

*The Bible Notebook*

# GALATIANS

*FREE - BY THE GRACE OF GOD!*

A Verse by Verse Commentary

By

Johnny L. Sanders, D. Min.

# DEDICATION

To

Jimmy Draper

*President, LifeWay Christian Resources  
1992-2006*

&

To

Thom Rainer

*President, LifeWay Christian Resources  
2006 -*

*Called, Committed, Commissioned*

*Serving on the Board of Trustees  
with you has been a blessing*

## The Epistle of Paul to the Galatians

### BACKGROUND

The Epistle of Paul to the Galatians was a letter written in anger, yet in love. In this letter Paul states unequivocally the terms on which a lost person can find salvation in Jesus Christ. In it he goes to battle against a movement that sought to completely altar the nature and course of Christianity. Had they won, Christianity might have remained a part of the Jewish religion, a sect of Judaism. But they did not win. The Lord had promised that the gates of hell would not prevail against His church. This movement, led by the Judaizers, was one of numerous challenges to that promise.

It has been suggested that if the apostle to the Gentiles had not been successful in dealing with this heresy the entire future of the Christian movement would be jeopardized. It had also been suggested that Christianity might have failed if the apostles had not handled the controversy concerning the Grecian widows (Acts 6) as they did. We would do well to remind ourselves of two things. First, the existence of the church was never in the hands of the apostles in Jerusalem, or those of Paul. Jesus is the Head of the church and the Holy Spirit is the guiding force behind, and within it. Second, throughout the history of the Christianity Gospel fires have flamed brilliantly in some places and smoldered in other places. But as long as Jesus Christ is the Head of the church you can be sure that, even if all other institutions in this world fail, the church will stand as the body of Christ awaiting His return.

Paul sets an example for modern believers. We preach love and promote unity in the local church. But Christians may, at times, hide behind those worthy commitments in order to keep from taking a stand. Unity is important, but it can never be established or preserved at the expense of holiness or truth. There are times when a church must take a stand and say, "We love you, but you are not bringing that movement into the Lord's church." Unity in Christ is based on sound doctrine, or objective truth as revealed in the Word of God.

When the Judaizers brought false doctrine in the Galatian churches Paul was inspired by the Holy Spirit to meet it head on. It is doubtful that it ever occurred to Paul to stand by, wringing his hands and

hoping they would go away. The church is weakened when it permits ungodly movements, philosophies, and practices to invade the fellowship. This is especially relevant in light of the proliferation of various cults and sects which identify themselves with Christianity today. Paul was led by the Holy Spirit to move quickly and decisively to counter the heresy that threatened the churches of Galatia. In doing so he set an example for us today.

Galatians has been called a theological battlefield, the primary document in a struggle for the very life of the early church. It was a basic tool in the spiritual awakening we call the Protestant Reformation. In this brief epistle we find revealed truth about how one finds salvation in Jesus Christ, which makes Galatians relevant for any church, in any age.

## **AUTHOR**

The Apostle Paul is almost universally accepted as the human author of this epistle to the Galatian churches. The Holy Spirit is the divine author, Paul the instrument by which it was communicated. Sometimes students of the Scripture become so caught up in discussions about what Paul had in mind when he wrote this or that to a particular church that they forget that the Scripture was the product of the mind of God. That takes a lot of guess work out of Bible study.

## **DATE**

Galatians was written after the Jerusalem Conference (Acts 15; Gal. 2) and possibly after a visit to Phrygia and Galatia (Acts. 18:22-23). It was written before Romans because the basic thesis of Galatians was covered again in Romans. A possible date was somewhere between A.D. 53-55. There is a problem with the date, however. Some hold that if Paul is writing to the churches of South Galatia which were founded on the first missionary journey the letter could have been written as early as A.D. 49 or 50. That, however, would have been before the Jerusalem Conference which he deals with in chapter two. If the letter was sent to the churches of North Galatia which were founded on the second missionary journey, it was written during the third missionary journey. If it was written early on the third journey it was written from Ephesus (possibly in A.D. 53), but if it was written later it might have been written from Macedonia (about A.D. 55). There is no reason to rule out South Galatia, nor is there any reason that Paul could not have written to them from Ephesus on the third journey.

## **PLACE OF WRITING**

The Epistle to the Galatian churches was probably written during Paul's third missionary journey,

either from Ephesus or soon after leaving Macedonia for Corinth. The date and place of writing are interrelated, as shown above. The main reason the date and place of writing should be considered is that the date we accept either places the letter before or after the Jerusalem Conference. Ryrie notes in the introduction to the letter in the Ryrie Study Bible that no mention is made of the decision at the Jerusalem Conference, indicating that the conference had not yet taken place. However, the second chapter of Galatians gives an account of the conference (See Acts 15).

## GALATIA

Galatia refers to the Roman province of Galatia in central Asia Minor. On the first missionary journey Paul and Barnabas visited the cities of Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe in the southern part of Galatia. On the second missionary journey he and Silas returned to these cities in order to minister to churches established on the first trip. Then, joined by Timothy, they expanded their ministry throughout the area until they reached Troas where they were joined by Luke.

The Galatians were descended from the Gaulish settlement of Asia Minor which was directly connected with a fourth century B.C. invasion by the Celts. They overran Asia Minor and placed the region under tribute. In 189 B.C. a Roman campaign under Manlius placed all Galatia under subjection and in 25 B.C. Galatia became a Roman province.

## THE GALATIANS

The Galatians, whom Manlius subdued by the sword of Rome, and Paul by the Sword of the Lord, were a mixed race of Gauls, Phrygians, and Greeks. But they inherited their fickle nature and restless spirit from the early Gauls. Two elements had been added to the population by Paul's day. In the first place, the establishment of the Roman province brought many Romans to the centers of government throughout the area. Second, there had been a large influx of Jews and their influence on the region was undeniable. The area later became the center of the dispersion of Jews in Asia Minor.

The Galatians were no longer the fierce race Greece and Rome had subjected. Nevertheless, beneath the surface the Celtic character remained the same, whether manifested by the fiery barbarians who were crushed by Rome, or the impetuous and fickle converts whose rejection of truth in favor of error invited the indignant rebuke of the Apostle to the Gentiles. The Roman writers noted the main features of the Gaulish character: "Quickness of apprehension, promptitude in action, great impressibility, and eager craving for knowledge; this is the brighter aspect of the Celtic character. Inconstant and quarrelsome, treacherous in their dealings, incapable of sustained effort, easily disheartened by failure, such they appear when viewed from the darker side" [Barclay].

This instability of character was the great problem Caesar had to cope with in dealing with these people. Even though Paul had a lot of experience with their hollow professions and their fickle nature, he was totally amazed at their vacillating on the doctrine of grace. He wrote, "I marvel that ye are so quickly changed" (Gal. 1:6). This nature made the Galatians easy prey for the Judaizers. Blackwood says, "The Galatians had been guilty of perverting the Gospel, giving serious attention to those who would, in effect make Christianity another sect of Judaism, parallel with the Pharisees, Sadducees, and esenes" [B'wood].

The Judaizers apparently claimed that since Paul was not one of the twelve apostles he lacked apostolic authority and his teachings were not really authentic. They subtly taught the Galatians that it was not enough to trust Jesus. First, they taught that one must become a Jew (be circumcised), accept the Jewish law, and then trust Jesus Christ for salvation.

In order to persuade the Gentiles to follow them they had to invalidate the teachings of Saul of Tarsus. It is still a common practice that when someone wants to tear down another person's teachings he usually starts by attacking that him personally. They implied that Paul was not a legitimate apostle, that he had been taught by the apostles but had changed their message. They tried to convince them that their message was supported by the twelve apostles.

Paul met this major threat head on, heatedly defending his apostleship and boldly refuting the false claims of the Judaizers. His defense was critical because it dealt with a crucial issue for any age. The very nature of the Gospel that would be preached around the world would depend upon Paul's inspired defense. He vigorously attacked any theory that says man must "believe and..." (do anything else) for salvation.

## VALUE FOR TODAY

Bible Scholars in the past called Paul's Epistle to the Galatians has been called the "Magna Carta" of religious freedom. It remains so today and so it will be until our Lord's return. As long as there is a struggle between the works of the flesh and the works of the spirit this letter will serve as a spiritual guide for believers. When one believes he can achieve righteousness through his own efforts he had shifted the focus from Christ and His Cross to "me and my goodness." The Judaizers did not ask anyone to renounce his faith in Christ. They just wanted them to add something. Paul preached Christ; the Judaizers , Christ plus...

## INTRODUCTION TO THE EPISTLE, 1:1-10

## 1. THE SALUTATION (1:1-3)

This is the briefest salutation in any of the Pauline Epistles. Charged with emotions and reflecting the heat of battle, the apostle rushed to the attack, venting his wrath against the Judaizers for perverting the Gospel, and the Galatians for following them. Greek custom demanded that both the writer and the recipients be identified in the salutation. Paul identifies himself as the writer and the Galatian churches as the recipients.

**1:1 - PAUL.** Saul is the name by which we are introduced to the great first century missionary. Saul is his Jewish name, the name he was given when he was born in Tarsus and the name by which he was known in Jerusalem when as a student he sat at the feet of the great teacher, Gamaliel. It was the name Luke used until Acts 13:9, at which time he began to use the Roman name, Paul. It seems appropriate that he would begin to use his Roman name as the Apostle to the Gentiles moved deeper and deeper into Gentile territory.

**APOSTLE.** The word translated apostle literally means "one sent out." It denoted one sent out in the full authority of the Lord and for that reason the office of apostle was the it was the highest office in the church. The term corresponds to the modern word missionary, with one major distinction. The missionary is called and sent out by the Lord. Normally he makes it known to his church, and/or denomination and following his training he is appointed to a mission field where he, or she, will work with the support of his denomination's mission board. The apostle, like the apostles of Jesus and Paul received a direct appointment from Jesus which carried with it apostolic authority which other church officers do not seem to have.

**NOT OF MEN.** Here we have a blunt denial of charges apparently made by the Judaizers that Paul was not a genuine apostle and that his message carried less weight than that of the Twelve. This charge had led the Galatians to question the validity of the Gospel Paul had preached when he was with them. He states here without equivocation that his appointment was from the Lord and not from man. Paul is not defending his apostleship out of pride. There is a higher reason. The Judaizers wanted to destroy Paul's message and the way they chose to do it was to attack his apostleship. In order to defend his message he had to defend his appointment to the office of apostle because they were unalterable related.

**BY JESUS CHRIST.** Paul was not a self-appointed apostle, nor was he appointed by any other man. He was appointed to that office by Jesus Christ, Who spoke to him on the road to Damascus. He was saved and appointed an apostle to the Gentiles through this sensational and supernatural encounter on the Damascus Road. He might have pointed to his fellow travelers who could have testified that something supernatural had indeed happened to him that day. He certainly could have mentioned Ananias, who could have confirmed Paul's salvation and call. But he did not. The Holy Spirit inspired Paul to simply state the fact that he was made an apostle by "Jesus Christ and God the Father.

**WHO RAISED HIM FROM THE DEAD.** The crowning miracle of the New Testament and the most convincing proof of the truth of the Gospel was the resurrection of Jesus Christ by God the Father. Bible students today are conscious of the centrality of the Cross in the preaching of the Apostles and other preachers of the early church. Because it was central in their message we feel that we must make it central in our preaching and teaching - at least we say we must. First century apostles, pastors, and missionaries did preach Christ and Him crucified, but the glory of the early church was the Resurrection. They preached Christ crucified, raised, ascended, interceding, and returning.

From time to time we hear the criticism that pastors and evangelists have neglected the preaching of the Cross. That criticism is probably justified in too many cases. But a greater and more relevant criticism might well be that we have neglected to preach about the Resurrection. If twentieth century Christians had reached the world with the message of "Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised Him from the dead, we might not be so inundated with books and lectures on reincarnation by New Agers and others involved in eastern mysticism. The popularity of these false teachings says more about the failure of the church than the success of their gurus.

**1:2 - ALL THE BRETHREN.** Paul probably refers to the small company of traveling companions, his fellow missionaries, but it is possible that he included the church where he was ministering at the time. The missionaries who traveled with Paul were known to the Galatians. Silas had accompanied Paul on the Second Missionary Journey and Timothy was from that area. Luke joined Paul, Silas, and Timothy on the Second Missionary Journey at Troas. Titus was one of their own and may have been with them when the letter was written.

**1:3 - GRACE.** The word translated grace was the typical Greek greeting. As such it denoted all the good and pleasant things that bring joy and happiness to life. In the New Testament the word means the unmerited love and favor of God. It is God's love for sinners, not because they deserve it, but because that is the kind of God He is.

**PEACE.** Peace (shalom) was the usual Hebrew greeting. This denotes peace in God and peace with God. When the Hebrew greeted his neighbor with the traditional, "Shalom," he was saying more than good morning. He was saying, "I wish for you everything that will bring about the highest good for you." Peace is a positive term, and never a negative one.

Paul was inspired by the Holy Spirit to use both the Greek greeting and the Hebrew greeting in writing various epistles. Two reasons come to mind. First, there were both Jewish and Gentile members in those churches and this combined greeting would get their attention. The second reason is theological. This is exactly what God desires for every person: grace and peace. And they come in exactly that order. Those who receive the grace of God receive a peace that passes all understanding. There is no real peace apart from the grace of God.

Paul was familiar with the style and format of Greek letters and for the most part he followed the traditional style, but there are some subtle changes. The first indication of this is seen in the



combination of the two greetings. Some have even suggested that Paul invented the Christian epistle.

**FROM GOD.** God is the source of Paul's apostleship. God was also the source of his message, not Peter or any of the other original apostles. God is also the source of true grace and lasting peace. Paul had preached among the Galatian churches that God is the source of eternal life and that this life comes by grace, not man's works. "Grace be to you and peace from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ."

**LORD JESUS CHRIST.** The Holy Spirit, the Third Member of the Trinity, is the divine Author of this epistle. He holds the before us both the Father and Son. In the Bible, there are many titles for both Father and Son and all are significant. A favorite title for God is "Father." The Son here is identified by three words - Lord, Jesus, and Christ. "Lord" is a favorite title for Jesus in the epistles of Paul. It acknowledges His sovereignty over the redeemed, His reign in their hearts of believers. In the Old Testament this is the title assigned to God the Father. The word either appears as **LORD** (YHWH) or **Lord** (Adonai).

In the Pauline Epistle "Lord" usually refers to Christ rather than the Father. Jesus is the personal name for the Savior; Christ, the title, which identifies him as the Anointed One, the Messiah.

## 2. PRAISE FOR JESUS CHRIST (1:4-5).

**1:4 - WHO GAVE HIMSELF FOR US.** He Who all the time loves us once for all died for us. Jesus Christ gave Himself voluntarily as the once-for-all sacrifice to redeem man from sin. The Jewish readers, with their background in the Old Testament Scriptures, would especially appreciate this. The sacrificial system of the Old Testament was a testimony to the sacrifice Jesus Christ made on the Cross. Jesus, our High Priest, gave Himself (the lamb slain from the foundation of the world, Rev. 13:8b) as the once-for-all sacrifice for our sins.

**DELIVER.** The word means to "pluck out" or rescue. When the suffering Israelites in Egypt cried out to the Lord He sent a deliverer (Moses) to deliver them. Repeatedly, during the period of the Judges, when the people were oppressed they called on the Lord and He sent a deliverer (Samson, Gideon, Deborah, et. al.) to deliver them. The unredeemed people of this world are in bondage to sin, Satan, and this evil world. God sent His Son to deliver us from sin and its consequences.

**THIS PRESENT EVIL WORLD.** "World here does not mean the material creation, the earth, but the current state of human affairs" (B'wood). The "evil world" refers to all the political, economical, social, and spiritual systems under the control of Satan which are in rebellion against God. This is the Lord's evaluation of the world in which we live - it is an evil world.

A friend called to tell me about a motivational speaker who made a statement which he found enlightening. The speaker had said, "This is not a just world, it's just a world." We discussed the fact that it is not a just world, but even as we concluded our conversation was beginning to be somewhat uncomfortable with the statement. Then it dawned on me - this is not just a world. It is a very unjust world, and "evil world." And so it has ben ever since the Fall.

**THE WILL OF GOD.** What is the will of God? Christians often pray that they will know the will of God. They discuss the will of God with others, often speculating as to how God's will is involved in some catastrophe. Christians should always seek God's will. Paul sought both to know and do the will of God in all decisions. But here we find the ultimate will of God - that He might redeem us from this present evil world.

**1:5 - TO WHOM BE GLORY.** This is fitting praise for Jesus! It is appropriate for the creature to glorify his Creator. It was the Lord's will to deliver us from this evil world, first, because He loves us (Rom. 8:5). It is also His will to save us that we might glorify Him.

"Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created" (Rev. 4:11).

"Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify Me" (Ps. 50:15).

"I will praise You, O Lord my God, with all my heart, And I will glorify Your name forevermore" (Ps. 86:12).

**AMEN.** This comes from the word meaning "be firm." In Hebrew worship it meant a solemn confirmation of what was said, not just an emotional response. It means "I agree," or "let it be so." Jesus is identified as the Amen in Rev. 3:14: "And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God."

### **3. THE OCCASION FOR THE LETTER (1:6-10).**

This section is charged with emotion. Paul had witnessed great victories for the Lord in the Galatian churches, but now the Judaizers were perverting the Gospel and seducing the Galatian believers with their false doctrine. The Galatians, who had responded so favorably (and quickly) to Paul's teachings are now responding to the perverted message of false teachers (just as quickly, it appears).

The Judaizers were Jews who professed faith in Christ. But they insisted that since salvation is of the Jews, any Gentile who wanted to be saved would first have to be circumcised (accept Judaism, of which circumcision is the symbol or seal).

**1:6 - I MARVEL.** Paul bluntly expresses disbelief and continuing amazement that they were so fickle and unstable. The average pastor knows this kind of disbelief and surprise when an individual who seems to be grounded in the Lord and growing in faith suddenly drops out and then associates himself with some group which does not follow sound doctrine. For example, when the modern charismatic movement was generating a lot of attention (1970-1980) a lot of people were leaving mainline churches and either joining these groups, or worse, trying to bring the movement back into their church. Their efforts actually caused splits in some churches.

When pastors observed some of the people who were caught up in this movement, they were disappointed, but not too surprised. There were some members who had a background that was very compatible with this movement and they found in it something that appealed to them. But some of the people who became involved in the movement caused their pastor to marvel that they could be so easily led into a movement that often placed more value in human experience than revealed truth.

If a pastor, or church, is surprised when a member drifts to a different set of beliefs, one can only imagine Paul's amazement when he saw churches throughout the whole province abandon the doctrine they had learned from him and abruptly turn to another gospel. Immediate and decisive action was required and the Holy Spirit inspired Paul to write to them to deal with the problem.

**SO QUICKLY REMOVED.** The original meaning was "transferring." They were in the process of transferring themselves from the Gospel Paul preached to "another gospel." "Quickly" probably means from the time the Judaizers first appeared on the scene. It is possible that he had in mind the last time he had preached to them. The former, however, seems to fit. What amazed Paul was how easily they were seduced and how quickly they removed themselves from the truth and gave themselves over to false doctrine.

Apostasy was a serious problem with Paul and it is still a serious problem. Neale and Barbara Goetsch illustrate how serious the problem is in Great Britain.

We anticipated seeing "everything" during that 36-hour layover in London. Instead we shivered in our hotel room or sat wearily waiting in the air terminal. Hardly a tourist's dream-come-true! But that's where we met our neighbor, the Hindu. It was November 1968, and the mass exodus of Asians from East Africa had begun.

Today England is home for over one million Asian immigrants, of whom over 600,000 are Hindus. When we arrived in North Leicester as missionaries in 1973, fifty thousand became our neighbors: the families living beside us, our doctor, greengrocer, pharmacist, and best friends.

Some surmise that if geographical isolation from India does not cause Indians to forsake Hinduism, western culture will. Instead, in the European religious climate of universalism, Hinduism thrives. Empty church buildings are converted into temples. Carey Hall, the large Baptist church named after William Carey who left his pastorate

in Leicester in 1783 to reach Hindus in Burma and India, now houses Leicester's largest Hindu temple. Public school buildings are rented weeknights to teach Indian languages and religions [Bible Ill.: Index: 1235-1236].

**1:7 - ANOTHER.** Another Gospel? Never! There is but one Gospel and that is the Gospel of grace, not works. Any change in the Gospel message is nothing short of heresy. Heresy is extremely dangerous and sinister because it works within the framework of that which it seeks to destroy.

**SOME THAT TROUBLE YOU.** He has in mind the Judaizers.

1. The Judaizers were Jews who professed faith in Christ.
2. They perverted the Gospel of grace by adding works (Law, circumcision).
3. They wanted to make Christianity a Jewish sect, denying salvation to Gentiles until they were circumcised.
4. They brought false charges against Paul to nullify his message.

There were three groups of Jews at the time Paul wrote to the Galatians. There were Jews who rejected Jesus as the Messiah, there were Jews who embarrassed Him as Savior, and there were the Judaizers. The Judaizers professed a faith in Christ, but first and foremost, they were Jews and they insisted that Gentiles must be circumcised (become a proselyte of Judaism), or observe the Jewish Law before they could become Christians. If they had had their way Christianity would have become a sect of Judaism and the Gospel of pure grace would have been contaminated with works.

**PERVERT THE GOSPEL.** The message preached by the Judaizers would change the nature and course of Christianity completely. Paul preached that salvation is by grace through faith, and not of works (Eph. 2:8-9). They taught that faith in Christ was necessary, but not enough. They advocated faith plus circumcision.

**1:8 - ANY OTHER GOSPEL.** If anyone preaches any other Gospel, "let him be accursed." Literally, the word "accursed" (*anathema*) means to ban or to excommunicate. If Paul had been writing this on his own, the idea might have been that they should withdraw fellowship from them, or literally excommunicate them. But since this involves a doctrinal heresy that strikes at the very heart of the Gospel, and this since the statement is the product of the mind of the Holy Spirit, and not that of the apostle, it would seem that the consequences of their actions would be devastating. The word is a strong one, suggesting that anyone guilty of this offense should be marked for destruction.

The missionary to the Gentiles knows he cannot afford to lose this debate with the Judaizers. He cannot mince words and he cannot be ambiguous with these false prophets. All heresies are serious, but circumstances made this one particularly dangerous. There has never been a more critical issue in the history of Christianity. Paul, inspired by the Holy Spirit, dealt decisively with this issue.

This epistle is invaluable in equipping the saints today for their warfare against false teachings of our day. We have to take seriously the threat from the cults, the occult, from atheism, agnosticism, evolution, Humanism, and the New Age Movement with their pantheism, eastern mysticism, and reincarnation. We are engaged in spiritual warfare with these forces and our Lord has promised a victory to all those who put on His armor (Eph. 6).

Paul never took a soft line when it came to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Christianity needs doctrinal champions and spiritual giants today. Fortunately, the Lord has provided some. In recent times many Christian leaders have taken bold stands on gambling, abortion, homosexuality, and other moral issues. Dr. Henry Morris and Dr. Dewayne Gish of the Institute for Creation Research have debated evolutionists all over the world, often defending the first eleven chapters of Genesis against theologians and biologists in Christian colleges and universities who have compromised with evolutionists. Donald Wildmon, founder of the American Family Association, has been a champion for decency and a foe of pornography and immorality, profanity, and violence on television. The late Francis Shaefter and many others have been mighty soldiers of the cross in resisting liberalism, especially in reference to the authority and authenticity of the Scripture. Dr. James Dopson, founder of Focus on the Family, Gary Bauer and others fight daily for the family.

Christians, however, must not leave the spiritual battles to the so called spiritual giants. Each Christian has his or her place in the spiritual warfare in which we are all engaged. Paul's example is a challenge to us. Most Christians are not looking for a fight. In fact, many will go to great lengths to avoid offending anyone, citing the importance of love and unity. But there are issues facing the church today that demand a stand, or some action which cannot be avoided without yielding ground to the enemy. Truth is not a threat to love and sound doctrine is the highest grounds for unity.

There is but one Gospel and that is the Gospel that Paul preached to the Galatians. There is but one Gospel today and any other message is a false gospel. There are many cults in America today and all of them preach a gospel other than the one Paul preached. What has been the response of the average church member to these false teachers? What has been the response of the average leader? Have we responded as Paul did?

Unfortunately, most church members are very silent about these false teachers and the false gospel they spread. As a matter of fact, it is worse than that. If their pastor says very much against these false doctrines, some of his members might actually turn on him. For example, they may say that Mormonism is just another Christian denomination. To them there is no offense greater than criticism of someone else's beliefs.

The believer must love the Lord with all his heart, soul, mind, and strength, and he must love his neighbor as himself. After that there is no more critical issue for the Christian than sound doctrine. The child of God must make a commitment to learn Scriptural truth, teach it, and defend it at all cost. The Christian must not compromise the Gospel, either by teaching and preaching a false gospel, or by refusing to offer a defense of the one true Gospel. Paul could not be any more clear: if anyone should preach any gospel other than the true Gospel revealed in the Scripture, "let him be accursed."

**1:9 - SO SAY I AGAIN.** Even though Paul's message is charged with emotion, he does not want them to write it off as mere excitement. The Holy Spirit has inspired him to write this and he will stand by every word. While we can almost feel Paul's emotions, we must remember that this letter is the product of the mind of God and not the mind of Paul.

**PREACH...GOSPEL.** Interestingly, the same word (*euaggelizo*) is used in the Greek for both *preach* and *gospel*. The word means to announce, or declare, good news. If the author had been writing about those who were preaching the true Gospel, he might have written, "they gospelized the Gospel." The word means glad tidings, or good news, but these Judaizers were proclaiming a false gospel, and that is not good news.

**1:10 - DO I PERSUADE MEN OR GOD?** The servant of God cannot be a man pleaser. The Jews were courting the Galatians for their affection and loyalty but the missionary to the Gentiles will use no flattery. They will accept his message or reject it on the basis of the issues and not personal appeal. Paul was a Gospel preacher who preached out of conviction, not convenience.

There are better ways to win man's approval than preaching the Gospel. There seems to be a lot of preaching in this country that is not Gospel preaching. Stephen Olford insists that there is a famine of expository preaching in America today. From time to time one reads in the church news that some preacher will be the pulpit guest at a local church. In the news release we read that Rev. so-and-so is a very popular preacher in the city or region of the country from which he comes. Do you really believe Paul ever gave any thought to how popular he would be when he preached or when he sent a letter to a church?

## I. PAUL'S DEFENSE OF HIS APOSTLE (1:11-2:21).

### A. The Source of the Gospel Paul Preached, 1:11-12.

Paul received his message by divine revelation. This was one of the most critical issues Christianity would ever have to face, so he had to establish his apostolic authority. His apostolic authority was under attack by those who sought to destroy his message. He wanted the Galatians to know that his was not a second-hand message which he had learned from other men.

