

## WRITER

Because of the statement of 5:2, and the introductory affirmation of 1:1, there is little question among Bible students that the apostle Paul wrote this letter. It was often Paul's practice to use a stenographer to inscribe his inspired words as he dictated. However, because of the seriousness of the Galatian problem, he sits down and personally writes this letter (6:1). The fact that he personally wrote the letter indicates the urgency by which the Holy Spirit inspired him to write in order to prevent an apostasy and the loss of souls (See also "Writer" in intro. to Rm). Paul had personally traveled the road of faith about which he writes in this letter.

## DATE

Though the exact date of the letter is unknown, some believe that the letter was written from Corinth between A.D. 56 and 58 while Paul was on his third mission journey. Disciples were first made in Antioch, Iconium, Lystra and Derbe in southern Galatia on the first mission journey in 47 and 48 (At 13,14). On the third journey, Paul passed through southern Galatia "*strengthening all the disciples*" (At 18:23). If he wrote the letter on the third journey when he was in Corinth, then we would understand that these disciples were about ten years in the faith, and it had been only a year or so after Paul had taught in the area. It is important to understand this because it gives us an idea of how soon apostasy to legal justification can set in among the disciples, as well as, how persistent the teachers of such a theology can be.

There is another consideration concerning the date of writing that might better enhance our understanding of the letter. Some Bible students believe the letter was written in 48 or 49, or possibly immediately after the Jerusalem meeting in Acts 15 when Paul received word concerning the great influence of judaizing teachers among the Galatian disciples. If this was the situation, then the influence of legal justification entered among

the disciples immediately after the preaching of Paul and Barnabas in southern Galatia on Paul's first mission journey. This may explain the unconverted character of those who came immediately out of legalistic Judaism into the fellowship of the disciples. This may also explain why Paul is so stern in this letter, for judaizing teachers had come from Judea and were taking advantage of newborn babes in the Lord.

If the letter were written immediately after their conversion, then we can understand that what Paul is teaching in this letter must be taught to new converts, for Paul had taught the principles of grace to the Galatians at the time of their conversion. It is necessary for new converts to understand the nature of God's grace that Paul is defending in this letter. Such is necessary, not only because grace motivates labor in the Lord, but an understanding of grace also helps prevent Christians from being carried away into legal theology.

If this letter were written around 48 or 49, then this would probably be the first inspired letter that was written by Paul, and possibly, the first letter of the New Testament canon. When considering the message of the letter, it is easy to understand why this would logically be one of the first portions of New Testament Scripture to be written. The Holy Spirit wanted any adverse effects of Jewish legalism to be eradicated at the very beginning of the infant church. In this letter, therefore, the Holy Spirit stops the influence of Jewish legalism before such could destroy the faith. The letter of Galatians is Paul's defense of the very foundation upon which our faith is based.

### **HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

The Greek name "Galatia" refers to the land of the Gauls or Celts (See 1 Co 16:1; 2 Tm 4:10; 1 Pt 1:1). The region is enclosed in Asia Minor or modern-day Turkey. The area of Galatia was originally settled by the Gauls who broke away from the main tribal groups of the Gauls in central Europe around 278 B.C. The Romans subdued the Gauls or Celts in 189 B.C. In 25 B.C., Caesar Augustus of Rome organized the area of Galatia into a Roman prov-

ince. Principal positions of government were given to Roman officials. Previous to Roman rule, and during the time of Antiochus the Great, many Jews had moved into the Galatian area. By the time of Paul's preaching, Judaism had thus spread throughout the region and greatly influenced the culture. Paul preached in this area on his first (At 13,14), second (At 16:6), and third mission journeys (At 18:23). Peter probably preached in this area after his stay in Antioch of Syria (See 1 Pt 1:1).

### DEFINITIONS

In reference to comments on Romans and Galatians, it is important to understand the use of the words "legalism," "law," and "justification" in reference to Paul's arguments (See also intro. to Rm). If this book were the first inspired New Testament Scripture to be written, then we assume that legalism is a system of religious thought that can destroy Christianity. It is essential, therefore, to understand the nature of this theology in its attack against the grace and truth that was revealed through Jesus.

#### A. Legalism:

The term "legalism" is the word commentators use to explain that with which Paul deals in his letters to the Roman and Galatian disciples. Though this word is not in the Bible, it is a word that Bible students use to identify a system of religion that Paul refers to as "*another gospel*" (1:6-9). It was a system of justification that was promoted in Judaism (the Jews' religion), the religion out of which Paul and most of the early disciples came (1:13,14). The stern nature of Paul's letter to the Galatians emphasizes that legalistic thinking is contrary to the truth of the gospel of grace that was revealed through the cross (Ti 2:11).

In the religious context of Judaism, performance of religious traditions, in conjunction with the Sinai law, was a very important aspect of the religious thinking and behavior of the Jews. The religious leaders of Judaism sought to establish their own righteousness (Rm 10:3). They affirmed that one could be justified before God on

the basis of performing law and doing meritorious deeds to atone for sin (Ph 3:9). In their relationship with God, therefore, they trusted in their own self-justification (Lk 18:9). When it came to pleasing God, the first thing that came to the Jewish mind was doing some good deed that would merit God's pleasure, and thus, one could feel that he earned the forgiveness of God (Mt 19:16). The Jews' emphasis in religion, therefore, was on a meritorious relationship with law and deeds by which one earned the grace of God.

In conjunction with the practice of the Sinai laws, the Jewish religious leaders had bound on the consciences of the people a host of religious traditions that were built around their heritage. Throughout the history of Israel, these traditions were added to the Sinai law until they were considered a part of the law. Therefore, the concept of law-keeping in religion resulted in a long tradition of added religious practices or regulations that would guard one from violating any precept of the Sinai law. These practices or regulations first became religious tradition, and then, religious law. Jesus dealt with this fabricated religion throughout His ministry.

It was on the Jews' system of religion that Jesus focused in Mark 7 when He spoke to the Pharisees and scribes who laid aside the commandment of God in order to keep their traditions (Mk 7:8). For example, there was no religious significance in the Sinai law about the washing of pots, pans and hands before or in relation to eating. These were only Jewish religious practices, though they were good practices in and of themselves. Nevertheless, nothing specifically is commanded in the Sinai law that one do such before eating. The Jewish religious leaders, after the authority of the tradition of the fathers, had bound these practices where God had not bound. In order to protect the precepts of cleanliness of the Sinai law that one not become unclean, the religious leaders thought it safe to orchestrate a host of protectionist laws in reference to cleanliness in order to make sure the original laws were kept.

What eventually happened is stated in Jesus' rebuke of the scribes and Pharisees in Mark 7:9. "All too well you

reject the commandment of God so that you may keep your own tradition.” Tradition not only moved Israel further away from the original laws of God and their purposes, but the traditions became laws that often took the place of the law themselves. Keeping the traditions became more important than keeping the simplicity of the original law. Thus God’s law became so obscure among the host of traditions that surrounded it that the people forgot the original intent for which God gave the Sinai law. This explains why the religious leaders confronted Jesus about healing on the Sabbath. The host of traditional laws that were established in order to make sure one kept the Sabbath became more important than the Sabbath rest itself.

The Jews had established a host of regulations in reference to the original Sabbath rest in order to guarantee that the Sabbath was kept. There were numerous regulations in the Jewish Mishnah that explained the strictness by which the Sabbath was to be kept. There was the “Sabbath journey” distance of a total of 8000 cubits to and from a destination, beyond which one could not journey on the Sabbath. There were regulations on behavior and food preparation. There was law upon law in order that Sabbath keeping be maintained. Attention thus turned from emphasizing the original purpose of the Sabbath to keeping all the minute regulations the Jews had added to the Sabbath. The more obedient to the regulations one became or was, the more righteous the Jew presumed he would be. The problem was in his emphasis on the traditional Sabbath laws, not the Sabbath law. By emphasizing strict external adherence to the traditional Sabbath regulations of the Sinai law, the Jews were actually moving further away from the original purpose of the law.

In Mark 7:1-9 Jesus portrayed the Jews’ digression from the law. Obedience to tradition as religious law led to the outward performance of law that was void of their heart. “*This people honors Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me*” (Mk 7:6). Their worship was thus in vain because their heart was not behind their legal performance of human religious traditions (Mk 7:7). Jesus

then identified their digression. They first taught the traditions of men (Mk 7:7). But their reverence for the traditions of men went further. They then laid aside the commandment of God (Mk 7:8). From this point, they even rejected the commandment of God so that they might keep their traditions (Mk 7:9). Their digression went from teaching as doctrine the traditions of men, to laying aside the commandment of God, and finally, to rejecting the commandment of God. Religious movements that do not honor the Bible as the final authority in religious matters will move in the same direction as the Jews. Paul saw the Galatians moving in the direction of the legal theology of the scribes and Pharisees, for he was once a Pharisee in his life.

Herein was the problem with Jewish legalism. By the time Jesus announced grace and faith, Jewish religious thought had digressed far from faith and grace by which God has always intended that men be saved. The Pharisees were so far removed from the faith of the Sinai law that the Holy Spirit pronounced that the Jews' religion was just that, the Jews' religion (1:13,14). Some translations of Galatians 1:13,14 use the rendering "Jews' religion." It was no longer God's revealed Sinai law. It was a system of religion that had been fabricated through the binding of the traditions of the fathers (See Mt 15:1-9; Mk 7:1-9).

The mentality of strict legal obedience to tradition constituted what the teachers of Judaism considered most important in reference to religious behavior. Jewish legalism, therefore, involved one's performance in obedience to religious traditions in order to stand justified before God. One's religiosity was measured by his adherence to established traditions. Since the Galatian situation involved Jews who had come into the fellowship of the disciples, then adherence to Jewish law and regulations, associated with the Sinai law and Jewish traditions, was considered necessary in order to supplement the grace of God.

However, many Jews by faith, as Paul, recognized that they could not keep the law perfectly, as well as the Jewish regulations that had been attached to the law. The

Jews' religion, therefore, became a burden that could not be borne (At 15:10). Jesus said that the Pharisees and scribes had laid heavy burdens on the people that the people could not bear (Mt 23:4). In frustration, and in order to atone for flaws in law-keeping, therefore, a system of doing good deeds was constructed by the Jews in order to atone for sin (See Lk 18:12).

The combination of perfect law-keeping, tradition-keeping and meritorious deeds, therefore, became a system of religion for the Jews. Those who were brought up in this environment of religious behavior had a difficult time understanding Paul's statement of Romans 8:2, "*For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has freed you from the law of sin and death.*" To the Galatians, Paul wrote, "*Stand fast therefore in the freedom by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage*" (5:1). The theological battle between the freedom one has in Christ and Jewish legalism came to a climatic debate among the disciples of Galatia. If the letter of Galatians was indeed the first inspired letter of the New Testament canon to be written, then the Holy Spirit wanted the concept of legalism immediately refuted and eradicated from the early growth and propagation of the gospel.

The historical context of legalism in the Galatian situation specifically refers to the judaizing teachers binding circumcision as an indication of conformity to their legal theology. However, we must not ignore the fact that religious legalism is an ever present threat to the church at any time in history. In Galatians, Paul is attacking man-made theologies. The binding of circumcision and ceremonies was only the manifestation of this theology among the early Christians. Since the 1st century, a host of other religious rules have been bound on believers. All such forms of religiosity are only manifestations of an erroneous concept of men seeking to establish their own system of righteousness. When men seek to establish their own system of righteousness, salvation by God's grace is forgotten.

It is always the tendency of religious people to move toward some regimented system in reference to both law and tradition. Such happens in order to establish a quick

fix for spiritual growth. It is easy to judge ourselves spiritual by some outward performance of law or tradition. It is more difficult to correct the heart by a loving response to grace. The problem with following the outward appearance of a complicated checklist of law-keeping is that the inward man can remain unchecked. Sins of attitude can go unchecked as we check off the outward appearance of our religion. However, when one responds inwardly to God's grace, there is no comparison of checklists between brothers. There is no occasion for boasting. One is moved to humble himself under the mighty hand of God in order to be lifted up by God, not by oneself (1 Pt 5:6). When one must concentrate on the inward man, the outward obedience to the will of God naturally follows.

**B. Justification:**

Justification is God's work for those who have accepted His saving grace through obedience to the gospel (Rm 8:33). Justification is a legal term that proclaims one to be liberated from guilt before the judge. Since the justified have been forgiven all sin, they are thus righteous before God on the basis of God's mercy and grace. The justified have been brought into a right relationship with God because of the atoning sacrifice of the cross (Rm 4:3,9). When one submits to obedience to the gospel, he is accounted righteous before God because sins are washed away by the blood of Jesus (Rm 1:17; 4:6).

Since justification comes from God in a complete and sufficient manner, then there is no such thing as measures of justification. When God forgives, He forgives completely. Since grace is not limited to the ability of man to perform law perfectly, or do meritorious deeds to atone for sin, then grace is offered in its fullest measure to all who are obedient to the gospel. Therefore, when the New Testament speaks of justification by God's grace, we must understand that justification is full and complete, and thus, needs no subsidy of meritorious deeds on the part of man (Rm 5:1,2).



**C. Law:**

There are two things about Paul's use of the word "law" that are important to understand in Galatians. The first refers to a translation problem and the second refers to the Jews' concept of law. Both points are related to one another.

**1. Paul deals with law in general.** Most translators seem to be eager to add the Greek article "the" to the text in reference to law in some contexts where no article was originally used. This is a significant addition, and one that sometimes limits the meaning of what Paul was trying to say. For instance, in the following translation of Galatians 2:16 notice the bold print which indicates the addition of the article to the text in conjunction with the word law. "*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*" (New King James Version). If we were reading from the Greek text, we would not be reading the word "the" in the text in reference to law. The text would simply read "law" (See comments 2:16).

What some translators of this verse assumed was that Paul was always talking specifically about the Sinai law. Certainly, the occasion for the writing of the letter of Galatians and Romans was to deal with Jewish legalism in reference to the Sinai law. However, the meaning and application of what Paul was saying is broader than the problem the disciples were facing in Galatia and Rome. What Paul wanted to convey is the fact that any religious law can be made a legal system of justification. And in the context of the Roman and Galatian situations, Paul wants it to be clearly understood that no man is ever justified by human performance of law. His point is, "*for by works of law no flesh will be justified.*" One can also delete the article in the parallel passage of Romans 3:20 where Paul states the same principle. "*Therefore by the deeds of ["the"] law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by ["the"] law is the knowledge of sin*" (See comments 2:16).

**2. Paul deals with human originated religious laws.** Law to the Jews was a system of religious codes and statutes that they had added to what God actually required in the law that was originally given through Moses. Their religion thus became the Jews' religion (1:13,14; see Mt 15:1-9; Mk 7:1-9). By the time of Jesus, the Jewish religious leaders had stolen the revealed law from God and imposed on the people a religious behavior that was foreign to the Sinai law. Obedience to law, therefore, meant that one must keep all the added codes that the Jews built around the Sinai law statutes. (In reference to a greater definition of Paul's various uses of the word "law," see the intro. to Rm).

#### **D. Grace:**

The word "grace" is used to translate the Greek word *charis*, which is often defined as "unmerited favor." It is the favor of God that cannot be earned by the meritorious obedience of man, for man cannot perform flawlessly in reference to law. Therefore, God had to initiate salvation regardless of man's dysfunctional relationship with law (Rm 5:8; see 2 Co 5:19). Salvation was not initiated from heaven because God saw righteousness on earth that motivated the action of the cross. On the contrary, on earth "*there was none righteous, no, not one*" (Rm 3:10). There was no possible way, therefore, for man to save himself through performance of law. For this reason, God had to initiate salvation by grace while we were all in sin (Rm 4:8).

Because of our own inability to live in a manner to be judged righteous, we cannot reach God through works and demand salvation. God, through grace, had to determine to save those, who through faith, were seeking salvation, but realized the inadequacies of their own obedience. God extended grace, but man had to obediently respond to the offer in order to accept the free gift.

It is one's own recognition of his inability to save himself that moves him to respond to the grace of God. This response is obedience and the establishment of law in our lives. When grace came, obedience abounded for those who believed because they recognized that their

salvation is dependent on the grace of God (1 Co 15:10). Herein is the key to the relationship one establishes between grace and law through obedience to the gospel. The legalist is working in order to earn his salvation. Because he is so working, his salvation is always in doubt. He is in doubt because he never knows if enough works have been accomplished in order to merit the reward of salvation.

When we recognize that our salvation has been granted by the grace of God upon our obedience to the gospel, our whole view of our relationship with God changes. The unbeliever must first recognize his inability to save himself in relation to God's will. He must ask, as those on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2, "*Men and brethren, what will we do?*" (At 2:37). This response to the cross of Christ leads to obedience of the gospel, that is, immersion in water for the remission of sins (See comments At 2:38; Rm 6:3-6). From this initial response to the cross of Christ, the newly born disciple works (obeys) in response to God's saving grace. He now responds to law because he is saved, not in order to be saved. In this way law is established in his life (Rm 3:31). In this way grace brings peace of mind. And for this reason, the Holy Spirit addressed New Testament Christians through Paul by saying, "*Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ*" (Rm 1:7; see 1 Co 1:3; 2 Co 1:2; Gl 1:3; Ep 1:2; Ph 1:2; Cl 1:2; 1 Th 1:1; 2 Th 1:2; 1 Tm 1:2; 2 Tm 1:2; Ti 1:4; Pl 1:3; 1 Pt 1:2; 2 Pt 1:2).

### THEME

The general theme of Galatians that represents a fundamental principle of Christianity is stated in 3:11. "*The just will live by faith*" (Rm 1:17; see Hk 2:4; Hb 10:38). Since this is a quotation from Habakkuk in the Old Testament, it is evident that this has always been God's plan of salvation. The righteous must through faith trust in the grace of God in order to be saved. Among the Galatian disciples, this principle was under attack.

In reference to the preceding theme, there is a specific theme that Paul maintains in order to uphold the teaching that the just will live by faith. This theme is ex-

pressed in 2:16 and 5:1. Judaizing teachers had entered the fellowship of the Galatian disciples. They were promoting a system of salvation that had been brought over from Pharisaical Judaism, that is, one could be saved by meritorious works of law and atoning deeds.

We must keep in mind that the judaizing teachers were teaching the gospel of the death of Jesus for our sins. They were proclaiming His resurrection for our hope. However, in their legal approach to salvation they were adding also the requirements of meritorious deeds as circumcision and some Sinai law ceremonies to the grace of God (At 15:1,2). In doing such, they attacked both the sufficiency of God's grace through the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross, as well as, our freedom from perfect law-keeping that comes as a result of God's grace. They sought to bring Christians under a system of justification by perfect law-keeping and meritorious deeds, and thus, bring them again into bondage (See 2:4; 4:3,9,24,25; 5:1; At 15:10).

Lest we fail to understand that this problem also exists in the religious world in which live, we must keep in mind that religious leaders today often make the same mistake as the judaizing teachers. As the judaizing teachers in the 1st century, some teach that one must obey the gospel of the death and resurrection of Jesus. However, some add to this gospel of grace that one must also conform to the traditions or opinions that are maintained by each particular religious group. Obedience to what defines a particular group is often of greater importance than obedience to the gospel. When one conforms to the identity of a particular religious group, it is supposed that his salvation is guaranteed. This is exactly what the judaizing teachers were proclaiming. That which was bound by the judaizers was different (circumcision), but the "other gospel" they were teaching was the same as those today who would bind either traditions or opinions on the consciences of men that God never intended to be bound in reference to salvation.

In both Romans and Galatians, Paul is dealing with similar problems concerning legal justification in reference to law. In his argument, however, we must not

forget the importance of God's law. The occasion for the writing of both Romans and Galatians was that the judaizing teachers in the Rome and Galatia contexts were using the Sinai law simply as a legal system to submit men to a legal code of justification by perfect law-keeping. They were wrong in their approach to God's law, but the Sinai law was right for the purpose for which it was given. The Sinai law led the nation of Israel to faith in Christ (3:24). The law was added to expose the sin of man, and thus, frustrate men with their inability to keep law perfectly (3:19; Rm 3:20; 7:13). The Sinai law, therefore, served its purpose. It brought Israel to faith in Jesus by frustrating sincere people who knew that they could not keep the law perfectly. But now, we are no longer under the Sinai law (3:25). It served its purpose. It was not given as a means of salvation, but as a means to bring Israel to salvation in Christ (See comments 3:19-29).

