jerusalem which now is", alluding to the present historical fact that Jerusalem of Paul's day was in "bondage" to the Roman empire, which is a national curse explicitly specified in the Mosaic covenant (cf. Deut28:49-58).

As for the issue of "Mount Sinai [being] in Arabia", see the comments on Gall:17.

- [26] In contrast, the "Jerusalem which is above" (i.e., the new, heavenly Jerusalem that will be revealed in the future; Heb11:10; Rev21:2) is "the mother of us all", meaning both Jews and Gentiles who come to God by grace through faith, apart from the Law; the new, heavenly Jerusalem (along with all its citizens) "is free" and will forever be so.
- [27] This is a quote of Isa54:1. In context, the verse from Isaiah prophesies the historical/spiritual progress of the nation of Israel (before, during, and after the Babylonian captivity), but Paul applies it to his illustration of Sarah and Hagar. Though Sarah was long barren, while Hagar gave birth to a son of Abraham, in God's perfect time Sarah in her latter days bore a son that would ultimately provide Abraham a much greater progeny than Hagar.
- [28] Paul asserts that "we . . . are the children of promise", analogous to Isaac. As Isaac's birth was supernatural, according to the promise of God (apart from any works) appropriated by the faith of Abraham (Gen15:4-6), so likewise is the believer's new birth (Jn3:3-8; Gal2:8-9).
- [29] As Isaac was persecuted by Ishmael (Gen21:8-9), a persecution that has continued unabated down through the centuries and currently manifests itself as the Arab/Muslim persecution of Jews/Israel, so those who have been "born after the Spirit" by grace through faith should expect to experience persecution from those who remain in bondage to the Law. Paul's own persecutions came primarily at the hands of unregenerate Jews; he puts the Judaizers who are attempting to corrupt the Galatians in the same category as Ishmael.
- [30] This is a quote of Gen21:10 made following the occasion of Hagar and Ishmael mocking Isaac as a son of Abraham. Once Isaac was born into the house of Abraham, Ishmael had to be cast out. Isaac was the "heir", Ishmael was not. The inheritance of believers as "the sons of God" comes through the promise of the Abrahamic covenant (Rom8:14-17), not by the works required in the Mosaic covenant.

By way of application, Paul is charging the Galatians to "cast out" (excommunicate, exclude from the fellowship) the Judaizers and their followers who are abandoning grace for a return to legalism.

- [31] Just as Ishmael the "son of the bondwoman" could not continue to live along side of Isaac the son of the "free" in the house of Abraham, so law and grace cannot coexist.

## CHAPTER 5

### CHRISTIAN LIVING APART FROM THE LAW

- [1] This verse really concludes Paul's argument and illustration from Galatians 4. The work of Christ in fulfilling the Law and

meriting genuine human righteousness, which is imputed to the believer, has "made us free" from the Law; Paul's exhortation, then, is "be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage" to any form of legalism. Why would any slave who had been given the gift of "liberty" choose to return to "bondage"?

#### A RETURN TO LAW DESTROYS GRACE

- [2] The Galatians were being challenged by the Judaizers to be circumcised as a requirement for salvation (Act15:1,5). Paul asserts that for them to do so would be adding works to grace, thus perverting the gospel (Gall:6-7). The work of "Christ shall profit you nothing" (i.e., you cannot be justified) if in addition you trust in works of your own. Law (circumcision) and grace (Christ) cannot be mixed.
- [3] Circumcision did not stand alone, but was the initiation into the Mosaic covenant. Under that covenant, circumcision by itself profited nothing. Circumcision was but one of 613 commandments (by Jewish reckoning), all of which had to be kept (Gal3:10; Jas2:10). The Law of Moses was all or nothing; there was no merit in keeping only a portion of the Law. A misunderstanding of this important truth was a problem for the Galatians, and it continues to be a problem for Jews and Christians today.
- [4] Those who trust in "law" to be "justified" have "fallen from grace". This verse is not teaching the possibility of a believer losing his salvation. Here, "grace" is not equivalent to salvation, but rather to *the way of salvation*. God's way of salvation is **by grace** (Eph2:8-9; Tit3:5), and to abandon it and turn to "law" (i.e., works of any kind) as a *way of salvation* is fatal. For those depending on their own works as a way of salvation, the work of "Christ is become of no effect unto you". You cannot trust in your own works and the work of Christ; law and grace cannot be mixed!
- [5] Some background on the entire salvation package is helpful in understanding this verse. Believers are immediately justified with God (Rom5:1) and free of condemnation (Rom8:1). We enjoy positional sanctification by virtue of our standing "in Christ" (1Cor1:2), but this is not practical sanctification (i.e., we still sin; 1Jn1:8,10). Thus, believers "wait for the hope of righteousness by faith". Our ultimate sanctification (the time when we will no longer sin) will never come as a result of our 'working harder', but must await the new bodies we will receive in the resurrection that will occur at the return of Christ.