**1:11 - I CERTIFY YOU.** It was absolutely essential that they understood the truth about Gospel he had preached to them. One can sense the urgency as he wrote, "I want you to know, brothers, that the gospel I preached is not something that man made up" (NIV). Most modern translations read like the NIV (I make known to you, NASV) rather than the KJV (I certify).

**GOSPEL...NOT AFTER MAN.** Paul uses an interesting play on words. Literally, he is saying, "The Gospel which was gospelized" by me when I was with you was not of man, but of God. The

Christian Gospel is the good news that Jesus Christ came and suffered and bled and died on the Cross to save us from our sin, and through faith in Him we may have eternal life. Any gospel that originates with man falls far short of the true Gospel, even if it originates with good men (even if it had originated with other apostles).

**1:12 - I NEITHER RECEIVED IT OF MAN.** Paul is specific in his denial of charges the Judaizers were apparently making. he said "I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it." He had not received the Gospel in any way, form, or fashion from man. He had not received it from others in informal conversations. He had not gleaned it in the market places. Furthermore, he had not been formally taught the Gospel as he had been taught the Law at the feet of Gamaliel.

**BY REVELATION.** Jesus Christ, Whom he had met on the road to Damascus, had saved young Saul of Tarsus and appointed him as his apostle to the Gentiles. Paul insists that the Gospel he preached came through the revelation of Jesus Christ. Following his salvation we know that Paul spent three years in preparation for the ministry to which he was called. Is he referring to revelation gained through study of Scripture during that three year period? Or, does he mean that Jesus personally, and supernaturally gave him the Gospel he had preached to the Galatians? We do know that he had no New Testament to study and he was not in touch with the early disciples who might have taught him the Gospel. If Jesus called him to preach the Gospel, is it not reasonable to think He reveal what He wanted him to preach?

## **B. Paul's Background in Judaism, 1:13-14.**

Paul has been called an aristocrat of Judaism (see Phil. 3:5-6). He had practiced Judaism with more zeal than anyone they knew, but found no salvation in the Law. In the name of religion, he had viciously attacked Christians. He explodes the myth about it not mattering what you believe as long as you are sincere.

**1:13 - MY CONVERSATION.** It probably seems strange to some modern readers to see the word conversation used in this context. The King James translators had the option of translating the Greek word conversation or behavior. The NKJV renders it, "For you have heard of my former conduct in Judaism." Or, "For you have heard of my previous way of life in Judaism" (NIV). Both Paul's fanatical adherence to the Law and his vicious persecution of the church were well known to the Judaizers, and it is reasonable to assume that they had apprised the Galatians as to his background.

Paul could put these critics to shame if he chose to boast of his Jewishness, or his commitment to the Law. He wrote to the Philippian church (3:4-7 NKJV):

If anyone else thinks he may have confidence in the flesh, I more so:  
circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew  
of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the

church; concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ.

***IPERSECUTED THE CHURCH.*** "I persecuted the church of God beyond measure and tried to destroy it" (NKJV). He could never forget the ruthlessness of his persecution of the church. "Beyond measure " tells us that his persecution was beyond reason and justice. We might also infer that he pursued the persecution of the church more zealously than his peers in Judaism.

***WASTED IT.*** He ravaged the church, without respect to women and children, a fact that could never be forgotten after his conversion. It became a part of his testimony: "persecuted this Way to the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women" (Acts 22:4 NKJV). In his zeal for Judaism he sought to destroy every vestige of this new "way" which he considered a heresy. He attacked it as though the very existence of Judaism was at stake. It was.

### **C. Paul's Conversion experience and Call, 1:15-17.**

***1:15 - SEPARATED.*** He was set aside for a specific purpose. Each Christian is set apart for the Lord's service and should be conscious of the fact that God has set him apart for His glory. In the New Testament, believers are called saints. A saint is one who has been set apart, or separated by the Lord. Every believer is set apart for the glory of God. Some are set apart for a particular purpose. For some that purpose may be a temporary task. For some are separated, or called, to a life of service as ministers of the Gospel. Paul was keenly aware of the fact that the Lord had separated him for his special ministry. He had been separated for a unique ministry and he took it seriously. His faith was not the result of human striving, but by revelation from God.

***CALLED.*** This means separated or chosen. Ministers today must still be called of God to their ministry. A leader in a black church asked, "Do you think a minister has to be called by God, or can someone just decide to go into it?" I stressed the importance of a divine call. A divine call is the first qualification for the Gospel ministry. The work of a pastor might seem exciting to a young man just entering the ministry, but the time will come when trials come that the only thing that will keep him going is a sense of divine call. Many young men who questioned whether or not they had been called to preach have talked with a mature pastor about the dilemma. Some of them have heard a concerned minister say, "If you think you could be happier doing something else, maybe you should be doing it." As a long time pastor, I pray that I will never say anything to discourage any person who has been called by the Lord. At the same time, I would never want to encourage one who has not been called by the Lord to enter the ministry. I do not understand why anyone who has not been called would want to be a pastor. And without that call and the ministry of the Holy Spirit which accompanies it, I do not see how anyone who has not been called can stay in it when the going really gets rough.

Paul was called to be the Apostle to the Gentiles. His call also included his own people and



when he went to a new city, he first went to the synagogue and ministered there until he was forced to leave. Then he turned to the Gentiles in the area. That is one reason there were both Jews and Gentiles in the churches of Galatia and other provinces.

**1:16. TO REVEAL HIS SON.** In verse 12, Christ reveals the Father. Here the Father reveals His Son (see also, John 14:9). He says it pleased God the Father to reveal His Son *in* (to) me *that* (denoting purpose) I might preach him among the heathen (Gentiles)."

**I CONFERRED NOT WITH FLESH AND BLOOD.** The encounter he had with Jesus Christ on the way to Damascus, the three days of physical blindness and spiritual enlightenment, and visit by Ananias to affirm his call was so mighty and so real that he sensed no need to confer with the Apostles and other leaders in Jerusalem. He knew what they preached, the claims he made about Jesus. He might have heard some of them preach (he does not say one way or the other). But he investigated believers, arrested and interrogated them. Linear action shows what he did and in what order. "Immediately" after Ananias laid his hands on him and he received his sight, he went to Arabia, not taking time to confer with church leaders in Damascus or Jerusalem.

**1:17 - NEITHER WENT I UP TO JERUSALEM.** The Judaizers were apparently accusing Paul, the man who had started the churches of Galatia of being a second rate apostle with a second hand Gospel. But the fact was, he did not even return to Jerusalem, let alone confer with the apostles. His reason was possibly as much pragmatic as spiritual.

**ARABIA.** Paul alludes to his orientation period following his conversion and call to be a missionary. He spent three years in Arabia, we might infer, in prayer and Bible study. He had spent almost his entire young life studying the Law, outstripping all his peers in the study of Judaism. After he was saved he had to relate all the law and prophecy he had studied to the Messiah, which required a one hundred eighty degree adjustment in the course he was following.

**RETURNED AGAIN UNTO DAMASCUS.** Does this mean that he went to Arabia and then returned to Damascus where he stayed three years before being forced to flee from the city? Or, did he return to Damascus after three years in the Arabian desert? A. T. Robertson took the position that these three years came in between the two visits to Damascus [ATR, SpeedMaster CD-Rom Database]. Many believe the three years he mentions in verse 18 denote the time since his conversion.

The point Paul makes here is that he did not rush to Jerusalem following his conversion to sit at the feet of the apostles as he had sat at the feet of Gamaliel. A young person who seeks to serve the Lord, either as a "full-time" minister, or a lay-person, should listen to mature ministers, but the Scripture should receive highest priority. Paul understood this and while he received his call by divine revelation, he also spent three years in intensive preparation for this ministry. He was already well grounded in Old Testament Scriptures, having spent a good part of his life in the study of the Law and the Prophets from a different perspective. All he had learned about the promised Messiah now had to be related to the Christ he had fought.

The apostle also convincingly refutes the notion that it does not matter what you believe as long as you are sincere. He was genuinely, even fanatically sincere. He was also sincerely wrong.

He effectively rebuts the apparent claim by the Judaizers that Paul had learned his theology from the leaders of the Jerusalem church and then either distorted it or misunderstood it. If there is one person in the history of Christianity who did not misunderstand the Gospel it was Saul of Tarsus. He is remembered as a student who sat at the feet of Gamaliel, but we must never lose sight of the fact that after that he sat at the feet of Jesus for the next three years .

The missionary to the Gentiles had not preached a second-hand message to the Galatians. His call was genuine and his message was authentic. The letter he was writing to them, however did not find its origin in the brilliant mind of the missionary, but in the mind of God.

#### **D. Paul's Apostolic Independence, 1:18-24.**

**1:18 - AFTER THREE YEARS.** Three years after his conversion he went up to Jerusalem to see Peter. When he did go to Jerusalem he did not go to learn from Peter and the other apostles there, but to establish a relationship with the early Christian leaders and possibly to synchronize his work with theirs. Besides, "fifteen days" was not enough time to study systematic theology - not even for Paul.

**1:19 - JAMES, THE LORD'S BROTHER.** James had become a strong conservative leader in the Jerusalem church. It seems that he was the pastor of the church, even though he is not identified by that title. His leadership role is obvious from the account of the Jerusalem Conference recorded in Acts 15 (see also Galatians 2). It was James that Paul visited at the conclusion of the Third Missionary Journey and it was to James he and his companions took the offering received in Corinth and other places for the relief of the suffering saints in Jerusalem. It was also James who informed Paul about reports spread by Jews from Asia that he was teaching Jews to forsake the Law of Moses and advised him concerning his visit to the temple (Acts 21:18ff).

**1:20 - I LIE NOT.** Even though the Judaizers had lied about him but he assures them that, with God as his witness, he is not lying to them. They knew Paul when he was among them and they should remember what kind of person he was. His word should carry some weight with them.

**1:21 - AFTERWARDS...SYRIA AND CILICIA.** After the brief visit to Jerusalem he went on to Syria and Cilicia where Barnabas found him some seven years later and asked him to come back with him to Antioch to help him with the work. There is little doubt in this writer's mind that Paul had a productive ministry in and around Tarsus during the interim. In writing to the Corinthian church he lists trials he had experienced. Since all of them are not mentioned by Luke in Acts, or in the Pauline Epistles, we might assume that some of them might have occurred during this phase of his

ministry.

Are they ministers of Christ?; I speak as a fool; I am more: in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequently, in deaths often. From the Jews five times I received forty stripes minus one.

Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeys often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils of the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness (II Cor. 11:23-27, NKJV).

**1:22 - UNKNOWN BY FACE.** Paul was not well known "by face" to the church in Jerusalem at the time of his visit. He was, however, well known by reputation. Three years earlier he had been a leader of the persecution against "the way" and had pursued his mission with such zeal and aggression that the mere mention of his name struck fear in the hearts of many people of the city.

**1:23 - THEY HEARD ONLY.** *"But they had heard only, That he which persecuted us in times past now preacheth the faith which once he destroyed."* Had they heard about his second visit to Damascus when his preaching placed his life in such jeopardy that friends had to help him escape by lowering him from the wall in a basket? His preaching in the synagogue had been so powerful and his logic so great that the Jews could not refute his message, so they sought to kill him (Acts 9:19ff).

**1:24 - GLORIFIED GOD.** The saints in Judah, though they did not know him "by face," yet glorified God because of Paul's work: "And they glorified God in me." He carefully avoids praising himself. Unfortunately, some students of the Word have accused Paul of pride because of statements like this and because of his comments about his claim that he excelled beyond his peers in the Jewish religion. Remember that the Holy Spirit is the author of this epistle. Paul could not have left this out if he had wanted to do so. Even at that, I would disagree with them, because he was put in such a position that demanded these statements. Here he is careful to point out that God was the one glorified, not Paul. Yet, this statement of the attitude of those Jews in Jerusalem would refute the charges brought against him by the Judaizers.

### **E. Endorsement By Leaders of the Jerusalem Church, 2:1-10.**

The visit to Jerusalem Paul discusses here is the one Luke described in Acts 15. The Jerusalem Conference (Apostolic council) was probably held in AD 51, though many writers hold to different dates. Paul's first visit to Jerusalem after his conversion was about AD 38, meaning his conversion on the Damascus Road would have been in AD 35-36.

In Galatia, the Judaizers were telling Christians that they could not be saved by simply believing in Jesus. They had to accept Jewish ceremonial law as a condition of salvation. They insisted that salvation was of the Jews and required the Gentiles to embrace Judaism, of which circumcised was the seal, in order to be saved. These demands had first been made in Antioch of Syria prior to the Jerusalem Conference. In both places these demands were a challenge to Paul's apostolic authority.

In 2:10 Paul reminds the readers that these same charges were brought up at the Jerusalem Conference and the issue had been resolved once for all. The Judaizers appealed to the authority of the Twelve, but then had already recognized Paul as an authentic apostle. Ignorance of, or rejection of the resolution of certain issues continues to plague the church today. There are people who bring up questions today that earlier Christians dealt with and in lengthy councils determined what the possible conclusions were. They might not have agreed, but theological positions were defined. When these issues are brought up we often have to try to determine the individual's definition of terms, and what knowledge he already has of the issue (grace, predestination, eschatology, or the Trinity).

This principle applies in practical areas, including moral issues and personal habits. Alcoholism is a serious problem in America and throughout the world, yet when we talk with certain people about the danger in social drinking, they snap back, "Jesus drank wine, didn't He?" Generation after generation of social drinkers ask the same question, without realizing that the question has been answered thousands of times in the past. Yes, Jesus drank wine, probably a naturally fermented wine with one part wine mixed with three parts water. A person who drank wine straight (not mixed with water) was criticized as a wine-bibber.

The Judaizers either did not know about the Jerusalem Conference, or knew about it and rejected the opinions expressed there. They could hardly have pled ignorance. Their early leaders were a group of fundamental Jewish Christians who were in Antioch of Syria when Paul and Barnabas arrive following the First Missionary Journey and reported that Gentiles were being saved. They openly, and vehemently insisted that no Gentile could be saved without first being circumcised (as proof that he accepted the Jewish Law). It was their opposition that precipitated the conference in Jerusalem, at which it was concluded that Gentiles are saved the same way Jews are saved, by grace through faith, and not by the works of the Law. Paul and Silas visited the churches established in South Galatia and informed them about the conference and the results.

The Judaizers had lost in Jerusalem but they would not accept defeated. They hounded Paul's steps stirring up opposition to Paul and his message. They should have known better and the members of the churches of Galatia should have known better than to believe them. It is a shame to think how much time they wasted from the ministry of the greatest missionary, the most brilliant theologian, the most important minister in the history of the church, as they forced him to go back over ground that had already been covered and deal with issues that had already been settled.

Before criticizing those ancient trouble makers, think of how many times churches today make decisions, not for the glory of God, but to accommodate some person who, like Diotrephes,

loves preeminence among the members. Think how many times has a church changed its course because some people said, "I had to vote with my family." How many times has a church started a bus ministry just because a neighboring church had one? And how many churches have been motivated to build a family life center (gymnasium) when they saw one going up down the road at another church? How many churches have opened the door to gospel-rock music because they do not want to offend the new youth worker who insists that he can use it to reach young people? How many churches have permitted false doctrines to be taught in Sunday School because every one was afraid they might offend a person whose financial support they thought they had to have? Occasionally a person gets to the point that he (or she) thinks he is perfectly justified in telling the pastor what to preach and what not to preach. Someone else may try to manipulate members of the finance or building committee or control the election of deacon.

A denominational worker stopped by to visit a pastor who had just accepted the call to a new church. They discussed opportunities and goals for some time and then the conversation turned to some past problems. The denominational worker said, "At least, you do not have to deal with a man who was a member here years ago." He went on to describe a very small man with a good mind and big ego who announced to the pastor something he wanted to do. The pastor reminded him that the church had elected a committee to look into the matter and recommend a course of action. This man snapped back, "God called me to run the affairs of this church!"

In dealing with individuals or groups like this we would do well to follow Paul's example in dealing with the Judaizers. If your response is, "I am glad we do not have any of those people around today," you may be missing the fact that this Scripture has an application for the church of any age. There are some members in some churches who are just as mean spirited and just as vicious as the trouble makers in Galatia. A retired denominational worker had watched a local church for decades. He talked with the new pastor about a certain man who had been a thorn in every pastor's side for many years, using every conceivable method of intimidation to control both the pastor and other members. Later, the pastor mentioned a problem with this man and the retired minister said, "He is just like a rattlesnake. If you don't ever cross him you won't have nay trouble, but if you cross his path, he'll strike."

A person usually does not get like that over night. New members do not usually start off like that. They take a step or make a statement to test the water. If members stand firm for the Lord the back off, at least for a while. But if the people, in thinking they are preserving peace, back away this type of person will take another step, and another. This kind of person, or a group of people can only take over a church if the people let them. This is exactly what had happened in Galatia. The only difference is that they were, perhaps, better organized and a little more determined.

A church I once served was committed to mission, usually ranking in the top three churches in the state in percentage giving to missions. We also helped sponsor two mission churches in south Louisiana. I took a group of young people and their workers to one of the mission churches to conduct a mission Vacation Bible School and revival in which I preached every evening. The bivocational pastor was also principal of a local school. While we were there he told me about a group from a charismatic church who decided that each one would begin attending another church in the

area in order to spread the charismatic movement to those churches.

The pastor knew he was going to have to deal with the man who chose his church. After a worship service the man came to him and said, "The Holy Spirit gave you that message." He asked the man, "Do you really believe the Holy Spirit told me what to say?" the visitor answered, "Yes, I surely do." The pastor repeated his question and the charismatic man reaffirmed his conviction that the Holy Spirit was communicating with this pastor. He followed with, "You mean if I tell you that the Holy Spirit is telling me to say something to you right now you would believe me?" He assured him he would believe him. The pastor then said, "Right now the Holy Spirit is telling me to tell you that you should leave our church and go back where you came from because your presence here is divisive. Now do you believe the Holy Spirit told me to say that to you?" The man honestly replied, "If you tell me He told you to say it, I will have to take your word for it." He never returned.

That pastor is from what I refer to as the Barney Fife school. Americans have been in love with Barney Fife since he first appeared on television on the Andy Griffith Show. His response to a problem was, "You got to nip it! You got to nip it in the bud." Because the fickle Galatians did not nip this heresy in the bud, it spread through the churches of the region, severely hindering fellowship and arresting the growth of members, and obstructing the evangelistic ministry of the church. Now, Paul is inspired by the Holy Spirit to deal with this issue.

Paul, in this letter to the churches of Galatia must both defend his apostleship and correct the heresy spread by the Judaizers. For more on the controversy see Acts 15 for Luke's account. In this chapter he gives a brief account of the Jerusalem Conference, at which all these issues should have been settled.

In Acts, Luke mentions five visits made by Paul to Jerusalem: (1). Acts 9:26, (2) Acts 11:30, (3) 15:1, (4) 19:22, and (5) 21:15. The visit Paul discussed in Galatians 2 is the same one Luke records in Acts 15.

**2:1 - TO JERUSALEM.** Fourteen years after he went from Damascus to Jerusalem to see Peter, he went to Jerusalem for the great Jerusalem Conference (Acts 15). A.T. Robertson wrote:

Paul is not giving a recital of his visits to Jerusalem, but of his points of contact with the apostles in Jerusalem. As already observed, he here refers to the Jerusalem Conference given by Luke in Ac 15 when Paul and Barnabas were endorsed by the apostles and elders and the church over the protest of the Judaizers who had attacked them in Antioch (Ac 15:1f.). But Paul passes by another visit to Jerusalem, that in Ac 11:30 when Barnabas and Saul brought alms from Antioch to Jerusalem and delivered them to "the elders" with no mention of the apostles who were probably out of the city since the events in Ac 12 apparently preceded that visit and Peter had left for another place (Ac 12:17). Paul here gives the inside view of this private conference in Jerusalem that came in between the two public meetings (#Ac 15:4,6-29) [Seedmaster Bible].

**WITH BARNABAS...TITUS.** Paul went to Jerusalem with Barnabas and took Titus. Barnabas was his fellow missionary. Titus was a Gentile and it seems that Paul both sought an opinion, and used Titus as a test case. Robertson has an interesting comment:

Titus is not mentioned in Acts 15 nor anywhere else in Acts for some reason, possibly because he was Luke's own brother. But his very presence was a challenge to the Judaizers, since he was a Greek Christian [Seedmaster Bible].

**2:2 - BY REVELATION.** When the controversy could not be resolved in Antioch, Paul was led by the Holy Spirit to Jerusalem to see if they could arrive at a consensus. The Judaizers may well have been appealing to the authority of the Apostles and other leaders in Jerusalem. The Lord revealed that he should go to Jerusalem to have this issue resolved in the most logical place and before the most logical group so that the Gospel could be preached without this hindrance in the future. Many of those gathered in Jerusalem would go into Gentile lands in the future and this issue needed to be settled once and for all.

It is also important to note that Paul was led by the Holy Spirit to go to Jerusalem. He did not go because he was summoned by either an apostle or the church at Jerusalem. He went voluntarily to try to determine that the course he had independently taken did not conflict with the message of the apostles and the Jerusalem church. The Holy Spirit was his authority, not Peter, not the other apostles, not James, not the church at Jerusalem. Peter had no authority over Paul and neither Peter, nor James had no authority over the church in Jerusalem. No hierarchy is being perpetuated in the church at this point. They acted as they were led of the Holy Spirit.

**COMMUNICATED...TO THEM...OF REPUTATION.** Because of the uproar of the Judaizers, Paul had to be very careful to assure a victory for the Gospel. He met with a small group of leaders, not because he was inferior to them, but because with an issue like this a group like the Judaizers could throw more heat on the subject than light. Such a militant group can be an intimidating influence. Two things stand out: Paul is being led by the Holy Spirit, and he is now becoming a key Christian leader of the early church. Not too long before this he was Barnabas' associate - it was then Barnabas and Saul, not it is Paul and Barnabas.

Who were "them which were of reputation?" He names three of them (Cephas, James, and John) but does not say if there were other apostles present. James is the half-brother of the Lord (the other James, the brother of John was dead (Acts 12:1f). There may also have been others present, possibly a select group of leaders. By gaining the support of this group the open conference could be approached with a greater degree of confidence. This group could shape the decision of the public conference.

So far as we know Paul had not met John before. He had met Peter and James at in Jerusalem, but John was not there at the time of his visit following his flight from Damascus. "Lightfoot has much to say about the Big Four (St. Paul and the Three) who here discuss the

problems of mission work among Jews and Gentiles. It was of the utmost importance that they should see eye to eye" [ATR, S'master Bible].

***LEST... I SHOULD RUN ...IN VAIN.*** Paul had invested a significant part of his life in the mission to which he had been called by the Lord. He had done battle with the Judaizers and now he was prepared to debate them again. At issue was the very future of mission among the Gentiles. Paul and others who follow him in an effort to reach Gentiles for the Lord must go out with a common message. There could be no mixed signals. If they left Jerusalem in a state of confusion about how Gentiles could be saved, they results would have been disastrous. The kind of confusion created by the Judaizers in Galatia at the time Paul wrote this letter would have been commonplace. He had not come this far to lose, and he knew the support of these leaders was crucial.

His enemies were formidable and they were on their home turf. He had to be sure all his efforts were not in vain. The Judaizers may well have assumed that the twelve apostles and James the Lord's brother would side with them against Paul and Barnabas. Peter had already been before the Jerusalem Church for his work in Caesarea (Acts 11:1-18). James was considered a very loyal, and very conservative Jew. Furthermore, these leaders, like the Judaizers, were all Palestinian Jews, while Paul and Barnabas were Hellenistic Jews.

**2:3-5.** Paul here pauses to add an interlude about Titus. He obviously had a reason for taking Titus with him to the Jerusalem for the conference. He wanted to win a victory against the Judaizers and then use Titus for a test case. The conflict had developed when he and Barnabas had returned to Antioch of Syria to reported on the success of the Gospel on the First Missionary Journey. When they reported that Gentiles were being saved, the Judaizers were quick to challenge them. They were led by the Holy Spirit to go to Jerusalem to seek a solution to the conflict in a forum which included the early leaders of the Christian movement. Paul obviously anticipated a victory in Jerusalem and knew he would revisit those churches which were founded on the First Missionary Journey where he would report on the Jerusalem Conference. He knew there might be questions and by taking Titus, a Gentile, with him as a test case he could avoid further misunderstanding.

According to Acts 15 and Galatians 2, Paul met first with the leaders of the church; and then with a smaller caucus, probably to lay the ground work for the main meeting. After this he met with the larger group (and open meeting) to present his case. They agreed that Gentiles could be saved without having to be circumcised (accept Jewish law or become a Jew).

**2:3 - TITUS.** Paul had Titus there on the scene to test his victory. They did not compel Titus to be circumcised. There is an obvious connection between this case and that of Timothy whom Paul circumcised (Acts 16:3). In Timothy's case circumcision seemed expedient because he was a half Jew and would be working with Jews who would not accept him otherwise. Circumcision had nothing to do with his salvation, it simply removed a stumbling block with the Jews. Paul, however, had no intention of having Titus circumcised. He is very clear about that. To yield in this instance would be an admission that circumcision, hence all the Jewish ceremonial law, was essential to salvation.



**2:4 - FALSE BRETHREN.** Evidently some of the Judaizers or their sympathizers whom Paul and the other leaders had not invited slipped into the meeting in order to spy on them - as the type is predisposed to do. They were there to make a cunning, or deceptive, investigation for an evil purpose. The evil intent of these spies is highlighted in this verse by the double reference to their presence: "brought in unawares," and "to spy out our liberty" to the intent that they would pull them from the freedom of salvation by grace through faith in Jesus Christ, back into bondage of the works of the Law. It was that simple - - and it was that serious.

But, if they were truthful, they would have to report the opinion (by consensus of the leaders) reached, but they would also have to report that Paul had a Greek, Titus, with him and when Paul set him before them and asked what they would do with him, then agreed that Titus would not have to be circumcised.

**2:5 - WE GAVE ...NOT AN HOUR.** Paul and Barnabas stood against the Judaizers who challenged the Gospel they preached, and apparently demanded the circumcision of Titus. They would not give any ground to the enemies of grace, did not yield to their demands even for a for a minute. They would not yield on spiritual grounds and they would not yield to these false brethren in order to have peace or promote harmony. A compromise with false brethren, or false doctrine can only produce a false peace. We need unity, but unity must be in the Lord and according to "the truth of the Gospel."

The language is strong but it was call for in light of the deceitful behavior of these antagonists. Robertson is right:

It was a grave crisis to call for such language. The whole problem of Gentile Christianity was involved in the case of Titus, whether Christianity was to be merely a modified brand of legalistic Judaism or a spiritual religion, the true Judaism (the children of Abraham by faith). The case of Timothy later was utterly different, for he had a Jewish mother and a Greek father. Titus was pure Greek [S'master Bible].