### **PURPOSE**

When Paul and Barnabas first evangelized southern Galatia, the majority of the first converts were Gentiles (At 13;14:24). However, by the time Paul wrote this letter, many Jews had been converted and were bringing into the fellowship of the disciples a legal system of self-justification through law-keeping, specifically the keeping of the law concerning circumcision. Add to this the encouragement of judaizing teachers who had gone out from Jerusalem in order to recruit Gentile disciples by binding circumcision as a condition for salvation (2:11-13; 4:17; 6:12,13; At 15:1,24). These judaizing teachers were intimidating the Gentile disciples into obeying Jewish religious customs and certain Sinai laws in order to legally save themselves (4:10; 5:2,11; 6:12; At 15:1,2). As a result, the disciples in the area of southern Galatia were on the verge of apostasy to a system of self-justification by works of law (1:6; 3:1). Paul writes this letter in order to stop this apostasy before it destroyed Christianity in the region. He wrote to warn against the judaizing teachers who taught that Gentile Christians must be circumcised and keep other ordinances of judaistic religious law in order to be saved (At 15:1). Galatians, therefore, is

the Holy Spirit's declaration of independence from both Jewish and Gentile legalism that would destroy the freedom one has in Christ (See comments 5:1).

The propagation of legal justification in Galatia came from the judaizing teachers who followed in the footsteps of Paul (Compare At 14:19). Their purpose was to "save the saved" by binding on the disciples things that God had not bound. This practice of recruiting the saved can be seen in Paul's statements of what these teachers tried to do when they came from Jerusalem to Antioch of Syria. Even Peter and Barnabas were intimidated by their presence, and thus, withdrew from the Gentile disciples (2:11-13). Paul also stated that these teachers, who were seeking to recruit the Galatians, gloried in their flesh, that is, they gloried in the fact that they presented themselves righteous before God because of their heritage and law-keeping (See 4:17; 6:12,13). For this reason, circumcision became the identification mark of those who sided with the legalistic judaizing teachers in this early controversy.

The result of turning to legal justification was expressed in 5:4: "*You have been severed from Christ, you who seek to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace.*" Though Paul is correcting doctrinal problems in the letter, the underlying danger was the Galatians' loss of their salvation. By adding to the grace of God, they were actually proclaiming the insufficiency of God's grace. In doing so, they would be fallen from grace. Paul thus writes with urgency and the eternal salvation of the Galatian disciples on his shoulders. Galatians was written in order to prevent the saved from losing their salvation in Christ.

The legalistic theology of the scribes and Pharisees is what put Jesus on the cross (See comments Mt 23). Jesus did not fit into their system of religiosity. He was thus rejected as the Messiah of Israel. It was in the letters to the Galatians and Romans that the Holy Spirit stopped this system of legal theology, for such thinking attacked the very foundation upon which our faith is based. If the judaizers were right, then salvation by grace was wrong. Grace does not exist in the presence of salvation by meritorious works of law-keeping.

**HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

Justification through meritorious behavior was prevalent among the disciples of Rome and Galatia. This form of religiosity led to the writing of two profound pieces of inspired literature. If the system of religious legalism prevailed among the disciples of Rome and Galatia, then it would have been the end of Christianity in these regions.

Jewish legalism permeated the thinking of Jews by the time Jesus came. This is brought out clearly in the ministry of Jesus and in the work of Paul among the Jews. During the ministry of Jesus, a rich young person came to Jesus and said, "*Teacher, what good thing must I do so that I may have eternal life*" (Mt 19:16; Lk 10:25; see Mk 10:17-31). The emphasis of the one who asked this question was on what he could do in order to earn eternal life. He certainly had to do the commandments, as Jesus stated (See Mt 19:18,19). However, obedience to the commandments alone would not put God in debt to give one the reward of heaven. Jesus said, "*When you have done all that is your duty to do, ask, 'What lack I yet?'*" (Lk 17:10).

One can keep all the commandments as the rich young ruler. However, what he lacked was his ability to keep all the law perfectly. The problem was his inability to keep all the commandments perfectly. In other words, one can keep the law to the best of his ability, but still lack. And that lack brings condemnation (Js 2:10). The rich young ruler in Mark 10 had observed the commandments from his youth (Mk 10:20). However, he lacked, for Jesus said, "*One thing you lack: Go your way, sell whatever you have*" (Mk 10:21). The lesson Jesus wanted us to understand was one that the Jewish thinking of His day could not. The lesson was that there is always lack when it comes to law-keeping and good deeds. We are all "*unprofitable bondservants*" (Lk 17:10) "*who have turned aside from the way*" (Rm 3:12). James states, "For whoever will keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he has become guilty of all" (Js 2:10). Therefore, when we think we have done all that is necessary for salvation, we still lack what is required to be saved. We must thus have God's grace in order to be saved. Man cannot of him-

self save himself. And when he sins, he cannot perform enough good works in order to either atone for his sins or earn his way into heaven.

On another occasion during His ministry, Jesus gave a parable concerning the thinking of the Pharisees. Luke recorded, *“Now He spoke this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others”* (Lk 18:9). The parable was of the Pharisee who self-righteously prayed, *“God, I thank You that I am not as other men”* (Lk 18:11). Herein is the problem that had come in among the Roman and Galatian Christians. There were those who trusted in themselves. They trusted in their ability to perform law, and thus, exalted themselves over others.

Paul was formerly a Pharisee. He reminded the Galatians of his zeal as a legalistic religionist who performed the codes of Judaism (1:13,14; see Ph 3:4-6). He thus knew the mentality of the Pharisees, and Judaism in general. However, after reviewing his previous life in the Jewish legal system of religion, he counted that system of religiosity, with its positions of authority, as rubbish in order to gain the excellence of the knowledge of Jesus (Ph 3:7-9). Paul escaped the legal system of Judaism wherein one attempted to establish his own righteousness by works of law and meritorious deeds. He escaped through faith in Christ.

In Romans 10 Paul looked back to the futility of the Jewish situation concerning the Jews' efforts to save themselves through law-keeping (See Rm 10:1). He knew the Jews' predicament. He had also experienced the futility of justification by works of law, for he had also sought to establish his own righteousness before God (See comments Rm 10:3). The Jews sought to trust in their own ability to perform law. In doing such, they bypassed the righteousness of God that came through Jesus. Their pride in their own Pharisaical ability to keep law hindered them from accepting the fact that *“Christ is the end of law for righteousness to everyone who believes”* (Rm 10:4).

In coming out of Jewish legalism, the Jewish Christians learned to put their trust in God for their salvation



(At 14:23). They learned to trust not in themselves, but in the grace of God. The legalistic problems among both the Roman and Galatian disciples had arisen because of novice Christians who had been deceived into believing the legal system of those who were still taking pride in their religious performance. Paul wrote the Galatian letter in order to stamp out this problem. Once one is finished with this letter, there is the certain feeling that we are totally dependent on God for granting us the gift of salvation by His grace.

It is sometimes easy for Bible students to relegate the message of Galatians to the 1st century by assuming that Paul's discussion in the book centered around binding on the early Christians some of the precepts of the Sinai law. And since it is assumed that we do not have this problem today among most religious groups, then Paul's principle argument in Galatians is not relevant to us. This is a serious misunderstanding of the message the Holy Spirit seeks to convey through this document. Through Galatians, the Spirit is warning anyone who would attack the grace of God by adding man-made mandates of legal religiosity that focuses on the performance of man. If we miss the Spirit's message of Galatians on this matter, then we have missed the purpose for which the document is a part of the New Testament canon of Scriptures.

Legalistic theology attacks the very nature of God. Therefore, in dealing with the problem of legal justification that was threatening the Galatian disciples, Paul was writing to defend and proclaim certain fundamental concepts concerning the nature of God.

### **A. Paul defends the loving nature of God.**

If God is loving, and thus, not willing that any should perish (2 Pt 3:9), then certainly He would not submit men to a legal system of law that demanded in and of itself perfect obedience in order to be saved. He would be fiendish if He did such, because He knows that no man can keep law perfectly in order to be saved (Rm 3:9,10).

The problem with law is man, not the law. God has pronounced that all are under sin because all men are lawbreakers (Rm 3:10,23). No man, therefore, can keep

law perfectly in order to be justified by law. God would not be loving if He condemned to hell those He knew could not keep His law perfectly in order to save themselves. Since men cannot obey law perfectly in order to be legally justified in the sight of God, or do meritorious works in order to atone for sin, then it is necessity that God save man by His grace. Salvation, therefore, depends on the grace of God, not on the ability of mankind to keep law perfectly in order to save himself.

### **B. Paul defends the justice of God in judgment.**

The theological system of legal justification of the legalistic teachers makes God a respecter of persons. Since no man can work in order to save himself by perfect keeping of law, then God must determine who is going to be saved on the basis of meritorious works and law-keeping. The standard of salvation, therefore, would depend entirely on one's ability to perform law and do meritorious works. This means that those who would have a greater chance of being saved would be those who were more successful in accumulating meritorious deeds by which to atone for their sins. The result of this concept of salvation would be that in judgment God must be a respecter of persons. He would be left to judge only on the merit of one's works and performance of law. Those who would have the most deeds and best performance of law would subsequently have a better chance of salvation (See comments Rm 4:4; 11:6).

Some have erroneously believed that they can trade their meritorious deeds in a fair deal to receive the reward of heaven. But how can one fairly exchange a few years of faithful work on earth for the reward of eternal glory in an unending heaven? Only arrogance would lead one to think such. There is no possible way that we could fairly exchange our labors on earth for the glories of heaven. We cannot exchange twenty or fifty years of faithfulness to God for an eternity of rest in heaven. We owe God more than what we can pay. We will receive more than what we can buy (See comments Rm 8:18). The fact that God is willing to give all of heaven to us for all of eternity, though we do not deserve it, is evidence of

how much He cares for us. The more we understand the glories of heaven, the more we appreciate the grace of God.

In His parable of the laborers, Jesus illustrated the justice of God in judgment that is based on grace (Mt 20:1-16). It was not without purpose that only Matthew, who was writing specifically to a Jewish audience, records this particular parable of Jesus.

In the parable, all the workers agreed to be paid the same wage for a day's work. Upon agreement of wages, the laborers were glad to have a job instead of standing unemployed in the marketplace. In the eleventh hour, more workers were hired. All was well until it was time for payment for labor at the end of the day. Every man received the same pay regardless of the time he worked in the vineyard (Mt 20:9).

Jesus surely had the Jews in mind, specifically the Pharisees, when He said, "*But when the first came, they supposed that they would receive more*" (Mt 20:10). But Jesus reminded them that the wages would be the same for all who worked in the vineyard. The owner of the vineyard had the right to award one for working in the vineyard, regardless of how long he worked (Mt 20:13-15). Grace gives equal reward, regardless of an accumulation of good works or length of faithful work as a laborer. Heaven will not be meted out in measures. Since the reward ("pay") far exceeds any amount of work that one can possibly do to earn it, then even those who work the longest will be rewarded according to grace.

### **C. Paul defends the gracious nature of God.**

When the prodigal son returned from his wayward journey to the pig pen, Jesus said that the loving father received him back with a kiss and a feast (Lk 15:20). This is the nature of the God of the Bible. He is loving, gracious and forgiving. But this is contrary to the behavior of God that the scribes and Pharisees would have us believe.

The scribes and Pharisees were as the older brother who stayed with the father and faithfully carried out his duties as a son. The older brother stayed and performed

well. The prodigal son, however, ran from his duty, but returned with a repentant heart. The older, "faithful" brother wondered why the father could eagerly forgive and invite the prodigal brother back. The point is that God's grace does not keep a score card of "faithful" duties. Repentance brings the full grace of God into action in the life of any individual. There is no "paying penitence" in order to work oneself into the graces of God. Grace forgives. God forgives completely. He forgives fully upon the condition of repentance, not meritorious deeds.

We must remember that much was at stake concerning the truth of Christianity as the Holy Spirit spoke through the inspired pen of Paul. Understanding this helps us to answer our questions concerning why Paul was so stern in this epistle. There is more to be considered than a few false teachers who promoted a doctrine of legal justification. The Holy Spirit did not write simply for the benefit of the Galatian disciples. He wrote for the benefit of all Christians until the coming of Jesus. The Holy Spirit knew that legalistic theology is always a threat at any time in history. Therefore, the Galatian problem presented the occasion for the writing of an inspired document that will help guard the members of the body against the onslaught of this system of religiosity that attacks the very nature of the God who lovingly gave His Son on the cross of Calvary. Paul thus defends the gospel of grace that was revealed through the Son of God.

### **Introduction To The Problem**

(1:1-10)

**Outline:** (1) Greetings (1:1-5), (2) Warning of the other gospel (1:6-10)

## **Chapter 1**

### **GREETINGS**

**1:1** Paul is here affirming his Christ-sent apostleship (vss 11,12; At 9:15, 20:24; 2 Co 1:1). This apostleship equals him in responsibility with the original twelve apostles who were personally called by Jesus during

His earthly ministry (See Mk 3:13-19; Lk 6:13; At 9:6; 1 Co 3:6,10; 12:28; 2 Co 12:12; Ep 2:20; 4:12; Ti 1:3). This meant that he had the same responsibility as the Twelve because he was called and sent out personally by Jesus (1:11,12). Though he was personally called to be an apostle by Jesus out of the ordinary time when apostles were called, he was still a Christ-sent apostle (See At 9:1-18; 1 Co 9:1; 15:7-9). Though he did not have the qualifications of an apostle as set forth in Acts 1:21,22 (At 2:32; 3:15), he still fulfilled the qualification of being an apostle by the personal calling of Jesus. Thus, in order to be a Christ-sent apostle one had to either fulfill the qualifications of Acts 1:21,22 or be personally called by Jesus. **Apostle:** The word "apostle" is also used in the New Testament in a general sense of one being sent forth by the church (At 14:14; 2 Co 8:23; Ph 2:25). The equivalent would be an evangelist who is sent forth to preach the gospel. To be a church-sent apostle, therefore, one must go forth. He cannot stay at home. In the context here reference was to Paul's Christ-sent apostleship. This meant that he had special responsibility as an apostle as he went forth (See 2 Co 12:12). Paul was a Christ-sent apostle especially called for a mission to the Gentiles (At 9:15; Rm 1:1; 1 Co 1:1; 9:1,5ff). **Not from men:** In this letter Paul defends his Christ-commissioned apostleship against those who were denying such by their claim that they also had the position of an apostle. Paul reminds the Galatians that he became an apostle, not by the commissioning of men, as those who denied his special Christ-sent apostleship. On the contrary, he was an apostle by special appointment directly from God. **Raised:** Paul wants to remind the Galatians that Christianity is based on the fact of the resurrection of Jesus from the dead (See At 2:24; 1 Co 15:1-4,14ff). Without this resurrection, Christianity has no real foundation that will distinguish it from other religions of the world (See At 17:18).

**1:2 Galatia:** This letter was probably directed to the disciples in the southern part of Galatia that Paul and Barnabas established on Paul's first mission journey (At 13,14). This would at least include the Christians in the cities of Antioch, Iconium, Lystra and Derbe (See 1 Co 16:1).

**1:3 Grace ... peace from God:** This common greeting of Paul was his desire that God's blessing of salvation by grace would bring inward contentment (Rm 1:7; 1 Co 1:3; 2 Co 1:2; Ep 1:2; 1 Th 1:1). There is also a salvational statement here in the sense that God's grace brings peace between God and man. It is by the grace of God that sin is forgiven. Since there can be no peace between God and man as long as sin reigns in our lives, man is in need of grace. The proposition of Paul's message is that we have peace with God because of His grace, not because of our meritorious works of law or atoning good works. Those who seek legal justification based on their own merit have no peace of mind simply because they never know if they have performed enough good works in order to merit their salvation. Those who trust in the grace of God have peace of mind because they trust in God, not in themselves. They have peace of mind because they are at peace with God concerning their salvation by God's grace.

**1:4 Gave Himself:** It was God's eternal purpose and will that Jesus be offered as an atoning sacrifice for the sins of men (Mt 20:28; Mk 10:45; Rm 4:25; 1 Co 15:3; Ep 5:2; 1 Tm 1:15; 2:6; Ti 2:14). In the foreknowledge of God, Jesus was thus crucified before the creation of the world (Rv 13:8; see Ep 1:4). This significant statement of introduction to the Galatians is here emphasized in order to establish the foundation upon which Paul will build his proposition. We are saved by the atonement of Jesus on the cross as opposed to meritorious deeds and works of law. This has always been God's plan of salvation for man (See comments 3:11; see Ep 1:3-6; 3:8-12; 1 Pt 1:2). **Age:** Through the sacrifice of Jesus one is delivered by obedient faith from the darkness of the wicked age in which he lives (Hb 2:5; 1 Jn 5:19).

**1:5 Glory:** Paul wants to remind the Galatians that all glory must go to God, the Father (See comments At 14:12-15). Glory does not go to the church. It is the church that must give glory to God (Mt 5:16; Rm 7:25; 9:5; 11:36; 1 Co 6:20; 2 Co 9:15; Ep 3:20). Those who trust in their meritorious performance of good works boast in their performance of law (Ep 2:9). Christians who work in order to

bring glory to themselves, are often reflecting their desire to meritoriously be justified before God. They thus glory in their accomplishments (6:13). However, those who realize that they are saved by God's grace recognize that no one is righteous before God on the merit of performing law and works (Rm 3:9,10). We are all unprofitable servants (Lk 18:14) and have nothing of which to glory concerning our own efforts toward our salvation. All glory must go to God for His tremendous gift of grace though the cross of Jesus (2 Co 9:15).