For this reason, salvation in the New Testament is sometimes spoken of in the past, present and future tenses (see CHART below). The believer has been saved in the past (justification), he is in the process of being saved in the present (sanctification), and he will be saved in the future (glorification); although they do not all occur at the same time, they are a sure and complete package promised to the believer (Rom8:30). Remember, "hope" as used in the NT never implies uncertainty, but is always used in the sense of a confident expectation that what God has promised will come to pass (Cp., Rom4:18-21).

### THE THREE TENSES OF SALVATION

Tense of Salvation	The believer . . .	from . . .	Stage of Salvation	Aspect of Sanctification
<b>Past</b>	<u>has been saved</u> (at the moment of faith)	the penalty of sin	Justification	Positional
<b>Present</b>	<u>is being saved</u> (during this life)	the power of sin	Sanctification	Progressive
<b>Future</b>	<u>will be saved</u> (at the resurrection)	the presence of sin	Glorification	Perfect

[6] Thus, for the one who is "in Jesus Christ" (i.e., justified, which is positional sanctification), God already reckons him perfect by virtue of the completed work of Christ on his behalf. Whether he is circumcised or uncircumcised cannot add to, or detract from, his justification. Any works of his are irrelevant. What is important is his "faith", which is the non-meritorious means by which one personally appropriates the work of Christ.

However, this is not to say that the believer, after being saved by grace through faith, will not perform good works. Indeed, he is expected to do so (Eph2:10). But his motivation for doing good works is now entirely different. He is not working because the Law (*pedagogue*) demands it, but freely out of love for his Lord and his desire to please Him. This is the meaning of "faith which worketh by love".

#### A RETURN TO THE LAW HINDERS SPIRITUAL GROWTH

- [7] The Galatians had started well in receiving Paul's gospel of pure grace and continuing in it (Act13:48-39,43,48). But now the Judaizers are tempting them to depart from "the truth" (i.e., the gospel). Using an athletic metaphor (common for Paul), he describes their Christian experience as a race. They began "run[ning] well" in grace, but at some point in the race they encountered someone who "hinder[ed]" them from completing the race; now they are attempting to complete the race by legalistic self-effort, rather than by the grace of God. For those who have been saved by believing "the truth" (i.e., the gospel), they are not in danger of losing their salvation, but their spiritual growth is being "hinder[ed]" (cf. 2Pet3:18).
- [8] This "persuasion" (lit., deceptive or treacherous enticement) did not come from "Him that calleth you" (i.e., God; Cp., Gall:6).
- [9] Paul uses another metaphor (cf. 1Cor5:6) to illustrate that even small errors must be resisted, since error in one area will inevitably propagate into error in other areas. Truth, revealed in the Word of God (Jn17:17), is a consistent, integral and comprehensive whole, like the seamless robe of Christ (Jn19:23); error at any point, left unchecked, will eventually unravel the whole. In the case of the Galatians, error regarding justification had already spread to errors regarding sanctification.
- [10] Nevertheless, Paul expresses "confidence" that the Galatian believers, "through the Lord", will agree with the truth of Scripture that Paul is laying out for them. He also expresses "confidence" that the leader of the Judaizers who is "troubling" them will be judged by God (cf. Gall:9), "whosoever he be"; since Paul never hesitated to name names, he apparently did not know the identify of the leader of these Judaizers.