**2:6 - SEEMED TO BE SOMEWHAT.** They seemed to be something, not someone. We must avoid the temptation to jump to the conclusion that Paul is showing the arrogance of some among the intellectual elite who hold the uneducated in disdain. He had been trained as a Pharisee but he in not looking down with pharisaic contempt on unsophisticated Galilean fishermen. In the age of psychologist in which we live a person might read this and conclude that the Thirteenth Apostle was having a little problem with his self-esteem as he recalled his appearance before what some have called "The Big Three" (James, Cephas, and John). But this is not ego talking. God does not recognize personal distinctions, and he will make none.

This is a long and complicated sentence, in which we find two parentheses. It seems on the surface that Paul may be putting down the three best known and most influential Christians of the day, but he really means no disrespect. His purpose is to assert his independence from them. He is a God-called Apostle, not a usurper.

**WHATSOEVER THEY WERE.** Literally, "What sort they once were." James had know Jesus all his life and Peter and John and his brother (James, the son of Zebedee) had followed Him for three years and formed the inner circle of Apostles. The apostle James had been martyred in AD 44. By AD 51, James, the half-brother of our Lord had taken his place with Peter and John as chief leaders of the church. The position, or relationship, they once had with Jesus was on no consequence to Paul. Why? Because "God accepteth no man's person" (no respecter of persons) and Paul has simply adopted the attitude of his Lord. What effect would it have on churches everywhere if all Christians adopted this attitude?.

Lightfoot held that these three leaders were the ones who suggested the compromise about Titus. Robertson, however, argues against this claim. He wrote, "That is a possible, but not the natural, interpretation of this involved sentence. The use of 'de' (but) in verse 6 seems to make a contrast between the three leaders and the pleaders for compromise in verses 4f" [ATR, S'Master].

**ADDED NOTHING TO ME.** Of the men of reputation and influences whom he names in vs. 8f (Peter, James, and John) Paul says, "They added nothing in the conference to me." The Judaizers had tried to win them, but when they understood Paul and Barnabas, they finally came over to their side, and as Robertson points out, "Paul won his point, when he persuaded Peter, James, and John to agree with him and Barnabas in their contention for freedom for the Gentile Christians from the bondage of the Mosaic ceremonial law" [ATR, S'Master].

We must remember Paul's purpose in writing about the Jerusalem Conference to the Galatians. Roots of the conflict between Paul and the Judaizers reached back to the conference and the controversy in Antioch of Syria which spawned it. In addition, they appealed to the authority of the apostles in Jerusalem to support their charges that Paul was not an authentic apostle. So, he makes the point that the top three apostles (James, like Paul was appointed by Jesus as an apostle), added nothing to his call, his appointment, or his qualifications as an apostle.

**2:7 - CONTRARIWISE.** After He had stated his case in the private conference, the key leaders, rather than support the Judaizers, boldly threw their support behind Paul and Barnabas. They openly supported them against the radicals who created the controversy as well as the compromisers of verse 4. This is a more reasonable interpretation than the view expressed by some that Peter, James, and John first proposed the circumcision of Titus, but were persuaded by Paul to change their minds and support him.

**WHEN THEY SAW.** What he is saying that, after they heard our side of the issue, "they saw that I had been intrusted with the gospel of the uncircumcision, even as Peter with the gospel of the circumcision" (ASV). There was a clear understanding between the missionaries and the apostles in Jerusalem with regards to their sphere of ministry. Paul (and Barnabas) had been appointed to preach the Gospel to the Gentiles, and Peter (and his associates) were appointed to the ministry of the Gospel among the Jews. In time, Peter and John would be working among the Gentiles. At the conclusion of the Third Missionary Journey, James, our Lord's brother, was unquestionably the leader (pastor), and most influential Christian in Jerusalem. The language denotes a distinction in

the sphere of their work, not in the Gospel. They both preached the true Gospel - which is more than can be said of the Judaizers.

The point is that Paul had the support of the apostles in Jerusalem, contrary to the claims of the radical who stirred up the trouble Galatia. Therefore it is "hardly fair to the Three to suggest that they at first championed the cause of the Judaizers in the face of Paul's strong language in verse 5" [ATR, S'Master].

**2:8 - WROUGHT EFFECTIVELY.** For emphasis the author parenthetically repeats the conclusion of verse 7. The apostles, in the private conference concluded that just as God had called Peter to be an apostle to the Jews, He had called Paul to be the apostle to the Gentiles. The Judaizers attacked his apostleship, but the top three apostles in Jerusalem clearly accepted it. Paul clearly recognizes Peter's apostleship and Peter recognizes Paul's apostleship, which conclusively refutes the claims that Paul was not a true apostle because he was not one of the twelve.

**2:9 - WHEN THEY PERCEIVED.** When James, Cephas, and John perceived the grace of God in calling Paul to declare the Gospel to the Gentiles the issue was settled - at least, it was settled in their minds. It should have been settled in the minds of the Judaizers. Unfortunately, there are some people who profess to know the Lord who are controlled by Satan to the extent that they will attack anyone who disagrees with them. They cannot accept constructive criticism. In fact, there are a few of them respond to any restraint or resistance with hatred.

A pastor once talked with me about a problem. When the Pastor Search Committee was dealing with him he became acquainted with members and their families. One lady in particular seemed excited about his moving onto the field and made it a point to tell him so the first Sunday he was there as pastor. The next morning she came to his office and announced, "I want you to do something about the messages on the sign out front," and throwing a copy of the Sunday bulletin on his desk and demanded that he "do something" about it. He paused, trying to think what he might say and then asked what she had in mind. She offered some suggestions and he said, "Well, I could talk with the deacons about it." Her smile disappeared and her eyes instantly became hard and cold and from that day she refused to speak to him. Like the Judaizers, she did not get her way and instead of seeking a reconciliation, she became bitter enemy.

**RIGHT HANDS OF FELLOWSHIP.** After Peter, James, and John perceived the grace that was given to him, they gave Paul and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship. This was a "Dramatic and concluding act of the pact for cooperation and coordinate, independent spheres of activity. The compromisers and the Judaizers were brushed to one side when these five men shook hands as equals in the work of Christ's Kingdom. In other words, they shook hands on it" [ATR, S'Master].

**2:10 - REMEMBER THE POOR.** They mutually agreed to keep the poor in mind and to abstain from immorality, from things strangled and from blood (Acts 15:20). This would not save anyone, nor would failure to observe dietary restrictions prevent salvation, but it would open the

door for fellowship between Jewish and Gentile Christians. The private meeting ended with the hands of fellowship and an encouragement to remember the poor, which Paul and Barnabas said they were already doing.

Paul does not mention the second general, or public meeting (Acts 15:6-29) but goes on to deal with Peter's conduct in Antioch. The Jerusalem was a complete success for Paul and Barnabas, for the Gospel of grace, and for these Gentiles to who he is writing. It was a victory the Judaizers could not prevent in Jerusalem, but were determined to win in Galatia.

#### **F. Paul Rebukes Peter at Antioch, 2:11-14.**

**2:11 - ANTIOCH.** Antioch was capitol of the province of Syria, not Antioch of Pisidia (Pisidian Antioch), which was one of the Galatian churches Paul and Barnabas founded on the First Missionary Journey. By AD 51 it was the center of Gentile Christianity (where believers were first called Christians) and it was in the process of becoming the center for the spread of the Gospel.

The Church in Jerusalem was still the most important church in the world, primarily because of all the great leaders in the church with a solid background in the Old Testament Scriptures.

Following the martyrdom of Stephen, Christians were scattered and everywhere they went they preached the Gospel. When word of the phenomenal success of the Gospel in Antioch reached Jerusalem they sent Barnabas to minister there. The work continued grow so rapidly that Barnabas needed help, he went to Tarsus and found Saul whom he had befriended several years before in Jerusalem (see Acts 11). When news reached them that the saints in Jerusalem were in need, believers in Antioch sent relief by Barnabas and Saul (11:27-30). Later, as they "ministered to the Lord, the Holy Spirit said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them" (Acts 13:2). Following this they, with John Mark, went on the First Missionary Journey, which saw Mark turn back and Barnabas and Saul continue to Galatia where churches were planted. Their report when they returned to Antioch that Gentiles were being saved precipitated the controversy and the Jerusalem Conference.

**I WITHSTOOD HIM TO HIS FACE.** After Barnabas and Saul (Roman, Paul among Gentiles) returned from Jerusalem, Peter came to Antioch to visit the believers. While he was there he behaved in such a way that Paul felt compelled to rebuke him to his face. In Jerusalem he had stood face to face with Peter as an equal; in Antioch he withstood him to his face as a superior (morally).

**2:12 - FOR.** "For" points to the reason Peter was to blame and deserving of Paul's rebuke. The Christian must avoid of two temptations in a situation like this. The first is the temptation to remain silent when we should speak up, either to rebuke someone, or simply to take a stand on some issue. The other is to be too quick to rebuke or to condemn someone else. Most of us have been guilty of both at one time or another. We must know when to speak and when not to speak, and that is not always easy. Like Paul, we should be sure there is a good reason before we rebuke another person.

**FROM JAMES.** Does the statement "before that certain came from James" mean that Paul is implying that these "certain" people had been sent by James to Antioch to investigate reports of the

conduct of either Peter or the other Jewish believers, as some scholars have suggested? There is little doubt that these believers from Jerusalem intimated that they "from James." But, as Robertson points out:

That idea is inconsistent with the position of James as president of the conference and the author of the resolution securing liberty to the Gentile Christians. No doubt these brethren threatened Peter to tell James and the church about his conduct and they reminded Peter of his previous arraignment before the Jerusalem Church on this very charge (Ac 11:1-18) [ATR, S'master].

It has been pointed out that the Jerusalem Conference did not discuss the matter of social relations between Jews and Gentiles. However, at the conclusion of the conference James wrote and read a "sentence" (opinion?) that would serve as a guideline for fellowship between Jewish and Gentile believers (Acts 15:19ff).

**HE DID EAT.** The imperfect tense is used: It was his habit to eat with the Gentiles. Before Jews showed up from Jerusalem Peter regularly ate with Gentiles and obviously saw no problem with it. It may help to remember that these Jews "from James" were Palestinian Jews. Hellenistic Jews, like Barnabas, Saul, and others in Antioch had lived among Gentiles and were more open to association with Gentiles than the Palestinian Jews. Peter had previously been condemned for associating with Gentiles (Acts 11:1ff.).

**HE BEGAN TO DRAW BACK.** Here the imperfect means "he began to draw himself back" (or, he began to withdraw). Peter ate with Gentiles until Jewish Christians from Jerusalem showed up in Antioch and then he withdrew himself from them. His action was hypocritical in Paul's eyes and he says he rebuked him to his face. Not only was his action hypocritical, it placed in jeopardy the recent victory at the Jerusalem in which Peter had made the most persuasive speech. Peter was instrumental in winning the victory he was now compromising. The thought of Paul rebuking Peter might be disturbing to some people, but if there is anyone in all the New testament we could picture rebuking Peter it would surely be Paul.

**2:13 - DISSEMBLED.** The word denotes play acting, which is, in fact, hypocrisy. Not only was Peter hypocritical, he led others into the same sin. Peter was a powerful leader of men and often influenced others to trust and obey the Lord. But in this case he dishonored the Lord and led others to dishonor Him.

We learn some valuable lessons from this. In the first place, no one is so great in the Lord that he will not be tempted to sin, and Satan knows where we are most vulnerable. Satan knew Peter's Achilles heel. He had seen him deny Christ to a group of servants who could do no more than laugh at him. The Lord had to prepare him miraculously go to the home of Cornelius. And now, in Antioch, he seemed to have no problem eating with Gentiles until these Jews arrived from Jerusalem and he withdrew from the Gentiles.

It is this writer's conviction that Simon Peter withdrew from the Gentiles in Antioch when the Jews arrived because of the fear of ridicule. Why did he deny Christ to the servants? Jesus had secured the freedom of His disciples, so there was no immanent threat from the authorities. The servants had no authority and apparently presented no threat. the very worst thing could do was to ridicule him. What did God do to prepare Peter for the invitation to go to the home of Cornelius? In Acts 10:9-16 we find the account (NKJV):

The next day, as they went on their journey and drew near the city, Peter went up on the housetop to pray, about the sixth hour. Then he became very hungry and wanted to eat; but while they made ready, he fell into a trance and saw heaven opened and an object like a great sheet bound at the four corners, descending to him and let down to the earth. In it were all kinds of four-footed animals of the earth, wild beasts, creeping things, and birds of the air. And a voice came to him, "Rise, Peter; kill and eat." But Peter said, "Not so, Lord! For I have never eaten anything common or unclean." And a voice spoke to him again the second time, "What God has cleansed you must not call common." This was done three times. And the object was taken up into heaven again.

There is a second lesson we may learn from Peter. We are not told what Peter's reaction was to Paul's rebuke. But we do know what he did after denying Christ. The Bible tells us he repented (he went out and wept bitterly). We are not told that Peter repented in Antioch, but it may be inferred from the fact that God continued to use him and he was very effective among Gentiles. We know that from this time until his martyrdom in AD 68 Peter poured out his life for Jesus as he preached the Word to both Jews and Gentiles.

The third lesson we learn from Peter's sin is that the consequences of sin can be far reaching. We do not know what effect it had on the Gentiles who were slighted by Peter, though it is doubtful that they missed it. It might well have been their reaction that caused Paul to see the problem. But aside from the effects the sin had on the victims of his bigotry, there was another group that was greatly influenced by it. Paul informs us that "the rest of the Jews also played the hypocrite with him, so that even Barnabas was carried away with their hypocrisy" (2:13, NKJV). Christian leaders have an awesome responsibility to those less mature in the Lord's work. The fall of a few televangelists, a few pastors, and some other Christians leaders in recent times has caused serious damage to the spread of the Gospel in America. Following news reports of the fall of evangelist, Jimmy Swaggart, Bobby Ready said, "Imagine the response I get when I tell people I am an evangelist from Baton Rouge."

After a contemporary Christian singer confessed to adultery and return awards he had received, a number of people asked me if I thought he should start singing in concerts and recording Christian songs again. When I expressed reservations, I was a little surprised by the reaction. "You have to forgive him, you have to forgive him!" I tried to explain that there is a greater issue than my forgiveness. If he has repented God has forgiven him and he can find a place of service. But once a person has held the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ up to nationwide ridicule and made the ministry the target of late-night TV jokes, that person had better be very sure that it is the Lord Who

is leading them to resume that ministry. He will be forgiven if he repents and there are things he can do for the Lord, but before he goes back into the pulpit he should be as sure that it is God will as he was of his call to the Gospel ministry in the first place.

In the fourth place, we should make an application of the lessons we learn. The fear of ridicule is the besetting sin of many Christian witnesses today. There are strong, courageous men who tremble at the thought of asking a neighbor, "Does Jesus live in your heart?" God gave Peter a victory of the sin of the fear of ridicule and he will give his servant a victory of that fear today. He will replace the spirit of fear and cowardice with a spirit of boldness and assurance.

Why did Paul rebuke Peter instead of all the Jews? Why was he singled out? This was a solemn moment when Paul saw the victory of the Jerusalem Conference in danger of slipping away from them. Peter's influence was such that even Barnabas was joining the other Jews as they slinked off with Peter in his cowardice. The next question is, why did Paul write to the Galatians about his rebuking of Peter? The answer comes in two parts. First, Paul is the human instrument, the Holy Spirit the source of the message. In the second place, this answers the charge that Paul had been the student of Peter. In this case he was the instructor and Peter the student.

**2:14 - THEY WALKED NOT UPRIGHTLY.** When Paul saw Barnabas and the other Jews were following Peter's example he confronted him publicly. Peter had condemned himself - Paul had simply rebuked him. After the great victory in Jerusalem, would Peter now make the Gentiles become Jews before they could sit at the table with him? Would he *Judaize* them? In essence, he asked, "If you and I found that we could not be saved by the works of the Law, why impose this on the Gentiles?"

Paul rebuked Peter before the group because Peter had acted publicly and the other Jews were following him. After publicly supporting Paul in Jerusalem, he comes to Antioch and publically strikes at the very point settled in the Jerusalem Conference. The Lord blessed the fellowship in that there was no permanent rift between Paul and Peter or between Paul and Barnabas remained friends, even though they soon separated over John Mark.

Before condemning Peter, let's take a look in the mirror. How many church members dismiss certain people as prospects for their church because "they are not our kind? I sat with a friend at a state evangelism conference a number of years ago and listened to the pastor of a local church "share" outreach tips he used in his ministry. He told about flying from Mississippi to a northern state to visit a family that was moving to his city (obviously before any other pastor could get to them). At that point someone whispered, "Yes, but there are a lot of lost people living in the shadow of his church and he has never walked across the street to witness to them."

As a student pastor I was excited about a number of young people and children we were reaching. I was picking them up for services and taking them home afterwards. I mentioned a number of them to a church leader and her response was, "That's nice, but that's not helping our treasury at all."

The pastor of a growing church was invited to speak to an evangelism class at a seminary. He told about a rather sophisticated church that called him as an associate pastor. He began reaching a lot of young people so when he was asked to attend a deacons meeting he assumed they were going to encourage him, or possibly give him a raise. He was shocked when he was told, "Those are not our kind of people."

### **G. Justification Through Faith, 2:15-21.**

Dr. Wayne Ward, Professor of Theology at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, once called this section the most perfect summary of Paul's theology to be found in any of his letters. Bible students are well aware of the doctrinal content of Romans and Ephesians, but in our study of Paul's letter to the Galatians one may get caught up in the controversy between Paul and the Galatians and fail to appreciate the great depth of the divine truth which strikes at the very heart of the Gospel message.

**2:15 - SINNERS OF THE GENTILES.** The Jews thought of all Gentiles as sinners by contrast with themselves. To them the very word Gentiles was synonymous with sinners. It was commonly held that Gentiles were fit only for fodder for the fires of hell. Is Paul attributing this attitude to Peter, or simply reminding him that this is the attitude of the Jews from Jerusalem to which he is yielding? In Romans, Paul lists many advantages in being a Jew, but his attitude was not the same as the average Jew, who felt that as a member of the chosen race he was superior to other people.

The late Dr. W. W. Stevens began teaching in the Bible Department at Mississippi College about 1955 or 1956, a short time after the 1954 Supreme Court decision which opened the door to racial integration of schools and other institutions in America. As barriers fell there were many community debates concerning what steps to take and how to implement changes. Occasionally the debate deteriorated into a heated arguments, or even a shouting matches. Dr. Stevens told his class about one such meeting in a Kentucky town where he has served as pastor before coming to Mississippi College. As the meeting progressed it seemed that more heat than light was being thrown on the subject. A Jewish business man was insisting that they speed up the process when someone demanded of him, "Would you want your daughter to marry a black man?" Quickly he snapped back, "No, or any other Gentile!"

Unfortunately, such attitudes have not been put to rest. Racial bigotry has been responsible for many problems in society. There is tension between races throughout the world. In Jesus, and only in Jesus, is there an answer to this problem. Man's solutions have helped people to a certain degree, but often at the expense of others. For example, reverse discrimination may provide a job for a minority person, but two problems may be created by such action. A better qualified person may be denied a job on the basis of reverse discrimination and end up resenting the individual, or the group from which the individual comes who is given the job he feels he is entitled to and for which he may be better qualified. The second problem is the attitude it creates in the individual who gets a job on the basis of such discrimination. What does that do for his sense of worth and his self-confidence? Man's solutions may provide some economic benefits for a period of time, but may drive the wedge



that separates groups deeper and create more serious problems.

Christians have the answer in Jesus Christ as Paul says in Gal. 3:28: "There can be *neither Jew nor Greek, there can be neither bond nor free, there can be no male and female*; for ye all are one man in Christ Jesus" (ASV, Italics mine).

**2:16 - JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH.** Is Paul addressing this statement (2:16-21) to Peter, or to all those present, both Jews and Gentiles? Or, is he simply teaching the Galatians in light of the controversy? The Bible is very clear about this basic doctrine. Justification is not accomplished in full or in part by the works of the Law. Justification is by grace through faith in Jesus Christ (Eh. 2:8). To Martin Luther, this was the Magna Carta of Christian liberty. Paul elaborates on this in Romans 1:17; 5:1; 11:6 and in other epistles.

The church in every generation has faced the challenge of teaching the doctrine of Justification by Faith to the saved as well as to the unsaved. After hearing the gospel explained, people often say, "You mean there's nothing I can do to deserve it? That's too easy." It seems natural for people to object to the idea that God's unmerited favor can be given so freely to unworthy sinners. Many find it difficult to trust a God who offers salvation as a free gift.

G. Campbell Morgan told of a coal miner who came to him and said, "I would give anything to believe that God would forgive my sins, but I cannot believe that He will forgive them if I just ask Him. It is too cheap." Morgan said, "My dear friend, have you been working today?" "Yes, I was down in the mine." "How did you get out of the pit? Did you pay?" "Of course not. I just got into to cage and was pulled to the top." "Were you not afraid to entrust yourself to that cage? Was it not too cheap?" Morgan asked. "Oh no," said the miner, "it was cheap for me, but it cost the company a lot of money to sink the shaft." Suddenly the truth struck him. What had not cost him anything -- salvation -- had not come cheap to God. This miner had never thought of the great price God paid to send His Son so He could rescue fallen humanity. Now he realized that all anyone had to do was to "get into the cage" by faith [Bible Ill.: #12203].

Justification means to declare, or pronounce righteous. It is one of several metaphors Paul uses to help explain salvation in Christ. Redemption is a metaphor of the slave block; propitiation, a metaphor of the sacrificial system; and Justification, a metaphor of the court, or judicial system. It does not mean to be righteous, nor does it point to a process by which one is saved. It means simply to be declared righteous (on the basis of the completed work of Jesus Christ on the Cross).

There are many glorious testimonies from individuals who struggled in frustration in search of justification through works. The necessity of the new birth is vividly portrayed in the life of George Whitefield. At 16 he became deeply convicted of his sin. He tried everything to become acceptable to God. He wrote, "I fasted for 36 hours twice a week. I prayed formal prayers several time a day and almost starved myself to death during Lent, but only felt more miserable. Then by God's grace I met Charles Wesley, who put a book in my hand that showed me from the Scriptures that I must be 'born again' or be eternally lost." Finally, Whitefield understood that he had to trust in Jesus Christ. He believed and was both forgiven and changed [Bible Ill.: #2154].

## THREE THEORIES OF JUSTIFICATION

There really are but three theories of Justification. Some groups, or individuals, may not want to be placed in either of these categories, either because they do not want to be categorized, or because they honestly believe they do not belong in either category. But aside from some cultic belief, or New Age claim that you just need to discover that you are God, or that you are the Christ you seek, everyone does fit into one of these categories.

### 1. JUSTIFICATION BY WORKS

Paul wrote to the Galatians, "Knowing that a man is **not justified by the works of the law** but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for *by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified*" (Gal. 2:16 NKJV).

"For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, **not of works, lest anyone should boast.** (Eph 2:8-9 NKJV)

### 2. JUSTIFICATION BY GRACE PLUS WORKS

Man is not saved by any combination of grace plus works. Nor, can he be saved by grace and they maintain his salvation by works. Paul was shocked that the Galatians thought they could be saved by grace plus circumcision. He was equally shocked by the implication that one could be saved by grace and then come back and add works later. How could they not see the folly of such a preposterous teaching? He wrote, "Are you so foolish? *Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh?*" (Gal 3:3 NKJV)

Paul was inspired to reveal to us through the Epistle to the Romans that grace and works are mutually exclusive approaches to God and His salvation. Either, in any measure, cancels out the other. No one is saved by "grace through" plus anything else, be it baptism, good works, or set of rules, regulations, and revelations. Jesus Christ is totally, completely adequate, as John MacArthur stresses in two of his books - *Charismatic Chaos* and *Our Sufficiency in Christ*. See Romans 11:6 (NKJV):

"And if by grace, then it is no longer of works; otherwise grace is no longer grace. But if it is of works, it is no longer grace; otherwise work is no longer work."

### 3. JUSTIFICATION BY GRACE

1. (Gal 2:16 NKJV) - Knowing that a man is **not justified by the works** of the law but **by faith in Jesus Christ**, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified.
2. (Gal 2:21 NKJV) - I do not set aside the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died in vain.
3. (Eph 2:8 NKJV) - **For by grace you have been saved through faith**, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God.
4. (Rom 5:1 NKJV) - Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.
5. (Rom 8:1-4 NKJV) There is therefore now *no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit*. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

There are three theories of justification and every denomination subscribes to one of these theories. There are people who believe one is saved by good works. Once when I was in seminary I talked with the pastor of a church in a county-seat town. The pastor seemed capable and committed to his church. He was loved and respected by the members. Initially, I was impressed with the minister, but as we talked I discovered that he placed a lot of emphasis on activities, but little on sound doctrines. For example, when I asked about sermon preparation he answered, "Well, you see, a lot of preachers have to study, but I don't. You see, I have intellect." He made three attempts to say that he preached extemporaneously, but I finally had to pronounce the word for him. Finally, I asked him what he told people they had to be saved. He responded enthusiastically, "I tell them they have to go to church and do right." In other words, justification by works.

A Jewish rabbi spoke to a group at a Baptist college. A student asked him, "What do you see as the main difference between Jews and Christians?" Without any hesitation, He replied, "You Christians believe that all you have to do is believe on someone else (Jesus) in order to have salvation. We Jews believe we have to work for what we get." He couldn't have stated it better.

Many believe in justification by grace plus works. These fall into two categories. First, there some who teach that in order to be saved you must believe in Jesus and be baptized, or believe and do good works, or live up to Biblical standards (or abstain from certain things). Second, there are many who teach that one receives salvation by grace and grace alone. However, after he is saved by grace, he must live up to certain things, or abstain from certain things. Failure to do so will result in

the loss of salvation. That is justification by grace plus works; the former group adds works in order to obtain salvation, and the latter in order to maintain one's salvation.

To hold that after a person is saved he must either do certain things, or abstain from certain things in order to keep his salvation is to transfer the saving power of God from Justification to Sanctification. The Christian works (serves, ministers) because he has been saved by grace through faith - unto good works. He works because he is saved, not in order to maintain his salvation. A distinction must be made between the root of salvation (Justification) and the fruit of salvation (Sanctification). To subscribe to this view is like nailing a sign to the Cross that says, NECESSARY BUT INADEQUATE (Essential, but Insufficient).

Fortunately, there are those who hold the third view - salvation by grace and grace alone. As seen above, this is the Scriptural position. Many other passages teach that salvation is by grace and grace alone (pure grace). This theory is Scriptural, but there is more. If you accept the doctrine of justification by grace through faith, you can accept the doctrine of security of believers. If you accept what the Bible has to say about security of believers you will have greater assurance of salvation and if you have assurance of salvation, you will find greater joy in your salvation.