### WARNING OF THE OTHER GOSPEL

**1:6 I am amazed:** Paul expresses great astonishment and surprise concerning the Galatians' apostasy from the truth so soon after the entrance of the judaizing teachers into their fellowship. His surprise could also be directed toward their apostasy so soon after their conversion and his personal presence among them (3:1; 5:8). After all, the Christians were only one or two years old in the faith in this region, and at the most seven or eight years, depending on the date of writing. Paul had been there about a year before the letter was written if we accept the early date of writing to be 48 or 49. The rapidity by which they accepted the legalism of the judaizers surprised him. In this statement, Paul sought to shock them into realizing that there is a difference between what they were accepting and the truth of grace he had only a short time before taught them. **Turning away:** The Greek present tense is used here which emphasizes progressive action. The indication is, therefore, that there was a process of apostasy that was rapidly occurring at the very time Paul wrote this letter (3:1; 5:8; see also Rm 8:30; 9:24; 1 Co 1:9; 1 Th 5:24; 2 Th 2:14). The nature of this letter reflects urgency. Paul writes as if he has just heard of the apostasy. He thus writes in order to stop their turning away from their freedom that they had gained in Christ. His plea in the Galatian letter concerning their return to legalistic religion is the same as his letter to the Colossians (See comments Cl 2:20-23). Understanding the nature of legal justification explains why they were turning to such. Such religions appeal

to man in his religiosity to manifest an outward performance of religion. Men like the pomp of show in order to parade their institutional religion before others (See 4:10; Mt 23:5-7; Lk 18:9-14; Ph 3:1-10). Jesus had said the same in reference to the system of religion that was believed by the Pharisees and scribes who loved to be in places of prominence (See Mt 23:6,7). These religionists like to create a religion that appeals to the carnal desires of men to walk ceremoniously before others. Instead of humbly walking by faith (2 Co 5:7), and worshiping God in spirit and truth (Jn 4:24), the legalists will create a religion that can be identified by the senses of men. Thus, religiosity is relegated to a system of worship through the performance of acts and ceremonies. In their religious performances, such religionists like to compete with their fellow man. In their concentration on outward manifestations of ceremonies, performance of codes and duties allows them the opportunity to compare themselves with themselves (See 6:13,14). Because of this appeal to a religion that is created after the carnal desires of men, the Galatians were scurrying after that which they could measure by sight and not by faith. They were deceived into thinking that performance of codes was the road to spiritual growth. At least, the performance of their religiosity gave an outward pretense of spirituality. **Called:** At the final judgment, the church as a group will be called out of the world for eternal salvation in the new heavens and earth (2 Pt 3:13). All who free-morally make a choice to become members of the church now are thus called in this present time. Individually, people are called out of the world into the church by the preaching of the gospel, to which one free-morally must choose to obey (Rm 8:30; 9:24; 1 Co 1:9; 1 Th 5:24; 2 Th 2:14). **Grace of Christ:** This is the fundamental teaching that is under attack. It is thus a central theme of the letter (1:3,6,15; 2:9,21; 5:4; 6:18). **Another gospel:** The Greek word *heteros* (another), that is used here, is sometimes translated "different." The word is used here to refer to another gospel of a different kind. The "gospel" to which they were apostatizing was not the one true gospel of grace that was revealed through Jesus. Paul is here using the



term “gospel” (good news) as it was no doubt counterfeited by the judaizing teachers who used it to refer to their system of salvation by legal justification. The fact that Paul says that it is a “different gospel” teaches that any distortion or perversion of the true gospel is simply considered to be another gospel. Keep in mind that the judaizing teachers were preaching the gospel that Paul taught in reference to the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus. The problem was that they were teaching the gospel, plus works, and thus teaching another gospel. They were adding requirements to the grace of God, and by such, assuming the insufficiency of the grace of God. In this context, the phrase “another gospel” is used to refer to more than the good news of the atoning death, burial and resurrection of Jesus. In contrast to this other gospel, the covenant and doctrinal relationship that are established through one’s obedience to the death, burial and resurrection are here understood to be the gospel of grace. In the Galatian context, all the implications of God’s grace that appeared through the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus are thus under attack by the judaizing teachers who teach “another gospel.” They are adding a system of justification by law-keeping to the simple gospel of grace. Paul uses the word “gospel” as a synecdoche to refer to God’s covenant of grace that was revealed through the cross and is established with the believer through obedience to the gospel. He uses the term “another gospel” to refer to the judaizers’ message of a “gospel plus works.”

**1:7 Another:** The Greek word *allos* in this verse suggests difference in numerical existence, or different in the sense of being an added value or kind. In other words, Paul affirms that there is no other gospel than the single gospel that was revealed when he first preached to the Galatians. The preaching of anything different after his initial proclamation of the gospel (See 2 Co 2:17), was simply an addition to the only gospel that exists (See Rm 1:16; 1 Co 15:1-4; 1 Th 2:2,8,9). What he is saying to the Galatians is that if anything is added to or taken from the message he first preached to them, it is another gospel. As will be seen in his discussions in the remainder

of the letter, the other gospel is a system of self-justification by works or meritorious deeds. The Galatians knew what was being taught by the judaizing teachers. We do not discover this teaching until we study the rest of the letter. However, we must be perfectly clear here in understanding that the "other gospel" Paul identifies is the doctrine of legal justification by meritorious obedience. The entire letter is the Holy Spirit's identification of this doctrine and denunciation thereof as a perversion of the truth of the one true gospel (1:6-9). This system of religion not only destroys the fellowship of the disciples and spirituality of the believers, but it also destroys one's relationship with God. Those who are of such a persuasion are thus fallen from grace (5:4). Therefore, with great seriousness we approach this letter. This doctrinal mentality is one of the greatest problems among disciples in times when traditional religious practices are made law, and thus, are made legal requirements for fellowship and salvation. **Some:** Paul does not name those who were causing the trouble by teaching a false gospel. It is interesting to note that though he sternly rebukes these false teachers, he does not mention their names. When it comes to serious doctrinal deviation, names are not important, lest in the debate over the doctrinal problem, personalities cloud the discussions. Slandorous statements to discredit the character of one's opposition does not prove one's argument. **Disturbing you:** The legalistic teachers of the early church were troubling the Gentile disciples (At 15:1,24; 2 Co 2:17). They were causing tension in the fellowship of the disciples by their additions to the one true gospel. Paul's statement here indicates that these teachers had not yet succeeded in completely leading the disciples astray. However, there was imminent danger that some members would be lost to the influence of those who were recruiting members in the brotherhood for the purpose of binding where God had not bound (See 4:17; 6:13). What was happening was that these teachers were causing trouble by binding those things God had never bound (See Rm 16:17,18). **Pervert:** The word translated "pervert" here means to change to the opposite (See its use in At 2:20;

Js 4:9). There were those who were changing the result of the gospel by reversing the very nature of the gospel. They were changing the gospel into a legal system of justification, and thus, reversing the results of what would occur in the life of the individual in eternity. By binding where God had not bound, the judaizing false teachers were actually perverting the true gospel. They were thus going beyond the gospel (See comments 2 Jn 9,10). When one adds to God's redemption of man by His grace, he is going beyond what God requires for salvation. He thus goes beyond the teaching of Christ. Those who bind where God has not bound, have gone beyond the freedom that we have in Christ. They are changing the covenant relationship we have with God, and thus, changing the effect of the covenant relationship. The true gospel and teaching of Christ produce freedom in Christ. In this letter, Paul will eventually exhort the Galatians to stand fast in this freedom (5:1). Those who would violate this principle have perverted the gospel. They have changed the Christian's covenant with God. They have reversed the motivation for obedience. The legalist is working in order to earn or merit his reward that is based on his performance of law. In contrast to this motivation, when one focuses on grace, he works because he is saved (See 1 Co 15:10). These two views of one's relationship with God are opposite to one another.

**1:8 An angel from heaven:** Paul seems to resort here to hyperbole in referring to angels. The point is for emphasis. He is serious about this matter. It is not that there are angels preaching the gospel, but if such were the case, they would be accursed from God for preaching anything but salvation by grace, the free gift of God (See comments At 8:26).

**1:9** Paul is serious, direct and intolerant in warning against those who would teach a legal system of justification in addition to the true gospel (5:12; 2 Jn 9,10). **Accursed:** Another translation would be "anathema." The meaning refers to that which is dedicated to destruction. The judaizing teachers will suffer the condemnation of being eternally destroyed from the preserving presence of God (2 Th 1:7-9). They will suffer such because they

are denying the sufficient atonement of the cross that came by the grace of God (Ti 2:11). By adding legal works to the gospel, they are proclaiming that the grace of God is insufficient. Those who teach such a legal system of justification, and thus, by such cause division among the disciples, are here under a severe denunciation by the Holy Spirit. Those who add to God's saving grace are adding to God's atonement for our sins by the cross of Christ (Compare Rv 22:18,19).

**1:10 Please men:** Paul quickly refutes those who were accusing him of seeking the favor of men by preaching those things that pleased men. He was telling them the truth (4:16). No servant of God can please all men and at the same time please God (See Mt 6:24; Js 4:4). Paul is not teaching in order to escape the persecution of those judaizing teachers who would bind where God has not bound. In fact, by the time he closes the letter, he will point out those who are teaching a legalistic doctrine in order "*that they might not suffer persecution for the cross of Christ*" (6:12). The unbelieving Jews followed Paul from city to city, making plots to stir up the audience against him or plots to kill him (At 9:20,23,29; 14:5; 20:3; 23:12; 25:3). If he were preaching to please men, then certainly he would not have been enduring this constant persecution. Paul affirms that those who preach to please men are not servants of Christ. They are preaching for their own benefit (See At 20:30; Rm 15:17,18; Ph 3:17-19). And since they are preaching for their own benefit, they are self-centered in reference to preaching that which calls for one to sacrifice all, if necessary, in order to bring men into a saving relationship with God.

### The Autobiographical Argument

(1:11 - 2:21)

**Outline:** (1) Christ-sent apostleship (1:11-17), (2) Paul's visit to Jerusalem (1:18-24), (3) Paul meets the apostles (2:1-10), (4) Paul rebukes Peter (2:11-14), (5) Justification by faith (2:15-21)

### CHRIST-SENT APOSTLESHIP

**1:11** One characteristic of legalism is that those who promote such often deny God's authority in order to promote their own authority that is manifested through the

binding of the laws of man. **Not according to man:** Paul's apostleship was under attack as the judaizing teachers tried to discredit his message by discrediting him. Therefore, Paul here reaffirms that his message to them was not invented by men. He did not receive it from any man. It was not taught to him by men. In contrast to these normal ways men receive their religious heritage, he received the gospel he preached directly from God by revelation (See 1 Co 2:7-13; Ep 3:3-5; 2 Pt 1:20,21). The gospel Paul preached was not the invention of Paul or any man. It was not the accumulated theology of men who put together their ideas to formulate a systematic theology. Contrary to what the judaizing teachers were doing, Paul preached what was revealed from God and not the traditions of the fathers (See Mk 7:1-9).

**1:12 Neither received it from man:** As was the case with Jewish oral tradition, such was not so in reference to Paul's reception of the gospel. The true gospel did not originate from the oral proclamation of myths and fables, doctrines and teachings of Jewish rabbis or story tellers (See Mk 7:1-9). It was revealed from God to man through Jesus and the apostles. **But:** The Greek word *alla* that is used here means to emphasize a sharp contrast from what has just been said. The gospel did not come to Paul through oral tradition. He was not taught such in a rabbinical school. On the contrary, the true gospel came to Paul through direct revelation from God. **Revelation:** The gospel came to Paul as a result of direct revelation from God (1 Co 2:10-13; Ep 3:3-5). This revelation began by Jesus' personal revelation to him on the Damascus road (vss 16,17; see 2 Co 12:1). It continued as truth was revealed to Paul, possibly while he was in Arabia (1:17,18). Though the Galatian letter was written by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, it contains no new revelation to the Galatians. The Galatians had been taught the revelation Paul had received concerning the truth of the gospel. Through Paul, the Holy Spirit is now encouraging them not to forsake what they already know.

**1:13 My behavior in the past:** Paul's former manner of behavior was a life in the Jew's religion. When the church was first established in Jerusalem and Judea, his

conduct of life was to destroy the church (At 8:1-3; 9:1ff; 23:4,5; 26:9-12; 1 Co 15:9; Ph 3:6; 1 Tm 1:13). However, through divine intervention, this manner of life was changed. His sincerity took him from being the persecutor to being the persecuted. **Judaism:** Some translations read, "Jews' religion." By the time of the coming of Jesus and the establishment of the early church, the Jews had moved away from true faith that was based on the law of the Old Testament (See Mt 15:1-9; Mk 7:1-9). By the addition of Jewish religious traditions, the Jews thought that their covenant relationship with God was based on the conditions that they had created after their own traditions. Therefore, after the establishment of the church, the confrontation between Christianity and Judaism was not a confrontation between the Sinai law teachings and the law of Christ. The confrontation was between those of the legal, works-oriented religion of Judaism, and those who trusted in God through faith. It was those of the Jew's religion who put Jesus on the cross and persecuted the community of God who had accepted the grace of God through faith. The Jews of Judaism persecuted the Jews who were sons of God by faith. The Jews who were sons of God by faith were considered liberal by the Jews who were in the bondage of their own religious institutions.

**1:14 Advanced:** Paul excelled above his peers in learning the religious customs and laws of the Jews' religion (At 22:3; 26:9; Ph 3:5,6). He was growing in his studies and work of Judaism before he encountered Jesus on the Damascus road. As many Jews of his time, he was fanatical to maintain the purity of Judaism and his growth in this religious system (At 9:1; 22:4). Paul seems here to be reaffirming his credibility in order to deal with the judaizing problem among the disciples. He knows what he is talking about. He had long since repented of that which he now worked against. He repented from following after a religion that had been formed after the traditions of men, a religion that assumed that obedience to law in and of itself would justify one before God. Though Paul was zealously driven by his legal obedience to Judaism, he worked more abundantly when he realized God's

grace (See comments 1 Co 15:10; 2 Co 4:15).

**1:15 Separated me:** When we compare Paul's quotation of Isaiah 49:1-6 in Acts 13:47 with what is said here, we understand that Paul felt a keen sense of destiny to fulfill in his life the prophecy of Isaiah. He now believed that before his birth, God had determined to separate him to fulfill a special part in the divine plan of early world evangelism to the Gentiles. This is in agreement with God's plans to raise up special people to accomplish His work (See Jg 2:16; 3:9; Jr 1:5; ; Jl 1:1; Mc 1:1; Rm 13:1-4,6). Paul argues that the right conclusion to the tremendous and sudden transformation of his life can be answered only in the fact that he had a divine encounter. The change from the intensity of his havoc of the church to the zeal to preach the gospel can be answered in no other way. His conversion was the result of the direct hand of God. God's direct revelation to him was God's gift that he be called into apostleship. It did not come as a result of Paul's work. God knew what He was going to do with Paul before he was even born. God knew what Paul would do before he had done anything that might be interpreted that he had earned God's favor.

**1:16 Reveal His Son:** The Father specifically and uniquely revealed Jesus to Paul in order to call him to apostleship for the Gentiles (See At 9:1ff; 22:3ff; 26:2ff; 2 Co 4:6). His call was the work of God, not man (See Jh 2:9). It was by grace, not by Paul's work. After he was personally called on the Damascus road, and his subsequent obedience to the gospel in Damascus, Paul did not receive instructions from any man concerning the truth of the gospel. God revealed through the Holy Spirit what he was to preach. Paul's argument here was to affirm the divine origin of his message. He was not, as the judaizing teachers who were promoting a man-made system of religion that was invented and propagated by those who demanded conformity to a system of belief. Since God had directly revealed what he preached, he had no need to conform to the whims of those who sought to bind where God had not bound.

**1:17 Arabia:** In order to prove his point, Paul says that he went into Arabia (See At 9:22,23). If he had confided

immediately with those in Jerusalem, then there would be the accusation that he received his appointment from either the apostles or "false brethren" who were influential judaizers in Jerusalem (See 2:4). He was thus kept from the influence of the Jewish-oriented church in Jerusalem by going to Arabia. He did not go to Jerusalem until three years after his conversion, during which time he was already preaching the gospel of grace (At 9:20-22). We are not told to what part of Arabia he went, or exactly why he went. Nor do we know how long he stayed in the actual region of Arabia. It might be assumed, however, that he went there for personal solitude and the transformation of his thinking (Rm 12:2). The point is that Paul wants the Galatian brethren to know that he is not proclaiming an invented religion after the traditions of men as is the case with the former religion of Judaism that he promoted. Nor is he promoting a Jewish influenced Christianity of Jerusalem.

### PAUL'S VISIT TO JERUSALEM

**1:18 After three years:** This is three years after his conversion (See At 9:23, 26ff). This explains how long Paul was in the area of Damascus and the region of Arabia. We might assume that he was three years in Arabia. However, this assumption is not necessary. His point is that it was three years after his conversion before he went to Jerusalem. **Jerusalem:** Paul's purpose for going to Jerusalem was not to be instructed in the truth of the gospel. He went to become acquainted with Peter (Cephas). He visited Jerusalem for fifteen days and moved freely in the city, boldly preaching and disputing with the Hellenists (At 9:28,29).

**1:19 Apostles:** Here is one of those times where the Greek word *apostolos* is used in the generic meaning, that is, reference to "one who is sent." The disciples sent out men in the 1st century. These evangelists, as James, were thus referred to as apostles (See At 14:14; 2 Co 8:23; Ph 2:25). They were not Christ-sent apostles. These church-sent apostles did not have the power of the Christ-sent apostles (See 2 Co 12:12). However, because they were sent out by the church to preach the gospel they were re-



ferred to as apostles, or those who were sent. Whenever one was referred to as an apostle in the New Testament, he was one who went forth to preach the gospel. **James, the Lord's brother:** This would be James, the physical brother of Jesus and author of the letter of James (Mt 13:55; Mk 6:3; Js 1; see Jn 7:1-5; 1 Co 15:5-7).

**1:20 I do not lie:** Paul wants to make it very clear that he was not commissioned by the Christ-sent apostles or any other man. He was sent forth directly by God. In fact, he was sent forth directly by Jesus through a vision. Those things that he first preached to them, and is again about to write, came by direct revelation from God. We wonder why Paul places so much emphasis here on affirming the origin of his apostleship and message. It may be that some disciples in Jerusalem had by this time succumbed to the onslaught of Judaistic legalism (See 2:13,14). At least there were those who were making "mission trips" out of Jerusalem in an effort to recruit disciples to their system of theology (See 6:13; At 15:1,24). Paul therefore wants the Galatians to clearly understand that what he has taught and is now again instructing, did not originate from any influence from Jerusalem. In conjunction with this, he wants to stop the influence of those who are moving among the Christians in an effort to destroy new converts through their legalistic religiosity.

**1:21 Syria and Cilicia:** The trip mentioned here would actually be Paul's first mission journey (At 9:30). When he returned to his homeland on this occasion, he certainly did not keep silent about what he had experienced during the three years in Damascus and Arabia. Some believe that he stayed in the area of Cilicia and Tarsus from five to seven years. We do not know how long he stayed, only that he went back to his home country in order to announce to friends and family the grace of God that had now been poured out on mankind from a cross outside Jerusalem. It may be that while Paul was in Cilicia he did not comprehend the extent of his commission to the Gentiles (See At 9:15). Whatever the reason, Barnabas went to get him and bring him to Antioch of Syria (At 11:25,26). Paul may have been unaware of the tremendous growth of the Gentile church in Antioch. Thus

Barnabas presented him before the disciples in order to remind Paul of what great things God was doing among the Gentiles. From these disciples, he would be sent forth to the Gentile world, a mission he had received about ten years before in the city of Damascus (At 9:15,16; 13:1-3).

**1:22 Unknown:** Though certainly known for his persecution of the disciples and historic conversion on the Damascus road (At 9:28,29), Paul was not personally known by face to the members of the body in the area of Judea outside the city of Jerusalem. He and Barnabas made a trip to Judea in Acts 11:27-30. However, Acts 11:30 indicates that the relief funds he took there were given to the elders for distribution. Paul did not go among the disciples in the area. He simply met with the elders, delivered the relief funds, and then returned from Jerusalem to Antioch (At 12:25).

**1:23** Paul quotes here the statement of news that was spread throughout the region of Judea where he persecuted the church. The statement reveals that there was much talk among the members concerning the ministry of the disciples and the conversion of one who had previously hindered evangelism. **The faith:** The article "the" is here used with the word "faith." Reference is to the totality of fundamental truth that is encompassed in that which is necessary for the salvation of men and the identity of the disciples (See At 6:7; 13:8; 14:22; 16:5; Jd 3).

**1:24 Glorified God:** Glory was not extended to Paul. In conversion, God is glorified, not the body or any individual member of the body. When anyone is converted, therefore, God is glorified (At 11:18).

## Chapter 2

### PAUL MEETS THE APOSTLES

Paul now turns in the letter to a defense of his apostleship in reference to the gospel that he preached. He preached the same gospel that was preached by all the apostles. He and all the apostles preached salvation by grace and faith that was not subsidized by works of law or meritorious deeds on the part of man. His argument to the judaizing teachers is that all the apostles agreed

on the message he was teaching. Therefore, the apostles in Jerusalem would give no encouragement to judaizing teachers who claimed that they had authority from Jerusalem to preach what they were preaching (At 15:1,2,24).