- [11] Here we see again the hint that the Judaizers were asserting that Paul himself had changed his gospel to include "circumcision" (see comments on Gall:8). Paul asks that if this were true, why does he continue to "suffer persecution" (from the Jews/Judaizers)? If he was now preaching circumcision, they would be satisfied with his message. No, they know they are treacherously attempting to deceive (v8) the Galatians in asserting that Paul has changed his gospel (he has not!). They continue their persecution of Paul because he continues to preach "the cross", which is the finished work of Christ on behalf of the believer as the **only** basis for justification, which is an "offense" to all who look to a legal system of works to merit favor with God (1Cor1:23; 1Pet2:8).
- [12] Paul makes use of a pun relative to the Judaizers' desire for the Galatians to be circumcised (i.e., which means to "cut off" the flesh of the foreskin). He expresses his own desire that they be "cut off", which is also the expression from the Law used for excommunication (e.g., Ex12:15). Those who teach false doctrine, whether they be genuine believers or not, must be removed from the fellowship (Rom16:17; 2Thess3:14).
- [13] However, "liberty" from the Law of Moses (or any law-works system) is not license to sin. Believers are to "serve one another" from the motivation of "love" rather than an obligation to obey law(s).
- [14] Paul asserts that the whole of the Law (of Moses) can be reduced to a single "word" (i.e. commandment), "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself" (Lev19:18). By this he means that the perfect keeping of this commandment would result in the fulfillment of the entire Law (Rom13:8-10). Jesus affirmed this same truth, adding only "love the Lord" (Matt22:36-40).
- [15] The strife in the Galatian churches caused by the Judaizers was causing them to "bite and devour one another", rather than "love" and "serve one another" (v13). If unchecked, this would "consume" (i.e., destroy) these churches.

## SANCTIFICATION IS THROUGH THE SPIRIT, NOT THE LAW

- [16] The alternative to a fleshly attempt to keep rules and regulations (i.e., law) is for the believer to yield to the Holy Spirit who indwells him (1Cor6:19). "Walk in the Spirit" is a present tense imperative, *keep on walking*, where "walk" is a metaphor in Scripture for one's course of life (Noah Webster) or lifestyle. If one's moment-by-moment, all-consuming objective of life is to yield to the Holy Spirit of God, he "shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh"; that is, he will refrain from sin as a corollary. In the Greek text "ye shall not" is given in the form of a double negative, which expresses an **impossibility**.
- [17] As justification cannot be attained by works, so sanctification is not achieved by human effort (note Paul's personal experience in this regard, recorded in Rom7:15-25). Both justification and **sanctification** are by grace through faith. The believer must put his faith in God the Son to save him, and he must put his faith in God the Holy Spirit to sanctify him.
- [18] In the Greek text, "if" is a first class condition which assumes reality. Thus, believers are "led by the Spirit", which is their rule of life and source of sanctification (rather than "law"). This is in contrast to the unbeliever, who is not led by the Spirit, and who remains under law as a restraint to sin (cf. 1Tim1:9-10).
- [19] Since the "flesh" (i.e., sin nature) of the believer is not eradicated at regeneration (as it will be in the resurrection), he can still succumb to sins produced by that nature; the believer can still commit any sin the unbeliever can, as evidenced by the sins enumerated in vv19-21.
- The sins listed appear to be grouped in 4 broad categories. First, **sexual immorality**: adultery, fornication (any sexual perversion), uncleanness, and lasciviousness (unbridled lust).
- [20] Second, **religious sin**: idolatry (honoring of anything in a way appropriate of God alone) and witchcraft (any form of trafficking in the occult, which is interacting with demons); note that these two sins are also linked in 1Sam15:23. Third, **societal evils**: hatred, strife, jealousy, wrath (unchecked eruptions of rage, temper), factions, seditions (divisions), heresies (lit., sects) . . .
- [21] . . . envyings, and murders. Fourth, sins associated with **alcohol**: drunkenness (excessive use of alcohol) and revelings (behavior/orgies that result from drunkenness). That these broad categories of sin, as well as the specific sins listed, are not exhaustive, Paul adds "and the like".