J. Wilbur Chapman often illustrated God's grace with the testimony given by a certain man in one of his meetings:

"I got off at the Pennsylvania depot as a tramp, and for a year I begged on the streets for a living. One day I touched a man on the shoulder and said, "Hey, mister, can you give me a dime?" As soon as I saw his face I was shocked to see that it was my own father. I said, "Father, Father, do you know me?" Throwing his arms around me and with tears in his eyes, he said, "Oh my son, at last I've found you! I've found you. You want a dime? Everything I have is yours." Think of it. I was a tramp. I stood begging my own father for ten cents, when for 18 years he had been looking for me to give me all that he had."

What a wonderful illustration of the way God longs to treat us, if we will only let Him [Bible Illustrator, Parsons Tech., 9-22-88, #1445].

Justification by grace, through faith, is a critical doctrine and it is imperative that Christians seek to understand what the Bible has to say on the subject. When Martin discovered the truth about Justification through faith, he launched the Protestant Reformation in the sixteenth century. Luther wrote, "When the article of justification has fallen, everything has fallen." He added, "This is the chief article from which all other doctrines have flowed." He insisted that "It alone begets, nourishes, builds, preserves, and defends the church of God; and without it the church of God cannot exist for one hour" [Boice: 416]. John Calvin, who followed Luther, also made a great contribution to the Reformation. Calvin said that Justification by faith is "the main hinge on which religion turns [Boice: 416].

James Montgomery Boice, in his one volume work of theology, *Foundations of the Christian*

*Faith*, emphasizes the point that "it is God who justifies and not we ourselves" [Boice: 417]. He appeals to Paul's letter to the Romans to support his claim: "All who believe . . . are justified by his (God's) grace as a gift" (Rom. 3:22-24). Also, "A man is justified by faith apart from the works of the law" (Rom. 3:28). He quotes Jon Murray (*Redemption Accomplished and Applied*, p. 118):

Justification is not our apology nor is it the effect in us of a process of self-excusation. It is not even our confession nor the good feeling that may be induced in us by confession. Justification is not any religious exercise in which we engage however noble and good that religious exercise may be. If we are to understand justification and appropriate its grace we must turn our thought to the action of God in justifying the ungodly [Boice: 417].

Boice continues with a discussion of "the salvation triangle," propitiation, redemption, and justification, three metaphors used to help us understand the death of Christ. He uses them to connect Christ, the Father, and Christians:

We are the recipients of two acts: redemption and justification. We contribute nothing to our salvation. Christ is the initiator of two acts: propitiation and redemption, for it is he who achieves salvation for us. God the Father is the recipient of one act: propitiation, Jesus satisfying God's wrath. On the basis of this the Father initiates the last act: justification, in which he reaches out in grace to reckon the ungodly to be right with himself.

No one is saved by good works but every person who is saved is saved unto good works Eph. 2:9-10). Boice says "Here is where "Roman Catholic theology and Protestant theology part company most radically. Although many Roman Catholics would heartily join with Protestants in affirming that justification is certainly by the grace of God through faith, they would say that works enter into justification in the sense that God justifies us in part by producing good works in us, so that we are justified by faith plus those works" [Boice: 424]. According to the Scripture we are justified by faith alone. Boice illustrates the difference with two formulas. Catholic theology says:

Faith + Works = Justification

Protestants reply:

Faith = Justification + Works

Boice makes a valid point: "I disagree with Catholic theology at this point. But what are we to say of a theology, such as that dominant in today's evangelicalism, that does not have any place for good works? What are we to say of a teaching that extols justification apart from sanctification, forgiveness without a corresponding change in life? What would Jesus himself think of such theology" [426].

Unfortunately, some evangelicals seem ignore the importance of good works. There is a

great need in the church for responsible, committed people who will work for the Lord, who will do their share and not leave all the work to others. This is the point of a poem I found under the title, *Dead Weight*

I've been a dead weight many years  
Around the church's neck;  
I've let the others carry me  
And always pay the check.  
I've had my name upon the rolls  
For years and years gone by;  
I've criticized and grumbled too,  
Nothing could satisfy.  
I've been a dead weight long enough  
Upon the church's back;  
Beginning now, I'm going to take  
A wholly different track.  
I'm going to pray and pay and work  
And carry loads instead;  
And not have others carry me  
Like people do the dead.

BI, Parsons Tech., 7-25-86, Topic:  
Works, Index: 3902-3905

**2:17 - MINISTER OF SIN.** This is an Illogical inference. What he is saying is, "We are sinners already in spite of being Jews. Christ simply revealed to us our sin" [ATR -S'Master]. In essence, he says, "It just doesn't make sense to go back to that from which you have escaped." But that is exactly what the Judaizers were demanding that they do.

**2:18 - IF I BUILD.** Here Paul shows how Peter had hopelessly contradicted himself. "When he lived like a Gentile, he tore down the ceremonial law. When he lived like a Jew, he tore down salvation by grace" [ATR, S'Master]. By building up that which had been destroyed, he says, "I make myself a transgressor." This was an preposterous contradiction. His purposes is to show that he, Paul, was not subservient to Peter. His apostleship was not inferior to Peter's as the Judaizers had claimed. They could not discredit his message with that charge.

People often make charges against a preacher of the Gospel in order to discredit, or soften his message. If he preaches against adultery they wonder if he has noticed his daughter's dress lately. If he preaches against homosexuality, maybe someone in his family leans a little in that direction. If he preaches against alcohol, they speculate on whether or not he would take a drink if no one would ever find out about it. And if he has the courage to preach on divisive attitudes within the "fellowship," he's been there too long.

Paul could not be discredited, would not be intimidated, and should not have been distracted by the charges by the Judaizers. As God protected and defended Paul from these vicious attacks, he will protect his servant today. The preacher should be prepared to compromise on the color of the carpet or the pew cushions, but he should not compromise Scriptural truth. He must be faithful and courageous and trust the Lord to take care of him and his family. The Lord's commitment to Israel as recorded in Isaiah 41:9b-10 should encourage him to be strong in the Lord.

... Thou art my servant; I have chosen thee, and not cast thee away. Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness.

**2:19 - THROUGH THE LAW...DEAD TO LAW.** His purpose is not to condemn, or denounce the Law, but to put it in its proper place. In Romans 7:4, 6 he sheds more light on this:

Wherefore, my brethren, ye also were made dead to the law through the body of Christ; that ye should be joined to another, even to him who was raised from the dead, that we might bring forth fruit unto God. But now we have been discharged from the law, having died to that wherein we were held; so that we serve in newness of the spirit, and not in oldness of the letter (ASV).

Blackwood wrote, "The principles of faith require one to go beyond law unto grace" (B'wood). He listed three steps:

- (1). Before law - sinful and ignorant of the fact.
- (2). Under law - sinful, aware of the fact, and unable to correct it.
- (3). Beyond law - free, because of justification by Jesus Christ [B'wood...].

Paul had come through the law to Christ. He was now he was free in Christ Jesus. As he wrote to the Roman church, "Moreover the law entered, that the offense might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord " (Rom 5:20-21).

**2:20 - CRUCIFIED WITH CHRIST.** This verse is full of meaning and rich in application. Some of the great themes of the Pauline epistles are found in this one verse. The believer was saved by grace through faith. He lives each day by faith, and not by the works of the law.

**I LIVE.** This points to the spiritual life, not biological life. He has life in Christ right now. In Christ you can have your cake and eat it, too! You are fully alive in Him now, but that does not take anything away from the life we will share with Him for all eternity. The point is, you do not have to wait until you get to heaven to enjoy eternal life.

**2:21 - DO NOT FRUSTRATE.** Paul moves on quickly to silence any critic who might accuse

him of voiding the grace of God in the previous verse. He says, "I do not nullify grace." If salvation is by works Christ died in vain. If righteousness can be received in any way other than through faith in Jesus Christ, then the virgin birth, the perfect life, the death, burial, resurrection, and ascension mean nothing.

***IF RIGHTEOUSNESS COME BY THE LAW.*** The Law has never saved anyone - it has never made anyone righteous. In the doctrinal section of Romans, Paul stresses the point that God demands righteousness of every person who stands before Him. No individual can produce righteousness in any measure, because we are all sinners and all of us "fall short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23), and all are under the sentence of death (Rom. 6:23). But "God commendeth His love to us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom 5:8).

God demands righteousness, but man cannot produce it. His highest attempt is described as "filthy rags." So, if we are to have any righteousness at all, we must receive it from God. But how? When a sinner repents and accepts Jesus Christ faith, the righteousness of God is imputed unto him. This is explained in Romans 4:3-6 (ASV):

For what saith the scripture? And Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned unto him for righteousness. Now to him that worketh, the reward is not reckoned as of grace, but as of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is reckoned for righteousness. Even as David also pronounceth blessing upon the man, unto whom God reckoneth righteousness apart from works.

***THEN CHRIST IS DEAD IN VAIN.*** The idea that God would do anything in vain is preposterous. If the Cross had not been necessary God would not have sent His Son to die such a horrible death. If any person could be saved apart from the grace of God, every person could be saved without it, and Christ truly would have died in vain.

This verse, answers the often repeated question: How can God condemn the heathen who have never heard the Gospel? There are many people who believe that if a person does the best he knows to do a loving God could never condemn them. In the first place, no one has ever done the best he could do, except Jesus Himself. This applies to the religious person as well as the moralist. To be saved by Law one would have to keep all the Law, and no one has ever done that but Jesus.

## **II. DECLARATION OF THE GOSPEL OF GRACE (3:1-4:31).**



## A. Salvation Is By Grace and Not By the Law, 3:1-18.

### 1. A personal appeal to the Galatian Christians, 3:1-5.

In verses 1-5 the Apostle Paul asks some very pointed questions of the Galatian believers. In other Pauline Epistles he answers questions we are not given - we presume what the questions were on the basis of the answer. But here the issue is so critical that nothing should be left to assumption.

The issue in this epistle is not the application of some principle, but the very nature of the Gospel itself. Can man be saved by works? Is grace sufficient, or must man add his efforts to God's grace? In the letter to the Galatians the Lord will provide the answer to these questions for every believer and for every church - in any time and in any place. With keen awareness of what is at stake, Paul is now engaging the enemy in spiritual warfare. The reader can sense his intensity as, in the heat of battle, he challenges them with a series of searching questions.

One might question Paul's wisdom in beginning with an outburst, "You foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? Before your very eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed as crucified" (NIV). But, to return to a point already covered, this epistle is not the product of the mind of Paul. The Holy Spirit is the One responsible for the intensity of the language. Calling them foolish was not a slip of the tongue - or pen.

In verses 6-18, Paul will answer the questions he asks in verses 1-5. Before looking at the answers, study the questions he asks (NIV):

3:1 - Who has bewitched you? Before your very eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed as crucified.

3:2 - Did you receive the Spirit by observing the law, or by believing what you heard?

3:3 - After beginning with the Spirit, are you now trying to attain your goal by human effort?

3:4 - Have you suffered so much for nothing--if it really was for nothing?

3:5 - Does God give you his Spirit and work miracles among you because you observe the law, or because you believe what you heard?

**3:1 - FOOLISH GALATIANS.** See in the introduction, "The Galatians." They had indeed been fickle, unstable, and easily influenced. This might remind us of those professing Christians who seem to be such easy prey to the Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses, and other cults today.

**WHO HATH BEWITCHED YOU?** He had proclaimed Jesus among them, but they had quickly turned away from the truth when the Judaizers came and perverted the gospel of grace

with a false gospel. Their abrupt rejection of the truth in favor of error had left him in disbelief. It must have seemed that they had been bewitched.

Anyone who has tried to counsel with a person who has been caught up in a cult understands why Paul used the word "bewitched." It is as though the individual has been brainwashed to the point they cannot focus on the truth of the Word of God which you know they have read and heard taught for years. The computer user knows how disturbing it is when the message flashed on the screen tells you it cannot access your program. You know your information is there but you cannot access it until repairs are made, or some complicated steps are taken to enable you to access the information from a different direction. It is much the same with one who has been "bewitched" by some cult. You are using terms and quoting Scripture which you know the person knew only weeks earlier. But now nothing registers. It is as though some supernatural power has short-circuited their brain. The answer might well be that some supernatural force has short-circuited the thinking process.

Some professing Christians have never learned sound doctrine. Others have learned a little doctrine and then drifted into false doctrines, But there are some who become so quickly deceived by cultic teachings that one may well conclude that the person has been by Satan, the master deceiver and father of liars. This kind of deception does not "just happen" to the Christian who is grounded in the Word of God. But one who neglects prayer and Bible study is a target for seduction by the devil.

**3:2 - DID YOU RECEIVE?** This is the big question. "Did you receive the Spirit by keeping the Law or by believing the Gospel message?" (New English Translation). This is the heart of the matter. Paul had preached that one must be saved by grace through faith (Eph. 2:8). But the Judaizers had moved in after his departure, gained the confidence of the people, and persuaded them that they must add the Law (be circumcised) in order to be saved. Now Paul is being careful to point out once again that salvation is by faith and not by works ( Law) or any combination of works plus grace. He is not bothered by repetition.

Most mature Christians have no problem with the fact that Paul used faith and grace interchangeably in his letters. But some may wonder why in one passage the Scripture states that one must believe in Jesus Christ to be saved (Acts 16:31), but in other passages it states that one is saved by faith. So which is it, grace or faith? The answer is very simple. Grace and faith are like two sides of the same coin. There is an illustration I like to use to illustrate the relationship between faith and grace.

Suppose you are working, or exercising, outside in August and realize you are becoming dehydrated. You go inside a building where there is a water cooler and drink until your thirst is quenched. Now, what quenched your thirst, the water or the pipes and tubing that brought the water to you? Of course, you would say, the water quenched your thirst. You never gave the pipes a thought. But if the water line had not been there your thirst would not have been quenched. The water line was the channel through the water flowed to, and through, the water cooler so that your thirst could be quenched. The water quenched your thirst, but it had to have a channel through to flow in order for it to reach you and satisfy your thirst.

We are saved by grace through faith. It is God's grace which quenches your spiritual thirst, but faith is the channel through which it flows. God's part is grace, man's part is faith - but a saving faith is a gift from God. Saving faith is a *grace* gift from the Lord of our salvation. All the faith man can muster is inadequate and insufficient. At the very best, all our righteousness is as "filthy rags" (Isaiah 64:6).

**3:3 - ARE YE SO FOOLISH?** No doubt, these Galatians interpreted the theology of the Judaizers as brilliant and applauded themselves for having the wisdom to reject the Gospel Paul preached and embrace this new doctrine. That which they saw their action as wise but Paul called it foolish. These are not the thoughts of an out of control preacher who, having no answer, resorts to name calling. It cannot be emphasized too strongly that this epistle is the product of the mind of the Holy Spirit, not that of any man.

The message the Judaizers preached must have seemed reasonable to the new converts in Galatia, just as combining grace and works appeals to many individuals and various denominations today. Fortunately, we do not have to depend on human reason when God speaks on any issue. Since God has spoken on this subject we have empirical truth (divinely revealed truth). Man is saved by grace and not by works, or any combination of works and grace.

When my younger son, Mark, was about three years and a half years old, my wife resumed her career as a classroom teacher. We enrolled Mark in a pre-school program in a local church. For some period of time I picked him up each day at noon, took him home, and prepared lunch. One day as we were eating lunch I made some statement (I have no idea what it was now). He immediately responded, "That's logical." I glanced at him but his face was expressionless. He had not looked up from his food. I was totally amazed. Could it be that I had a child prodigy on my hands? If so, why had I not noticed it before? How could he know that the statement I had made was logical? But before mind could compute all the possible ramifications of his comment, he added, "Of course, everything is logical to me." These fickle Galatians seemed to find any novel idea logical, but in reality they were foolish.

This verse conclusively refutes the theory of salvation by both grace and works. They had begun on the right track, but now they were making progress in reverse. In Romans 11:6 the Lord reveals that grace and works are mutually exclusive. Grace destroys works and works destroy grace.

Someone asked about a verse by verse study of Romans I had just revised. He asked, "do you believe in the supremacy of grace?" It was a fair question, but I knew where he was coming from because I had heard that he taught a rigid Calvinism. I assured him that I believe in the supremacy of grace if by that you mean that grace is the only way by which we can be saved, and that it is totally adequate for our salvation. But, I assured him, man must respond in faith to God's grace. Faith is the gift of God, not the product of the mind or heart of the individual. However, a person must choose to exercise the faith God has given him. An individual is a free moral agent in that he is not coerced into receiving Christ. Every one is free to choose, but no one is free not to choose. God's grace does not save a person who

rejects Him. The "whosoever" of the Scripture speak loudly and clearly:

And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely (Rev. 22:17).

And when he had called the people unto him with his disciples also, he said unto them, Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. "For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it (Mark 8:34, 35) .

**HAVING BEGUN IN THE SPIRIT.** Paul's use of a double contrast, is interesting. Robertson points out that the verb translated "perfected" is in the middle voice as in I Peter 5:9, "finishing of yourselves" (SeedMaster Bible). So, there is a double contrast, between *having begun* and *finishing*, and between *Spirit* and *flesh*. Both contrasts were both dramatic and convincing - then as now.

**3:4 - HAVE YE SUFFERED...IN VAIN?** How had they suffered? There is no record of persecution in northern Galatia but we do have records of the work in southern Galatia (Acts 14). Paul would have known about the persecution of the saints in these churches. Since they had suffered it is reasonable to conclude that the source of their suffering had been persecution, either had the hand of officials or pagans. Had they faithfully endured suffering without forsaking their Lord only to abandon Him now that the Judaizers had come among them with false doctrines?

**IF IT BE INDEED IN VAIN?** He has not given up hope for them. It seems that they had gone through persecution in vain, but if they respond favorable to this epistle, they will not have lost everything. Their venture into error would not be without consequence. It never is. Dabbling in false doctrine arrests spiritual growth, restricts blessings for those who participate, and hinders evangelistic outreach. But if they repent and come back to the truth, all will not be lost.

**3:5 - HE THAT MINISTERETH TO YOU THE SPIRIT.** "He therefore that supplieth to you the Spirit" (ASV). God is the One Who had given them His Spirit. There is no reason to assume that they had rejected this fact, but the point is not simply that it was God Who had given them the Spirit, but how He had given Him to them.

**WORKETH MIRACLES.** *This is an exciting combination of words (energôn dunameis).* The word *energeô* (worketh, KJV) means to work or energize, and *dunameis* is from *dunamis* which means power. What a great way to portray God's activities among (or, in) His people. "In you" captures the idea better than "among you." See I Thes. 2:13; I Cor. 12:6.

For it is God who *worketh in you* both to will and to work, for his good pleasure (Phil. 2:13 ASV).

And for this cause we also thank God without ceasing, that, when ye received from us

the word of the message, even the word of God, ye accepted it not as the word of men, but, as it is in truth, the word of God, which also *worketh in you* that believe (I Thes. 2:13 ASV).

**BY LAW...OR FAITH?** This is the question. How did He do it? Was it by law or by faith? Here Paul repeats the contrast of verse 2 concerning "works of the law" and "the hearing of faith." We must understand the principle by which God works. It is either by faith or by works - it cannot be both because the two principles are mutually exclusive (Rom. 11:6). Which leaves us with either works or faith. He has categorically rejected works (Gal. 2:16, Eph. 2:9), so that only leaves faith.

Works will not work, but faith works every time. Human effort will never gain God's approval, cannot make one righteousness, and stands in opposition to grace. Then what is the place of works? The Scripture is clear, but too often in quoting from the second chapter of Ephesians we leave out verse 10. Read verses 8-10 (ASV):

For by grace have ye been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, [it is] the gift of God; not of works, that no man should glory. For we are his workmanship, *created in Christ Jesus for good works*, which God afore prepared that we should walk in them.

The KJV has "unto good works. What this means is that works, service, observance of laws and rituals, and abstinence from bad habits will not produce righteousness. But the person who is saved by grace through faith will produce works of righteousness. In other words, works are the fruit of justification (righteousness) and not the root, the result and not the source.

John MacArthur entitled one of his books, *Faith Works*. When I first saw the title I assumed he meant that faith is compatible with grace but works are not. Faith is the response God is looking for and not works. Furthermore, He provides the faith so that no one can boast that the faith is the product of his own ingenuity. However, In this book he takes the reader to the Scripture to show us that faith involves more than wishful thinking. It involves genuine commitment.

In *Faith Works*, MacArthur discusses the "Lordship Salvation" controversy at some length, defending the "Lordship" position against the "No Lordship" position. He insists that "this is not theological trivia. How we proclaim the gospel has eternal ramifications for non-Christians and defines who we are as Christians." "Nor," he says, "is the lordship question a theoretical or hypothetical problem. It raises several fundamental questions that have repercussions at the most practical level of Christian living" [*Faith Works*: p. 22]. He lists some of those questions:

How should we proclaim the gospel? Do we present Jesus to unbelievers as Lord, or as Savior only? What are the essential truths of the gospel message? What does it mean to be saved? How can a person know his or her faith is real? Can we have absolute assurance of salvation? What kind of transformation is accomplished in the new birth? How do we explain sin in the Christian's life? How far in sin can a

Christian go? What relationship is there between faith and obedience? [*Faith Works*: 22].

While MacArthur says he does not like the term *lordship salvation*, he states that "The gospel call to faith presupposes that sinners must repent of their sins and yield to Christ's authority. That, in a sentence, is what 'lordship salvation' is all about" [*Faith Works*: 23]. He lists the crucial points of his position:

- Christ's death on the cross paid the full penalty for our sins and purchased eternal salvation. His atoning sacrifice enables God to justify sinners freely without compromising the perfection of divine righteousness (Rom. 3:24-26). His resurrection from the dead declares His victory over sin and death (1 Cor. 15:54-57)
- Salvation is by grace through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ alone-plus and minus nothing (Eph. 2:8-9).
- Sinners cannot earn salvation or favor with God (Rom. 8:8).
- God requires of those who are saved no preparatory works or prerequisite self-improvement (Rom. 10:13; 1 Tim. 1:15).
- Eternal life is a gift of God (Rom. 6:23).
- Believers are saved and fully justified before their faith ever produces a single righteous work (Eph. 2:10).
- Christians can and do sin (1 John 1:8, 10). Even the strongest Christians wage a constant and intense struggle against sin in the flesh (Rom. 7:15-24). Genuine believers sometime commit heinous sins, as David did in 2 Samuel 11. [*Faith Works*: 23-24].

There are some areas in which lordship advocates and no-lordship advocates will agree:

- Christ's death purchased eternal salvation.
- The saved are justified through faith in Christ alone.
- Sinners cannot earn divine favor.
- God requires no preparatory works or pre-salvation reformation.
- Eternal life is a gift.
- Believers are saved before their faith produces any righteous works.

- Christians sin, sometimes horribly. [Faith Works: 26].

There are many other points on which the two positions differ dramatically:

- Repentance is a change of mind about Christ...[n]o turning from sin is required for salvation.
- The whole of salvation, including faith, is a gift of God. But faith might not last. A true Christian can completely cease believing.
- Faith is simply being convinced or giving credence to the truth of the gospel. It is confidence that Christ can remove guilt and give eternal life, not a personal commitment to him.
- Some spiritual fruit is inevitable in every Christian experience. The fruit, however, might not be visible to others. Christians can even lapse into a state of permanent spiritual barrenness.
- Only judicial aspects of salvation - such as justification, adoption, imputed righteousness, and positional sanctification - are guaranteed for believers in this life. Practical sanctification and growth in grace require a postconversion act of dedication.
- Disobedience and prolonged sin are no reason to doubt the reality of one's faith.
- A believer may utterly forsake Christ and come to the point of not believing. God has guaranteed that He will not disown those who thus abandon the faith. Those who have once believed are secure forever, even if they turn away. [Faith Works: 27].

There are some more radical advocates of No-Lordship salvation who further stipulate:

- Repentance is not essential to the gospel message. In no sense is repentance related to saving faith.
- Faith is a human act, not a gift from God. It occurs in a decisive moment but does not necessarily continue. True faith can be subverted, be overthrown, collapse, or even turn to unbelief.
- To "believe" unto salvation is to believe the facts of the gospel. "Trusting Jesus" means believing the "saving facts" about Him, and to believe those facts is to appropriate the gift of eternal life.

- Spiritual fruit is not guaranteed in the Christian life. Some Christians spend their lives in a barren wasteland of defeat, confusion, and every kind of evil.
- Heaven is guaranteed to believers but Christian victory is not. One could even say "the saved" still need salvation. Christ offers a whole range of postconversion deliverance experiences to supply what Christians lack. But these other "salvations" all require the addition of human works, such as obedience, submission, and confession of Jesus as Lord. Thus God is dependent to some degree on human effort in achieving deliverance from sin in this life.
- Submission is not in any sense a condition for eternal life. "Calling on the Lord" means appealing to Him, not submitting to Him.
- Nothing guarantees that a true Christian will love God. Salvation does not necessarily even place the sinner in a right relationship of harmonious fellowship with God.
- If people are sure they believe, their faith must be genuine. All who claim Christ by faith as Savior - even those involved in serious or prolonged sin - should be assured that they belong to God come what may. It is dangerous and destructive to question the salvation of professing Christians. The New Testament writers never questioned the reality to their readers' faith.
- It is possible to experience a moment of faith that guarantees heaven for eternity, then to turn away permanently and live a life that is utterly barren of any spiritual fruit. Genuine believers might even cease to name the name of Christ or confess Christianity. [Faith Works: 28-29].

MacArthur documents each position with parenthetical references. In listing the no-lordship position he quotes Charles Ryrie, *So Great Salvation*, and Zane Hodges, *Absolutely Free*, and Charles C. Ryrie, *Balancing the Christian Life*. In *Faith Works*, the well known pastor, educator, and writer correctly assesses the controversy:

The Lordship controversy is a disagreement over the nature of true faith. Those who want to eliminate Christ's lordship from the gospel see faith as simple trust in a set of truths about Christ. Faith, as they describe it, is merely a personal appropriation of the promise of eternal life. Scripture describes faith as more than that--it is a wholehearted trust in Christ personally (e.g., Gal. 2:16; Phil. 3:9). Not merely faith about Him; faith in Him. Note the difference: If I say I believe some promise you have made, I am saying far less than if I say I trust you [Faith Works: 30].

MacArthur rightly observes that believing in a person involves some degree of commitment to that person. Trusting Christ means that "we rely on His counsel, trust in His goodness, and entrust ourselves for time and eternity to His guardianship. Real faith, saving faith, is all of me (mind,



emotion, and will) embracing all of Him (Savior, Advocate, Provider, Sustainer, Counselor, and Lord God)" [*Faith Works*: 30].

We are not saved by works, but by grace through faith. However, a saving faith is an obedient faith. To quote my Bible professor from Mississippi College again, "Wind is not wind unless it is blowing, and faith is not faith unless it is working." Our works will never produce justification, but justification by faith will produce good works.