**2:1 After fourteen years:** Some believe that Paul marks this fourteen years from the time of his first visit to Jerusalem (At 9:26-30). His use of the word “again” seems to indicate this meaning, and thus, this would be his second visit to the city after his conversion. This would be the visit of Acts 11:27-30. It is probable, however, that the visit mentioned here is the Acts 15 occasion when the disciples met in Jerusalem to deal with the threat of the judaizing teachers. Paul made the following visits to Jerusalem after his conversion: **(1)** He met with the apostles (1:18; At 9:26-30). **(2)** He took famine relief to Judea (At 11:27-30). **(3)** He attended the Jerusalem meeting when the disciples dealt with the matter of legalism (2:1-10; At 15). **(4)** He greeted the disciples in Jerusalem after the second mission journey (At 18:22). **(5)** He made a last evangelistic effort after the third mission journey (At 21:15-23). **Barnabas:** Barnabas went with Paul on the Acts 11:27-30 visit. He is also mentioned here to be going with Paul. The Acts 11:27-30 visit that is also mentioned here in verse 10, was for the purpose of benevolence. Some have affirmed that the visit mentioned here in chapter 2 is the Acts 11:27-30 visit. In Acts 11:27-30 the statement is made that Paul and Barnabas took famine relief to the disciples in Judea. Acts 11:27-30 does not say that Paul actually went among the disciples of Judea and Jerusalem. He went only to “the elders.” Nevertheless, it might be assumed that this included the elders of Jerusalem, for he did visit the city on this trip (At 12:25). It is not specifically stated that Paul visited any disciples outside Jerusalem, and thus, was unknown by the Judean members (1:22). Many students believe that reference here is to the Acts 15 visit. The mission journey of Acts 13 & 14 had already taken place by the time Paul made the trip to Jerusalem that is mentioned here. Though Paul made at least five different trips to Jerusalem (At 9:26-30; 11:27-30; 15; 18:22; 21:15-23), it is probable that the visit discussed in the context here is the Acts 15 visit.

Determining which visit is inferred here is not as important as understanding the problem that prevailed concerning Jewish legalism that had infiltrated the body. The purpose of the visit of Acts 15 centered specifically on this issue. He was in Jerusalem in Acts 11:30. However, the Acts 11:30 visit seemed to be insignificant both in Luke's record of Acts and in the context of his argument here against Jewish legalism. Barnabas had already been on the Acts 13 & 14 mission journey with Paul before the Acts 15 visit. He had become a prominent servant in evangelism in the early organic function of the body and here accompanies Paul to Jerusalem (See At 4:36,37; 11:23-26). **Titus:** Titus was possibly one of the converts from Antioch of Syria since this is the first time we see him in the company of Paul. Since Paul and Barnabas returned from the first journey to Antioch, we would be correct to assume that this Gentile believer accompanied Paul to Jerusalem for the meeting of Acts 15.

**2:2 By revelation:** God sent Paul to Jerusalem. The significance of the Acts 15 Jerusalem meeting is seen in the fact that God instructed Paul to be present at this meeting. The purpose of Paul's first visit to Jerusalem in Acts 9:26 was to meet Peter. The purpose of the Acts 11:30 visit was to take famine relief contributions to the brethren in the area of Judea. The purpose of this visit of Acts 15:1,2 is to correct the onslaught of Jewish legalism. His previous visit in Acts 21 was a last attempt to salvage his Jewish brethren from the impending destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 that was only a decade away from the visit (See Rm 9:1-3; 10:1). **Preach among the Gentiles:** On the occasion of the Acts 15 visit, Paul went to Jerusalem to explain those things that he had been doing among the Gentiles. He wanted the Galatians to know that he did not go for the purpose of either receiving instruction from the apostles or to be sent forth by the apostles. He went to announce his mission among the Gentiles that God had commissioned him to do. He went to inform the apostles that the message he preached was not the gospel plus circumcision and works. **Reputation:** Reference is to those who were accepted as leaders in the church. These were "those who seemed to be

something" (2:6) and those "who seemed to be pillars" (2:9). This would at least be Peter, John and James, the Lord's brother (2:6,9). By the time of the visit of Acts 15, the apostle James, and brother of John, had been killed by Herod (At 12:1,2). James, the Lord's brother, had since that time gained a good reputation among the disciples, and thus, was recognized as a leading brother among the brethren. **Privately:** It is significant to note that Paul's meeting with the apostles and elders was first in private. He wanted to make sure that the leaders had not been influenced by the judaizing teachers before the matter was taken before the church. He was thus cautious to be well informed before he made any statements. **Run in vain:** Paul was not seeking to check the accuracy of his message with the apostles or to submit to them as so-called "chief" apostles. There were no degrees of responsibility among the apostles, and thus, Paul's personal call by Jesus and his inspiration by the Spirit, qualified him to be considered an "apostle of the Lord" (See 1 Co 15:8-10). His purpose on this occasion, therefore, was to maintain unity in the global body by having the public sanction of the apostles and leaders in Jerusalem for his mission to the Gentiles. He wanted to make sure that he and the other apostles were in total agreement in this mission. In view of the infiltration of judaizing teachers in Jerusalem, he wanted to lay the truth of the gospel before the leaders in order to reaffirm their salvation by the grace of God. Paul also possibly wanted to know if the apostles and church in Jerusalem had been influenced by legalistic Judaism. If they had, then his mission and message to the Gentiles would have been in vain since legal justification could have been further revelation from God. But such was not the case. There was no further revelation that works were to supplement grace. Paul thus wanted the Galatian judaizing teachers to know that they would have no support from the prominent leaders of the church in Jerusalem (See At 15:24).

**2:3 Not ... compelled to be circumcised:** Titus went to Jerusalem as a representative of the uncircumcised Gentile Christians. Once the legalistic Jewish brethren in Jerusalem realized that he was a Gentile, they compelled him

to be circumcised. In the mind of the judaizing teachers, Titus was not saved because he had not been circumcised (At 15:1). The word “compel” here emphasizes both urgency and pressure. The legalistic atmosphere among the Jerusalem disciples at this time must have been intense in view of the fact that this seemingly lone Gentile was intimidated to be circumcised in obedience to the demands of some Jewish brethren. **Not even:** Paul is emphatic about not submitting to binding either cultural or religious ordinances as a necessity for salvation. He simply did not allow these false brethren an opportunity to get away with their theology of binding circumcision and Jewish ceremonies.

**2:4 False brethren:** It is significant to note that these false Jewish brethren were “brought in.” The Greek verb that is translated “brought” is passive, thus indicating that some within the fellowship of the body were bringing those from outside the fellowship of the church into this meeting in order to support their position of binding where God had not bound. Those who seek to bind their legal requirements on the church will often resort to these extreme measures in order to add support to their position. Paul, however, was truthful by calling false those who are brought in to give support to a legalistic dogma. We do not know exactly who these teachers were. They could possibly have been brought in from the sect of the Pharisees (See At 15:1,5; 2 Co 11:26). Regardless of their religious origins, they were trying to bring into bondage those who had escaped the burdens of legal institutional religion. They were seeking to bring into bondage those who had been set free by the perfect law of liberty (3:25; 4:3,9; 5:1). **Freedom that we have in Christ:** Christians are brought into the law of liberty (5:1; see comments Js 1:25; 2:12). In Christ there is law to direct the moral behavior of man. However, in this law there is liberty of choice. God has set forth principles of behavior in the law of Christ. However, Christians are given liberty as to how the principles are to be applied. In this area of liberty there is freedom from the necessity of perfect law-keeping of either written law or oral traditions—as with Judaism—in order to be justified before

God. The law of Christ, therefore, gives liberty from the necessity of perfect law-keeping. **Bondage:** Those who would return to law are brought again into the necessity of keeping all the law in order to be justified before God, for one sin makes a sinner. Since all have sinned (Rm 3:9,10,23), then without God's grace all are under the bondage of having to keep law perfectly in order to be justified before God. The judaizing teachers, therefore, were compelling believers to return to a system of law-keeping that did not bring justification.

**2:5 We did not yield:** Paul is again very emphatic. Neither had he, Barnabas nor Titus, submitted to the demands of teachers who sought to bind on them that which God had not bound. Not for one moment did they entertain the notion of returning to a system of law that did not bring justification for sin. Doing so would have meant that they give up their freedom that they enjoyed in Christ (See 5:1,2). **The truth of the gospel:** In the context of Galatians, we discover what Paul meant by the phrase "truth of the gospel." This "truth" is the factuality of the incarnation, crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ. In his letters, Paul often uses only the word "truth" to refer to these historical events. In other words, the "truth" is not a reference to a catechism of law, but to the salvational work of the incarnate Son of God for our sins. Herein is the freedom from having to be justified by meritorious law-keeping that the gospel brings to those who obey it. The new covenant is a covenant of grace. God's grace has delivered us from the bondage of having to keep law perfectly in order to be justified before God, or to perform meritorious deeds in order to seek atonement for sin. This is the truth that the gospel brings to all those who are in bondage. When one speaks of the truth, therefore, he must be speaking of God's grace that was revealed on the cross, not some systematic theology that has been developed as a legal system of salvation.

**2:6 The purpose of the Jerusalem visit was threefold:** (1) Paul wanted the Galatians to know that the leaders in Jerusalem did not add to his message of the truth of the gospel (vs 6). (2) The leaders in Jerusalem gave Barnabas

and him the right hand of fellowship (vs 9). **(3)** The Jerusalem leadership encouraged him to remember the poor (vs 10), which thing the judaizing teachers may not have been doing. **Seemed to be important:** There were men of great reputation in the church of Jerusalem. It was not that these men had authority in the church, but that they were true servants of God (See comments Mk 10:35-45). These men were as Peter, James, Silas and John (vs 9). But Paul wanted the Galatians to know that God did not have respect of persons that was so common among some leaders (See Dt 10:17; At 10:34,35; Rm 2:11). Leaders have different abilities of leadership, but not different ranks according to those abilities, or according to some supposed authority over their fellow man. When Paul met with these leaders, they did not add any new truth to what he already knew. Most importantly, they were not adding works of law or merit to the truth of the gospel. Both he and the apostles in Jerusalem were teaching salvation by grace.

**2:7 The gospel of the uncircumcision:** Peter, James and John immediately recognized that Paul was given a mission to the Gentiles (At 9:15). This mission had been given to him as a specific mission as a specific mission had been given also to Peter to focus on the Jews. In this special responsibility of men to focus on different cultural groups, God recognizes that different men have specific abilities to reach different cultural groups.

**2:8 Effectively worked also in me:** God's work through both Paul and Peter was successful. Their success in reaching both Gentiles and Jews manifested that God had chosen the right men and assigned them the responsibility to evangelize cultural groups that were compatible with their abilities.

**2:9 Right hands of fellowship:** Peter, James and John recognized that Paul's work among the Gentiles was the work of God (See At 9:15; 13:46; Rm 11:13; 1 Co 15:10; 2 Tm 1:11). When they recognized this, they extended to Paul and Barnabas their full agreement and blessing that they continue their mission to the Gentiles. This was a mission to preach the truth of the gospel, and thus, bring men into a covenant of freedom in Christ, as opposed to



bringing men again into the bondage of man-made religions. Extending the right hand of fellowship did not mean that they authorized Paul's mission. Paul did not have to ask for permission to do what Jesus had already told him to do on the Damascus road. There was no chain of authority among the apostles, nor in the church as a whole, or locally. **Go to the Gentiles:** Paul's argument is that Peter, James and John agreed with his mission that was given to him directly by Jesus. There was thus no division among them concerning his mission and message. From Paul's emphasis in the text on this matter, we could assume that one ploy of the judaizing teachers was to suppose that there was a division between Peter, James and John on one side of the issue and Paul on the other. Because Peter, James and John resided in what seemed to be the seat of Jewish legalism in Jerusalem, the judaizing teachers falsely assumed that they would side with them on the matter against Paul. Such thinking manifests the tactics of those who would divide the disciples over issues, especially in the area of where God has not bound. In order to make sure that the judaizing teachers had no support from the disciples in Jerusalem, the apostles, elders and whole church sent the letter of Acts 15:23-29. In the letter they stated that the legalistic judaizing teachers had been given "*no such commandment*" from the Jerusalem church (At 15:24). The legalists were on their own. They had cut themselves off from the family of believers by their teaching of binding laws where God had not bound.

**2:10 Remember the poor:** It was not Paul's mission to specifically minister to the poor. It was his mission to preach the gospel and remember the poor. In accomplishing his mission, he was exhorted by Peter, James and John to remember that we must work to feed and to help those who were victims of their circumstances (At 20:35; see At 11:29ff; 21:17; Rm 15:25; 1 Co 16:1-4; 2 Co 9). The unified teaching of both Paul and the other apostles was that both agreed concerning correct teaching, but also correct Christian benevolent behavior. Correct teaching will produce unity among those who seek to do the will of the Father (Ph 1:27).

**PAUL REBUKES PETER**

The historical context of the following incident in Antioch teaches many practical lessons concerning the behavior of those whose thinking is patterned after a legal system of religion. Though we do not know all the details, we can assume some movements among the disciples throughout the incidents concerning Jewish legalism among the Gentile Christians. We assume that Paul wrote the letter after the Jerusalem meeting of Acts 15. It is believed that the incident of which he here speaks may have taken place sometime after that meeting. It is difficult to determine exactly when this incident took place in reference to Acts 15. Some Bible students say that it took place before Acts 15, some say after. Regardless of when these events occurred, Paul here presents the serious nature of legalism by recording this division that took place as the result of the work and teaching of legalistic teachers. One possible theory is that the Galatians 2 event occurred after Acts 15. In Acts 13 & 14 Paul and Barnabas had just preached the gospel in Galatia around A.D. 47 & 48. Paul then went to Jerusalem after reporting to the disciples in Antioch (At 14:26-28). The judaizing teachers evidently came immediately in among the Galatian disciples after Paul and Barnabas left the area. They came in order to recruit members to their legal system of justification. When Paul arrived in Jerusalem, he immediately had a heated dispute with judaizing teachers who were among the members of the body in Jerusalem (At 15:1,2). It was eventually decided during the Jerusalem meeting not to place a yoke of bondage on the Gentile disciples (At 15:10). By the time of the Acts 15 meeting, however, legalistic recruiters had already left Jerusalem to bind on the Gentiles "*circumcision and the customs of Moses*" on the Gentile disciples. They evidently went first to Antioch where the incident of Galatians 2 occurred and where Paul and Barnabas were located after the first journey (At 14:28). At least this is one historical theory that is possible. From Antioch or Jerusalem, judaizing teachers went to the new converts in Galatia. The Jerusalem brethren rebuked the judaizing teachers in their midst in Jerusalem (At 15:5),

and then, drafted a letter to be sent to the Gentile disciples in Asia (At 15:22-29). In the letter they had stated that some went out from Jerusalem, to whom they had given no commandment to do so (At 15:24,25,28). The Jerusalem meeting was thus closed, and people went on their way. Sometime after the Jerusalem meeting, Paul returned to Antioch. However, Peter and Barnabas had evidently already gone to Antioch before Paul arrived. Therefore, before Paul arrived, the incident of Peter and Barnabas' withdrawing from the Gentiles because of fear of the judaizing delegation from Jerusalem, had already occurred. When Paul arrived, the separation had already taken place. In the eyes of the Jewish legalists of Jerusalem, the Gentile disciples in Antioch were not saved (At 15:1,5). The judaizing teachers of Jerusalem thus commissioned a delegation of their own to go throughout the Gentile members to supposedly save them by binding Jewish circumcision and ceremonies on them. Their mission, therefore, was to go from city to city, binding where God had not bound, and thus, saving the saved, while all the time sending back glorious reports of how many had been circumcised, or in their possible words, "how many had been 'converted'" (6:13). They zealously courted newly converted Gentiles in order to bring them into "their fellowship," and thus, separate them from the influence of Paul (4:17). Such are the tactics of legal minded teachers. Everyone is supposedly liberal until they are cloned after their legalistic opinions and interpretations.

**2:11 *Opposed him to his face:*** The Greek word that is translated "opposed" is a military term that refers to resisting an attack. In the situation that developed in Antioch, Paul stood alone to resist an attack of Jewish legalism. The incident that Paul now mentions took place in Antioch not too long after the Jerusalem meeting of Acts 15. In the Jerusalem encounter, Paul had "*no small dissension and debate*" with certain brothers who were binding where God had not bound (At 15:1,2). He opposed the legalists in Jerusalem, and now he is opposing them in Antioch. Thank God for Paul who had enough courage to stand against those who were denying the gospel of grace

by adding to grace that which God had not bound. In the previous section of the Galatian letter (vss 1-10), Paul rehearsed what he had affirmed at the Jerusalem meeting in Acts 15. His argument was that he, as a Christ-sent apostle, was equal with all the Christ-sent apostles. Such establishes a foundation to what he is saying in this letter, and specifically, in this context where he takes a public stand to oppose the actions of Peter and those Jewish brethren in Antioch who succumbed to the intimidation of the legalists from Jerusalem. In order to emphasize the seriousness of the problem with which he was dealing, he wrote concerning this incident that took place in Antioch. Paul recounted the following circumstances of what happened in order to affirm the necessity of standing up for the truth that he is stating in this letter. Paul is stating that even public confrontation with a respected apostle of our Lord is necessary if the truth of the gospel concerning the liberty of the new covenant is in danger of being compromised. **Stood condemned:** Versions that are more direct with the translation of this verse use the words, "stood condemned." What Peter did brought him under condemnation. Therefore, we should not lightly consider this matter of reverting to a legal or meritorious system of justification as a supplement to the gospel. What Peter did to encourage such by his behavior was to yield to the intimidation of those who would subject the disciples to a covenant law of meritorious works. What makes the situation here serious is the fact that Peter was known for having received a special vision that the Gentiles were to be received into the fellowship of the body without meritorious conditions (See At 10 & 11). The necessity of Paul's dealing with Peter in a public manner was that fundamental teachings were under attack by his behavior. Peter, and those Jews who withdrew with him, were violating the fundamental teaching concerning the organic unity of the body (vs 14). Peter was manifesting support for the teaching of those who denied justification by faith (vss 15,16). He was manifesting behavior that would bring the believers again into the bondage of law, and thus, destroy the freedom we have in Christ (vss 17,18). The actions of Peter attacked the oneness of all

races in the one body (3:26-29). The very nature of the truth of the gospel was under attack (vss 19,20). The sufficiency of the grace of God was being denied (vs 21). If what happened in Antioch was allowed to be propagated throughout the world, then the church would go out of existence. The seriousness of Peter's actions, therefore, must not be considered lightly. Though this confrontation between judaistic legalists and those of the truth of the gospel had occurred in other areas, the Holy Spirit directs the inscription of this incident in order to prove Paul's argument, but also to set forth an example of what God feels about legal justification as an addition to grace. Galatians was written to declare freedom in the midst of a movement to take the free back into bondage.

**2:12 *Ate with the Gentiles:*** Previous to this incident, Peter stood united with the Gentile disciples in Antioch on the teaching of the liberty of the gospel of the new covenant. However, when brethren came from Jerusalem, he fell under the social and brotherhood pressure of those who were seeking to persuade Gentile disciples to submit to their system of religion, specifically the ordinances of circumcision and some Sinai law ceremonies. Peter's sin was that he turned from the truth of the gospel that brings salvation by faith and grace in Christ. He turned from the truth of the gospel because he feared his fellow Jewish brethren who were as a delegation working to submit the members to their beliefs (See 4:17). He thus succumbed to the legalistic delegation from Jerusalem. Subsequently, his hypocrisy and actions toward the Gentiles caused him to be in a state of condemnation at this particular point of his life. Herein is certainly evidence that though one can stand saved before God, he can turn from that state of salvation, and thus be lost. One is saved by grace, but grace cannot save those who would follow Peter's example on this occasion by turning away from saving grace to a legal system of salvation by works.

**2:13 *Other Jews:*** We should not underestimate the intimidating influence of legalistic brethren who would seek to bind where God has not bound. The sin of some is to use brotherhood politics to intimidate all into con-

formity to their understanding or interpretation of God's word. In the case here, all the Jewish brethren in Antioch, and even Barnabas, succumbed to the delegation from Jerusalem. One cannot but feel sorry for the Gentile brethren in this situation. They had been accepted by the Jewish brethren before the arrival of the legal delegation from Jerusalem. But now they stood alone, withdrawn from by those who knew better. Therefore, it is easy to understand why Paul was so intense and straightforward concerning the problem. He blasted those Jewish brethren who would seek to turn the grace of God into a legal system of justification by meritorious deeds and law-keeping, and thus bring the free again into bondage (5:1,2). We understand his boldness because such behavior prompted what was characteristic of Peter and the Jewish brethren in Antioch on this occasion. Peter and Barnabas knew better. We must not underestimate the power of social intimidation within the body. **Joined in his hypocrisy:** The Antioch incident should strike fear in the hearts of any who would seek to bind on the church laws that God has not bound. When such occurs, men practice hypocrisy. They divide the church. They allow fear to rule their lives. And they often practice racial discrimination. All such things are sinful, and thus, need the public rebuke of one who is not afraid to stand alone to affirm the truth of the gospel. This whole incident reveals the remarkable character of the apostle Paul. In all this Paul was willing to stand alone against the evil actions of those who were dividing the church by preaching a gospel of meritorious works.