Then Paul asserts that "they who do such things (i.e., the sins of vv19-21) **will not inherit the kingdom of God**". This assertion has been interpreted in widely different ways. 1) Arminian theology teaches that the believer who habitually practices these sins will lose his salvation (i.e., salvation is by faith plus a post-conversion holy lifestyle, which is certainly a perversion of the gospel of grace). 2) Lordship Salvation proponents assert that a person who professes faith, but habitually practices these sins, was never truly born again (i.e., his faith was not genuine or 'saving'<sup>3</sup>). 3) Some in the Free Grace camp have taught that true

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<sup>3</sup> But this puts an unbiblical emphasis on the quality or strength of one's faith, rather than on the object of that faith. The Lord Jesus Himself taught

believers who live ungodly lives (carnal Christians) will enter the Kingdom of God (i.e., the Millennial Kingdom) but will not "inherit the kingdom", which is alleged to be the reward given to some of reigning with Christ in the Kingdom. All of these interpretations are problematic<sup>4</sup>, and I believe unbiblical. In understanding this passage, it is helpful to consider two very similar parallel passages (1Cor6:9-13; Eph5:1-8).

1 Corinthians 6:9-13. In this parallel passage, it is "the unrighteous" (Paul's label for unbelievers in 1Cor6:1) who are said "shall not inherit the kingdom of God"; the unrighteous are those said to be guilty of a list of sins similar to that of Gal5:19-21, and they are explicitly contrasted with the Corinthian believers, who though guilty of practicing these sins "are washed ... sanctified ... justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God" (1Cor6:11). Thus, "the unrighteous" in this passage are not believers who are practicing sins of the flesh, but unbelievers who God still views in their sins, rather than in Christ. The issue is **positional sanctification**, not practical sanctification. If God views us as guilty of these sins, we will not "inherit the kingdom of God", which includes both salvation and entrance into the Millennial Kingdom in our resurrection bodies; this is true of all unbelievers. But God views every believer as being just as righteous (positional sanctification) as the "Lord Jesus", which means he both possesses salvation and looks forward to reigning with Christ in the Millennial Kingdom.

Ephesians 5:1-8. Ephesians is addressed to a fellowship of believers who Paul assured were **all** "blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ" (Eph1:3), which included "inheritance" (Eph1:11,13-14,18); inheritance is a gracious gift lavished upon all believers by virtue of position in Christ (Cp. 1Pet1:3-5). Thus, when Paul refers to those guilty of the sins enumerated in Eph5:3-5 as not having "any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God" (Eph5:5), it is because they are unbelievers, who God sees still in their sins rather than in Christ; indeed, he calls these "the sons of disobedience" who will be recipients of "the wrath of God" (Eph5:6). In the context of the entire epistle, it is not believers who are habitually committing such sins that are in view in Eph5:3-5, but those who are UNSAVED because of their rejection of Christ as Savior. This is made clear from the distinction drawn in Eph5:8; before believing, the Ephesian Christians had been in "darkness", but now they are in "light in the Lord" (again, **positional sanctification** is in view).

Conclusion Relative to Galatians 5:19-21. All believers are justified by grace. All believers possess an inheritance in Christ by grace, which includes entrance into the coming Millennial Kingdom as well as reigning with Christ in it (though one's relative position in the Kingdom will be a reward for faithful service). Galatians 5:19-21 has in view unbelievers, who God views as guilty of the sins enumerated, and no unbeliever will "inherit the kingdom of God" (v21). Believers can commit all the same sins as unbelievers, but God still views them as righteous in Christ (**positional sanctification**). This is not to say that sin

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that it was not the size of one's faith that was vital, but Himself as its Object (cf. Matt17:20; Luk17:6).