In Hebrews 11, the great faith chapter, we have a list of people who "obtained a good report" by their faith. Observe some of the "faith works" listed in this passage:

- (1) *By faith* Abel offered a more excellent sacrifice (vs. 4).
- (2) *By faith* Enoch walked with God and was translated that he should not see death (vs. 5).
- (3) *By faith* Noah prepared an ark (vs. 7).
- (4) *By faith* Abraham obeyed God and followed Him to a strange land (vs. 8f).
- (5) *By faith* Abraham offered up Isaac (vs. 17)
- (6) *By faith* Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph served the Lord (vs. 20ff).
- (7) *By faith* Moses led the Israelites out of Egypt (vs. 24ff).
- (8) *By faith* Israel conquered Jericho (vs. 30).

## **2. The true sons of Abraham, 3:6-18.**

Paul has asked some very pertinent questions (3:1-5). Now, in verses 6-18 he will answer those questions. More specifically, in this section he will answer the question of 3:2: "This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?"

- (1) Abraham was justified by faith, not works (3:6). He believed God before he was circumcised, and 645 years before the giving of the Law.
- (2) Believers are the true children of Abraham (see John 8).
- (3) Believers are the true heirs of Abraham (John 8).
- (4) The Law brought a curse rather than a blessing (3:10-14).

(5) The Law came after the promise (3:15-18). In this section Paul uses the traditional rabbinical method to show that grace preceded the Law.

In 3:6-18, Paul drives his opponents into a corner from which there is no escape. He does so by showing them the inevitable consequence of the course they have taken.

**3:6 - AS ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD.** The Jewish readers did not need to be reminded of the life, character, or call of Abraham. They did, however, need to understand how he was justified. It was not through works, circumcision, or the Law. He was justified prior to circumcision and prior to the giving of the Law. Paul presses the point here as he does in Romans, that Abraham was justified (declared righteous) when he believed God.

When I was a student at Mississippi College I led a group of Baptist Student Union students in a mission to the Hinds County Jail in Jackson each Thursday afternoon. I directed this mission for two and one-half years and for at least one year of that time I preached at the Mississippi state Penitentiary at Parchman early each Sunday morning before going to preach at the church I served as student pastor. If one of the students had a problem on the mission trip to the jail he occasionally asked me to help. This happened once while I was talking with two juveniles. Two students interrupted me and one asked, "Will you change places with us?" He went on to explain, "That man down there is getting rather violent and we don't know what to do? I wasn't sure what I could do but I knew I had to try to do something.

As I moved down the passage way to the cell in which the man was incarcerated, I was a little puzzled as to why an adult was being kept in a cell in the juvenile area. In time I discovered that he was isolated from other prisoners in the "bullpen" because he was a homosexual.

When I stopped in front of the bars I looked into the cell and saw a man sitting on a cot. There was nothing in the cell but a man, a cot, and a commode. I introduced myself and asked his name and when he gave me his name I asked where he was from and he named a town near my home in the Mississippi Delta. When I told him that I worked every summer for the Quitman County ASCS and had measured cotton land (plotted fields on an aerial Photograph) around his home, he immediately showed some interest. After a few minutes I asked his permission to read a few passages from the Bible. He was very receptive but as I turned to the Scripture passages I kept wondering about what the other students had said about how violent the man had become.

"Bill" was quiet, never volunteering anything, but always answering when I asked a question. Finally I felt that it was time to courteously "press for a decision." So, I asked, "Bill, do you believe in God?" Without hesitation, he said, "Yeah, I believe in God." I know the Holy Spirit was guiding me because, I found myself responding in a way I had not planned, and with a question I had not asked other prisoners. I asked, "Bill, you have told me that you believe *in* God. Now, I want to ask you another question. Do you *believe* God. He sat for some time without saying a word. Suddenly, he got up from the cot and started toward the bars. Since my face was almost against the bars, I decided not to draw back too quickly, but I was prepared to jump back if he tried to reach through

the bars. I was still remembering what the other students had said about him. I was especially alert, but did not step back as he stopped right in front of me and brought both hands up and forward. I will never forget the thrill I experienced when he caught a bar in each hand and looked me directly in the eye and asked, "Johnny, can you get me a Bible?" Not only did he get my Bible, he believed God and it was "accounted to him as righteousness."

**ACCOUNTED...RIGHTEOUS.** Abraham did not achieve righteousness through his own works, nor could he have done so, regardless of how good they might have been. As Paul wrote in Romans, God demands righteousness of all who stand before Him, but there is none righteous (Rom. 3:10). Man's highest attempt is compared to filthy rags. But there is a righteousness revealed by God that is available to each person: "For therein is revealed a righteousness of God from faith unto faith: as it is written, But the righteous shall live by faith. For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hinder the truth in unrighteousness" (Rom: 1:17-18 ASV).

What then shall we say that Abraham, our forefather, hath found according to the flesh? For if Abraham was justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not toward God. For what saith the scripture? And *Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned unto him for righteousness.*

Romans 4:1-3 ASV (Italics added)

**3:7- CHILDREN OF ABRAHAM.** The Jewish leaders of the day prided themselves in being sons of Abraham, but the real sons of Abraham are those who believe as he did, "they which be of faith" [ATR: SeedMaster]. True children of Abraham are those those whose "spiritual sonship springs out of (ek) faith, not out of blood. John the Baptist denounced the Pharisees and Sadducees as vipers though descendants of Abraham (Mt 3:7; Lu 3:7) and Jesus termed the Pharisees children of the devil and not spiritual children of Abraham (not children of God) in Joh 8:37-44" [ATR: SM].

**3:8 - THE SCRIPTURE FORSEEING.** The Scripture is personified here: "The Scripture, forseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith..." This was the message (the gospel) preached beforehand, and while it shocked Jewish leaders of the day, it should not have been a surprise. It had been in God's plan all along to justify the heathen - and to justify them through faith.

**IN THEE SHALL ALL NATIONS BE BLESSED.** The Scripture announced beforehand the gospel concerning justification by faith. He quotes the promise to Abraham in Gen. 12:3 ("In thee shall all families of the earth be blessed") and in 18:18 ("all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him"). This is a crucial passage for Paul's point, showing that the promise to Abraham included all the nations of the earth.

**3:9 - THEY WHICH BE OF FAITH.** They who are blessed with Abraham are not the biological descendants of Abraham, but those who share in his faith in the Lord. They are the spiritual descendants of "faithful" (believing) Abraham. Jesus had said:

I know that ye are Abraham's seed: yet ye seek to kill me, because my word hath not free course in you. I speak the things which I have seen with my Father: and ye also do the things which ye heard from your father. They answered and said unto him, Our father is Abraham. Jesus saith unto them, If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham (John 8:37-39).

**3:10 - OF THE WORKS OF THE LAW..UNDER A CURSE.** Paul uses some simple logic to drive home his point. Rather than being blessed with "believing" Abraham, those who seek God's blessings through the works of the law are under a curse. Why? Because those who seek salvation through the works of the law must keep all of the law without failing in any point: "Cursed is every one who continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law, to do them." Accordig to one report there are 1050 commands in the New Testament. If you want God's approval you are going to have to keep evryone of them perfectly - or trust in Jesus.

**3:11. NO MAN IS JUSTIFIED BY THE LAW.** Paul continues to stress his basic thesis - the just shall live by faith. We are saved by faith, not by works. No one is saved by faith plus works. No one is saved by faith plus joining a particular church or a church of a certain denomination. No one is saved by believing plus adopting a particular creed, and no one is saved by believing plus observing ordinances. No one is saved by believing in Christ plus baptism, or by believing plus living up to a certain standard. Godly living is the fruit, and not the root of our salvation.

D. James Kennedy has a good illustration of saving faith:

Faith is the key that opens the door to heaven. You know, you could have a key ring with a lot of keys on it, like this (use actual key ring as object lesson if you have one); they will look somewhat alike. But I'll tell you this. If you go to the front door of my house, you could try all of these keys except the right one, and they would not open that door. The right key to heaven is called faith, saving faith. That is what will open the door to heaven. There is nothing else in the world that will open that door. What is it? FAITH [Bible Ill.: Index: 1203, 3-18-1987].

**3:12 - THE LAW IS NOT OF FAITH.** The principle of law and the principle of faith are mutually exclusive. Of the two only faith is compatible with God's grace. We replaced the sound system in a church I served as pastor. Sound engineers installed a number of new amplifeirs, new lines, and new microphones, and new speakers. We wanted to use some of our old microphones and when the engineer checked them he said that the microphones were good but that we could not use them as they were with our new system because they had the wrong plugs for the new jacks. We had good mics and an excellent soundd system but we could not use they were totally incompatible, and until he replaced the plugs they wre absolutely useless. Law and grace are incompatible, but grace and faith totally compatible. Law demands absolute obedience and unlike faith rests not on mercy, faith, and grace, but on human effort. "He that doeth them shall live in them" (completely, perfectly) and only Jesus has ever done that.

**3:13 - REDEEMED.** This is a metaphor of the slave block. It usually means paying the purchase price of a slave so that the slave could go free. Christ purchased us from the curse of the law. "Here the graphic picture is completed. We were under (hupo) a curse, Christ became a curse {over} (hyper) us and so between us and the overhanging curse which fell on him instead of on us. Thus he bought us out (ek) and we are free from the curse which he took on himself" [ATR: SMaster].

***CURSED IS EVERYONE THAT HANGETH ON A TREE.*** We know that Christ was not cursed by God, so this may be an allusion was to exposure of dead bodies on stakes or crosses (see Josh. 10:26). The word rendered tree (Xulon) means wood, not necessarily tree. It was used of gallows or crosses (Acts 5:30; 10:39; I Peter 2:24).

**3:14 - THE BLESSING OF ABRAHAM.** To the religious leaders of the Jews it was inconceivable that the blessing of Abraham "might come on the Gentiles." To the chief priests, Scribes, and Pharisees it was also incomprehensible that the blessing of Abraham would not be theirs, simply because they were the descendants of Abraham and professed to lived by the Law.

***THE PROMISE OF THE SPIRIT.*** Jesus Christ took our sins upon Himself (was made a curse for us, vs. 13) so that all of us (Jew and Gentile) might receive the promise of the Spirit (the promise of God). In Christ (and only in Christ) we may all (Jew and Gentile) receive the promise made to Abraham - but only through faith, not the Law. The Lord had promised Abraham: "And I will bless them that bless thee, and him that curseth thee will I curse: and in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed" (Gen. 12:3). Paul has more on the subject in his letter to the Romans.

For what saith the scripture? And Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned unto him for righteousness. Now to him that worketh, the reward is not reckoned as of grace, but as of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is reckoned for righteousness. (Rom. 4:3-5 ASV). See also Romans 4:6-17.

The Scripture states clearly that the promise of the Spirit is realized only through faith, both here in Romans:

For the scripture saith, ***Whosoever believeth on him*** shall not be put to shame. For ***there is no distinction between Jew and Greek:*** for the same [Lord] is Lord of all, and is rich unto all that call upon him: for, Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved (Rom 10:11-13 ASV).

**3:15 - I SPEAK AFTER THE MANNER OF MAN.** The Apostle will speak after the manner and custom of man in giving them an illustration from everyday life they can understand. Even in a human covenant (contract), once it has been ratified it cannot be changed - except by consent of the

contracting parties. One of the parties cannot change it, nor can an outsider change it.

**3:16 - ABRAHAM AND HIS SEED.** Seed is singular, and at first look we might think "seed" denotes Christ and "seeds" all Israelites. All do not agree, however. A. T. Robertson says:

The promise to Abraham uses (sperma) as a collective substantive and applies to all believers (both Jews and Gentiles) as Paul has shown in verses 7-14, and as of course he knew full well. Here Paul uses a rabbinical refinement which is yet intelligible. The people of Israel were a type of the Messiah and he gathers up the promise in its special application to Christ [SeedMaster Bible].

However, in giving the promise to Abraham, the Lord did use "seed" to denote the Israelites who would inherit the land.

For all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever" (Gen. 13:15 ASV).

Seed (in the singular) here denotes Christ. At the same time, we must remember that we are all one body in Christ Jesus: "So we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and severally members one of another" (Rom. 12:5 ASV).

**3:17 - THE COVENANT WAS CONFIRMED BEFORE.** God's promise was given to Abraham centuries before the Law was given to Moses at Sinai. The covenant was duly ratified by God and it could not be changed by the Law. The Law had its purpose but that purpose was not to alter the promise of God, or to nullify it.

**FOUR HUNDRED AND THIRTY YEARS.** This refers to the time Israel spent in Egypt. Acts 7:6 rounds it off to 400 years. The period from Abraham to the Egyptian captivity was 215 years, so there was some 645 years between the promise given to Abraham and the giving of the Mosaic Law.

**3:18 - IF LAW...NO MORE OF PROMISE.** Abraham received the inheritance by the *promise of God, not the Law*. We receive our inheritance by grace (Eph. 2:8) and not by works (law), Eph. 2:9. Why does God demand faith and not works? It is because faith is compatible with grace and law (works) is the antithesis of grace. Grace is the unmerited love of God, and the only acceptable response is a faith which is supplied in its entirety by the Lord. Paul explains this in Romans 4.

For *not through the law* was the promise to Abraham or to his seed that he should be heir of the world, *but through the righteousness of faith*. For ***if they that are of the law are heirs, faith is made void***, and the promise is made of none effect: for the law worketh wrath; but where there is no law, neither is there transgression. ***For this***

*cause it is of faith, that it may be according to grace;* to the end that the promise may be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all (Rom. 4:13-16 ASV, italics added).

A good illustration of this was published when Ronald Reagan was president under the title: Sensational Headlines:

The man who owned the city's newspaper had 3 sons. He offered ownership of the paper to the son who could write the most sensational headline of only three words. The first son's headline was, "Reagan Turns Communist." The second son concocted this: "Khomeini Becomes Christian." But the third son inherited the newspaper when his headline was submitted. It had only two words, "Pope Elopes."

Fortunately, we don't have to earn our spiritual inheritance by sensational works. God's grace is sufficient [Bible Ill.: #1445, 12-5-86].

## **B. The Place of the Law, 3:19:-24.**

**3:19 - WHEREFORE...THE LAW?** That is a very good question, especially since it predates the Mosaic Law and was still in effect after the Law was given. The Law "was added because of transgressions." As Paul saw it "the law is no part of the covenant, but a thing apart 'in no way modifying its provisions' (Burton)" [ATR: SeedMaster].

**TILL THE SEED COME** - Seed here (sperma) refers to Christ. The essential function of the Law was fulfilled when Jesus came. The function of the Law from the beginning to serve until the coming of the Messiah "to whom the promise was made."

**ORDAINED OF ANGELS** - The role of angels in giving the Law angels is a reference to Deut. 33:2: "And he said, Jehovah came from Sinai, And rose from Seir unto them; He shined forth from mount Paran, And he came from the ten thousands of holy ones: At his right hand was a fiery law for them." The Law was placed in the hand of a mediator. The term is used of Moses here, but of Christ elsewhere.

**3:20 - NOT A MEDIATOR OF ONE.** "A mediator is not necessary for one acting alone, and God is one". The Bible teaches that The Holy Spirit (God) comes directly to the individual Christian heart through his faith in Christ (God), but the law, though it came from God, came through a multitude of angels and a human mediator" [B'wood]. Long before the giving of the Law, God came to Abraham who accepted Him by faith. "For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness. For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof

to glory; but not before God. For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness.(Rom 4:1-3).

**3:21 - IS HE LAW AGAINST THE PROMISE OF GOD?** Paul's response to that question is just what we might expect: "God forbid!" But at the same time he wanted to refute the claims of the Judaizers: "for if there had been a law given which could make alive, verily righteousness would have been of the law" (ASV). See also, Matt. 5:17-20; Rom. 3:31; 7:7-13.

**3:22 - CONCLUDED ALL UNDER SIN.** The King James Version has, "But the Scripture has concluded all under sin..." The ASV reads, "But the scriptures shut up all things under sin..." Literally, it is "did shut together." Robertson points out that Paul uses an old verb which means:

to shut together, on all sides, completely as a shoal of fish in a net (Lu 5:6). So verse 23; Or 11:32. Under sin...As if the lid closed in on us over a massive chest that we could not open or as prisoners in a dungeon. He uses ta panta (the all things), the totality of everything [SedMaster Bible].

The reason the Scripture shuts up all things together under sin is "that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe." Our salvation is received by faith, not by works or law.

**3:23 - BEFORE FAITH CAME.** The Jews who possessed the divine law, as opposed to the pagan statutes of other nations, still were not liberated by it. We have here a picture of a prisoner who has received the promise of freedom, but he is still a prisoner. The Judaizers were trying to persuade the Gentile Christians in Galatia that they had to embrace the Law in order to be saved, but not one of them had ever been saved by the Law. All the Law could do was point them to Jesus.

To appreciate the reference to their being "under he law, shut up unto the faith," we need to undrstand something of the ceremonialism that had become a a major part of Judaism. One example concerns ceremonial washings. Edersheim in *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah* outlines the most elaborate of Jewish washings.

Water jars were kept ready to be used before a meal. The minimum amount of water to be used was a quarter of a log, which is defined as enough to fill one and a half eggshells. The water was first poured on both hands, held with the fingers pointed upwards, and must run up the arm as far as the wrist. It must drop off from the wrist, for the water was now itself unclean, having touched the unclean hands, and, if it ran down the fingers again, it would again render them unclean. The process was repeated with the hands held in the opposite direction, with the fingers pointing down; and then finally each hand was cleansed by being rubbed with the fist of the other. A really strict Jew would do all this, not only before a meal, but also between each of the courses [Bible ILL.: Index: 2988].



At the turn of the twentieth century, James Burns wrote the book *Revivals: The Laws and Leaders*. In the opening chapter he discusses "laws" of revival, as well as the "laws" of the absence of revival. "The first tendency," he writes, "Is for the doctrine of the church to lose its power of convicting the conscience, convincing the mind, or moving the heart." He goes on to point out that spiritual decay brings with it a formality of worship in which the "ritual" is so exalted that it crushes the spirit [Bible Ill.: # 2988, 4-11-87].

**3:24 - SCHOOLMASTER.** "So that the law is become our tutor to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith" (ASV). The word translated school master (tutor) denotes the slave of a wealthy family whose task it was to accompany his master's son to and from school. He led the boy to the teacher and exercised discipline and guidance in the process - but he was not the teacher. It was his place to get the boy to the teacher who would then teach him. "The point of the illustration is the subordinate character and disciplinary function of the law" [B'wood].

### C. Freedom in Christ, 3:25-29.

**3:25 - FAITH.** Paul, stressing the continuity in God's plan of salvation, points out that Abraham was justified by faith - and we are justified by faith. He could not be saved by circumcision and Moses could not be saved by the Law. During the long years of spiritual immaturity (infancy, and childhood of God's Messianic plan) the "schoolmaster" (the Law) was needed to lead men to salvation (by faith).

**3:26 - YE ARE ALL THE CHILDREN OF GOD BY FAITH.** This statement is not a proof text for those who believe in universalism. All people are not the children of God. There is no universal brotherhood. Only those who repent of sin and accept Jesus Christ by faith are the children of God. What, then, does Paul mean here? In the Greek society the schoolmaster was released from his assignment when the child was seventeen. The Galatians were "of age" (heirs, children of God with all the benefits pertaining to that position) but the Judaizers were trying to push them back into the role of children.

While the KJV uses *children*, later translations (NIV, ASV) prefer *sons*. Paul has already used the term "Son of God" for Jesus in this epistle (1:15-16; 2:20), a title he used seventeen times in all his letters. As Timothy George points out in the commentary on Galatians in *The New American Commentary*, "Jesus is uniquely and exclusively *the* Son of God, equal with the Father from all eternity, unrivaled by any creature in his essential deity. All the more remarkable, then, is Paul's description of the redeemed as 'sons of God.' He developed this theme in the verses that follow by showing how the sonship of Christians is derived from the sonship of Christ" [NAC: 274].

George correctly observes that in this context Paul's inclusion of believers as "sons of God" carries two other means as well. He recognizes the strategic significance of the place of this verse

within this context.

Galatians 3-4 resonates with the theme of family - the promised seed, the inheritance, adoption, heirship, motherhood. Galatians 3:26 is the fulcrum verse of both chapters.

Everything Paul had said from 6:6 through 3:25 flows into this verse, just as everything that follows from 3:27-4:31 issues from it. This verse says plainly what Paul was arguing for throughout this central section of the letter: the children of Abraham are really the children of God. However, in the immediate context of the pedagogue analogy, the language of sonship has still another connotation. Now that we have entered into full adult sonship, we no longer need a baby sitter [NAC: 274].

God's law still commands the respect and commitment of His children, but the law no longer condemns them or places them in bondage. "To be reshackled in that former bondage as the Galatians were being "bewitched" to do, was to turn life in Christ into a sordid anachronism" [NAC: 274].

**3:27 - BAPTIZED INTO CHRIST.** Most translations agree with the ASV, "For as many of you as were baptized into Christ did put on Christ." Some prefer "unto Christ" meaning in reference to Christ. Certainly, if we think of water baptism, we are baptized unto Christ. But if we think of spirit baptism (baptized with the Holy Spirit), we are baptized into Christ. In this passage those who are baptized "unto Christ" are the ones who have "put on Christ." When the Ethiopian eunuch asked Philip, "what doth hinder me to be baptized?" Philip answered, "If thou believest with all thy heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they both went down into the water, both Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him (Acts 8:36-38).

True believers are "sons of God." There is but one way to enter this relationship with the Father and that is by faith. Jesus made that abundantly clear: "But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name" (John 1:12). It cannot be overstated that it is only by faith in Jesus Christ we become sons of God. Paul uses the expression "in Christ" 172 times in his letters. "Sometimes this expression is used in the instrumental sense of 'by' or 'through Christ,' as we find in Gal 2:17 and 3:14. More often, however, it is used to describe that participation in and union with Jesus Christ that is effected for every believer by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit" [NAC: 275].

**3:28 - YOU ARE ALL ONE IN CHRIST.** The ground is level at the foot of the Cross. The ground is level only at the foot of the Cross. Every year Children and young people throughout the country attend Vacation Bible School. They march into the sanctuary for a Joint Service which included the pledge of allegiances to the American flag, to the Christian flag, and to the Bible. There has been one change to the pledge to the American flag, when the words "under God" were added to the pledge by act of Congress. A change was also made in the pledge to the Christian flag when Christian leaders came to realize that a theological correction was needed. The old pledge included the words, "...one brotherhood uniting all nations in service and love." That was changed to read

"one brotherhood uniting all Christians in service and love." All true believers are indeed a brotherhood, but only those in Christ are united in that brotherhood.

The Lord saves individuals, he does not save groups, families, or denominations. God has a lot of children - but He has no grandchildren. His children are citizens of many nations, but He does save them individually - not as nations. Furthermore, He saves them all the same way - by grace, through faith. When they are saved, they are brought into fellowship with one another in Christ, and as such we are all one in Jesus Christ.

It is interesting that in the first part of verse 28 the writer states in a negative way all the things that are transcended in Christ, and in the last part he states in a positive way our new reality in Him: "for you are all one in Christ Jesus." As George observes, baptism is the "event where this divinely given unity is acknowledged, proclaimed, and celebrated" [NAC: 283]. He continues:

At this point we may draw on the congruence of meaning between the word *baptizo* literally "to dip" or "immerse," and a closely related word *bapto* "to dip or dye." As a part of the "putting on" metaphor, Paul may have regarded baptism as analogous to the dying of clothes. As J. Bligh put it, "When a person is dipped in the bath of baptism, he comes out a changed man: his former color disappears, he comes out the color of Christ. Whether the person being dipped was a Jew or a Gentile, a slave or a free man, a man or a woman, no longer matters" [NAC: 283].

#### **D. Sonship Replaces Slavery, 4:1-7.**

Paul now shifts his emphasis from the inheritance to the heirs. There is also a shift of emphasis from a prison warden "guardians and trustees," whose duty it was to supervise the inheritance, or estate, for a minor child until he came of legal age to assume that responsibility for himself. In the Galatian letter Paul is addressing both Jews and Gentiles, but in chapter 3 the primary focus is on the Jewish Christians and their emphasis on the Mosaic law. With the Judaizers, however, it was more of an obsession with the law. In 4:1ff he "reiterated and elaborated his former argument from the standpoint of Gentile Christians, many of whom had recently been converted from religious syncretism and pagan idolatry" [NAC: 293].

Here we see the analogy of a legal guardianship in which a minor child is the heir to a great estate. He is the legal owner, but as long as he is a minor he is subject to rules and restraints very much like a slave.

In the ancient world there was a clear and definite point in a boy's life at which he ceased to be a child. The first Sabbath after a Jewish boy became twelve years of age he was taken to the temple where he was declared in a special ceremony to be a "son of the law." In the Greek society a boy was under his father's care until he was seventeen, at which time he became a man. When a boy is an infant in the eyes of the law he may in reality own a vast estate, but he can make no legal decisions until he is of age. He was the owner, but for all practical purposes, he might as well have been a

slave. Everything was done for him and all decisions were made for him until he became a man and came into his inheritance.

From a cursory look at this analogy one might infer that Paul has in mind a minor child whose father is deceased. But a more careful examination of the passage might suggest another possibility. Because Paul does not say the father is dead, it has been suggested that since the father represents God it would be foolish to think of him as dead. If this is the case the point is that the time when the son "entrance into his inheritance depends solely on the predetermined decision of the Father, not on a chronological age fixed by statute" [NAC: 294].

Paul uses this metaphor to show that in the "childhood" of the world the law held sway, but under grace (Christ) the child comes of age and enters into his inheritance. Why then should the Judaizers go back to the Law? Why would the Galatians let the Judaizers push them into it?

**4:1 - THE HEIR AS LONG AS HE IS A CHILD.** The child may be an heir of all his father owns, but until he is of age he can exercise no freedom in the administration of his estate. He has the satisfaction of knowing that some day it would all be his, but for the present someone else is in control of his estate. In the Old Testament period God had promised the Jews (during their childhood) an inheritance. He fully intended to give it to them, but first they would have to go through a period resembling slavery, during which time they were under the Law, just as a minor is under a guardian to trustee until he is of age.

**4:2 - UNDER TUTORS AND GOVERNORS.** Or, guardians and stewards (ASV). Both words were common in ancient writings. This is not the same word as in 3:24 (schoolmaster, as slave), but for the guardian or overseer of children, as in the case of an orphan who is a minor. The Greek word translated "governors" is *oikonomous* (stewards), the manager of a household, whether freeborn or slave.

**UNTIL THE TIME APPOINTED.** Under Roman law the tutor had charge of the child till he was fourteen, at which time a curator took over if necessary until he was twenty-five. The same law existed in cities in Greece and Phrygia except that the father in Syria appointed both tutor and curator whereas the Roman father appointed only the tutor.

**4:3 - WE, WHEN WE WERE CHILDREN.** Before the "appointed time," the time of faith, we were under guardianship, or stewardship of the Law. As such, he says, we "were in bondage under the elements of the world." The word for elements is interesting. It denotes the elementary things, first things (as the first letters of the alphabet, ABCs of the Law). It might be used of the elementary things of the universe, or the arrangement of heavenly bodies, but here it probably refers to the rudimentary character of the Law, the ABC's of the Law.