**2:14 Not behaving according to the truth:** Paul realized that if Peter's actions became a common practice among the disciples, the truth of the gospel would be destroyed. The church of the free would cease to exist. Paul thus begins his rebuke of Peter and the rest of the Jews in Antioch by pointing out that before the legal delegation came from Jerusalem, they had lived in close fellowship with the Gentile brethren. Paul now asks if they, the Jews, would encourage the Gentiles to live as the Jews. **Truth of the gospel:** As in verse 5, the meaning here is that we are justified under the new covenant

by God's grace that was manifested through the incarnation, accomplished at the cross, given assurance through resurrection, and continued through the ascension and kingdom reign of the Son of God (Rm 5:1,2). Paul's exhortation is that Christians stand fast in this fundamental truth (5:1). Those who would invite disciples to enter into a covenant relationship with God that demanded legal justification, are denying the truth of the gospel, and thus, inviting brethren into a covenant of bondage and condemnation. **Before them all:** Since the sinful actions of Peter and the Antioch Jews were manifested before the whole church, Paul makes his rebuke publicly before the church (See Mt 18:15-17; 1 Tm 5:19,20). It is not stated if Paul first approached Peter on a private basis before this public rebuke. Whether or not he did, did not alleviate the necessity of dealing with this matter before the entire church in Antioch. And in this inspired letter, Paul is dealing with it before the entire body of the world for all history. What the Jewish members did in Antioch was to manifest an organic dysfunction of the body of Christ.

### JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH

**2:15 Jews by nature:** Though Paul begins this address as a message to Peter, he explains it to the Jews in general. He thus begins with the principal theme of the book (vs 16). It appears that he uses the historical events, or encounters with judaizing teachers in chapters 1 & 2, in order to lay the foundation for the teaching that is to follow. Throughout the remainder of the letter, we have this stern rebuke by the Holy Spirit of any who would seek to steal the sheep of God by bringing them under the dictates of human opinion and religious traditions. This book should be a warning to any religious leader who would seek to subject the flock of God to his own opinions and traditions.

**2:16 Knowing that a man is not justified by works of law:** Paul, as well as all the faithful Jews who believed in Jesus, realized that salvation could not be acquired through perfect works of law or meritorious attempts to atone for sin (At 13:38). Even in the covenant relationship of Israel with God under the Sinai law, salvation was by

grace and faith (Hk 2:4). It has always been this way simply because no man can work in order to put God in debt to pay him with salvation. The fact is that “*there is none righteous, no, not one*” (Rm 3:10). This was a pronouncement of God even before Paul quoted the statement in Romans 3 (See Ps 14:1-3; 53:1-3; Ec 7:20). Before the manifestation of the grace of God through Jesus (Ti 2:11), the Jews realized the futility of justification by works of law. **Not justified by works of law:** We must keep in mind that the Greek article “the” is not in the text. Here is a clear statement of principle of the new covenant. To the Romans, Paul had explained, “*Therefore by the works of law no flesh will be justified in His sight*” (Rm 3:20). When men are locked in the bondage of traditional religions and arrogant boasting over religious deeds, this principle is the first to be denied. Paul’s restatement here of the principle is meant to cut to the very heart of the religious ego of man. No one can so work as to demand salvation from God. Man’s arrogant performance of law can in no way make God a debtor to man. The reason for this is that all have sinned (Rm 3:10,23). Sin separates one from God (Is 59:1,2). Thus, the wages of sin is death (Rm 6:23). No one can keep law perfectly in order to justify himself before God, and thus, demand salvation. Add to this fact the reality that no one can do meritorious works in order to atone for sin, for we are saved by grace (Ep 2:8,9). **The faith of Christ Jesus:** The Greek text here reads “faith of Christ.” Thus, emphasis in this statement is not on our faith, but on the faith of Jesus in going to the cross for us. Reference here is to the faithfulness and obedience of Jesus who went to the cross in compliance with the Father’s will to bring to us justification by grace (Rm 8:22,26; Hb 5:9). Through faith, Jesus “*became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross*” (Ph 2:8). We have been justified because of the faith and obedience of the Son of God (See vs 20; 3:22; Ep 3:12; Ph 3:9). If we assume that we must add to the faith and obedience of Jesus, we are saying that His sacrificial death for our sins was not sufficient. **The faith:** By literally translating the Greek objective genitive of 2:16 reveals a profound truth: “*A man is not justified by works of law, but by the faith of*



Christ Jesus.” And as if we might forget this point, or even marginalize its importance by being arrogant about our own good works, Paul repeated the thought in the statement in the same verse: “*We have believed in Christ Jesus so that we might be justified by the faith of Christ.*” Therefore, Christians have faith in the faith of Jesus to have done all that was necessary in order to make us righteous before God (See comments Rm 1:17; Ep 3:12; Ph 3:8). For this reason, the Greek text of 2:16 should not read in order to produce a sense of insecurity and self-righteousness in the minds of those who may be questioning whether they have enough faith to be righteous before God. Fortunately, the Greek objective genitive of the verse focuses our attention on the faith of Jesus Christ who had faith in the Father in order to endure the cross for us. The “faith” that is under consideration with the objective genitive is not the faith of those who believe, but the faith of Jesus who “believed” for us. It is in His faith that we believe and trust, just as 2:16 states when the objective genitive is correctly emphasized. In other words, when we consider our salvation, our faith is in the faith of Jesus by which He took Himself to the cross. Translations that do not honor the objective genitive of Paul’s argument in 2:16 miss the argument of the entire book of Galatians that is brought out in this one verse. Faith “in Jesus” in order to be saved is indeed necessary (See Jn 20:30,31). But our faith is not Paul’s primary point in 2:16. He wanted his readers to focus on the faith of Jesus Christ, not on their own personal faith, which faith is often weak. When personal faith is weak, this does not mean that our righteousness before God is slipping. We continue to be righteous before God even in our weak faith because the faith of Jesus in going to the cross did not waver, though He struggled in the final hours (See Lk 24:44). The actual Greek text of 2:16, therefore, should literally read, “*through [the] faith of Christ.*” This is the literal translation of the Greek text that honors the objective genitive that Paul used to uphold his theme of the entire book of Galatians, as well as Romans. **Believed in Christ:** Because of the justification that came as a result of the faith of Jesus, Paul says that he, as well as all other

Jews who were children of Abraham by faith, believed in Jesus. They realized that law brings condemnation, not commendation. When one violates a law, condemnation results. The law brings no atonement for sin since one can neither keep law perfectly in order to justify oneself, nor do good works to rectify the violation of law. Law was never given, therefore, as a means of salvation. It was given that we might recognize our condemnation. On the other hand, grace brings commendation. Under grace one is commended for good by God. Such commendation encourages one to work out of gratitude (1 Co 15:10; 2 Co 4:15). There is a difference between law that says, "You broke the law and must be punished," and grace that says, "I have saved you, therefore be grateful" (See comments Ph 2:10). One system of religion brings frustration and the other brings peace and joy. In the verse here, Paul is saying that he and others saw this difference, and thus, ran to grace. They were drawn to Jesus because Jesus did for them what they could not do for themselves through law-keeping. **Of law:** A literal translation here would be "of law," for the Greek article "the" is not in the text. Reference therefore is not only to the Sinai law, but any religious law that men would establish as a legal system of justification. In stating the principle of justification by grace and faith, Paul affirms that no law can be established that would bring justification, for no man can keep law perfectly. The Greek article "the" is not used in this letter in many places when reference is to law. Paul also does the same in the letter to the Romans. Some translators have not served us well by adding the article in the text. By leaving out the article, Paul wants us to understand that he is referring to law in general, not specifically to the Sinai law, though in the context of the judaizing problem, the judaizers were trying to use ordinances of the Sinai law as requirements for justification (At 15:1).

**2:17** Here, as well as in Romans (Rm 6:1-3), Paul anticipated that some would argue against the principle of verse 16. Their argument against the principle would supposedly be founded upon the promise that one could continue in sin if salvation were based on a simple faith.

Some to whom Jude wrote had turned “*the grace of God into licentiousness*” (Jd 4; see Gl 5:13; 1 Pt 2:16). Paul makes his statement of definition of faith in 5:6. What profits in Christ is “*faith working through love.*” Let no man think, therefore, that because we are justified by faith and grace, we can live as men without law from God. Christians are not under law as a meritorious code of conduct. But they are under law as a direction of life. Obedience to law is not based on merit to obtain salvation. Obedience is based on the fact that salvation has already been obtained through faith in God’s grace and one’s obedience to the gospel (Rm 5:1,2). Christians, therefore, work in obedience to law because they have been saved by their obedience to the gospel. They do not work in order to be saved, but work because they are saved (See comments Rm 6:3-6; 1 Co 15:1-4; Ep 2:10).

**2:18 *Make myself a transgressor:*** If Paul sought to return to a covenant system of law-keeping, he would be found a transgressor of the law of the new covenant of Christ. In returning to an attempt to be legally justified by flawless living under law, one sidesteps the law of grace and faith. He becomes a transgressor of the law of grace and faith, for he gives up God’s forgiving grace in his life (5:4). In this transition from his defense of his apostleship, to the subject of justification by faith, Paul approaches those judaizing teachers who would attempt to be married to both Jesus and the ordinances of the Sinai law (See Rm 7:1-4).

**2:19 *Law:*** Again, keep in mind that in this verse the article “the” is not present. Reference is thus to law in general. ***Died to law:*** Paul died to law in the sense that he recognized that law could not bring justification before God (3:21; Rm 6:11,14; 8:2). Law, as a meritorious system of justification, brings condemnation, not life. The reason for this is simple. All have sinned, and sin condemns (Rm 3:23; 6:23). We must die to law by not seeking to obey law as a system of salvation. ***Live to God:*** It was the Sinai law and covenant that brought the Jews to the New Testament law and covenant. The Sinai law brought death to those who sought to use it as the end within itself to gain salvation. The other, the New Testament law

and covenant, brings life as long as one does not make the New Testament law a legal system of justification as the Jews made the Sinai law. Paul is essentially saying that law brings death, for all have sinned. Jesus brought life, for He manifested the grace of God (See Rm 6:11; 2 Co 5:15; Hb 9:14).

**2:20 *Crucified with Christ:*** Previous to one's obedience to the gospel by immersion in water for the forgiveness of sins, he crucifies the old man who would live after the glory of the flesh (See Rm 6:3-6; Ph 3:10; Cl 2:12-14; 3:1-4). ***Christ lives in me:*** Once one realizes the grace of God in his or her life, life changes are voluntarily made in response to grace. When Paul transitions from discussions concerning God's grace in Romans, he moves into a life response to grace in Romans 12. Paul argues that since we have obtained mercy through God's grace (Rm 11:30-32), we should present our bodies a living sacrifice (Rm 12:1). Recognition of God's grace should move us to "*be transformed by the renewing*" of our minds (Rm 12:2). We should be moved in thanksgiving to work more abundantly (1 Co 15:10; 2 Co 4:15). The point is that a correct understanding of grace promotes Christian living. ***Live in the flesh:*** When Paul uses the term "flesh" he is referring to one's ability to perform law or merit salvation through works of the flesh. The flesh, or the body directed by boastful thinking, seeks to behave independently of God's direction. In doing such, we sin. Therefore, we must not trust in our ability to behave according to God's law while living without the direction of His law. ***Live by faith:*** After Jesus' crucifixion and ascension, His life and work changed (Ep 1:20-22; Hb 8:1). So it is with the Christian. Paul affirms that in conversion our entire personal being and life changes by being consumed in the will of Jesus. The will and mission of Jesus becomes the life of the Christian who has come into a covenant relationship with Deity. ***Loved me:*** Salvation is based on this simple action on the part of God, for God loved us while we were in sin (Rm 5:8; see Jn 3:16; Ep 5:2; Ti 2:14).

**2:21 *If righteousness comes through law:*** The fact is that the grace of God did away with the necessity of being justified by perfect law-keeping. Our faith does away

with meritorious deeds. However, if any would seek to return to law in order to merit justification, then he would be proclaiming that Jesus' atonement on the cross was insufficient. If anyone sought to return to meritorious deeds, then he denies his faith in the sufficiency of the atonement of the cross. Jesus died in vain if justification can be attained through either law-keeping and/or meritorious deeds. However, Paul affirms that it is impossible that any system of law-keeping can justify man. Because of this, God had to reveal His grace to man through Jesus (Rm 11:6; Ti 2:11; Hb 7:11). But grace did not cancel works of obedience to God's will. Paul's labors were increased when he realized the grace of God was in his life. He worked more abundantly (1 Co 15:10). He was motivated by love and appreciation, not self-righteous meritorious works to gain honor and justification before God (2 Co 4:15). Under grace, one works because of what he has, that is, his salvation. Under law, one is constantly working in order to receive. There is a complete difference in attitude between these two concepts of justification before God. In Galatians, Paul is arguing for the former, for the latter proclaims an insufficiency of the cross of Christ.

### **The Theological Argument**

**(3:1 – 4:31)**

**Outline:** (1) Law and faith (3:1-9), (2) The curse of law (3:10-14), (3) Promise of the Seed (3:15-18), (4) Purpose of the law (3:19-25), (5) Children of God by faith (3:26-29), (6) Heirs of God (4:1-7), (7) Uselessness of dead religions (4:8-11), (8) Paul's work in Galatia (4:12-20), (9) Hagar and Sarah (4:21-31)

## **Chapter 3**

### **LAW AND FAITH**

Paul now turns to a specific discussion of the Galatians' problem of returning to the bondage of circumcision and law-keeping. He emphasizes the fact that Christians are under the law of grace and faith as opposed to the Sinai law that was only a tutorial master to bring to Christ those who were sons of Abraham by faith. In continuing the theme of the letter, he now uses the personal experiences of the faith of the Galatians. He begins by asking a

series of questions to shock them into reality concerning the seriousness of what they were doing in reference to turning from the grace of God.

**3:1 Foolish Galatians:** Paul here expresses his amazement that they are being enticed by the judaizing teachers to return to a covenant of condemnation (See 1:6; 5:7). It is Paul's pronouncement that returning to a system of justification by works is both foolish and senseless (See At 13:39). What they were actually doing was turning from trusting in God's grace to trusting in their own performance of law-keeping, specifically the performance of some ordinances of the Sinai law and Jewish religious regulations. The Greek word that is translated "foolish" means "spiritually dull." In returning to law-keeping they were becoming spiritually dull. Such is the nature of religion that is legalistic in its concept of law. It becomes a system of religion that is void of gratitude. By emphasizing externals, one's internal self spiritually dies. While concentrating on self-righteousness, one sacrifices the righteousness of God. The Galatians, in such a state of religiosity, were foolish, that is, spiritually dull. **Who has bewitched you:** It is as if someone had cast a spell over them. They have temporarily lost their reasoning concerning the very nature of how one is saved. Literally speaking, the meaning of the Greek word from which "bewitched" is translated is "to give an evil eye." Some had cast an evil eye upon them and they were thus enticed to take their eyes off Jesus. **Jesus Christ has been publicly portrayed:** The Galatians had taken their eyes off the vivid portrayal of Jesus that had been preached to them by Paul. They had cast their eyes upon the proposals of the judaizing teachers. They were evidently fascinated by what the judaizing teachers were saying. **Crucified:** Paul preached Jesus Christ and His crucifixion in such a vivid manner that it was as if they had personally experienced the crucifixion in Galatia (1 Co 2:1-5). The Greek word translated "clearly portrayed" means publicly portrayed, as in an announcement on a public advertisement. In such a way Jesus was vividly announced to the Galatians (See 1 Co 15:1). Now they are in the process of turning from such a mental picture of grace on

the cross to a religious behavior that was tailored after the ability of man to perform. They took their minds off Christ and started to focus on themselves. Paul was astonished that they were so soon turning away (1:6). This one verse in the letter surely exemplifies the uselessness of those religions that depend upon the performance of men to behave themselves in order to meritoriously establish a right relationship with God. The futility of such religions is emphasized by Paul's use of vivid words in reference to those in Galatia who were falling for such a belief and practice. The Greek tense of "crucified" is significant in the perfect passive participle. Emphasis is on a past action that had continuing action of results in the present. Thus the past action of the cross had continuing results of atonement in the present. The atonement of the cross needs no supplemental action of meritorious works in order to be effective.

**3:2 Did you receive the Spirit ... by hearing of faith:** There are two ways of interpreting Paul's reference to the reception of the Spirit in the context here by use of the phrase "receive the Spirit." **(1)** There is the non-miraculous indwelling of the Spirit as He permeates and directs the life of the Christian through inspired words. Upon obedience to the gospel, every Christian is so indwelt by the Spirit because of the individual's obedient immersion into a relationship with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit (Mt 28:19; see At 2:38). **(2)** In the historical context of Paul's establishment of the Galatian church, however, there was the reception of the Holy Spirit by the laying on of the apostles' hands (See comments Acts 8:18; 19:1-6). As a Christ-sent apostle, Paul had worked many miracles in their midst (At 15:12). He preached the gospel in this region on the first mission journey, as well as, visited the converts on the second. We would certainly be correct to assume that he had laid hands on those members with whom he had personal contact. In their midst, therefore, there were many who had the gift of prophecy, as well as the other miraculous gifts (1 Co 12:7-11). We must also not forget that Peter later went through this region and also would have laid hands on the members on whom Paul had not laid hands in order

that they receive the miraculous gifts of the Spirit (1 Pt 1:1). Though they had continued contact with Paul after the first journey and the writing of the letter, we would assume correctly that they received the miraculous gifts on the first journey by the laying on of his hands (See At 14:23). The Christ-sent apostles freely gave as they had been freely given to concerning miraculous gifts (Mt 10:8; At 8:18). The purpose of the gifts was to build up the body. Paul could not leave Bibles. He could leave only the spoken word of inspired prophets. Therefore, in the context of the miraculous gifts of the 1st century church, we should first assume that this is what Paul has in mind when talking about the reception of the Spirit in this context. At least, when the New Testament writers referred to the receiving of the Spirit, the miraculous experience of those who had come into contact with a Christ-sent apostle was certainly a major part of their lives (At 8:14,15; 19:1-6). **By hearing of faith:** If we assume that Paul has in mind the miraculous receiving of the Spirit by the laying on of his hands, then his argument is quite forceful. They had received the Spirit by the laying on of the hands of those who preached the gospel of grace. They did not receive the Spirit as a result of some meritorious work they performed or by their perfect obedience to law. The Spirit was a free gift that came as a result of God's grace. In reference to the apostle's use of the miraculous work of the Spirit, Jesus said to them, "Freely you have received, freely give" (Mt 10:8). The responsibility to exercise the miraculous gifts of the Spirit was a free gift. The apostles did not earn the gift. Neither did the Galatians. Thus, Paul asks the Galatians a question that demands an obvious answer. The answer was that they did not receive the miraculous gifts of the Spirit as the result of some debt that God had to give to them as a result of their works of law. They could also conclude that the judaizing teachers did not impart to them any spiritual gift, proving that they were not sent from God as Paul.

**3:3 Begun in the Spirit ... completed in the flesh:** Here is a contrast. It shows the foolishness of their actions. The Spirit initiated salvation by bringing to them the



gospel through inspired preaching. They now assume that they can complete the work of the Spirit by adding their meritorious deeds or works of law-keeping through circumcision and ceremonies. They began a spiritual life in Christ apart from the Sinai law and circumcision (See 6:12). Paul questions them on their foolish theology of thinking that they can now add to or complete their salvation by returning to a law and covenant that brought condemnation, not life (vs 11; 4:9). It is the rationale of the legalist to conclude that performance of traditions enhances spirituality. However, what is constructed by the adding of traditions is a religiosity that is patterned after the desires of men. Such legalistic religiosity never brings one to the relationship he seeks to have with God. Legalism frustrates our relationship with God because we never know if we are pleasing to Him.