<sup>4</sup> One problem with which all the views struggle is the issue of what constitutes 'habitual' sin. None suggest that a single lapse (or small number of lapses) into sins preclude the possibility of repentance and restoration, but only the committing of such sins habitually. No one can define, however, how much is too much.

in the life of a believer has no consequences; indeed it does (including divine discipline in this life, up to and including death, as well as loss of reward in the kingdom to come). However, salvation and an inheritance in the kingdom of God are gifts of grace given to every believer that can never be lost.

- [22] Whereas the sin nature produces the sins enumerated in vv19-21 (an manifold others like them) as its "fruit", the "fruit" produced by the "Spirit" is: "love" (Greek *agape*, the commitment to the good of others above one's own), "joy", "peace", "long-suffering" (perseverance), "gentleness", "goodness", "faith" (faithfulness), . . .
- [23] . . . meekness (proper submission to authority), and temperance (self-control). Note that "the fruit of the Spirit" is not something we do, but something we display; it is not produced by the effort of the believer, but by the work of the Spirit, and for this reason these nine qualities are sometimes (appropriately) referred to as 'graces'. On the one hand, there has never been any law enacted to forbid such "fruit" (everyone everywhere recognizes them as virtues); on the other hand, these virtues could never be enforced through legislation.
- [24] This verse is not commanding that believers crucify/mortify the flesh, in the sense of working harder to sin less (Paul has already asserted that such works of the flesh are not effective). Rather, believers who "are Christ's", "have crucified [aorist tense] the flesh". In Greek grammar, the aorist tense is the tense of consummate fact. It is a fact that believers have crucified the flesh (Cp., Gal2:20), which occurred when they were Spirit-baptized into the body of Christ (1Cor12:13), thus identifying with Him in His death.
- [25] As in v18, "if" is a first class condition in the Greek text, which assumes reality. Thus, it is assumed to be true that the Galatian believers "live in the Spirit", which refers to their positional sanctification (i.e., God reckons them sanctified by virtue of the fact that they are 'in Christ', Who is perfectly righteous). Paul's exhortation, "let us also walk in the Spirit", is for the believer's practical and progressive sanctification to line up with their positional sanctification. But the very fact that Paul gives such an exhortation admits the possibility that the genuine believer may live a life that is not growing in godliness.
- [26] Justification and/or sanctification that is based on individual performance within a legal system (i.e., works) ALWAYS gives rise to personal pride, "vainglory", and "envyings" (cf. Eph2:8-9). This verse seems to indicate that the legalism introduced into the Galatian fellowship by the Judaizers had led to internal strife and divisions along these lines.

## CHAPTER 6

### RESPONSIBILITIES OF CHRISTIAN LIBERTY IN THE CHURCH

The believer during the Church Age (i.e., Christian) is not under Law of Moses, and indeed enjoys tremendous liberty (1Cor10:23). Christian liberty, however, is not a license to sin. The Christian is exhorted to "be led by the Spirit" (Gal5:18), to "walk in the Spirit" (Gal5:25), and "[motivated] by love [rather than law] serve on another" (Gal5:13). Thus, far from being a life of sinful indulgences of fleshly lusts (as those who charge us with Antinomianism allege), the Christian life is

one of sacrificial service, illustrated in a variety of ways in this final chapter of Galatians.

#### A SINNING BROTHER

- [1] Though it ought not to be, the Christian is capable of committing any sin. Whereas the purpose of the Law is to condemn the sinner, the gracious goal of Christian fellowship is to "restore" the believer who has been "overtaken in a fault". This comes by the believer's confession of sin (1Jn1:9), and it is the responsibility of "spiritual" brethren within the fellowship to confront the offending brother; such confrontation is performed "in the spirit of meekness" rather than pride, with the knowledge that every believer is capable of succumbing to similar "tempt[ation]", whatever it may be.