**4:4 - THE FULLNESS OF TIME.** This is a familiar theme in the Scripture. Paul, in his letter to the Ephesian church concerning the "dispensation of the fullness of the times, to sum up all things in Christ, the things in the heavens, and the things upon the earth; in him...(Eph. 1:10). See also, Dan.

9:24-26; Mal. 3:1; Mark 1:15. The time is the time God appointed for His purpose, in this case the fulfillment of His Messianic covenant.

**GOD SENT FORTH HIS SON.** "But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth his Son, born of a woman, born under the law" (ASV). The KJV has "Made of a woman, made under the law." No specific statement is made about the virgin birth here, but His deity is proclaimed by the words "His Son." so, we have a reference to both His humanity and His deity. The pre-existent Son of God became man (born of woman) and He became a Jew (born under the Law).

**4:5 - REDEEM.** This is another metaphor, the metaphor of the slave block, which helps us to understand our salvation. It refers to the price paid to free a slave. Jesus paid that price for our freedom from the slavery of sin. God's purpose was "to redeem them that were under the law" (and under a curse) that He might receive them as sons by adoption. Adoption is a term Paul uses to show "how God takes into his spiritual family both Jews and Gentiles who believe" [ATR: S'Master]. See also Rom. 8:15,23; 9:4; Eph 1:5.

**4:6 - BECAUSE YE ARE SONS.** Jews and Gentiles, after they receive Christ by faith, are sons of God and joint heirs with Jesus. They are now sons with all the rights the relationship implies, no longer are they under the guardianship of another who manages their affairs. "Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts..." At the time a individual repents of sin and receives Jesus Christ, God sends His Spirit, the Holy Spirit (the Spirit of His Son) into our heart.

This is the baptism of the Holy Spirit, or the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. We receive Him (not "it") once for all time when we believe, not as a second blessing at some later time, or some additional experience. The activity of the Trinity is seen in our salvation: The Father sends the Spirit when we, by faith, receive the Son.

And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may be with you for ever (John 14:16 ASV).

For ye received not the spirit of bondage again unto fear; but ye received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit himself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are children of God: and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified with him (Rom. 8:15-17).

The Holy Spirit is called the Spirit of God and the Spirit of the Son. God manifests Himself to us as three in personality, but one in essence.

**ABBA, FATHER.** When the Father sends the Holy Spirit into our hearts, and only then, we may call our Creator, "Abba, Father," implying a personal, intimate relationship with the Father. Think what a privilege it is for the creature to be given permission to call his Creator "Father."

**4:7 - NO MORE A SERVANT, BUT A SON.** Paul continues to develop the analogy of the servant and the son, or the minor child and the son who is of age. But he does not waste time with meaningless repetition. Here he changes to the singular to drive home the point that each person must repent of sin and receive Jesus individually. You are a bond-servant (ASV) to sin until you receive Christ and at that point you become a son of God.

**AN HEIR OF GOD THROUGH CHRIST.** In Jesus Christ the individual is set free from the bondage to sin and made a son and an heir. By faith we are made joint-heirs with Jesus. The very thought is mind-boggling. It is incredible that our Creator makes it possible for us to call Him "Father."

#### **D. The Bondage of Legalism, 4:8-31.**

There are a "good many church members today, devoted to ritual and rule-keeping, who have not yet realized that they are living in spiritual bondage" [Colson]. There is no doubt that many people are as enslaved by ritual and tradition as the Judaizers of the first century. They are in bondage to law, ritual, or tradition. Barclay has written, "The law's basic and inherent weakness always was and is that it can diagnose the disease but can produce no cure" [Barclay].

##### **1. Gentile Christians are now free from the bondage of idolatry, 4:8-11.**

In this passage Paul links both the paganism of the Gentiles together with Judaism in a common bondage and stresses the folly of lapsing back into slavery.

**4:8 - WHEN YE KNEW NOT GOD.** That is, during the time before these Gentile Christians knew Christ they were involved in pagan worship. Before the Jewish believers became Christians they may have been in bondage to rules and rituals but the Gentiles were slaves to pagan gods.

**WHICH...ARE NO GODS.** When the Gentile believers were in paganism they "did service unto them which by nature are no gods." See also I Cor. 10:20 where they are called "demons;" in I Cor. 8:5, "so-called gods;" and in Acts 17:29 they were worshipping images made by hands.

**4:9 - ARE KNOWN OF GOD.** This points to God's redemptive love. God has intellectual knowledge of all men, but he has redemptive love for all those who are in His family by faith. "This is the mystery of election, an irrefutable truth of Christian experience that is almost impossible to reduce to logical terms" [B'wood].

Paul writes, "But now that ye have come to know God, or *rather to be known by God*, how turn ye back again to the weak and beggarly rudiments, whereunto ye desire to be in bondage over

again?" (ASV). They had been set free from those rudiments (elements, KJV) by the grace of God, but now that the Judaizers have come with their false doctrine, they want to go into bondage again, this time to the rules and regulations of the Law.

They had been in bondage to rules and rituals of gods which "are no gods." And now they want to be in bondage to "weak and beggarly" (impotent) rules and rituals of the Law. Such a choice was absurd and foolish. Unfortunately, people are making the same inane choices today, either choosing false gods (which are no god), or false worship of the true God (as the weak and beggarly cults).

**4:10 - YOU OBSERVE DAYS.** The Judaizers religiously observed Jewish feast days and it seems that they had persuaded the Galatian Christians to "observe days, and months, and times, and years" (legalism). This is progress in reverse. Robertson observes:

The meticulous observance of the Pharisees Paul knew to a nicety. It hurt him to the quick after his own merciful deliverance to see these Gentile Christians drawn into this spider-web of Judaizing Christians, once set free, now enslaved again. Paul does not itemize the "days" (Sabbaths, fast-days, feast-days, new moons) nor the "months" (Isa. 66:23) which were particularly observed in the exile nor the "seasons" (passover, Pentecost, tabernacles, etc.) nor the "years" (sabbatical years every seventh year and the Year of Jubilee). Paul does not object to these observances for he kept them himself as a Jew. He objected to Gentiles taking to them as a means of salvation [ATR: S'Master].

**4:11 - I FEAR FOR YOU.** The KJV has "I am afraid of you," but "I fear for you" (NIV) is the more literal rendering. He is not afraid of them, but he fears for them. The construction denotes fear for what has already happened, not fear about what will happen in the future. He is afraid they have already been seduced by the Judaizers.

Their apostasy placed a great burden Paul. We can certainly identify his fear for those who were falling away from the truth. It is still a serious matter, as the following illustration will show,

In the town of Delburne, Alberta, there is an old water tower, built in 1926. Now standing empty, the building has been bought by two men who want to turn it into a dining and cocktail lounge. Plans call for a bar to be built on the second floor.

Something similar has already happened in various communities: that which was originally designed to provide the water of life has been "converted" into that which is providing resources detrimental to society. Schools were once thought of as sources of moral and spiritual benefit. In most cases they now are fountains of agnosticism and atheism. Even churches, built to convey to men and women the water of life, are now the providers of everything but the Gospel. There's bingo, and there are dances, and there are clubs. But they no longer function as conveyers of the Gospel [Bible Ill.: Index # 435].

## 2. A personal appeal to loyalty to Christ based on love for him, 4:12-20.

This was a personal letter, written from the heart. Paul writes a stinging letter, but it is a letter from one who loves them.

**4:12 - BE AS I AM.** Paul plead with them to set aside legalism as he had done when he was converted. Literally, he says, "Keep on becoming as I am. He hears for them, but he is not ready to give up on them. While he is disappointed in them, he wants them to know that they have not hurt him personally.

**4:13 - INFIRMITY.** Paul does not reveal what the infirmity was. Some writers, however, think this was a reference to his "thorn in the flesh." While Paul does not identify his thorn in the flesh, Bible students have not hesitated to speculate about it. Some suggest that it was poor eyesight; but others think he contracted either malaria or swamp fever in the coastal lowlands or swampy areas of Phrygia and then went to the mountains of Galatia to recuperate.

Whatever the problem was, it was his infirmity that brought him into their midst initially. "Ye Know" suggests that they were aware of the fact that he had first visited the area and preached the Gospel to them because of his illness. In the account of his missionary journey in Acts 13-14 Luke does not tell us that he was going to pass up the region, so we have to assume that he was planning at some point to take the Gospel to the area. But that does not dispute that fact that his infirmity forced him to go to the area when he did.

**4:14 - MY TEMPTATION.** The best manuscripts have, "Your temptation." The American Standard Version reads, "and *that which was a temptation to you in my flesh* ye despised not, nor rejected; but ye received me as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus." His infirmity presented them with a temptation (trial, test). They passed the test with flying colors. Paul's condition was such that they were tempted to turn from him in revulsion (but they did not). We may infer from this that the illness might well have been malaria or swamp fever with the accompanying fever, chills, and profuse sweating.

**4:15 - WHERE THEN IS YOUR BLESSEDNESS.** The ASV renders it "your gratulation." The meaning is to pronounce happy. He asks, "Where then is the joy you once had in me?" Did they no longer claim to have been happy to minister to him?

**PLUCKED OUT YOUR EYES.** It is easy to imagine Paul's gratitude even as he writes this harsh letter. He wrote a tearful letter to the Corinthian Christians, and one can imagine tear stains on the scroll when they opened it and began to read from it. They could not have done more for him when he arrived in such a revulsive condition. He wants them to know that he remembers their



compassion and generosity.

**4:16 - YOUR ENEMY.** The Judiazers claimed Paul was their enemy, but he warns that they are, in fact, their real enemy. Had he, by telling them the truth, become their enemy? Telling the truth is not without risk. There are some people who will respect you for telling them the truth, but there are others who only want to hear the truth when it is pleasant or flattering.

**4:17 - THEY ZEALOUSLY AFFECT YOU.** Paul had preached the truth to them when he was with them, just as he is telling them the truth now. He has the greatest desire to win them over, but he will not resort to flattery, deceit, or lies in order to reach them. The Judiazers, on the other hand, were courting them with evil methods and with evil motives, seeking to drive a wedge between them and Paul. They used both flattery and deceit, as people usually do when they seek to alienate and divide.

**4:18 - GOOD TO BE ZEALOUSLY AFFECTED.** The ASV is helpful: "But *it is good to be zealously sought* in a good matter at all times, and not only when I am present with you." They were being zealously sought by both Paul and the Judaizers; Paul for a good reason, they for evil.

**4:19 - MY LITTLE CHILDREN.** Because of their sin and rebellion the apostle was experiencing the travail of childbirth (in a spiritual sense). A mother knows the travail of birth, but unfortunately, many mothers also know what is to have their heart crushed by a child's rebellion. This can be a far more acute type of pain than the travail of physical childbirth. Such is Paul's burden for them now.

**4:20 - I DESIRE TO BE PRESENT WITH YOU.** Paul wished that he could have been present with them to be sure they understood his message and his tone. You cannot always be sure how one will read what you have written, and you cannot be sure how it will be received when it is read aloud by another party. He didn't want his feelings or his purpose to be misunderstood. If he had been able to deliver the message in person, he could tell how he was being received and change the tone if necessary.

### **3. Allegory of Sarah and Hagar, 4:21-31.**

Paul gives an allegorical interpretation of Genesis 21. "An allegory is a narrative, usually, but not necessarily fiction, in which the actions and persons are symbolic of other actions and persons. An allegory is an expanded metaphor - the use of one thing to symbolize another because of some real or imagined similarity between them. The connection is not logical but imaginative" (Blackwood).

Abraham had two sons, one by Hagar (Ishmael) and the other by Sarah (Isaac). Isaac was the rightful heir. The point is that those who trust in Christ are the true children (rightful heirs), not those who resort to legalism to try to gain the promises of God. Paul must have shocked everyone by charging that the unconverted Jews are, allegorically, sons of Ishmael, not Isaac! This is a serious matter and Paul is really bearing down. This might seem like an over-kill, but he wants to be sure he

makes his point. He is not afraid to use repetition or to risk being called overly dramatic.

**4:21 - DO YE HEAR THE LAW?** They seemed to be on the verge of surrendering to the Law (they "desire to be under the law"). "Paul makes direct reference to these so disposed to "hear the law." He makes a surprising turn, but a legitimate one for the legalists by an allegorical use of Scripture" [ATR: S'Master].

**4:22-24 - ABRAHAM HAD TWO SONS.** Paul takes a story the Jews all knew well and treats it allegorically. It is the story of Abraham and he two sons (Isaac and Ishmael) he had by two women (Sarah, the free woman, and Hagar, the bondwoman). In the story each woman symbolizes a covenant. Hagar, the servant symbolizes the law and Sarah the covenant of grace.

**4:25 - ANSWERETH TO.** This is a teaching method which suggests: "This belongs in the same column with. . ." This method arranges things in one column to match or contrast with something in another column. Accordingly, Mount Sinai corresponds to, or is in contrast with, Mount Calvary, Hagar is contrasted to Sarah, and the Old Covenant points, and is contrasted with the New Covenant. Each contrast below is a study within itself.

*Mount Sinai* - - - - - *Mount Calvary (implied)*

*Hagar, the slave woman* - - - - - *Sarah, the free woman*

*Ismael, child of the flesh* - - - - - *Isaac, child of promise*

*The Old Covenant* - - - - - *The New Covenant*

*The Jerusalem below* - - - - - *The Jerusalem above*

*Bondage* - - - - - *Freedom*

*Sterility (vs. 27)* - - - - - *Fruitfulness (vs. 27)*

*Salvation by law* - - - - - *Salvation by grace*

Hagar's child was born of normal human impulses, and legalism is of human impulses. Sarah's child represents the New Covenant in Christ Jesus. Her child, born free, was persecuted by the child of the slave girl. The child of bondage was driven out. Now, the Judaizers, sons of the law (slaves of legalism) are persecuting those born under grace. They, too, must be driven out!

Barclay says, "The man who makes law the principle of his life is in the position of a slave; all his life he is seeking to satisfy his master the law" [Barclay]. The man who accepts God's grace is born free. It has been said, "Love God and do as you please." This does not mean that we are to do as the world pleases, not does it mean that we are to follow the impulses of the flesh. The Christian's

love for God more than meets the demands of the Law. The First Great Commandment covers the Law as it relates to one's responsibilities to God (see the first four of the Ten Commandments). Likewise, the Second Great Commandment covers one's responsibility to others as covered by the last six of the Ten Commandments. Jesus is clear in Matt. 22:37-40:

Jesus said to him, You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.

### **III. THE ETHICAL DEMANDS OF GRACE (5:1-6:10).**

#### **A. Appeal to Remain Free from the Yoke of the Law, 5:1-12.**

Paul continues to prove that grace and law (works) are mutually exclusive. He deals with the same subject in Romans 11:6: "And if by grace, then it is no longer of works; otherwise grace is no longer grace. But if it is of works, it is no longer grace; otherwise work is no longer work" (NKJV).

**5:1 - STAND FAST...IN THE LIBERTY.** The ASV is helpful: "For freedom did Christ set us free: stand fast therefore, and be not entangled again in a yoke of bondage." It is important for us to stand fast in (and for) the Lord. Literally, he tells them to "keep on standing," a familiar theme with Paul.

Wherefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not vain in the Lord ( I Cor. 15:58).

So then, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye were taught, whether by word, or by epistle of ours II Thes. 2:15) .

**HATH MADE US FREE.** "For the (article) freedom that belongs to us children of the freewoman" (4:31) [ATR: S'Master]. Since Christ has set you free, stand fast and stay free. Stop being held in (entangled) by a yoke of bondage.

They had been set free from bondage to pagan rules and rituals but now the Judaizers were trying to ensnare them and bring them under the yoke of Judaism with its rule and rituals.

**5:2 - I PAUL.** He supports his apostolic authority with a personal appeal. They knew Paul, having ministered to him when he was sick and listened to him when he preached. He had introduced Jesus Christ to them. He is the same person they had known and followed.

***IF YE BE CIRCUMCISED.*** The conditional clause (condition of third class) recognizes the possibility that they might do just that, but if they do the consequences will be bad. If they do receive circumcision Christ will be of no benefit to them.

***5:3 - I TESTIFY AGAIN.*** The Judaizers were trying to persuade the Galatian saints to submit to circumcision. But Paul argues, If you accept circumcision (one part of the law), logically you have to accept all of the law. Paul says, " And I testify again to every man who becomes circumcised that he is a debtor to keep the whole law" (ASV). He is right: "Cursed is the one who does not confirm all the words of this law" (Deut. 27:26). This means that if, as reported, there are 1050 commands in the New Testament you would have to keep each one perfectly all the time.

Any person who seeks to earn his salvation by keeping the law and doing good works is under an obligation to keep the whole law, and to keep it perfectly. James wrote, "For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all" (James 2:10). Romans 3:23 clearly teaches that, far from keeping the law perfectly, "al have sinned and come short of the glory of God".

***5:4 - CHRIST IS BECOME OF NO EFFECT.*** This is a difficult verse for some. Is Paul saying that a person who has been born again through faith in Jesus Christ can lose his salvation (be "severed from Christ," ASV)? If so how do we explain the shocking contradiction between this statement and the many passages which teach that believers are secure in Christ? Jesus Himself said, "And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand" (John 10:28).

It is important to understand what Paul is inspired to write on the subject. Romans 8:35-39 is conclusive:

***Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?*** shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to ***separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.***

Now, look back at the verse before us. The NIV reads, "*You who are trying to be justified by law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace*" (NIV). Possibly another translation will help: "***Ye are deprived of all profit from the Christ*** as separated from him, as many as are justified by law; ye have fallen from grace" (DBY).

***FALLEN FROM GRACE.*** Does this not teach that believers can fall from grace? The writer is not saying that those who accept Christ are saved by His grace will lose their salvation. That is not the subject of this discussion. But if a man seeking salvation substitutes works for grace he will fall miserably short. Grace contradicts law and law contradicts grace. If you add even the faintest trace

of works to grace you destroy grace. Add the most minute element of grace to works and you destroy works. "And if by grace, then it is no longer by works; if it were, grace would no longer be grace" (Rom 11:6 NIV).

Robertson translates it, "Ye did fall out of grace," meaning, "ye left the sphere of grace in Christ and took your stand in the sphere of law" as your hope of salvation. He adds:

Paul does not mince words and carries the logic to the end of the course. He is not, of course, speaking of occasional sins, but he has in mind a far more serious matter, that of substituting law for Christ as the agent in salvation [S'Master Bible].

You are either justified by Christ (by grace through faith), or you are justified by works (by man through human effort - which is totally rejected by the Lord according to Gal. 2:16; Eph. 2:9). There is no other position (any combination of grace and works, has been unequivocally rejected). So, the person who is trying to be justified by works, or law, has abandoned, rejected (fallen away from) Christ (by grace). The issue is not whether or not a genuine Christian can lose his salvation, but whether or not he substitutes a doctrine of works for the doctrine of Grace as a means of receiving salvation.

**5:5 - WE THROUGH THE SPIRIT.** "We" denotes Christians: We Christians, as opposed to the Judaizers (legalists). We Christians, through the Spirit have hope of salvation. This hope is made available to us through the Holy Spirit but not through the Law.

**HOPE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS BY FAITH.** Hope of imputed righteousness is by faith, and not by works. Hope here is not wishful thinking, but assurance of eternal life. We wait for the hope of righteousness by faith. Paul wrote to the Philippians: "... not having a righteousness of mine own, even that which is of the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith" (3:9). Also:

For in hope were we saved: but hope that is seen is not hope: for who hopeth for that which he seeth? But if we hope for that which we see not, then do we with patience wait for it. (Romans 8:24)

**5:6 - IN JESUS CHRIST.** There is no spiritual merit, or benefit, in circumcision or uncircumcision. Some people make a religion of opposing heresies, and there are heresies that must be opposed. But the only merit is in Jesus Christ, not in the "thou shalt" and "thou shalt not" of the Law.

**FAITH WHICH WORKETH BY LOVE.** " For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. *The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love*" (NIV). "Christian love (agape) is not dependant upon the feelings, but upon the reason and will. Hence it can be commanded as a duty" [B'wood]. Agape is mental attitude love. It is expressed when we seek the highest good for another. We can exercise it with the will (volition) and the mind.

Emotions may, and probably will be involved from the outset, but it is not primarily emotional. It is not triggered by emotions, but by knowledge of God's love for us, our love for Him, His commandment, and our will to obey. Emotions may be a part of the response from the beginning, but they may come only after some involvement with another person.

**5:7 - WHO DID HINDER YOU.** The word for hinder as used here means to interrupt. To illustrate the problem think of someone cutting in on you on the telephone. For many years after the telephone became available to the masses, users were on party lines, meaning that two or more families shared a party line. People were frequently interrupted by others on their party line. After most people were able to get a private line there would be mechanical problems, or electronic glitches, which would cause interruptions. The Judaizers were interrupting the Galatian believers in much the same way - except for the fact that they were "cutting in" on them in person instead of on the phone. They hindered the Gospel by cutting in on the teaching of divine truth with their false doctrines.

There is another interesting point here. The singular is used, implying that there was a "ringleader in the business. Some one "cut in" on the Galatians as they were running the Christian race and tried to trip them or to turn them" (ATR: S'Master). How often trouble begins with one ringleader who refuses to seek reconciliation, and refuses to be reconciled when others seek it. Rather than forgiving or seeking forgiveness, they seek to hurt, or even destroy those who disagree with them.

**5:8 - THIS PERSUASION.** The kind of persuasion (the argument) used by the Judaizers was not of God. They depended on their art of persuasion, their skill in debating theological issues to win the Galatians. God's method is to proclaim the truth. If one rejects the truth the consequences will be tragic, but God has no other method of reaching people.

Today there are many people who are seeking something novel. The Gospel is never enough for them. They are always looking for something more, something beyond, whether it is some second blessing, an ecstatic experience, a special revelation, or word of knowledge. These people are attracted by the sensational. After hearing the late Vance Havner in Port Arthur, Texas in 1974, I understood why he was one of the most quoted preacher of his day. Dr. Havner said, "People sing 'I stand amazed,' but a lot of them had rather sit amused."

There will always be temptations for the preacher to try to present the Gospel in a more popular package to gain the approval of his audience. He should take homiletics seriously and constantly try improve sermon preparation and delivery, but he had better be careful of games and gimmicks. There are methods of manipulating people to get them down the aisle which may not be of God. If the art of persuasion used is not of God, then it must be of Satan. It is an awesome thing to stand in God's pulpit and preach His sacred Word. It is no time to play fast and loose with the Gospel.

For a few months while I was a student at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, my wife (Becky) and I were members of First Baptist Church where Dr. J. D. Grey was pastor. A

number of years later Dr. Grey preached in a nearby church and I went to hear him. After he was introduced he presented the pastor with a self-adhesive sign to be placed on the pulpit as a constant reminder. The sign read, "Sir, we would see Jesus." Later over lunch he told me that he took one of the little signs everywhere he went and asked the pastor to place it where he would always see it while he was preaching. Obviously, Dr. Grey had observed something that suggested that this reminder was needed.

**5:9 - A LITTLE LEAVEN.** Verses 1-12 of this chapter show us the absurdity of reverting to law or works as a means of receiving salvation. Paul illustrates how pointless it is for people add works to grace, or substitute works for grace. Now he uses a familiar proverb as a warning. The point of the parable is the pervasive power of leaven, not that leaven is evil. However, a little evil can spread through a church or region. In this case the false teachings of the Judaizers had spread like wildfire throughout the region of Galatia. When the churches opened their doors to these false teachers and entertained their philosophy, they turned a cancerous growth loose in their midst and it spread with devastating consequences.

Jesus used this metaphor to warn His disciples about the false teachings and hypocrisy of the Pharisees and Sadducees:

And Jesus said unto them, Take heed and *beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees*. And they reasoned among themselves, saying, We took no bread. And Jesus perceiving it said, O ye of little faith, why reason ye among yourselves, because ye have no bread? Do ye not yet perceive, neither remember the five loaves of the five thousand, and how many baskets ye took up? Neither the seven loaves of the four thousand, and how many baskets ye took up? How is it that ye do not perceive that I spake not to you concerning bread? ***But beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees.*** Then understood they that he bade them not beware of the leaven of bread, but of the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees (Matt. 16:6-12 ASV). Italics added for emphasis.

Compare this with Matthew 5:13-16 to see what our Lord expects of us. As the light of the world we will lead people to Jesus, and as the salt of the earth we will impact society for God.

**5:10 - I HAVE CONFIDENCE IN YOU IN THE LORD.** Paul expresses faith in the Lord as well as confidence that those who were in the Lord would reject this error and return to the truth as it had been preached to them. Today we have two sources of help when it comes to dealing with truth and error. The Scripture is our infallible guide, the authority for all our decisions; and the Holy Spirit, Who inspired the writing of the Scripture, illumines the hearts and minds of believers so that we may better understand and apply God's Word in our lives.

**HE THAT TROUBLETH YOU.** There is no indication that Paul knew the identity of the key person who was causing all the trouble. Was there just one ringleader who was orchestrating all the trouble throughout the area? Or, was there a key leader in each church? Since the Judaizers were so successful in so many places throughout Galatia at the same time, it is possible that they entered the

area as a well organized group under one person who assigned them to various churches. It really didn't matter who he was, because Paul was no respecter of persons. Whoever caused trouble in the Lord's church was going to have to answer for it: "he that troubleth you shall bear his judgment, whosoever he be." This is a fair warning to anyone who would spread false doctrines among the saints.

**5:11 - IF I YET PREACH CIRCUMCISION.** Should we infer from this that some of the Judaizers been telling the Galatians that Paul preached circumcision? Since this was far from the truth, why would then make such a charge? Certainly such slanderous charge would only have been made in an effort to undermine his work, or even destroy his ministry.

The missionary skillfully answered the charge. If he had been preaching that men must be circumcised, why was he being persecuted for preaching that you do not have to be circumcised in order to be saved? Some charges made against Christians are often just that foolish. But often when false charges and rumors do not get the desired results, such people turn vicious.

A layman talked with a minister about a situation that had developed in his church. A few people wanted to get rid of their pastor, but could find no grounds to justify their pressuring him to resign. Their opposition intensified until the time when he announced his retirement. They were not satisfied with that. They wanted people to help them try to intimidate him into selling his home and moving out of town.

Another pastor moved from one church to another and later a minister who was familiar with the situation discussed the situation with him. The pastor consciously sought to avoid blaming the small group of people who had opposed him. His friend, who had talked with a few of these people, said, "You don't understand - they didn't just want you out of the church and community, they want you out of the ministry!"

You may reach the point that you cannot reason with people like these Judaizers. If that happens there are two things you can do. First, like the prophets of old, you can call on the Lord. Remember the promise the Lord made in Is. 41:9b-10:

Thou art my servant, I have chosen thee and not cast thee away; Fear thou not, for I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy God; I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness.