**3:4 *Have you suffered ... in vain:*** In preaching Jesus as the Messiah in Galatia, Paul suffered great persecution (At 15:25,26). Such was also the case with all those who believed (At 14:22; 2 Tm 3:12). This persecution originated from the Jews who sought to stamp out the movement of Christianity since it was taking many from Judaism. This persecution was certainly one motivation for the judaizing teachers to go on their campaign to recruit the Galatian disciples (4:17). They wanted to escape the persecution of their fellow Jews (2:12; 6:12). In the early years of the beginning of Christianity, there was much persecution from the Jews (See At 13,14). Paul is here saying that the endurance of such persecution is useless if the members of the body revert to compromising with the meritorious system of religion of those who brought on the persecution.

**3:5 *He who provides to you the Spirit and works powerful deeds:*** When Paul rehearsed his work among the Galatians before the Jerusalem meeting in Acts 15, the Jerusalem brethren stood silent (At 15:12). Paul and Barnabas had preached the cross on the first mission journey. The Lord confirmed their preaching by the miraculous works of the Spirit (See Mk 16:20; Hb 2:3,4). Not only had the Spirit worked miracles through Paul and Barnabas, but also the gifts of the Spirit were given to the

Galatians through the laying on of Paul's hands (See At 8:18; 19:1-6). He now questions their sensibility. He asks if the Spirit did all this miraculous work on the basis of their meritorious law-keeping, or on their hearing and obedience to the gospel. The answer was obvious.

**3:6** Paul now resorts to the judaizers' favorite Old Testament character whom they used in their arguments to convince the Galatians to return to circumcision and ceremonies of the Sinai law. However, Paul sets forth God's salvation by grace under the Sinai law and shows how the obedient life of Abraham proves that one is justified before God by faith. **Abraham believed God:** Paul first points out that Abraham was justified before he came into a special covenant relationship with God (Gn 15:6; see Rm 4:3,9,11; Js 2:23). Therefore, the covenant did not make him righteous before God. He was also reckoned righteous by faith before the giving of the Sinai law (3:17). Therefore, he was accounted righteous apart from the Sinai law. Add to this the fact that he was justified as a Gentile. All of this happened before the giving of the Sinai law and establishment of a covenant with national Israel that came about 550 years after the initial promise to Abraham, but 430 years after the final, but same promise, was made to Jacob. Paul's argument, therefore, is that neither the Sinai law, nor God's personal covenant with Abraham or Israel is now necessary for the salvation of the Galatians, since such was not the case in the justification of Abraham. Therefore, in carefully following Paul's argument here, there is a final and crushing blow to the theology of legalism that was being laid on the shoulders of the Galatian disciples. Paul wants to remind them that it was Abraham's obedient faith, not his meritorious works of law, that justified him before God. (In Romans 4 Paul also uses the example of Abraham as an example of justification by faith.) Keep in mind, however, that there is no contradiction here with what James said concerning Abraham's justification. James wrote, "*Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar?*" (Js 2:21). It was Abraham's faith that moved him to obedience. Without that faith he would not have acted. The Hebrew writer

explains, "By faith, Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac" (Hb 11:17). Therefore, the justifying action of offering Isaac (work) was founded upon Abraham's faith, his trust that God would raise Isaac from the dead (Hb 11:19). **Credited to him for righteousness:** The meaning is that Abraham was pronounced justified before God by faith (See Rm 4:11,22-24). The Greek word translated "credited" means that something is accredited to the account of another. In this context, righteousness (justification) is accredited to the account of Abraham and all who walk by faith. The accounting or accrediting does not happen as a result of one's performance of law in order to earn justification. One is not credited as a result of meritorious good works. If such were the case, then righteousness would be earned. God would be put in debt and grace would no longer be free (See Rm 4:4; 11:6). When Abraham had no son, God made the promise in Genesis 15 that He would be the father of many nations, not just the nation of Israel (Gn 17:5; Rm 4:17). Therefore, Gentiles, who were without the Sinai law before the coming of Jesus, were considered sons of Abraham, not because of a special covenant-law relationship they had with God, but by faith. Since Gentiles were justified without the Sinai law and covenant before the coming of the cross, then they are justified in Galatia without the Sinai covenant and law. They are justified by faith in the work of God on the cross. Keep in mind that justification of all who are of faith was through the cross. Paul establishes this truth in the middle of the arguments of the Roman letter in order that we not miss this point (See comments Rm 3:25). It was for this reason that Jesus also died in order to redeem those who lived before the cross (Hb 9:15). Salvation by faith has always been in view of the cross. Salvation by faith and grace before the cross was made possible because those who were obediently faithful were looking forward to the cross. By faith, those whom God justified in view of the cross, trusted that He would do so according to His eternal plan. After the cross, we are justified because of our faith in the atoning cross, though we have knowledge of the cross. All salvation, therefore, is in reference to the

blood of Jesus that was poured out on the cross, in which blood we trust that God has redeemed us from our sins (Ep 1:7).

**3:7 *Of faith ... sons of Abraham:*** Spiritual sonship of Abraham does not come as a result of being born a Jew. Sonship is based on faith (See Rm 2:28,29). The Gentiles had not received the Sinai law, nor had God established a covenant relationship with them. Nevertheless, those who walked by faith during the Old Testament times were sons of Abraham by faith, and thus, justified before God by their faith. If such were true then, then certainly it is true now.

**3:8 *Justify the Gentiles by faith:*** The spiritual nations of whom Abraham was the father, have always been justified by faith. In the context here this statement is placed in the future tense in reference to the promise. However, as the blood of Jesus was retroactive for the sins of men (Rm 3:25; Hb 9:15), so also the conditions for justification. Abraham was justified by obedient faith. In order that we not misunderstand what he was saying in all the discussion concerning faith, he began and closed the Roman letter with the “*obedience of faith*” by which we are saved (See Rm 1:5; 16:26). The faith about which Paul is talking is obedience to Him in whom we have faith. This is not a simple mental acknowledgment that God is and His Son is our Savior. The saving faith about which Paul is talking is a responsive and responsible faith (5:6; Rm 12:1,2; 1 Co 15:10). It responds to the grace of God (2 Co 4:15). It is responsible for carrying out the will of Jesus in life (See Js 2:14-26), for we are created in Christ for good works (Ep 2:10). ***Preached ... the gospel to Abraham:*** The Old Testament quotation of this verse is from Genesis 12:3 (See Gn 18:18; At 3:25). All nations were blessed in the coming of Jesus for the atonement of men. The good news (gospel) of justification by faith was first announced to Abraham. God revealed to Abraham that righteousness comes through faith. Those who would follow in the steps of Abraham's faith would receive the blessing of salvation of the promise that God made to Abraham (Rm 1:5; 4:16,20; 16:26). In this way the blessing would go into all nations.

**3:9 *Blessed with believing Abraham:*** Those who express their trust in God for salvation by faith are blessed by the faith of Abraham. They are blessed because God promised Abraham the blessing of salvation. It was through his seed that the Redeemer came (Gn 12:1-3). Since the blessing came as a result of God's promise, its fulfillment did not depend on the meritorious work of Abraham. Neither did the fulfillment depend upon Abraham's faith. The promise came freely as did the fulfillment. Thus, the totality of the blessing was based on the grace of God to save man through Jesus.

### THE CURSE OF LAW

**3:10 *Under the curse:*** Paul now turns to a second argument that is based on the curse of law. He argues against the judaizers by showing them the Old Testament teaching concerning the futility of justification through law-keeping. Those who choose to be justified by law-keeping must suffer the curse that law brings, that is, condemnation. It brings condemnation because no man can live perfectly under law in order to be sinless, and thus, justified (See Rm 3:10,23; 8:1,2). Therefore, the cursed are those who seek to use law with the illusion that they can justify themselves before God by their meritorious performance of law. The problem with this is what Paul states in the following thought. ***Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things:*** In order to be justified by law, one must keep it perfectly. In quoting Deuteronomy 27:26 (See Jr 11:3), Paul argues that man has no hope of justification if he tries to be legally justified before God on the basis of his ability to keep law. The foundation of his premise is that all sin (Rm 3:23). And since sin brings condemnation, law in and of itself brings condemnation. One sin makes one a lawbreaker (Js 2:10), and thus, condemned by law. Law, therefore, has no remedy for sin. There is nothing within law itself that makes provision for atonement of sin. It thus brings only condemnation. The Sinai law and covenant were given to Israel, not for the purpose of providing a means of salvation, but as a spiritual guide to direct Israel's attention and behavior toward God. Unfortunately, by the

time of Jesus, the Jews, and specifically the judaizers, were making the law a means of justification. Instead of viewing the law as a means to an end, they viewed it as the end within itself.

**3:11 No one is justified by law:** The article “the” is not present here in the Greek text. Therefore, no one can be justified before God by the perfect keeping of any law. We would thus caution ourselves not to make the law of Christ a system of laws that we might seek to establish it as a legal system of justification. It is not the purpose of law to produce salvation. The purpose of law is to direct one's attention to his own inadequacies in reference to law, and thus, move one to plead for grace. It is the purpose of law to manifest sin and death, and thus, direct one toward the atonement of the cross. It is the purpose of law to direct our lives in the direction of God's grace and what He would have us do. Law directs. The grace of God through the cross takes care of our misdirection.

**That no one is justified by law ... is evident:** No one can be justified (made righteous) by law-keeping (See 2:16,21; Rm 3:20). In reference to law, all men are spiritually dysfunctional. **The just will live by faith:** The quotation here is from Habakkuk where God reminded Israel that they were spiritually dysfunctional, and thus, they must trust in Him (Hk 2:4). This statement is quoted in three contexts in the New Testament where Jewish Christians were seeking to return to law-keeping as a means of salvation (3:11; Rm 1:17; Hb 10:38). “By faith” emphasizes total reliance on God for one's salvation. It is our faith in the faith of Jesus who went to the cross for us (See 2:16). “Works” or “flesh” are words that Paul uses to emphasize the fact that there are those who trust in their performance of obedience to law and meritorious works. Those who state that the phrase “by faith” excuses men from obedience have missed the point. Faith and meritorious works are contrasted in the letter. Faith emphasizes the individual's total reliance on God. Meritorious work (flesh) emphasizes one's reliance on one's ability to keep law. To say that one is justified by faith does not mean that one is not obligated to be obedient to the will of God. It does mean, however, that one cannot

save himself by perfect obedience to the will of God. If we miss this point, we will misunderstand the message of Galatians (See comments Rm 3:31).

**3:12 Law is not of faith:** Law in and of itself does not demand faith, that is, trust in God. One's reliance solely on law-keeping has the tendency to lead one away from God because one seeks to trust in oneself. **The man who does them will live in them:** Paul quotes Leviticus 18:5 in order to show that if one would be justified by law-keeping, then he must keep all the law perfectly. Thus the law in and of itself could have given life if one could have lived perfectly according to its ordinances. But man cannot so live (Rm 3:23). Therefore, no one can be justified by law (2:16; 3:21; see Rm 10:5; Js 2:10).

**3:13 Christ redeemed us:** Jesus ransomed us from the curse of having to live perfectly according to law in order to be justified (vs 10; Rm 8:3; 2 Co 5:21). He made us perfect in Him by His cleansing blood (Cl 1:28; 1 Jn 1:9). He became the curse by taking upon Himself that which condemned us through law, that is, our sin against law. The sufficiency of His atonement took the place of our total insufficiency in reference to law-keeping. It is not that our works subsidize some insufficiency of the atonement. His work through the cross came regardless of our insufficiency (Rm 5:8). The point is that there can be no salvation without the atonement of Jesus that takes care of our sin problem in relation to law. God's solution for our sin problem comes as the free gift to all who would submit to obedience of the gospel. **Cursed ... on a tree:** It was a curse in Israel to be hanged on a tree (Dt 21:23). One's body was desecrated by hanging it on a tree for public display (See Ja 8:29; 10:26; 2 Sm 4:12). Nevertheless, Jesus was willing to suffer the humiliation of hanging on a tree for our benefit. He took our curse by being a curse for us on the tree (cross) (At 5:30; 1 Pt 2:24).

**3:14 That the blessing of Abraham might come:** Jesus died in order to reaffirm the blessing of salvation by grace through faith. Salvation by faith that was promised to all nations through Abraham was fulfilled at the cross (Rm 4:9; 5:1,2; Ti 2:11). The gospel, therefore, is the avenue through which we must pass in order to receive



the blessing of the promise. **The promise:** Reception of the promise is both in a salvational context, as well as, in a miraculous context of the receiving of the Spirit. In the context of the reception of the Holy Spirit in Acts 2, Peter affirmed that such was the promise sent from the Father (At 2:33). The apostles had received the promise of the Spirit that was the fulfillment of Joel 2:28 (At 2:1-4; see Is 32:15; Ez 11:19). Though there was a promise of the Holy Spirit, which eventually went to all the 1st century disciples who had hands laid on them by a Christ-sent apostle (At 8:18), it is evident that in the context of the Galatian problem, emphasis is on the promise of salvation through the fulfillment of the blessing that was promised to Abraham in Genesis 12:3. Therefore, through inspiration of the prophets, the Holy Spirit made known to the prophets the promise of salvation. Peter's commentary was that the promise was made known through the Old Testament prophets, though they did not understand all the implications concerning the salvation (See comments 1 Pt 1:10-12). This grace that the prophets prophesied, therefore, has been revealed through Jesus.

### PROMISE OF THE SEED

In the following argument, Paul emphasizes the fact that the coming of the law did not do away with or annul the promise. Neither did the law become a condition upon which the promise was fulfilled or applied to our salvation. He argues the superiority of the promise over law. God's promise to Abraham, that is, His covenant with Abraham to bring forth the blessing to all nations, was unconditionally given. Abraham did not meritoriously earn the promise. God simply told Abraham what He would do in the future through his seed. But in reference to Moses, the law was given through Moses and he was told what he must do. In other words, the promise was given through grace, whereas law was given in order to demand obedience. The promise was unconditionally given and fulfilled, whereas law would have made the acceptance and fulfillment of the promise conditioned on Abraham's obedience and the Jew's obedience to the law.



**3:15 A man's covenant:** Paul begins this section by reminding the Galatians concerning the nature of the covenants that are established between men. These covenants are not changed after they have been ratified. A covenant is made between two parties. Only the parties involved can change the covenant. A third party cannot make changes in the covenant, neither can anyone other than the two parties annul the covenant that has been made between the two parties.

**3:16 The promises:** Paul uses the word "promises" in reference to the covenant with Abraham, since the covenant involved many promises such as a great name, blessing and a land (See Gn 12:1-3,7; 13:15; 17:7,8; 24:7). It was God who made the promises. He made the promises without meritorious conditions on the part of Abraham. God did not prescribe conditions to Abraham that he must keep in order to receive the promises. The promises of Genesis 12:1-3 were (1) a name, (2) a nation, (3) a land, and (4) the blessing that would bless all men. The physical promises (name, nation, land) had been fulfilled by the time of Jesus. The blessing promise was in reference to salvation and was fulfilled through the coming of the Seed, who was Jesus. **Your seed:** Christ was the particular seed around whom all the promises of the covenant were made. It was through the seed, or descendants of Abraham, that the Seed would come into the world. Thus, it was through the seed of Abraham that God would manifest His grace in the world through the sacrificial blood of Jesus (Ti 2:11).

**3:17 Four hundred and thirty years:** Scholars disagree concerning the time from which Paul measures the beginning of the 430 years. The promise was given to Abraham around 2000 B.C. However, the law was given around 1,450 B.C. This period of time is more than 430 years. Many scholars believe that Paul measures the time from God's last proclamation of the promise to the fathers (Abraham, Isaac & Jacob), the last of which would have been made to Jacob (Gn 28:3,4; 46:1-4). At least this measuring of the time would account for the 430 years. **Cannot annul a covenant:** Paul's argument to the judaizers was that the law, which came 430 years after God re-

affirmed to Jacob the covenant he had made with Abraham, did not annul the promise or become a condition for the fulfillment of the promise (Gn 46:1-4). The law did not set aside the promise by becoming a condition upon which it was to be fulfilled. The fulfillment of the promise was based on God's grace. The coming of the law did not offer a substitute for the promise. It only encouraged the fulfillment of the promise. In other words, law exemplified or manifested the sin of those to whom it was given. However, the promise pointed the law-keepers toward salvation by faith and grace. Therefore, at the time the law was given, it intensified the desires of the law-keepers to seek the justification that would come through the fulfillment of the promise. That fulfillment was God's grace. Thus the law drove men to faith (See 2:16; Rm 4:13).

**3:18 No longer depends on promise:** The word "gave" in the verse is perfect tense, thus emphasis is on the past action of giving the promise with emphasis on the continuing results of the promise. The promise was given as a gift to Abraham apart from his meritorious obedience to law. The effects of the promise were permanent. As Abraham was justified by faith and grace, so this means of salvation was continued though the law came 430 years after the promise was renewed in Jacob. Therefore, the Sinai law had nothing to do with the fulfillment of the promise. Neither did the Sinai law become a condition for the promise to be fulfilled (See comments Rm 4:14-16). God fulfills His promises regardless of law.

### PURPOSE OF THE LAW

**3:19** Since the law did not bring about the fulfillment of the promise, or become a condition upon which it was fulfilled or applied to one's life, then Paul assumes a question that was surely going through the minds of the Galatians. **Why then the law:** The answer is, "I would not have known sin except through the law. For I would not have known coveting except the law had said, 'You will not covet'" (Rm 7:7). The law was given to manifest sin (Rm 4:15; 5:20; 7:13ff). In order to convince one of sin, there had to be a standard by which one could self-inspect his life.

One had to be able to look into the mirror of the law and see a dirty soul (Js 1:22-25). The only way one could do this was through the manifestation of sin by the giving of law. When we thus see ourselves through the mirror of law, we are reminded that we are spiritually dysfunctional. We are reminded that we cannot keep law perfectly in order to justify ourselves before God. Law, therefore, manifested the futility of perfect law-keeping as a means of salvation. Thus the law was given to Israel, not to save those to whom it was given, but to manifest the need for God's grace in the lives of those to whom it was given. Law manifested the sinfulness of the individual, but it could not cleanse the sin (See comments Rm 7:21-23). Paul, as well as all who recognized the futility of justification by law-keeping, cried out, "*Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?*" (Rm 7:24). The answer to the question lies only in the grace of God that was manifested through Jesus (Rm 7:25; Ti 2:11). **It was ordained through angels:** The Sinai law was given through angels (Dt 33:2; At 7:38,53; Hb 2:2) to Moses who was the mediator between Israel and God (Ex 20:19; Jn 1:17). Therefore, Israel received the law third hand. However, the grace of God through Jesus was given directly from God to all men as an offering for sin (Ti 2:11).

**3:20 A mediator:** Though God is one, the mediator does not represent just one person. Thus the law involved two parties. One party gave. The other had to receive by obedience. The law was given to Israel through the mediator, Moses. It was thus given indirectly, since God gave the law through Moses. It was also limited to the one people. However, the promise involved the actions of one party. The one God of heaven gave the promise directly to Abraham on behalf of many peoples, that is, all nations. There was no need for a mediator with the giving of the promise as was necessary with the giving of the Sinai law.

**3:21 Is the law then against the promises of God:** Though sin was manifested by the law, and men spiritually died by recognition of their sin through their inability to keep law perfectly (Rm 3:20; Js 1:22-25), the coming of the law

did not annul the promises of God. The law did not set aside the promises. The law did not work against the promises. It worked to fulfill the promises. **Righteousness would have been by law:** If one could have been justified by law-keeping, then certainly the Sinai law could have produced such. Paul stated that *“the law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good”* (Rm 7:12). It is not the fault of law that men cannot keep it perfectly in order to be accounted righteous before God. The fault is with men, not the law of God. For this reason Paul wrote to the Romans that the law is weak through the ability of men to keep it (See comments Rm 8:3,4). The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus came through the promise, and thus, made us *“free from the law of sin and death”* (Rm 8:2).