#### A BURDENED BROTHER

- [2] While it is the responsibility of "spiritual" brothers to restore sinning saints (v1), it is the responsibility of all believers to assist their brothers/sisters in the bearing of "burdens" (Greek *baros*, which means 'loads of a grievous, excessive or crushing nature'). By doing so the believer will "fulfill the law of Christ", which is service motivated by love (Gal5:13-14); this is the "new commandment" Christ gave to His disciples (Jn13:34-35; 15:12).
- [3] Legalistic thinking always tempts the believer toward personal pride. When another is struggling and we are not, the devil and our own sin nature tempt us to believe it is because we are better than they are; where the Spirit in grace controls our thoughts, such should not be the case.
- [4] Rather than comparing one's "work" to others (cf. 2Cor10:12), even other believers, the Christian ought to examine himself relative to the gifts with which God has blessed him personally (2Cor10:13). The believer may appropriately "rejoice in himself alone" only if he has fulfilled God's calling of him personally, which cannot be assessed by comparison with others.
- [5] The expectation asserted in this verse does not contradict v2. Here, the word used for "burden" is the Greek *phortion*, which means 'a regular load'. Thus, it is the responsibility of each believer to carry his own weight relative to the normal burdens of life experienced by all, but to give assistance to those believers burdened with excessive loads that go beyond the normal experience and threaten to overwhelm the particular individual (v2).

#### A TEACHING BROTHER

- [6] It is the responsibility of believers to financially support those in the church who teach them the Word of God (1Cor9:7-14; 1Tim5:17).
- [7] While vv7-8 have broad applications, in context they appear to be related to the exhortation of v6 for the Galatians to support those who teach them "the word" (i.e., sound doctrine), as opposed to the Judaizers (who they are not to support). They are commanded to STOP being "deceived" (by the Judaizers?); it is the duty of the believer to exercise discernment so he will not be

deceived by false teachers; to allow oneself to be deceived by teaching that is contrary to the Word of God is to "mock" God.

Paul makes use of an agricultural analogy: it is an unailing fact that the farmer will get an abundant harvest of whatever he plants and feeds. Though the sin of a believer can and will be forgiven with confession (1Jn1:9), a life of sin will have consequences; these consequences are both temporal (divine discipline up to an including physical death; 1Cor11:30-32; Heb12:4-7; 1Jn5:16-17) and eternal (loss of reward at the Judgment Seat of Christ; 1Cor3:12-15).

- [8] A life of sowing to the "flesh" will "reap corruption". The legalistic teaching of the Judaizers (and all law-works systems) appealed to the flesh, but it includes a false gospel that will damn unbelievers (Gal1:6-9) and a rule of life that will prevent believers from growing spiritually (Gal5:7; 2Pet3:18). In contrast, a life of sowing to the "Spirit" will "reap life everlasting". Only the true gospel, which is a gospel of pure grace (Gal1:6), can save sinners, and only a life lived in dependence upon the indwelling Holy Spirit can mature a believer (Gal5:17; 2Pet3:18).
- [9] Paul concludes his agricultural analogy with the exhortation to "not be weary in well doing" and to "faint not" (i.e., don't get tired and give up). Just as the farmer receives an abundant harvest only after a long and strenuous effort of planting, watering, weeding, and waiting, so the reward for a believer's service will come later (at the Judgment Seat of Christ; 2Cor5:9-10). Note that Paul changed from using 3rd person pronouns (he, him) in vv6-8 to the use of 1st person pronouns (we, us) in this verse; Paul includes himself as a recipient of the exhortation to not get tired and give up in his service for the Lord (cf. 1Cor9:24-27)!
- [10] Finally, Paul extends his exhortation to "do good", initiated relative to the support of Bible teachers (v6), to "all men". The Christian, who is a recipient of the grace of God, is to show grace to others (cf. Eph4:32; Col3:12-13). As in v6, benevolence in the form of financial support is in view. If such benevolence must be prioritized (since financial resources are never unlimited), it should go first to "them who are of the household of faith" (i.e., support for believers who are in need is to be the priority).