The second thing you can do is hold them up to the Lord, praying that they will repent. If they refuse to repent, leave them to bear their own judgment (v. 10). Paul wrote to the Corinthians that he had determined "to deliver such a one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus" (I Cor. 5:5). In I Timothy 1:20, he mentions two men whom, he says, "I delivered unto Satan, that they might be taught not to blaspheme." Pray for such people and if they repent, rejoice with them. If not, leave them to the Lord. He will deal with them.



**5:12 - I WOULD THEY WERE EVEN CUT OFF.** "I would that they that unsettle you would even go beyond circumcision" (ASV). "They" are the Judaizers. "Unsettle" (trouble) denotes the disturbing (unsettling) of one's of mind. Paul is very blunt where these troublemakers are concerned:

" As for those agitators, I wish they would go the whole way and emasculate themselves!" (NIV). What he is saying is that if circumcision had such merit (contribute so much to one's salvation) why stop there? Why did they not go all the way and mutilate themselves?

## **B. Liberty Does not Mean License, 5:13-15.**

**5:13 - CALLED UNTO LIBERTY.** The ASV has, "Called to be free." Literally, "You were called for freedom." Do not turn freedom into license. Liberty is often a springboard to license. Some seem to think they can be baptized and then go out and deliberately sin. Man should by all means live more righteously because of love for the Lord than because of the law. After all, what is the highest motive for serving the Lord?

**BY LOVE SERVE ONE ANOTHER.** Literally, "be enslaved to one another." The world today is pushing self-love, self-worth, and high self-esteem. The root cause of most of man's problems is said to be low self-esteem, a lack of self-worth or self-love. God demands humility of all who come before Him and rejects those who are filled with pride. What is needed by most people is a high Christ-esteem, not greater self-esteem. We should humble ourselves to the point that we will be willing to serve one another.

**5:14 - ALL THE LAW.** The Second Great Commandment sums up man's obligation to others, just as the First Great Commandment covers our responsibilities to God. If one loves the Lord with all his heart, soul, mind, and strength, he does not take the Lord's name in vain, worship other gods, or violate His holy Day. The Ten Commandments provide foundation principles upon which all laws by which we live are based. The First Great Commandment is the foundation principle, or basis for man's relationship with God in every area of life and every expression of his worship and service. If you love the Lord with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength you will be faithful to His church, you will spend time with Him in Prayer, you will witness for Him, you will practice New Testament stewardship, and God's commandments will not be grievous (I John 5:3).

The Second Great Commandment covers the last six of the Ten Commandments. If a person loves his neighbor as he loves himself he does not kill him, steal from him, covet his property, or lust after his wife. The woman with agape type love for her friend does not "fall in love with her best friend's husband." Compare the two great commandments with the Ten Commandments.

*FIRST COMMANDMENT <>> FIRST FOUR COMMANDMENTS*

*SECOND COMMANDMENT <>> LAST SIX COMMANDMENTS*

**5:15 - IF YOU BITE AND DEVOUR.** A word to the wise should be sufficient, but unfortunately, it often goes unheeded. Paul's warning is still applicable: "If you keep on biting and devouring each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other." This is a condition of the first class, assumed to be true. The picture is of animals biting and devouring each other. A house divided cannot stand. This threat was unique to Galatia. Paul wrote to Corinth: "For I am afraid that when I come I may not find you as I want you to be ... I fear that there may be quarreling, jealousy, outbursts of anger, factions, slander, gossip, arrogance and disorder" (II Cor. 12:20).

There are countless numbers of church buildings that have been emptied by congregations that have devoured themselves. There are individual members who are better known for biting and snapping at others than anything else. They may do a lot of good, but once they get a reputation for snapping at other members their effectiveness is greatly diminished. Sometimes these people give others the impression that they feel more spiritual and courageous than gossips and backbiters because they will

tell you to your face what they think. They seem to feel that they express their spirituality by straightening out everyone around them. These same people usually go to others and try to rally their support in condemning others. Many will go along with them, forgetting that the last time they were the target of one of this person's attacks.

The churches in Galatia, like any church of any age, were in danger of being devoured by Satan, but they were also in danger of devouring each other through this controversy. They would be devoured by Satan if they substituted false doctrine for sound doctrine, but they would devour each other by fighting with each other. It may be an indictment of the condition of the church in this day that the issues that divide and devour today are often less serious than the issue of faith.

As I work at my computer I frequently "click" on an icon in the windows program and get a box on the screen in which I am given several options. Two of the options listed are *Minimize* and *Maximize*. I can choose between the two or disregard either. If you click on Minimize you reduce what you are working on to a small part of the screen, but if you click on Maximize you fill the screen with it. It occurs to me that in our churches we often maximize the trivial and minimize the exceptional. How few people there are who seriously study the great doctrines of the Scripture! They hear a sermon on grace and automatically "click" on Minimize. But they will come to church and see a mistake in the bulletin, a piece of paper on the floor, a child chewing gum, decide the flowers on the communion table don't match the carpet, or hear someone sing off key and immediately they "click" on Maximize. The next day someone at work asks them about services Sunday, and they go into a tirade about some trivial thing they have maximized.

### **C. Constant Struggle Between the Flesh and the Spirit, 5:16-18.**

**5:16 - FLESH.** Those who walk in the Spirit (Holy Spirit) will not fulfill the lusts of the flesh (sinful nature). This means the total person, not just the flesh. When Paul contrasts "flesh" with "spirit" he means human nature as estranged from God in contrast to human nature in accord with

God through the activity of the Holy Spirit. Spirit (capitalized) denotes the Holy spirit, or the individual's spirit that is totally surrendered to the Holy Spirit. The word translated "lust" means to long for, or to yearn for something.

**5:17 - THE FLESH LUSTETH AGAINST THE SPIRIT.** A tug-of-war is going on in each person. The Holy Spirit is the only One Who can give us a victory. Paul states a principle with which we can all identify: "*the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature.*" They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want" (ASV). Paul was conscious of this tug-of-war in his life at all times and if we understand what he has to say it will help us in our own experience.

For that which I do I know not: for not what I would, that do I practice; but what I hate, that I do. But if what I would not, that I do, I consent unto the law that it is good. So now it is no more I that do it, but sin which dwelleth in me. For I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me, but to do that which is good is not. For the good which I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I practice. But if what I would not, that I do, it is no more I that do it, but sin which dwelleth in me (Rom. 7:15-20 ASV).

Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. The mind of sinful man {Or mind set on the flesh} is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace; the sinful mind {Or the mind set on the flesh} is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God (Rom. 8:5-8 NIV).

It may be surprising to some that Paul would write these words after writing chapter 6, unless he was thinking of his life before he was converted. In Romans 6:2 we who are in Christ are dead to sin. In 6:6, he says that "our old man was crucified with him, that the body of sin might be done away, that so we should no longer be in bondage to sin." In chapter 7, however, he cries, "O wretched man that I am!" How are we to interpret this?

Three possible interpretations have been suggested. One, in chapter 7 he is describing his life before his conversion. Two, He is talking about his life as a "carnal" Christian. Three, he is describing his life at the time he was writing the epistle. The third has the most merit. John MacArthur says, "though he was one of the most spiritual saints who ever lived, he struggled with personal sin the same as all of us" [JM: 131]. One indication that this is the case is seen in the verbs he used. In Romans 7:7-13 he is speaking in the past tense, but in 7:14ff he is speaking in the present tense. MacArthur explains:

Romans 7:14-25 thus describes the human side of the sanctifying process. We must set it against Romans 8, as some do, imagining that these chapters describe two separate stages of Christian growth. They simply give two different perspectives on Sanctification. Romans 7 is the human perspective; Romans 8 is the divine

perspective [JM: 132].

As MacArthur points out that, "Though the degree of sin will vary depending on one's level of spiritual maturity, sin in the genuine believer should always make him or her feel the conflict Paul describes in these verses" [JM: 133]. He adds:

Romans 7 is not the cry of a carnal Christian who cries not for righteousness, but the lament of a godly Christian who, at the height of spiritual maturity, nevertheless finds himself unable to live up to the holy standard. It is also the experience of every genuine believer at every stage of spiritual development [JM: 133].

Justification is by grace through faith, and not of the law, but that does not mean that the law is evil. In fact, the law is spiritual, coming from the Spirit of God, and the "commandment holy, and just, and good" (7:12) - reflecting His character and nature.

To quote MacArthur again:

There is a barrier that prevents every believer from always obeying God's law: our carnal or fleshly nature. Note that Paul says, "I am *of* flesh"; he doesn't say he is "*in* the flesh." Here the *flesh* (Gk. , *sarx*) is not a reference to the physical body, or even a "part" of our person like the body, but the principle of human frailty - especially our sinful selfishness - which remains with us after salvation until we are ultimately glorified [JM: 133-134].

Every true believer who is well grounded in the Scripture share Paul's feelings and agrees that the law is good. He desires to obey it, but finds that he is continually falling "short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23b). As MacArthur says:

We cannot rid ourselves of sin. We are bound hand and foot by our own human frailty. Sin is in our very members. Self-righteous people deceive themselves into thinking they are moral and good, but Romans 7 shows that a true Christian is all the more aware of indwelling sin. The sin in our members cannot win all the time - and it will ultimately fail to defeat us - but it perpetually frustrates our attempts to obey God perfectly [JM: 135].

In 7:18-19, Paul says he has a desire to do good but ends up not doing it. He is not saying that he is "incapable of doing *anything* right. He is saying that his *desire* to obey is always greater than his own *ability* to obey" [JM: 135]. As one's love for God grows his hatred for sin grows, and his awareness of his sinful nature is heightened. At the same time his desire for victory over sin is intensified, and his faith is expanded.

**5:18 - LED OF THE SPIRIT.** The contrast between the Spirit and the flesh is repeated. Either we are "led of the Spirit," or we are "under the law." If you are continually led of the Spirit you are not under the law. See 3:2-6 for more on the law. It has been noted that to add works to grace is to

put a sign over the cross that reads "NECESSARY BUT NOT ENOUGH." It might read "Essential but Inadequate."

### **D. The Works of the Flesh, 5:19-21.**

Blackwood lists four kinds of sins found here:

1. Sin of misdirected desires.
2. Sin of misdirected faith.
3. Violations of brotherly love.
4. Sins of excess.

[B'wood: ]

Lists of vices and virtues were common among ancient writers. In verses 19-23 Paul gives two lists which illustrate the conflict between the flesh and the Spirit in verse 17 and to emphasize the command in verses 13f not to use their liberty as an occasion "to indulge the sinful nature" (NIV). There are four groups in Paul's list of the works of the flesh.

(1) SENSUAL SINS.

1. Adultery.
2. Fornication (*porneia*, prostitution, harlotry).
3. Uncleaness (*akatharsia*, moral impurity).
4. Lasciviousness (*aselgeia*, wantonness).

(2) FALSE WORSHIP.

1. Idolatry (*eidôlatreia*, worship of idols).
2. Witchcraft (*pharmakeia*, from *pharmakon*, a drug, the ministering of drugs).

(3) SINS IN PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS.

1. Hatred (enmities, *exthrai*, personal animosities).
2. Strife (*eris*, rivalry, discord).
3. jealousies (*zêlos*).
4. Wrath (*thumoi*, stirring emotions, then explosive anger).
5. Factions (*eritheiai*, from *erithos*, day laborer, worker in wool, party spirit).
6. Divisions (*dichostasiai*, to split in two).
7. Heresies (*haireseis*, from *haireomai*, preferences, choosing).
8. Envyings (*phthonoi*, feelings of ill-will).

(4) SINS OF EXCESS.

1. Drunkenness (*methai*, {plural}, drunken excesses).
2. Revellings (*kômoi*, drinking parties).
3. And such like (And things like these).

The list is more representative than it is exhaustive. For a more exhaustive list of sins, see the catalog of sins of the Gentiles in Romans 1.

### **E. The Fruits of the Spirit, 5:22-23.**

The Apostle Paul changes the figure from works (*erga*, vs. 19) to fruit "as the normal out-cropping of the Holy Spirit in us. It is a beautiful tree of fruit that Paul pictures here with nine luscious fruits on it" [ATR: S'Master]:

1. **LOVE** (*agapê*, a superior love, compared to *philia* and *erôs*).
2. **JOY** (*chara*).
3. **PEACE** (*eirênê*).
4. **LONG-SUFFERING** (*makrothumia*).
5. **KINDNESS** (*chrêstotês*).
6. **GOODNESS** (*agathôsunê*).
7. **FAITHFUL** (*pistis*).
8. **MEEKNESS** (*prautês*).
9. **TEMPERANCE** (*egkrateia*, from *egkratês*, maintaining control , holding in).

As Robertson observes, "Paul has a better list than the four cardinal virtues of the Stoics (temperance, prudence, fortitude, justice), though they are included with better notes struck. Temperance is alike, but kindness is better than justice, long-suffering than fortitude, love than prudence" [ATR: S'Master]. There is little wonder that Paul concludes, "against such there is no law." The fruit of the Spirit exceeds the demands of the Law.

### **F. Walking in the Spirit, 5:24-26.**

The Christian must crucify self. This is not something others can do for you. The believer dies with Christ and is raised to a new life in which he bears the fruit of the Spirit - in the power of the Holy Spirit. This is symbolized in baptism: "We were buried therefore with him through baptism unto death: that like as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we also might walk in newness of life" (Rom. 6:4).

**5:24 - CRUCIFIED THE FLESH.** "They that are Christ's (born-again believers) have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts." Paul uses flesh (*sarx*) here, as in verses 16,17,19, for "the force in men that makes for evil" (Burton) [S'Master]. With, or "Together with," emphasizes "the completeness of the extermination of this evil force' and the guarantee of victory over one's passions and dispositions toward evil" [ATR: S'master].

**5:25 - IF WE LIVE IN THE SPIRIT.** Those who are made alive by the Spirit, indwelt by the Spirit, live in the Spirit. Only those who are Christ's live in the Spirit. All those who are Christ's were live in the Spirit. He is the realm of our existence, the atmosphere in which we live out our lives. Every person who is saved lives in the Spirit - from the moment of Justification to the point of Glorification. All that comes in between is called Sanctification. Living in the Spirit is not a bad definition of Sanctification.

**5:25 - LET US KEEP ON WALKING IN THE SPIRIT.** This is living each moment in awareness (full alert) of God's presence. It is a life lived in submission to the Holy Spirit, Who indwells the hearts of believers. Walking in the Spirit is the practical expression of Sanctification. Walking in the Spirit is not an option for the believer. We are not saved by good works, but we are saved unto good works (Eph. 2:10). It is unfortunate that any believer should have to be reminded of this, but the simple fact is, many people who profess to be Christ's do not live like it. The need to emphasize this is mandated by the claims of those who are actually teaching that we can belong to Christ without accepting His Lordship over our life.

Both Charles Ryrie and Zane Hodges both insist that repentance has nothing to do with Justification. They point out that the Gospel of John does not use the word *repent* [JM: 79]. In fact, Hodges claims that John purposely avoided the subject of repentance. He finds in the Gospel of John

not a word - not a syllable - about repentance. And if ever there was a perfect place for the evangelist to inject this theme into his gospel, this is the place.

But his silence is deafening! . . .

. . . Only a resolute blindness can resist the obvious conclusion: *John did not regard repentance as a condition for eternal life* [JM: 80].

MacArthur rightly rejects this claim, pointing out that the fact that John does not use the word *repent*, does not mean that repentance is not essential to salvation. He points out that Jesus did not use the word *grace* but one would hardly claim that the doctrine of Grace was missing from His teaching [JM: 81]. In the Synoptic Gospels, Matthew, Mark, and Luke the emphasis is upon repentance and in John the emphasis is upon believing in Christ. But repent is taught throughout the Gospel of John, as illustrated by the Lord's command to Nicodemus, "Ye must be born again."

John MacArthur (*Faith Works*) quotes a number of people who reject this doctrine. He quotes Richard Belcher (A Layman's Guide to the Lordship Controversy, Southbridge, Mass.,: Crowne, 1990, p. 71):

If one were to suggest that the time would come when a group of evangelical Christians would be arguing for a salvation without repentance, without a change of behavior or lifestyle, without a real avowal of the lordship and authority of Christ, without perseverance, without discipleship, and a salvation which does not necessarily result in obedience and works, and with a regeneration which does not necessarily change one's life, most believers of several decades ago would have felt such would be an absolute impossibility. But believe it or not, the hour has come [JM: 193).

MacArthur also quotes J. Gresham Mechen (*What is Faith?*, New York: Macmillan, 1925, p. 203-104):

Faith is the acceptance of a gift at the hands of Christ . . . It is a very wonderful thing; it involves a change of the whole nature of man; it involves a new hatred of sin and a new hunger and thirst after righteousness. Such a wonderful change is not the work of man; faith itself is given us by the Spirit of God. Christians never make themselves Christians; but they are made Christians by God.

. . . It is quite inconceivable that man should be given this faith in Christ, that he should accept this gift which Christ offers, and still go on contentedly in sin. For the very thing which Christ offers us is salvation from sin - not only salvation from the guilt of sin, but also salvation from the power of sin [JM: 37].

Billy Graham had this to say about faith and works and their relationship to each other:

There really is no conflict between faith and works. In the Christian life they go together like inhaling and exhaling. Faith is taking the Gospel in; works is taking the Gospel out. Actually, what James is saying is: you can't have one without the other. The book of James balances off this matter of faith and works, and reminds us that the Christian must have both. True, we are not saved by works, but James reminds us also that we are not saved if good works do not follow. Some people argue this point so vehemently that it almost becomes like the old argument of which comes first, the chicken or the egg. The word "believe" comes from two words, "be" and "live". Faith helps us to "be," spiritually. But after we receive life, it is to find expression in Christian works and deeds. To show that there is no conflict in the Scriptures between the two, Paul, the advocate of faith speaks of "being rich in works," and James, the exponent of works, says, "rich in faith." Why be content with either when God has provided for, and says we must have both. See: Rom 4:3; 1 Tim 6:18; Jam 2:5; Jam 2:20-24 [Bible Illustrator for Windows, Index: 1201-1218].

**5:26 - NOT...DESIROUS OF VAIN GLORY.** "Let us not become vainglorious" (ASV). Literally, it is, "Let us cease becoming vainglorious." We must recognize the fact that for each person there is a temptation to become vainglorious. Dare we say we may already be guilty? Does the literal translation imply that we should at least entertain that possibility? Paul is concerned about the harm it can cause in the church:



If there is therefore any exhortation in Christ, if any consolation of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any tender mercies and compassions, make full my joy, that ye be of the same mind, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind; *doing nothing through faction or through vainglory*, but in lowliness of mind each counting other better than himself; (Phil. 2:1-3 ASV).

***PROVOKING...ENVYING.*** A vainglorious person easily provokes others to jealousy or envy, or creates strife in other ways. All believers, and church leaders in particular should avoid this attitude at all costs. Christians should always seek to give all the glory for what they do to God. There is but a short step between seeking recognition and a vainglorious attitude. This danger may be magnified in a society that trumpets high self-esteem, self-love, and self-worth from every street corner, classroom and family room.

But if ye have bitter jealousy and faction in your heart, glory not and lie not against the truth. This wisdom is not a wisdom that cometh down from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish. For where jealousy and faction are, there is confusion and every vile deed (Jame 3:14-16).

### **G. Bearing One Another's Burden, 6:1-6.**

***6:1 - IF...OVERTAKEN IN A FAULT.*** If a person was overtaken in a fault, as the Galatians were in falling away, or stumbling, over false doctrine, then those who were spiritual must seek to restore them. Who is without fault? Who is the one to correct them? When there is a difference of opinion does someone have to be at fault?

I attended a Church Growth Conference in Atlanta in 1994 that was sponsored by the Department of Evangelism, a division of the Home Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention. One conference was led by Dr. Ron Johnson, Director of Evangelism for the Georgia Baptist Convention. Dr. Johnson stressed that there are three distinct groups in most congregations today; The Cultural Right (older, conservative members, grounded in the Scripture ), the Cultural Middle (the Baby Boomers who may know little or nothing about the Bible), and the Cultural Left (Baby Busters who not only do not know anything about the church or the Bible - they could care less). That which appeals to one group (whether music, sound system, Bible study, or preaching) might really turn off another age, or interest group. Those who prefer traditional hymns may be critical of those who want praise music (or gospel-rock). You are never going to satisfy everyone, but you must try to avoid creating an atmosphere that breeds division and fosters factions. Members of one faction are constantly finding fault with those of another faction. They often find fault where none exists.

But there are real faults and they must be dealt with. The fault here may refer to theological error or a behavioral problem. If there is a real problem it must be dealt with in a Scriptural manner.

***SPIRITUAL.*** There are two kinds of people in the world - lost and saved. There are two kinds of saved people - Those who are spiritual and those who are carnal. Both statements may seem like an over simplification, but the first is absolutely true and the second is true but needs some explanation. The Lord never saved any person to live a carnal life. When a person is saved he embraces (by faith) Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. It is totally unscriptural to think of receiving Him as Savior and not receiving Him as Lord. Furthermore, it is unscriptural to think that one can receive Him as Savior and then make Him Lord through a secondary experience at a later time. He expects every believer to be spiritual, but if there were no such thing as a carnal believer why does the Scripture stipulate that those who are to restore one who has been "overtaken in a fault" are those who are spiritual.

We must be very careful when we take upon us the task of "setting someone straight" who disagrees with us. There are always people who seem to think they have a special calling from the Lord to rebuke and reprove others. The opposite extreme is the person who will not take a stand on anything, lest someone be offended. Again, the Scripture anticipates the problems emanating from either action: "ye who are spiritual, restore such a one in *a spirit of gentleness...*"

***IN THE SPIRIT OF MEEKNESS.*** This is the mark of true spirituality. Meekness is not weakness, but a strength the Lord can use. The meaning of Greek work for meekness is easily illustrated. It is the picture of a wild horse that is caught and then broken to the bridle and saddle. The horse is not made weak by the experience. Its strength is as great as ever, but its strength is harnessed so that it can be controlled. The Lord reveals an important lesson on strength and meekness in Paul's second letter to the Corinthian church. "And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me" (II Cor. 12:9).

***CONSIDERING THYSELF.*** Any time a Christian seeks to witness to a lost person, or restore one who has been "overtaken in a fault," he must be aware of the danger that he will be tempted through exposure to the other person's sin, or false beliefs. Tragic are the stories of a Christian counsellor who begins counselling someone who has committed adultery, only to become shamefully involved with that person in the same sin. there is little wonder that the very first Psalm warns us of the danger of becoming involved in the sins of the people with whom we come into contact. It is also important that we be warned of the progression in the risk as the association increases. David wrote, "Blessed is the man.. " that:

1. Walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly.
2. Nor standeth in the way of sinners.
3. Nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.

***6:2 - BEAR ONE ANOTHER'S BURDENS.*** Literally, it is "keep on bearing one another's burdens." It is not enough to read Scripture just to expand one's knowledge. It is not enough to attend a worship service just for what you get out of it. You never fulfill the law of Christ simply by abstaining from certain sins. Jesus set the example for us: "that it might be fulfilled which was

spoken through Isaiah the prophet, saying: Himself took our infirmities, and bare our diseases" (Matt. 8:17). He expects us to bear one another's burdens: "Now we that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves" (Rom. 15:1).

**BURDENS.** The Greek word is *baros*. The root meaning is weight. This denotes a crisis that comes on one from the outside (he didn't bring it upon himself). This teaches us that when another person's load becomes too heavy and he is being pressed down by it, the Christian will step up to help carry the load.

Unfortunately, after several generations of teaching the theory of evolution as fact in elementary schools high schools, and universities (including many Christian colleges), and having that theory reenforced by everyone from Walt Disney, to National Geographic, to PBS programs, a lot of people have devalued human life. There was a news report in 1994 about a woman jogger in California who was attacked and killed by a mountain lion. She left two children. The mountain lion was destroyed, leaving some cubs. One fund was set up to help provide for care for the children and another for the mountain lion cubs. After some period of time the gifts coming to the fund for the children of the slain woman amounted to about eight thousand dollars, but the gifts to the mountain lion's cubs totaled more than twenty one thousand dollars, even though the cubs were receiving everything they needed at a local zoo.

One reason for this attitude might be the involvement of the federal government in caring for citizens. They now do what churches once did for people in the community. Welfare roles continued to swell and the government continues to tax producers to care for those who cannot provide for themselves (and often able bodied people who refuse to work as long as they can receive assistance without it). Not only do we have third and fourth generation welfare recipients who have never provided for themselves, we have second and third generation members in our churches who are accustomed to seeing the government take care of those in need. They do not remember when the church met those needs. Furthermore, they resent having to pay taxes to provide for those who can, but will not work to provide for themselves and their own families.

There is a very real danger that those who need the ministry of the church may be overlooked by Christians who automatically assume that the government will take care of our neighbors who need help. In which case, the individual believer is denied the blessing that comes through this ministry, the needy person is denied a ministry by the church or individual Christians which might lead them to commit themselves to Jesus Christ, and the church misses a golden opportunity to minister and witness. It would be interesting to see what effect it would have on the attitude of the lost people in a community if they saw the church providing services they have become accustomed to seeing the government provide. It would be interesting to see how some cynics would look on the church if they personally had to go to the church to ask for help!

Above all, Christians should help bear the burden of other Christians when they need it. They receive the help they need, and we are given an opportunity to meet a need the Lord has given us - the need to express agape' love for another believer. And when the world sees Christians expressing their love for one another in a practical way it will make their witness much more believable and the

Christian life far more attractive to them. Last, but not least, this practical expression of our love for one another does one more thing: It also lets us "fulfill the law of Christ" (The Second Great Commandment).

**6:3 - IF A MAN THINK HIMSELF TO BE SOMETHING.** There are many things we can say, and often do say, about the Word. But one thing we may not emphasize enough is that it is practical. Our Lord, Who knows what is in each person, knew we needed this warning. There have always been people in His work who think they are "something." There is always the danger that the one who thinks himself to be *something* may, in fact, be *nothing*. How does a person convince himself that he amounts to something great when before God he amounts to exactly zero?

Solomon knew the problem a millennium before Paul wrote to the Galatians: "As clouds and wind without rain, So is he that boasteth himself of his gifts falsely" (Prov. 25:14). Is there any wonder that we called it "Wisdom Literature?" Solomon also wrote, "Seest thou a man wise in his own conceit? There is more hope of a fool than of him" (Prov... 26:12).

**6:4 - LET EVERY MAN PROVE HIS OWN WORK.** Again, we have a utilitarian word from the Apostle to the Gentiles. The hypocrite who spends his time trying to impress others would do far better if he would concentrate on his own work and let others do the same. As Paul stressed in writing to the church at Corinth, The Lord has given each person a special gift, or gifts, and He expects each person to use his gift(s) "to prove his work" and worth to the Kingdom of God. He wrote to the Corinthians, "Try your own selves, whether ye are in the faith; prove your own selves. Or know ye not as to your own selves, that Jesus Christ is in you? unless indeed ye be reprobate" (II Cor 13:5).