**3:22 The Scripture has confined all under sin:** The law confined men to condemnation because of sin. However, the blessing of law is that it reminds us of our confinement to sin (See Rm 8:9,10,23; 11:32). This recognition thus drives us to trust in God's grace. The law drove those who were the sons of Abraham by faith to accept the promise, that is, salvation by the grace of the cross (See comments Ep 2:5-8).

**3:23 Kept under guard:** Before the coming of the fulfillment of the promise, men were held in the captivity of sin because the law could not justify. Law, therefore, reminds man that he is a prisoner, a prisoner to his own sin. Paul argues that prisoners seek release. Thus those under law seek release from the bondage of law. Israel by faith, therefore, was driven by the law to freedom in Christ (See 2:16).

**3:24 The law was our headmaster:** Here is the word pedagogue that refers to the trusted slave in Roman and Jewish culture who was given charge of the children to both lead and supervise the children who were six to sixteen years in age. Israel was in like manner entrusted to the law in order to be brought to Christ. The discipline of the law inferred the immaturity of those to whom it was given. The purpose of the pedagogue was to usher to Christ the undisciplined and immature. The Sinai law, therefore, functioned in such a manner to bring man to

justification by faith in Christ, “and by Him all who believe are justified from all things from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses” (At 13:39). Once the pedagogue had served his purpose, however, he was discharged from his duties. So it was with the Sinai law (Hb 10:4).

**3:25 No longer under a headmaster:** In the preceding sense, therefore, “Christ is the end of law for righteousness to everyone who believes” (Rm 10:4). The law was a shadow that pointed to good things to come (Hb 10:1). However, when the substance of the shadow came, the law was taken away. It was for this reason that Jesus came to do the will of the Father by taking away the first covenant and law in order to establish the second (Hb 10:9). When the tutor (the law) had accomplished its work, it was taken away. Therefore, the law was only a means to an end. The end was the cross.

### CHILDREN OF GOD BY FAITH

**3:26 Sons of God through faith:** Though almost unbelievable from the standpoint of being human, Christians are actually considered by God to be His sons (Jn 1:12; Rm 8:14; 1 Jn 3:1). They are considered such through Jesus. **Through faith:** We are sons through (by) faith, not through law-keeping. Those who would seek sonship through meritorious law-keeping are on the wrong track. They are on a dead end road that brings only condemnation, for it is impossible for law to save simply because no one can keep law perfectly.

**3:27 Baptized into Christ:** As in Romans 6:3-6, Paul inserts the point at which the believer comes into a covenant relationship with God, and thus, begins his or her journey of faith. One establishes and signs a covenant to trust in God for salvation by His grace when his faith moves him to respond to God's grace. This response is immersion into the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus (See comments Rm 6:3-6). Baptism is not a work of law in order to earn God's grace. It is a response to grace by the believer, who at the time of immersion contacts the blood of Jesus that came as a result of the grace of God. “Into” is metaphorical of coming into a covenant relationship with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit (Mt

28:19). In the context here, emphasis is on coming into a covenant with the One through whom the blessing was manifested, that is, Jesus Christ (Ti 2:11). **Put on Christ:** In the following two chapters Paul will discuss what is meant by “*putting on Christ*.” Putting on Christ means putting off the ways of the world (See comments Cl 3:1,5). The fruit of the Spirit will come forth from the one who has put on Christ (5:22,23). So there are two metaphorical phrases in this passage that refer to the relationship one establishes with Christ by obedience to the gospel. By immersion in water “into Christ” one comes into a realm where he or she establishes a spiritual relationship with Deity. By “*putting on Christ*” one takes on the spiritual nature of Deity by conforming to Christ. Without immersion, therefore, one cannot establish through works of law or meritorious deeds that which results from submission to the grace of God. It is for this reason that baptism can never be a work of law. It is mentioned here in the context of an argument against works of law.

**3:28** The law created within Israel the differences and distinctions of race, class and sex. However, the class distinctions of race (Jew or Greek), social class (slave or free) and sex (male or female), end in Christ. It is not that these distinctions end within themselves in Christ, but that salvation by grace and faith are made applicable to all. The promise is fulfilled equally to all in Christ. In Christ there is equality to all in reference to salvation. These social distinctions that bring division among men in the secular world are nullified when one is baptized into Christ (See Jn 10:16; At 10:34,35; Rm 10:12; 1 Co 12:13; Ep 2:14; Cl 3:11). **One in Christ Jesus:** The oneness of humanity can be realized only in the fact that there is one God and Lord Jesus Christ to whom all men submit (Ep 4:4-6). There is one gospel to which men must be obedient in order to come into this relationship of oneness with Deity. Christianity, therefore, is not linked to any one culture of man. Jews cannot culturally claim it. Gentiles cannot claim it. Because Christianity is not culturally linked, it can go to all cultures of the world.

**3:29 Heirs according to the promise:** Being an heir of the promise did not depend on being a physical descen-

dant of Abraham. It depended on being a “spiritual descendant” by faith (Rm 2:28,29; see Rm 8:17). The Jews, therefore, could not, because of their physical heritage through Abraham, consider themselves to have a special relationship with God. John the Baptist told the Pharisees and Sadducees that God could even raise up children from stones (Mt 3:9). If one obeys the gospel in order to be clothed with Christ, then he is of the seed of Abraham.

## Chapter 4

Paul has just introduced the concept of an heir of God. He now continues by presenting an argument against the judaizing teachers that is based on the premise of how we have received the adoption to be sons of God. Sonship is not the result of physical identity with Abraham (circumcision), but through the spiritual identity of Abraham's faith.

### HEIRS OF GOD

**4:1 *The heir:*** Though the child has potential inheritance of the father's estate, as a child he is no better off in relation to the inheritance than the slave. In a sense, therefore, the son is “kept in bondage” until the time of the inheritance. The only advantage he has that makes him different from the slave is that he is heir to the estate (vs 7). The son is after the nature of the father, but the slave is not. The son has a father, but the slave is under a master. The son serves the father out of love, but the slave serves out of duty. The Galatians were seeking to return to slavehood at the expense of their sonship.

**4:2 *Under guardians and stewards:*** As a son, therefore, one is in bondage. The son has no rights to the possession of the inheritance until he actually inherits the estate at the time the father has so designated.

**4:3 *In bondage:*** Though speaking primarily to the Jewish situation under the Sinai law, Paul seems to be also addressing the Gentiles, who before Christ, were also shut up under bondage by the law unto themselves (See At 15:10; Rm 2:12-16). ***Elements of the world:*** The word “elements” refers to that which originates from

this world. Both Jews and Gentiles were kept under the basic or elementary principles of man-made religiosity until the coming of Jesus. The Gentiles were kept under the bondage of superstitious religions that haunted their minds with fear (See At 7:42; Rm 8:38; Cl 2:8,20). Though there were Gentiles who lived by faith in God before the cross, they were still in the bondage of their inability to obey any law in order to be justified before God. Paul's point is that both Jews and Gentiles were in bondage before the grace of God was revealed through Jesus. In returning to that from which they came, therefore, they were returning to their spiritual childhood, and thus, to the bondage of religious legal systems from which they had escaped in their obedience to the gospel.

**4:4** *When the fullness of the time came:* This was the time in which God had predetermined when He would send forth Jesus into the world. It was a time of peace that began with the rule of Octavius Caesar Augustus in 17 B.C. (See Lk 2:2). It was a time when Rome had developed a common language, roads, economic stability and national unity throughout the Roman Empire. It was a time when the world was sociologically prepared to receive the intervention of God into the world. Jews had been scattered throughout the world because of the Assyrian and Babylonian captivities. The stage was set for the coming of the Messiah in Jerusalem in order to be announced to Jews in synagogues throughout the world (See Is 2:1-4). It was thus a time when the gospel could be announced on earth and propagated throughout the nations of the Roman Empire (See comments At 2). **Sent forth His Son:** The preexistent Son of God was born of a woman into the world in order to bring together the divine with that which was of this world. Thus, the birth was of a virgin which is what would be expected of God's entrance into the physical world of man (See Gn 3:15; Is 7:14; Mt 1:23; see Jn 1:1-14). **Born under law:** Jesus was born under the Sinai law in order to redeem from the curse of law all those who realized that they were in condemnation because of the law. Paul's argument here is to question why should we return to that from which Jesus delivered us.



**4:5 To redeem those who were under law:** Jesus came to redeem us from the necessity of perfect law-keeping in order that we be justified by God's grace (See 3:13; Mt 20:28; Hb 9:12). He redeemed us from sin that was manifested by our inability to keep law. Thus, redemption from sin meant redemption from our futile efforts to keep law perfectly and efforts to atone for our sins through good works. Therefore, "*Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law*" (3:13). The word "redeem" is a metaphor that finds its earthly meaning in one of two sources, or both. Israel was in Egyptian captivity from which they could not deliver themselves. Thus, God redeemed them by His grace, since they could not redeem themselves (Ex 15:13-16). During Roman times, a slave could not deliver himself, but could find freedom if someone paid the redemption price for this freedom. Whichever is the source of the metaphor Paul has in mind, the thought is the same. We were in the captivity of our own sinfulness. We could not gain freedom by meritorious works of law or perfect law-keeping, for we are all dysfunctional in reference to law (Rm 3:10,23). We could not find atonement in meritorious works. Thus through the blood of Jesus, we were bought out of the captivity of sin (At 20:28; Ep 1:7; Hb 9:12). **Those who were under law:** Paul is discussing the situation of both Jew and Gentile. Not only was the Jew under the curse of not being able to perfectly keep the Sinai law, the Gentiles were also under the curse of the law unto themselves. Both were in bondage to law. **Receive the adoption as sons:** "*But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name*" (Jn 1:12; see Ep 1:5). Adoption is based upon faith in Jesus, not meritorious obedience to law. The Gentiles, therefore, must not seek to return to their superstitions, fear and bondage. The Jews must not return to depending on law-keeping that brought no justification. Since both Jews and Gentiles knew they could not keep law perfectly, they would be returning to bondage (See Rm 8:15). Bondage brings fear because one always knows that he has broken the law. Liberty brings joy and peace of mind.

**4:6 Because you are sons:** Because they were sons, the

Holy Spirit was given to them. The wording of the verse seems to indicate that Paul is referring to the miraculous gifts they received by the grace of God through the laying on of his hands. The text states that their sonship preceded their receiving of the Spirit. They were already sons before they received the laying on of hands by Paul in order to receive the gifts (See At 8:18; 19:1-6). The same would be true at the time of their immersion in reference to the indwelling of the Spirit. They were immersed, and then, the Spirit indwelt them. Whether miraculous or non-miraculous in reference to the Spirit, the argument of Paul is still the same. Such is also true of the context of Romans 8:16 where Paul stated, "*The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of God.*" The point is that the Spirit was not among them as a result of works of law, but through the grace of God. They did not earn the miraculous gifts, nor did they earn the right to have the indwelling of the Spirit. The Spirit was freely given both in the gifts and in the indwelling (Mt 10:8). If reference in this context is primarily to the miraculous work of the Spirit among the Galatians, then there is power in Paul's argument in the Galatian situation. Not only did they freely receive the miraculous gifts, the gifts became the confirmation of the truth of the gospel they received (See Mk 16:20; Hb 2:3,4). Since the truth of the gospel was confirmed in the lives of the Galatians, it remains confirmed today. We have the Galatian letter as a testimony that what Paul taught then is still true today. The Spirit miraculously confirmed the truth of the gospel once. It does not need to be reconfirmed today. The miraculous gifts passed away in the 1st century after the truth of the gospel was confirmed (See 1 Co 13:8-10). We read Galatians and understand that the message the Galatians received was the truth because it was confirmed by the Holy Spirit. If emphasis in Romans 8:16 is in reference to the miraculous work of the Spirit in the lives of the Roman disciples, then Paul is using the same argument here as with the Roman Christians. The miraculous work of the Spirit bore witness with their spirit of acceptance of the grace of God to manifest that they were sons of God. There was thus the outward evi-

dence of the Holy Spirit and the inward evidence of their obedient spirit. Today, we have the recorded evidence of the Roman and Galatian Christians' sonship as it was proved by the Spirit in the 1st century. We thus need no miraculous proof today. We simply need to believe and obey those things the inspired New Testament writers recorded concerning their beliefs. The Spirit confirmed the spoken word (Mk 16:20; Hb 2:3,4). He also confirmed their belief by the miraculous work among them (See 1 Co 14:22). Today our sonship is affirmed by our obedient faith to the direction of the Spirit that He has given through inspired words. One's sonship is determined by his focus on and obedience of the Spirit-inspired word of God. **God has sent forth the Spirit:** The presence of the Spirit was the manifestation of their sonship. If the Galatians returned to law-keeping, then they would give up their right of sonship, and thus, the presence of the Spirit in their lives. **Abba, Father:** This was an endearing term used by Jewish children in reference to their physical fathers (See Mk 14:36). A slave could not so address his master. What the Galatians were doing was turning from sonship where they could address the Father in an endearing manner. They were turning to slavehood under law where they would not have this endearing relationship with the heavenly Father. Those who appreciate their salvation by grace that has been extended from the Father through the cross, cry out to the Father for direction. "Abba, Father," therefore, is the plea of a son who seeks direction from the Father. It is the spirit of the Son to be obedient (See comments Hb 5:8). It is the nature of the son who is filled with the spirit of Jesus to seek commandments from the Father. Paul may be referring to the miraculous gifts of the Spirit that were prevalent among the Galatian churches. At least, we cannot ignore the miraculous presence of the Spirit in their lives since he had laid hands on many of them in order that they receive the miraculous gifts, which gifts came by the grace of God, not because of their meritorious works of law (See 3:5, see comments At 8:18). The presence of the Spirit in a miraculous manner was evidence of God's grace in their lives.

**4:7 No longer a bondservant but a son:** This verse is the conclusion to the preceding argument. As sons, the Galatians are not as slaves in their relationship with the Father. If they return to law-keeping, however, they will return to the status of a slave, and thus, cannot address the Father as "Abba." Since they are sons through Jesus, then they are heirs of the promise. The contrast between being a son or slave is obvious. The son has a close relationship with the Father. The slave does not. The son has hope of inheritance. The slave does not. The son labors in love of the Father. The slave labors in fear. The son is of the nature of the Father. The slave is not. The son has a father. The slave has a master. Now we understand why Paul "marvelled" (1:6) and had "doubts" (4:20) concerning the Galatians, and thus, referred to their move back to religious legalism as "foolish" (3:1). The foolishness of their turning from grace to solely depending on their performance of law is manifested in the tremendous contrast between true Christianity and a religion created after one's own ability to perform law. The law of grace and faith has delivered us from the law of sin and death.

#### USELESSNESS OF DEAD RELIGIONS

**4:8 Those things that by nature are not gods:** There was a time when the Gentiles of Galatia served those gods that they had created after their own imaginations. They did not know the true God of heaven (Rm 1:18-32; 1 Co 8:4; Ep 2:12; 1 Th 4:5). Paul here reminds them of the foolishness of their previous religious life of bowing down to idols and fearing the superstitions of imagined spirits (At 14:8-20; see Ex 20:3,4; Is 44:6-20; Jr 2:26-29; 10:1-5). The beauty of Christianity is that one is educated concerning the fallacy of the legends and voodooes of false gods and spirits that have been the invention of wicked, perverse and ignorant minds (See Is 37:19; Rm 1:25; 1 Co 8:5,6; 10:20; 12:2; 1 Th 1:9; Ti 3:3).

**4:9 You have known God:** They had obeyed the gospel and become sons of God. Reference here is to their recognition of the one true God and rejection of those gods they had invented after their own imagination. **Known**

**by God:** As a result of their obedience to the gospel, God claimed them as His sons through the redeeming blood of Jesus (See 1 Co 8:3; Ph 4:3; Rv 20:15). **How can you turn back:** Paul now questions their sensibility in returning to a system of law-keeping and fear that was produced by their past belief in gods they had imagined. He questions how they could give up the freedom that they now enjoy in Christ in order to return to a legal system that brought bondage and condemnation. **Worthless elements:** The Jewish Christians were in the process of returning to the legalism of meritorious law-keeping in reference to circumcision and Sinai law ceremonies. The judaizing teachers were taking both Jewish and Gentile Christians on a journey back to the emptiness of a religiosity that produced death, not life. They were thus returning to “another gospel,” a gospel that brought death because it denied the sufficiency of grace. The judaizing teachers were inviting the Galatians to return to religions of bondage and death. Their regression was not to a higher level of spirituality as they boasted. It was to the weakness of a religiosity that brought spiritual death. They were thus exchanging spiritual wealth for spiritual poverty. In this context it is difficult to determine if Paul is referring to the Gentiles’ returning to some of their religious beliefs or exclusively to Jewish religious practices. The context seems to indicate that he refers to the Gentiles’ former religious beliefs since they previously “served those that by nature are not gods” (vs 8). Regardless of the former religion to which primary reference is made, Paul affirms that their journey to legal religiosity would eventually end in death.

**4:10 Days and months:** The Galatians were being instructed to observe Jewish feast days as legal requirements for justification. Though Paul never condemned the keeping of certain days that were observed with a cultural connotation (See Rm 14:5,6; 1 Co 16:8), he did condemn the keeping of such days as meritorious works in reference to one’s salvation. In this context Paul rules against the observance of any day as a meritorious act of justification (See Cl 2:16).

**4:11 Labored ... in vain:** Paul here expresses his wor-

ry that he has wasted his time in bringing them forth in the gospel (See Ph 2:16; 1 Th 3:5). He and Barnabas suffered greatly when they preached the gospel in the regions of southern Galatia (At 13,14). It is Paul's concern here that all such persecution and labor was useless if they returned to a system of legal justification. This brief statement surely caused the Galatians to hang their heads in shame as they recalled the sufferings through which Paul went in order to preach to them the freedom of the saving grace of God. Paul makes them consider the possibility that they might be churches of "wood, hay, straw" that would be consumed in apostasy (See 1 Co 3:12,13).

### PAUL'S WORK IN GALATIA

**4:12** Paul now pleads with them to relinquish their attempts to revert to justification by law-keeping and meritorious deeds. Their actions were not just a simple deviation from the truth of the gospel. Their move was an apostasy to another gospel that would sever their sonship with God, and thus, their salvation. In order to emphasize this point, he now focuses on the relationship that will be severed with him if they return to legalism.

***I am as you are:*** Paul had become all things to all men in order to win the Galatians (1 Co 9:21,22). He had identified with them in order to cross-culturally communicate the gospel to them. Now he pleads that they become as he is by enjoying the freedom that he has in Christ (5:1).

***You did me no wrong:*** While in Galatia they did him no harm, but graciously received him as a messenger of God. An alternative meaning here could be Paul's reference to the principle of 1 Corinthians 3:11-15, that is, their apostasy would not harm his salvational relationship with the Father. Though they gave up their salvation by constructing a legalistically oriented religion, he would carry on by faith in the grace of God.

**4:13 *Physical weakness:*** Paul suffered great persecution and hardship in order to evangelize the areas of Galatia (At 13,14; see 1 Co 2:3). However, in the context here, reference is probably to sickness that he endured in order to preach (Compare comments 2 Tm 4:20). The

superstitious religionists in Galatia would have considered either persecution or illness to be a curse that the gods would pour out on those who were wrong. However, those who accepted what Paul preached did not receive him as one who was cursed. They did not consider Paul's hardships or sickness a curse from some false god.

***I preached the gospel to you at the first:*** Reference is to the first mission journey Paul made to the region in Acts 13 & 14. He and Barnabas were the first to preach the gospel in the regions of southern Galatia.