#### PAUL'S CONCLUSION (WRITTEN IN HIS OWN HAND)

- [11] Paul generally made use of an amanuensis to transcribe the main body of his letters, but he would personally pen the concluding salutation as his signature (1Cor16:21; Col4:18; 2Thess3:17). Apparently Paul takes the pen from his scribe at this point in his letter to the Galatians.

Paul's allusion to "how large a letter I have written unto you" is probably not a reference to the length of the letter (Galatians is not particularly long for Paul), but to the size of the letters employed by Paul in his conclusion. Those who speculate that Paul's physical affliction (2Cor12:7) involved his eyes (Gal4:15) see this as an allusion to his need to write large (due to poor eyesight?); more likely, Paul is using large letters (perhaps all capitals) to emphasize the importance of his concluding remarks.

- [12] The Judaizers know that **the gospel of pure grace** is an offense to the natural man, especially Jews (1Cor1:23). By adding circumcision to faith (Act15:1) as a requirement for salvation they hope to lessen the offense (i.e., it's not faith only, but faith plus works) as well as the "persecution" that always results from unbelieving Jews when such a gospel is proclaimed (note the ministry of Paul in Galatia, who was violently persecuted by Jews whenever he preached the gospel of grace; Act14:5-6,19,22).
- [13] But circumcision was initiation into the entire Mosaic law code, which had to be kept in its entirety (Jas2:10); circumcision alone profited nothing, even for Israel under the Mosaic covenant. The Judaizers themselves were circumcised, but they surely did not and could not "keep the law".
- [14] Paul's gospel, **the gospel of pure grace**, proclaimed that "the cross of Christ" (i.e., the work of Christ on behalf of the believer) ALONE has merit with God (1Cor2:2).
- [15] No work (circumcision) or lack of work (uncircumcision) on the part of the sinner achieves any merit with God. Merit with God resides in the work of Christ ALONE; the believer who puts his faith in Christ's work on his behalf is born again as a "new creature" in Christ (2Cor5:17-21) and is reckoned by God to be just as righteous as Him (Gal2:16).
- [16] Only those who accept that justification is by grace through faith alone have "peace" with God (Rom5:1). This is true both for "them" (i.e., Gentile believers in Galatia), as well as for "the Israel of God" (i.e., Jewish believers). Paul's most important concluding point is that justification comes by grace through faith alone, for **BOTH** Gentiles and Jews. It is not true that Jews are saved by keeping the Law and Gentiles are saved by faith; the way of salvation is the same for all!

Greek Note. Some have attempted to argue that an epexegetical *kai* is being employed in this verse, such that the "and" which connects "them" with "the Israel of God" should be translated 'even' (as in the NIV), thus identifying the Gentile believers as being "the Israel of God". However, this is a misapplication of the Granville-Sharp rule of Greek grammar; **it is an error**. Paul's point is not that believing Gentiles somehow become Jews, the new Israel, the true Israel, the Israel of God, or any such nonsense, but that justification by grace through faith applies equally for both Gentiles and Jews as the only way of salvation.

- [17] Paul encountered "trouble" (i.e., persecution for Christ's sake) wherever he went; this persecution came almost exclusively from unregenerate Jews who opposed his gospel. The Judaizers alleged that Paul had changed his gospel to include circumcision (Gall:8; 5:11); had this been true, the persecution would have ended. The physical "marks" (i.e., scars) on his body were a testimony to his faithful preaching of **the gospel of pure grace**.

The Greek word translated "marks" is *stigmata*, which refers to the permanent 'brand' a master put on his slaves or cattle to denote ownership. Paul's favorite title for himself was a *doulos* (voluntary, willing bond-slave; cf. Ex21:5-6) of Jesus Christ.

- [18] Paul closes every epistle by commending his readers to the grace of God. No one understood the grace of God more than the Apostle Paul, who had benefited so uniquely from it (1Cor15:9-10; 1Tim1:12-15; note the principle in Lk7:47).

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