**REJOICING IN HIMSELF ALONE.** The ASV has, "his glorying in regard of himself alone." We must avoid being vainglorious (5:26), and he must not seek the praise of his neighbor, but he can rejoice in the work he is doing for the Lord. Paul wrote to the church at Corinth, "For our glorifying is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in holiness and sincerity of God, not in fleshly wisdom but in the grace of God, we behaved ourselves in the world, and more abundantly to you-ward" II Cor. 1:12).

**6:5 - EACH SHALL BEAR HIS OWN BURDEN.** *Phortion* is the word for burden in this verse (not *baros* as in vs. 2). This is the word for a soldier's pack, a weight he is supposed to bear for himself. There is a burden which we must bear and no one can bear it for us. It is as important for us to determine what the burden is which we must bear and then bear it ourself. We cannot, and must not, expect others to bear it for us. Failure to recognize and bear one's own burdens has filled welfare rolls with people who expect someone else to bear their burden for them.

When parents bring children into the world it is their responsibility to care for them, and to provide food, shelter, and clothing for them. It is not their neighbors responsibility, and it is not the governments. Yet we have third and fourth generation welfare recipients who have never worked to provide for themselves, and they have never worked to provide for their families. As a matter of fact,

they have not seen their parents, nor grandparents work. This is one of the reasons that, according to some reports, we now pay forty-nine per cent of our income in local, state, and federal taxes.

Once again, if scriptural principles were applied, we could solve a major problem in America. If each person bears his own *phortion* (burdens which each person must bear for himself) and at the same time helps one another bear his *baros* (burden placed on him from the outside, over which he has no control) it would revolutionize our society and help solve some major economic problems.

**6:6 - LET HIM THAT IS TAUGHT.** The original denotes legal instruction and the construction, as A. T. Robertson pointed out, is of interest to Christians because it shows "how early we find paid teachers in the churches. Those who receive instruction are called on to 'contribute' (better than 'communicate' for *koinôneitô*) for the time of the teacher (Burton). There was a teaching class thus early (I Thes. 5:12; I Cor. 12:28; Eph. 4:11; I Thes. 5)." Paul wrote to the Corinthian church, "In the same way, the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should receive their living from the gospel" (I Cor. 9:14).

## **H. God's Law of Sowing and Reaping, 6:7-10.**

This is a common picture in the Bible - the thought is that life is a seed time and that the future is the harvest of seed sown in this life. While salvation by works (or law) should not be inferred from this, there is a principle which cannot be ignored.

### **SERMON OR LESSON OUTLINE**

#### **GOD'S LAW OF SOWING AND REAPING**

Following my Junior year in high school, I was one of three students my English teacher took to Ridgecrest Baptist Assembly in North Carolina for Youth Week. I am afraid public school teachers like that may be going the way of the dinosaur in this post-Christian age. But I will never forget the contribution this godly lady made to the lives of three of her students. It was a mountain-peak experience for me and I gleaned all I could from each moment. While browsing through the book store I found a book that I just knew would be a lot of help to me since the Lord had called me to preach the Gospel. I never dreamed that you could buy a book filled with sermon outlines! I bought the book for two or three dollars and began skimming the outlines.

I have no idea what happened to the book, or remember how many of the outlines I might have used, but there is one I shall never forget. It was an outline by Dwight L. Moody entitled "God's Law of Sowing and Reaping." I spent most of that summer driving a John Deere tractor on our family farm near Sledge, Mississippi. I recalled this particular outline one day while plowing cotton and related it to what I saw in those Mississippi Delta cotton fields. While observing the application of this law in the natural realm I composed a sermon around the three points I recalled and preached it in a few churches. As a student at Mississippi College, I had preached each week at the Hinds

County Jail in Jackson, Mississippi and early each Sunday morning at the Mississippi State Penitentiary at Parchman. I felt led on a number of occasions to preach from this passage, adapting the message as the situation dictated and as I was led by the Holy Spirit.

**INTRODUCTION:** God's Law of Sowing and Reaping has been in effect since Adam sowed to sin and reaped death. We see it in the Wisdom Literature and in the Prophets.

The wicked earneth deceitful wages; But he that soweth righteousness hath a sure reward, Pro. 11:18.

He that soweth iniquity shall reap calamity; And the rod of his wrath shall fail, Pro. 22:8.

For they sow the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind... ,Hos. 8:7.

Ye have plowed wickedness, ye have reaped iniquity..., Hos. 8:7.

I. MAN SHOULD EXPECT TO REAP WHAT HE SOWS, Gal 6:7.

- A. In the Physical Realm a Farmer Expects to Reap When He Sows.
- B. The Bible Clearly Reveals That God's Law of Sowing and Reaping Has Been in Effect Since Adam (Moses, David, Uzziah).

II. MAN SHOULD EXPECT TO REAP THE SAME KIND OF SEEDS HE SOWS, Gal. 6:8.

- A. In the Physical Realm a Farmer Expects to Reap the Same Kind of Seeds He Sows (Cotton from cotton, etc.).
- B. In the Spiritual Realm You Can Expect to Reap the same Kind of Seed You Sow

III. MAN SHOULD EXPECT TO REAP MORE THAN HE SOWS.

- A. No Farmer Would Go to All the Work and Expense of Sowing If He Did Not Expect to Harvest More Than He Sows.
- B. In the Spiritual Realm the Harvest Will Be Far Greater Than the Seeds Sown.

**CONCLUSION:** The future will be the harvest of the seeds we sow now. There will be no crop failure in the spiritual realm, Gal. 6:9.

**APPLICATION/INVITATION**

**6:10 - LET US DO GOOD UNTO ALL MEN.** Paul is once again being pragmatic. No advice could be more practical. Not only because this is a way of showing that we love *all men*, but principally because God loves us. If we love Him we will do good unto all people because the God Who loves us also loves them. Literally, "let us keep on doing good unto all men." "See that none render unto any one evil for evil; but always follow after that which is good, one toward another, and toward all" (I Thes. 5:15). This should be the pattern of our life. The child of God should be known for doing good unto all men. This is what should stand out in the mind of lost people when they think of Christians.

**ESPECIALLY TO THEM...OF THE HOUSEHOLD OF FAITH.** We should do good unto all people, but he stresses the importance of our doing good to other believers. There is a special relationship that exists within the fellowship of believers. That relationship requires our constant attention.

Hereby know we love, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But whoso hath the world's goods, and beholdeth his brother in need, and shutteth up his compassion from him, how doth the love of God abide in him? My Little children, let us not love in word, neither with the tongue; but in deed and truth. Hereby shall we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our heart before him (I John 3:16-19).

**6:11 - HOW LARGE A LETTER.** Rather, "how large letters." From this we might infer that at this point Paul took the pen from the amanuensis and wrote the rest of the Epistle himself. See Romans 16:22 for a salutation from an amanuensis: "I Tertius, who write the epistle, salute you in the Lord." For a farewell greeting from Paul, see II Thes. 3:17; I Cor. 16:21; Col 4:18. He signed his first epistle to the Corinthian church, "The salutation of me Paul with mine own hand" (I Cor 16:21).

What does Paul mean by "with how large letters"? Obviously, he does not mean "how large a letter" (the Epistle to the Galatians). Several suggestions have been made, including the possibility that he wrote in large letters because of poor eyesight. Some have even mentioned the possibility that it was because of his handwriting was poor and he had to make letters in a painstaking manner. It is also possible that he took the pen and concluded the letter in large (bold?) letters in order to call attention to the closing paragraph by setting it off in a different print (Ramsey). Robertson prefers Ramsay's explanation (S'Master), but if he had poor eyesight that would explain the large letters.

Paul personally writes part of this letter, and it is a personal letter, in spite of the rather deep doctrinal issues discussed. This Epistle is a very well planned unit, yet it is difficult to follow at times because of the change in the "thought-climate." Paul sums up his case and points out reasons the Judaizers were trying to force the Law on the Galatians.

**6:12 - DESIRE...SHEW IN THE FLESH.** The preacher cannot close without a final warning - a warning for the Judaizers, and a warning about them. They manifested the same traits as their

spiritual cousins, the Pharisees and Scribes - the desire to make a show in the flesh. Jesus had warned His disciples of their hypocrisy:

When therefore thou doest alms, sound not a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have received their reward (Matt 6:2).

And he said unto them, Ye are they that justify yourselves in the sight of men; but God knoweth your hearts: for that which is exalted among men is an abomination in the sight of God (Luke 16:15).

As a student of Gamaliel, the renowned teacher of the Law, Paul had seen the attitude of the Pharisees up close and personal. That is not to say that he had been a hypocrite. He was fanatically committed to the Law, but he knew that a works based righteousness often spawns pride, self-righteousness, and hypocrisy.

For we are not bold to number or compare ourselves with certain of them that commend themselves: but they themselves, measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves with themselves, are without understanding (II Cor. 10:12).

**6:13 - NEITHER THEY...WHO ARE CIRCUMCISED.** The Judaizers in this case. The term usually denoted Jews, those who sought righteousness through the Law. But the trouble makers in Galatia were the Judaizers, Jews who professed a faith in Christ, but insisted that circumcision was a prerequisite to salvation. Paul says they were trying to constrain the Galatians to be circumcised, a symbol of the Law, they did not keep the Law themselves.

These Judaizers were very much like their spiritual cousins, the Pharisees. Jesus had warned His disciples about their hypocrisy: "all things therefore whatsoever they bid you, these do and observe: but do not ye after their works; *for they say, and do not*" (Matt 23:3 ASV, Italics added). He never minced words in addressing them:

Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye tithe mint and anise and cummin, and have left undone the weightier matters of the law, justice, and mercy, and faith: but these ye ought to have done, and not to have left the other undone (Matt. 23:23).

As a young Pharisee Paul sat at the feet of Gamaliel, the famous teacher of the Law in Jerusalem. He knew them well and he knew Judaism. Until he met the Lord on the road to Damascus he had pursued righteousness through the Law with more zeal than any of his peers. If anyone could have been saved through the Law, surely Paul could have. In general, the Pharisees were characterized by hypocrisy, but there is no reason to assume that young Saul of Tarsus was a hypocrite. He had been sincere in the practice of Judaism, but now understood that he has been



sincerely wrong. He wrote to the church at Rome:

But if thou bearest the name of a Jew, and retest upon the law, and gloriest in God, and knowest his will, and approvest the things that are excellent, being instructed out of the law, and art *confident that thou thyself art a guide of the blind, a light of them that are in darkness, a corrector of the foolish, a teacher of babes*, having in the law the form of knowledge and of the truth; thou therefore that teachest another, teachest thou not thyself? thou that preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal? thou that sayest a man should not commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery? thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou rob temples? *thou who gloriest in the law, through thy transgression of the law dishonorest thou God?* (Rom. 2:17- 23 ASV, italics added).

**THAT THEY MAY GLORY.** Paul understood why those who received circumcision themselves but did not keep the law were coercing the Galatian believers to be circumcised. He says, "they desire to have you circumcised, that they may glory in your flesh." How might they glory in the flesh? Through pride in their own success? Were they trying to impress their peers? Or, did they believe God would bless them for their success?

During my third year at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, my wife, Becky, and I were invited by friends to go with them to hear a well known evangelist who was preaching in an area-wide crusade. The evangelist announced that there were three thousand people in the tent that night. When time came for the invitation, he asked all the preachers to come to the front and line up facing the congregation. Then he said, "all who would like to see us have a good revival this week, I would like to have a word of prayer, and then I would like for you to come on your way out and shake hands with these preachers and tell them you want to see a good revival.

Most of the three thousand people must have come by to shake hands with us on the way out of the tent. Their excitement showed in the way they were wring our hands and pumping our arms. Most of them knew some of the pastors and were anxious to meet the rest of us. As someone paused to visit with the pastor next to me, I quickly slipped my college class ring off and dropped into my pocket, (hoping it would help save some fingers). As I looked up I saw some activity in the center of the tent. A man was climbing onto a chair or table with a camera. Someone was helping him maintain his balance and watching his photographic equipment.

Why was he photographing us? I remember feeling that I was being manipulated at the time. As he took pictures of the people as they shook hands with us, I had the distinct impression that some of those pictures would appear in the next issue of their magazine or paper with a caption about all the people who were making decisions. As I recall, that is exactly what happened. Those pictures were printed to show others what they could expect if they invited that evangelist to preach in a revival or area crusade.

The Judaizers may have been reporting on their success. They might well have boasted of the number of men they circumcised, just as some preachers today boast of the number of people they baptize. To sum it up:

1. Circumcision would identify the Gentiles with Judaism, which was a "legal religion."
2. They sought to win God's approval by circumcision and the Law.
3. However, those who tried to force the Galatians to be circumcised did not keep the Law themselves.

**6:14 - GOD FORBID THAT I SHOULD GLORY.** Paul's attitude was, "I shall glorify in what Christ does for me - not what I do for Him." Self glory has always been a temptation and the temptation is particularly acute in this time of the self-esteem, self-worth, self-love gospel. Most Christians can probably think of someone they have known who gave the impression that they were seeking personal glory from their service, some "Diotrephes, who loveth to have preeminence among them" (III John 9).

I can recall apprehension I have had about certain people over the years. Possibly you recall a man who was overly anxious to be elected to the office of deacon, the lady who always had to make a pious speech before singing, or the youth who would do almost anything for recognition, at church as well as in the world. But this should not be our first concern. Rather than thinking of others, we should first examine our own hearts. It is a very rare person who does not have the potential for hypocrisy or vain glory.

I frequently hear people talk, or read articles dealing with self-esteem. People are advised to help they feel good about themselves. Some times I want to stop them and suggest that instead of focussing all their attention on themselves, they should focus their attention on Jesus Christ and let Him take care of their esteem problem.

Both my younger brother, Mike, and older son, John, are attorneys who often lament the degree of ignorance they occasionally encounter in interviews, depositions, or in court. Often those who are the most ignorant are surprisingly proud of their sagacity. They boast about how "smart" they are. Mike both revealed his own acumen in dealing with these people, and once vented a little frustration with this attitude when he observed, "And it's not like an ignorant person is going to suddenly wake up one morning and say, 'Hey, I'm stupid,' and do something about it."

The hypocrite who hides his "secret sins" from family, friends and church lives with guilt and knows he needs to repent, but lacks the courage or faith (which adds to his guilt). But the self-righteous hypocrite who is motivated by personal glory (or praise) is not likely to suddenly wake up one morning and say, "Hey, I'm a hypocrite," and then do something about it. As a pastor I have heard people confess almost anything you can think of, if not in the study or home, at least in jail or the penitentiary. But I do not recall many coming to me and saying, "I need help. I'm a hypocrite." On the occasions when that has happened, they were confessed sins they had tried to hide. But, I do not recall anyone saying, "I have been very active in my church, I have served in this position, I have held that office, and I spend all my spare time working with children or youth, or directing a missions

group. However, the motivation behind all of it is personal glory. I just love the feeling of self-righteousness I get from all I do and I cannot live without the praise of others."

Why was Paul able to say, "But far be it from me to glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world hath been crucified unto me, and I unto the world"? Is it possible that the answer lies in His attitude toward his Lord and his relationship to Him? He wrote to the Philippians, "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain" (Phil. 1:21). The great Apostle considered himself the least of the Apostles and chief of sinners. He identified himself as the bondservant of Jesus Christ. If you glory only in Jesus Christ the world cannot entice you to reject Him. If you can say with Paul, "for me to live is Christ," no one can intimidate you to get you to betray Him.

**SAVE IN THE CROSS.** The cross was an instrument of shame in the first century. One would no more have worn a gold cross on a chain in that day than one would wear a replica of an electric chair or gas chamber today. It was not only an instrument of death, it stood for the death of a criminal. It is important to note that Paul did not say he gloried in any cross. He said, "Far be it from me to glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." The cross was the heart of the Gospel he preached:

But we preach Christ crucified, unto Jews a stumblingblock, and unto Gentiles foolishness (I Cor. 1:23).

For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified (I Cor. 2:2).

**BY WHOM THE WORLD IS CRUCIFIED UNTO ME.** Crucifixion meant death. If one had been crucified he was dead. Jesus Christ had died on the cross, but he arose from the dead and is alive for evermore. But through the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ "the world hath been crucified unto me, and I unto the world." If the world was dead unto him it could hold no power over him. If he was dead to the world, he might be in the world, but he was not of the world.

This is one of the great sayings of Paul concerning his relation to Christ and the world in contrast with the Judaizers. Cf. #19f.; 3:13; 4:4f.; 1Co 1:23f.; Ro 1:16; 3:21ff.; 4:25; 5:18. . . Paul's old world of Jewish descent and environment is dead to him (Php 3:3f.) [ATR: S'Master].

**6:15 - IN CHRIST JESUS.** This is the heart of the Gospel and Paul never loses sight of it in the letter to the Galatian churches. Salvation is in Christ Jesus. John stated clearly the purpose in writing the Gospel that bears his name:

Many other signs therefore did Jesus in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book: but these are written, that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye may have life in his name (John 20:30-

31).

Paul addressed his epistle to the Philippians to "all the saints *in Christ Jesus* which are at Philippi" (Phil. 1:1). The Gospel establishes the fact that we must be in Christ in order to have eternal life. In Romans Paul stressed that the "Just shall live by faith" (Rom. 1:17) and not by works. He wrote, "There is none righteous, no not one" (Rom. 3:10). In Galatians his thesis is *how* we get to be *in Christ Jesus*. In 2:16, he wrote:

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

In Christ neither circumcision, nor uncircumcision mean anything. Neither can place us in Christ. Neither Jew nor Gentile, circumcised not uncircumcised has any advantage in Christ. At the Jerusalem Conference Peter had helped win the victory for the doctrine of righteousness by faith as opposed to righteousness by works (or law):

Brethren, ye know that a good while ago God made choice among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel, and believe. And God, who knoweth the heart, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Spirit, even as he did unto us; and he made no distinction between us and them, cleansing their hearts by faith (Acts 15:7b-9).

Paul was inspired to deal with the same subject in I Cor. 7:19: "Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing; but the keeping of the commandments of God." He wrote to the Colossians, "where there cannot be Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bondman, freeman; but *Christ is all, and in all*" (3:11, italics added).

Since circumcision is not a controversial issue in the church today, why do we need to study this? When we apply the message to modern day issues the answer is elementary. Just substitute for circumcision the word baptism. Relate the debate to membership in a particular church, or sacraments and ordinances.

Several years ago I spoke of two occasions to the Christian Legal Society (CLS) at the LSU School of Law. My son was asked to introduce me the first time and he was president of CLS the second time, so I had more than a passing interest in CLS. Following each meeting there was a period of fellowship which gave me an opportunity to get acquainted with a number of students from very different backgrounds. We talked about a variety of subject and I discovered that most of those in attendance were very conservative. They asked my opinion on a number of subjects and seemed to be in agreement on most of them. As we were leaving one young man asked me, "Do you ever listen to Rush Limbaugh?" Others then wanted to know if I listened to Rush on radio. I had to confess that I did not even know who he was.

After I returned home I forgot about it until my son came home and told me how popular he

was and where to find the "talk radio" program on the radio in my car. After that I began to listen to him when I had out of town trips. Little did I realize at that time what an impact Rush Limbaugh and talk radio would have on America. What I do remember was he criticizing some liberal position as "Symbol over Substance." He would respond to a caller, "That's symbol over substance," or "That is substituting symbol for substance." I had put hundreds of hours into the study of the three basic theories of Justification and when I heard Rush Limbaugh label something "symbol over substance," I remember thinking, "That is exactly what baptismal regeneration is - symbol over substance." Baptism, like circumcision, is a symbol. A symbol is a smaller representation of the real thing. Baptism is a symbol, or picture, of the death burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and it is a symbol of our identification with Him in death, burial and resurrection. "We were buried therefore with him through baptism unto death: that like as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we also might walk in newness of life" (Rom. 6:4). Baptism is the outward manifestation of the inner experience. Baptism does not save anyone, but those who redeemed are commanded to be baptized as a symbol of their having died with Christ, and their resurrection to walk in newness of life. Any view that says we must be baptized in order to be saved might be called symbol over substance. Anyone who says we must believe in Jesus Christ *plus anything* is substituting symbol for substance.

There is no greater assurance of our eternal salvation (security of believers) than in our awareness of what it means to be in Christ Jesus. Paul wrote to the Colossians, "For ye died, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall be manifested, then shall ye also with him be manifested in glory" (Col. 3:3-4). We should thank our Lord for the assurance given in the Scripture that we are absolutely secure in Christ. Inspiration could not express it more clearly than in Paul's letter to the Romans:

There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus made me free from the law of sin and of death (Rom. 8:1-2).

**A NEW CREATURE.** What really matters is that *in Christ we are* "a new creature," or a new creation. Jesus told Nicodemus he must be born again. It is not enough to turn over a new leaf. We must be born from above. The promises of our Lord are exciting: "Wherefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature: "the old things are passed away; behold, they are become new" (II Cor. 5:17). Paul wrote to the church at Ephesus that "... we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God afore prepared that we should walk in them" (Eph. 2:10).

**6:16 - WALK ACCORDING TO THIS RULE.** Paul touches on the same subject in writing to the church at Philippi, "whereunto we have attained, by that same rule let us walk" (Phil. 3:16). There is no contradiction in between this statement and the rest of the epistle. We are not saved by keeping rules. The subject here is a pragmatic statement about the statement he has just made (6:15). He has made a profound statement and now he says, "... as many as shall walk by this rule ("God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ"), peace be upon them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God."

***PEACE BE UPON THEM, AND MERCY.*** Jesus came as the Prince of Peace. His birth announcement was followed by an angelic choir praising God and singing, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will to men" (Luke 2:14). Peace (shalom, the normal Hebrew greeting) is positive, not negative. It does not mean simply the absence of hostility, but the expression of a desire for everything necessary to provide for one's highest good. He wrote to the Philippians, "And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall guard your hearts and your thoughts in Christ Jesus" (Phil 4:7).

Paul's desire for mercy for all those who glory in the Lord, and not themselves, expresses the desire that they would not have to pay the just penalty for their sins. It is a prayer thought that God would deal with them mercifully. Mercy was a favorite theme of the psalmists. David expressed it in the Shepherd Psalm: "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever." Paul would appreciate the great truth of Psalm 85:10, "Mercy and truth are met together; Righteousness and peace have kissed each other" (Ps. 85:10).

***6:17 - HENCEFORTH LET NO MAN TROUBLE ME.*** Paul was constantly embroiled in conflict, but he was tired of this kind of controversy. Being forced to defend himself against charges in Corinth tried his patience. In Galatia the Judaizers were trying to supplant the Gospel he had preached and subvert all his teachings. In order to do that they had attacked him personally. As noted earlier, it is that the most brilliant mind Christianity has ever produced had to spend valuable time defending himself against false charges!

***I BEAR IN MY BODY THE MARKS OF THE LORD JESUS.*** A master branded his slaves for the purpose of identification. Paul proudly wore the marks of persecution in his body as his identification as a slave of Jesus Christ. Robertson has a good commentary on the marks of a slave:

Slaves had the names or stamp of their owners on their bodies. It was sometimes done for soldiers also. There were devotees also who stamped upon their bodies the names of the gods whom they worshipped. Today in a round-up cattle are given the owner's mark. Paul gloried in being the slave of Jesus Christ. This is probably the image in Paul's mind since he bore in his body brand marks of suffering for Christ received in many places (2Co 6:4-6; 11:23ff.), probably actual scars from the scourgings (thirty-nine lashes at a time). If for no other reason, listen to me by reason of these scars for Christ and *let no one keep on furnishing trouble to me.*

Paul alludes to the suffering to which he had been subjected a number of times. The most complete list of the afflictions is found in II Cor. 11:23a-28:

In stripes above measure, in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day have I been in the deep; in journeyings often, in perils of rivers, in perils of robbers, in perils from my countrymen, in perils from the Gentiles,

in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in labor and travail, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Besides those things that are without, there is that which presseth upon me daily, anxiety for all the churches.

**6:18 - BRETHREN.** They had ministered to him when he needed it. He had preached the Gospel to them, led them to repent and trust Jesus Christ for their salvation, and planted their churches. He loved them and their waffling under the influence of the Judaizers could not destroy that love. Regardless of their rejection of the Gospel he had proclaimed to them and no matter how they false prophets had influenced their attitude about him, he still calls them his brethren.

Paul had written a heated letter, boldly attacking the Judaizers and rebuking the Galatians for following them and perverting the Gospel. He fought any effort to put works in the salvation picture. However, in 6:18 he concludes with a wish for peace and blessings.

Grace and mercy are like opposite sides of the same coin, one positive and the other negative. In mercy we do not get what we deserve, in grace we get what we could never deserve. Mercy means that I do not pay the supreme price for my sins. Grace means that Jesus paid the price for me.

Think of how appropriate it was for Paul to conclude with the word "Grace." "***Grace...be with your spirit.***"

## STUDY GOD'S WORD

Paul urged Timothy, "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (Tim 2:15). There is an urgent need today for Christians to study the Word of God and apply it in every area of life. John MacArthur (*Our Sufficiency in Christ, Word, Dallas, 1991, pp. 282*) has some timely thoughts on the adequacy of the Scripture for our life and our ministry.

The most dangerously effective assault on God's Word ... may be a subtle one that has been fostered primarily by those who think of themselves as Bible believers--but who doubt the perfect sufficiency of Scripture.

Contemporary evangelicalism has been beguiled and sabotaged by a ruinous lack of confidence in God's Word. I'm not talking about the question of whether God gave us an inerrant Bible. Of course He did. And the great majority of evangelicals accept that without question. But many who would never doubt the Bible's authenticity as God's Word or distrust its essential authority as a guide for righteous living have nevertheless accepted the notion that Scripture simply does not contain all we need to minister well in these complex and sophisticated modern times. So they turn to human expertise in the fields of psychology, business, government, politics, entertainment, or whatever else they think might supply some recipe for success that's lacking in Scripture [JM: 117].

MacArthur minces no words on this subject. Having already refuted the idea that believers need some experience beyond Christ, he attacks the notion that the Bible is somehow insufficient to equip us for the Christian life.

That perspective denies the glorious truth of the verses I've quoted at the beginning of this chapter. Most Christians are familiar with 2 Timothy 3:16--a key passage on inspiration: "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness." There Scripture claims to be the very breath of God ("inspired," *theopneustos* in Greek, means "God-breathed"). But don't miss the next verse. It tells us that the Bible is adequate to equip believers for every good work. Because Scripture ties these two claims together, it is either wholly inspired and wholly sufficient, or it is not inspired at all [JM2: 118].

***AMEN.*** Let it be so! And may the Holy spirit Who inspired the writing of this epistle, illuminate your heart and mind as you study it.