**4:14 *Trial that was in my flesh:*** Numerous physical illnesses have been suggested as Paul's physical ailment while he preached in Galatia. Whatever the ailment was, it hindered his work. Paul's point here in bringing up the infirmity is that they received him regardless of it. He certainly seeks to shame them for their turning away from him by accepting the character assassination of the legalistic teachers who were in their midst. And rightly so. Anyone who would accept and believe slanderous character assassination should be ashamed because they are judging the character of someone by accepting the slanderous reports of others. ***Received me as a messenger of God:*** The Galatians enthusiastically received Paul when he preached the gospel to them. He now wants them to reconsider why they are not now continuing to believe what he taught them. ***Messenger of God:*** The Greek word here for "messenger" (minister) is translated "angel" in some translations (See Gr. of 2 Co 11:23). On one occasion the Galatians actually believed that Paul and Barnabas were the gods who had come down from heaven to visit them (At 14:11,12). Though such a belief was false, it did manifest the enthusiastic reception the Galatians gave to Paul and Barnabas on the first mission journey. Their turn now to the legalistic teachers manifests their fickle nature to receive whoever might come by. This fickle nature might explain why they were so eager to receive the judaizing teachers in their midst. Paul goes on to say that they received him "as Christ Jesus." The point is that they received Paul as one sent from God, not from men. He questions why they should change their opinion.

**4:15** When Paul first came to them with the gospel, they felt greatly honored and esteemed him highly. They would have made great personal and physical sacrifices in order to aid him. As a result of their reception of Paul and his message, they also received a great blessing of joy. They were blessed by his presence. But now, their joy has subsided. Such is the fruit of a legal-oriented religion. In legalistic religions, joy lasts as long as one performs the merits of the religion. Once one recognizes that he cannot keep up with the demands of law, the joy quickly fades away. However, when one recognizes the grace of God, his joy is constant because he recognizes his continuing salvation by the blood of Jesus (1 Jn 1:7). His joy is generated because of his salvation. There is no joy in trusting in one's own works in order to be saved. The problem with the thinking of this system of religion is that you never know if you are saved. One always goes to bed at night wondering if enough works were performed in order to supposedly atone for the sins of the day.

**4:16** *Have I become your enemy:* It is here that Paul becomes straightforward with the Galatians. He feels that he must say the truth, though the truth might cause great antagonism against him personally. He is willing to take the risk of losing their friendship in order that they not lose their sonship. It is not unusual that Paul would make this type of statement in the context of this type of brotherhood debate. It is the custom of those who are legalistic in thinking to throw slanderous accusations around in order to guard their position and maintain their recruits. Diotrefes used the same tactic by speaking slanderous words against the apostles and evangelists (3 Jn 9,10). It was surely the case in Galatia that the legalistic judaizing teachers were slandering Paul with malicious words. At least they were accusing him of receiving his message from men (See 1:11,12). They surely labelled him either a liberal, heretic or a false teacher in reference to the Sinai law. They thus sought to turn the Galatians against him. And so it is today. Nothing has changed in the mentality of legalistically oriented religionists.



**4:17 They zealously recruit you:** Reference here is to the legalistic teachers (2:4). Those who are of a legalistic mindset seek to “save the saved.” The mission of the legalistic judaizers is to recruit the saints to their position. Their focus is on themselves, not Jesus, and thus they recruit people to their party. Herein is revealed the nature of legalistic religion. Those who are of such seek to intimidate others to conform to their own rules, regulations, opinions and interpretations. In order to court a following, they slander and label their opposition. They do such in order to turn disciples away from their opposition. On the other hand, those who are of the freedom of Christ seek to exemplify Christ in spirit and behavior. The legalist recruits. The son of God by faith converts to Christ. The legalist holds up rules and regulations. Sons by faith hold up the cross. **They want to exclude you:** If one allows himself to be recruited to the rules of ritualistic religiosity, Paul says that his fellowship is broken with God, the apostles, and the rest of the sons of God (See 1 Jn 1:3). The judaizing teachers wanted to influence the Galatians in order to have them in fellowship with their position. But in such fellowship, the Galatians would lose their fellowship with the global body of Christ. Therefore, we must not miss the seriousness of what Paul is saying. The legalist is establishing a religious denomination. He is moving a party of disciples into a set of rules that will denominate (divide) his group from the rest of the body. Legalism turns groups of disciples into various denominational groups that have no fellowship with one another (See 1 Co 1:12,13). **Zealous for them:** The character of a legalistic teacher is that he demands that the student agree with him in all opinions and interpretations. In this relationship there is no room for freedom. There is no more room for study since the legalist already has all his teaching organized into a systematic theology that enshrines his opinions and personal interpretations. Those who do not conform to his established rules and interpretations are liberal and lost.

**4:18 Good to be zealous:** Zeal is good. However, it must be controlled and guided by knowledge (Rm 10:2). In other words, one should not be deceived into thinking

that the zeal of any religious group proves the truth of the group. Zeal does not guarantee that one is teaching the truth. It only affirms that the zealous firmly believe what they teach. Thus the judaizers firmly believed what they were teaching, though their teaching was an apostasy from the truth (grace) of the gospel. The Galatians must not be deceived into thinking that the zeal of the judaizing teachers is evidence of truth. People are often deceived by the zeal of those who are promoting their own theologies. Zeal, or enthusiasm, draws attention and a following. However, zeal is no guarantee of truth. Zealous legalists have an appealing call to their religion. The Galatians were evidently drawn to the judaizers because of the great enthusiasm by which the judaizers trumpeted their teachings.

**4:19** Paul has moved in the letter from “foolish Galatians” (3:1), to “brethren” (4:12), and now to “my little children.” His sternness has moved to gentleness in a last emotional plea that they wake up to what is happening. ***I labor in birth again:*** The Greek word translated “labor” is the same one used to refer to a woman in labor in order to give birth. Paul was again going through the frustrations of establishing the disciples in the faith. As his first efforts in Galatia were strenuous as a woman in labor, so he was now going through the same in order to bring them forth into maturity. The language here indicates that they had to be reborn again as they were in the beginning. It was not that they had to be rebaptized, but they needed to start again since they had given up so much. ***Christ is formed in you:*** They had come into Christ by being immersed. However, they had not grown in the grace and knowledge of Christ (2 Pt 3:18) in order that Christ be formed in them. Thus baptism does not guarantee spiritual growth. It is only the beginning of a lifetime struggle to cultivate in one's life the principles of Christian behavior (1 Co 1:30; 1 Th 4:3).

**4:20** ***I desire to be present with you:*** Paul is bold and direct in the letter. If he were only personally present with them, he could nurture their spiritual growth and personally deal with the judaizing teachers among them. One wonders if behind the context of the desire here on

Paul's part are not the actions he would have to exercise as a Christ-sent apostle if he were in their presence. He expressed to the Corinthians that they needed to correct some problems before he arrived, lest he have to be among them in sorrow by exercising the responsibility of apostleship in their midst (See 2 Co 12:20 - 13:6). This was more than a hard sermon. People fell dead and went blind before Christ-sent apostles (At 5:1ff; 13:9-12). Would Paul have to deliver some in Galatia to Satan "*that they may learn not to blaspheme*" (1 Tm 1:20)? Would some have to be delivered "*to Satan for the destruction of the flesh*" that their spirit be saved in the day of judgment (1 Co 5:5)? Certainly. The Galatians knew the power of God that worked in Paul as a Christ-sent apostle (At 15:12). It was this miraculous power of God that confirmed his message. This was the positive use of the power to convince the unbelieving. However, there was also the use of the power to discipline the body.

### HAGAR & SARAH

Paul now uses an allegory, or illustration, to explain his point. What he has taught thus far in the letter has been proven true. Therefore, he can use an allegory to illustrate the truth of what he is saying. It is not that the allegory manifests in and of itself an added biblical argument to Paul's proposition. The proposition has already been proven true. He simply wants to emphasize its truth by reference to the historical situation that occurred between Ishmael, the son of Hagar, and Isaac, the son of Sarah.

**4:21 *Hear the law:*** Paul begins by asking a question that is directed to those who are seeking to return to law. He challenges them to listen to what the law says.

**4:22 *Abraham had two sons:*** The origin of the two sons after the physical means of procreation was the same. Both came from Abraham. Ishmael was born of the bondwoman, Hagar (Gn 16:15). Isaac was born of the freewoman, Sarah (Gn 21:2).

**4:23 *Born according to the flesh:*** Ishmael was born as a result of the natural processes of procreation. He was the result of Abraham and Sarah's plan on their own

to bring about the fulfillment of God's promise of a son through his seed. However, this was not to be. The work of Abraham and Sarah could not bring about the fulfillment of the promise, for the fulfillment of the promise had to be by grace. Isaac was born of Sarah according to the working of God who allowed Sarah to conceive when she was past her physical ability to give birth to children (Rm 9:7,8; Hb 11:11). Thus Ishmael was born as a result of man's effort to work out God's promise. Isaac was born as a result of God's work to carry out the fulfillment of His promise to Abraham.

**4:24 *These are two covenants:*** Ishmael represents the covenant that is from Mount Sinai, which covenant contained a law that brought death, for no one could keep the law perfectly in order to be justified (Rm 3:23). ***Children to bondage:*** The covenant and law that was given on Mount Sinai in Arabia had no provisions for justification. It thus brought bondage, not life. Law does not make provision for sin. Law manifests sin by providing the occasion for one to transgress the law. The law provides no means by which the individual can atone for transgression. Since animal sacrifices do not take away sin against law (Hb 10:1-4), justification must originate from something outside or besides law. Thus comes the necessity of God's grace that was manifested through the atoning sacrifice of Jesus on the cross.

**4:25 *To Jerusalem that now is:*** The covenant and law that were established on Mount Sinai were represented by Jerusalem that stood at the time Paul wrote the letter. Jerusalem was still the center of religious reference for the judaizing teachers (See At 15:1,2). There was a difference between the covenant and law given on Mount Sinai and the judaizers' law that was coming out of Jerusalem at the time Paul wrote. By the time of Jesus' coming, the Jews had bound on the religious consciences of the people a host of religious rites that were nowhere found in the Sinai law (See comments Mt 15:1-9; Mk 7:1-9). The Jewish religious leaders had added numerous practices to the original Sinai laws in order that they be strictly kept. These theological interpretations and traditions were made a part of the law by the Jews, and thus,

were also considered legally binding by the Jews in order to produce salvation. This was the Jews' religion from which Paul came (1:13,14). We must not miss a modern-day application of this point. The law of Christ can be made into a legal means of justification as the Jews made the Sinai law. Traditions and interpretations can be added to the law of Christ in a manner to make all such regulations necessary merits that one must do in order to be saved. Legalistic Christians too often add opinions and traditions to the law of Christ, and then make such opinions and traditions necessary requirements for salvation. The problem with this system of religion is the same as that which Paul was refuting. No one can keep any religious law in a manner that will merit salvation. Nor can anyone add to the grace of God the performance of meritorious works. By works of law no one can be justified before God (2:16; Rm 3:20).

**4:26. *The Jerusalem that is above is free:*** Isaac represents the covenant that we now have with God. This covenant relationship originated because of the grace of God. This covenant brings freedom, not bondage. It is the heavenly Jerusalem that is the focal point of worship for those who are born of the freewoman by faith (See Is 2:2; Ph 3:20ff; Cl 3:1-3; Hb 12:22; Rv 21:2,9ff). Those of the freewoman do not find their authority in the physical Jerusalem of Palestine, but in the heavenly Jerusalem from where Paul received the gospel (See 1:11,12).

**4:27 *Rejoice:*** Paul quotes Isaiah 54:1 where Isaiah depicted the desolate city of Jerusalem that would be restored to bring forth children once again. The children of Abraham by faith are far more than the children of Abraham through physical lineage. When God promised Abraham that he would be the father of many nations (Gn 17:5), there was more to the promise than his physical descendants. Both Jews and Gentiles who were of the faith of Abraham were the spiritual descendants of Abraham, and thus, the ones to whom the promise was made and fulfilled (Rm 4:15-18).

**4:28 *Children of promise:*** Isaac was born because of the grace and work of God in the lives of Abraham and Sarah. Christians are also born because of the grace and

work of God. Abraham and Sarah did not work in order to earn the fulfillment of the promise. Neither can we. Salvation is the gift of God through His grace. Abraham did not doubt that God could fulfill the promise. Though Sarah was past the time for childbearing, by faith Abraham trusted in God (See comments Rm 4:19-21).

**4:29 Persecuted him:** Ishmael was the only son of Abraham for fourteen years before Isaac was born. When Isaac was born, however, Ishmael had a rival, and thus, persecuted Isaac. Because he personally persecuted Isaac, he limited his own stay in the house of Abraham (Gn 21:9; see Jg 8:24; Ps 83:5,6). So it was in the Galatian churches. The judaizing teachers were persecuting the true sons of Abraham by faith (See 3:4; 5:11; At 13:50; 14:2-5,19). Because Paul was teaching the truth (grace) of the gospel, he was being persecuted by those who were of the bondwoman (6:12,17; see At 9:21,22,29; 1 Th 2:14-16).

**4:30 Cast out the bondwoman and her son:** God told Abraham to cast out Hagar and her son (Gn 21:10). Two things could be meant here, both of which would be true. First, Paul surely refers to casting out that which brought the children of the bondwoman into bondage, that is, the law of works (See Rm 7:1-4; Hb 10:9). Secondly, he also says to cast out the son of the bondwoman. This would be those who are subservient to the law as a means of justification. Paul would thus be saying that the Galatians should cast out those who were sons of legalism and were bringing them again into bondage. Thus, those who would bring the children of God under a legal code of justification should be cast out for they seek to recruit the disciples to themselves. They seek to steal the sheep of God by bringing them under the demands of their religious system of justification by meritorious law-keeping. In doing such, they are inviting the disciples to come under a system of religion that brings condemnation.

**4:31 Children of ... the free:** Here is Paul's conclusion. We are no longer under slavery, but under the grace of God that brings freedom. Paul's final conclusion is that it is foolish religiosity that would compel us to turn again to the bondage of legal law-keeping that brings death.

Such is foolish simply because legalistic religion not only destroys joy and peace, but also one's salvational relationship with God. It is for this reason that Paul marvelled concerning their desire to return to law.

### **The Practical Argument**

**(5:1 - 6:10)**

**Outline:** (1) Freedom in Christ (5:1-6), (2) Warning of false teachers (5:7-15), (3) Walk after the Spirit (5:16-26), (4) Discipleship relationships (6:1-5), (5) Sharing (6:6-10), (6) The new creation (6:11-18)

## **Chapter 5**

Paul now turns to the conclusion of his argument that we are saved by grace, not by legal performance of law. He makes a practical application of the response of our lives when we recognize the grace of God. His own life was a testimony to the effectiveness of the grace of God in the life of the individual who is truly motivated by an appreciation of God's salvation (See comments 1 Co 15:10). When one recognizes the grace of God that is in his life, that is, that he is saved, he labors in appreciation and thanksgiving to that grace and salvation (2 Co 4:15). The reason for this is that mercy motivates response in the life of an individual more than judgment and condemnation. The legalist is either trying to accomplish his salvation, or he is trying to add to the grace of God. His motivation is in trying to keep up with the demands of law in order to keep it perfectly. He is, therefore, always in doubt concerning his salvation, for he knows that he cannot keep all the laws. If he is honest, his struggle ends in frustration. Trust in God's grace produces godliness. Paul's conclusion to a discussion on grace in Romans ends the same as he ends his discussion here. His argument in Romans is that since we are saved by grace, then we should present ourselves as a sacrifice to God (Rm 12:1). In the following discussion, Paul is moving into the concept of life behavior that must be the result of a living grace in our hearts. If one perceives freedom under grace through legalistic thinking, then he usually thinks that now we are free from keeping any law. We are free to do what we please. Such thinking is contrary to the transformed life (Rm 12:2). We cannot view freedom

in Christ through grace as a license to sin (vs 13). Some had turned the grace of God into immoral living (1 Pt 2:16; Jd 4). Some even believed that the more we lived after the flesh, the more grace would abound (Rm 6:1). But this is a flagrant misunderstanding of grace. Paul argues that faith and grace establish law. He questioned, "Do we then make void law through faith? Certainly not! On the contrary we establish law" (Rm 3:31). The point is that true faith moves one into action (Js 2:14-26). One's appreciation of God's grace moves one into obedient thanksgiving (1 Co 15:10; 2 Co 4:15). Paul worked more abundantly under grace than under Jewish legalism because he had so much for which to thank God. Law, therefore, was established in his life because gratitude moved him to do what the Father requested. Under grace, we work in thanksgiving because of what God has done. We do not work in order to earn what He might do. He has done that for which we would work.

### FREEDOM IN CHRIST

**5:1 Stand fast ... in the freedom:** Paul is serious about the Galatians taking a bold stand for their salvation by grace. They must stop allowing anyone to distort God's grace or turn them away from it. They must shun religiosity after the codes and regulations of men (See comments Cl 2:20-23). He thus establishes a fundamental principle of Christianity. **Freedom:** God's grace through Jesus has set us free from the necessity of trying to keep law perfectly in order to be justified. We have been set free from fear of not having enough meritorious works to be justified, for no work can atone for sin. Since one is not justified by works of law (2:16; Rm 3:20), then one does not need to worry about perfect law-keeping being our standard of judgment. Jesus stated this very principle. "Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever commits sin is a bondservant of sin. And a bondservant does not abide in the house forever. The Son abides forever. Therefore, if the Son will make you free, you will be free indeed" (Jn 8:34-36). We are free from the bondage of sin because we are free from the bondage of justification by perfect law-keeping and meritorious works. Christians are set free by being cre-



ated in Christ to be new creatures (2 Co 5:17). We are set free in order to serve (Ep 2:10). We are free to obey. The work the Christian does has been prepared by God, not man. The Christian's work is a work of thanksgiving, not atonement (2 Co 4:15). What Paul says in Ephesians 2:10 is that one is in Christ Jesus where he works. He does not work in order to come into Christ. **Yoke of bondage:** Throughout their history the Jews had on many occasions been in either the political or national bondage of some nation. They had gone into Assyrian bondage and Babylonian bondage. They were a possessed land by the Romans even while this letter was being written. "Yoke of bondage," therefore, was a sensitive issue with them. Paul does not want the Gentile Christians to take on any controlling yoke of bondage as those that had hindered the Jews for so many years (2:4). Peter said to the judaizing teachers in Jerusalem that they should not put a yoke of bondage on the disciples because such would be testing God (See comments At 15:10). Paul is here saying the same thing. The Galatians must not allow anyone to intimidate them into taking on the yoke of religious legalistic bondage that even the Jews could not bear.

**5:2 Christ will profit you nothing:** The judaizing teachers were seeking to bind circumcision, not only as a statute of law, but also as an indication that they had recruited someone to their system of law. Thus circumcision became symbolic of a return to law-keeping. Therefore, if anyone was circumcised according to the demands of the judaizers, the grace of Christ would profit nothing toward the salvation of the one who was circumcised. These are certainly hard words in reference to salvation. By stating these things, Paul is emphasizing the dangerous nature of the systematic legal religion. Legalism is a doctrine that will lead one away from God's grace, and thus, away from one's salvation. It is a theology to bind where God has not bound, and thus, seek to supplement the grace of God either through one's perfect performance of law or meritorious deeds.

**5:3 Obligated to keep the whole law:** It is difficult to miss Paul's emphasis here. It is also difficult to misunderstand his seriousness about the matter of legal justi-

fication by perfect law-keeping and meritorious deeds. Those who would resort to such a system of justification are obligated to keep the whole law perfectly in order to be saved. But the futility of such an effort is in the fact that there is no one righteous because of their performance of law (Rm 3:10,11,23). If one were to keep the whole Sinai law, then the Jews must continue in the animal sacrifices, Sabbaths, and the assortment of precepts and statutes that came with the law. Paul assumes that even the judaizing teachers do not want to do this. The judaizers were wanting to merge part of the Sinai law with part of the law of Christ in order to develop a legal system of justification. In view of Romans 7:1-4, this would be spiritual adultery. Paul's point is that it is one or the other. We do not have the privilege of choosing and selecting laws as we so desire. It is either grace plus law, or grace in and of itself with total dependence on God to save us as a result of our obedient response to His law. Add to this the fact that the judaizing teachers were boasting about keeping the law. However, they were keeping only part of the law, not the whole law. James stated that if one would keep part of the law, he is obligated to keep all the law if he seeks justification solely through meritorious law-keeping (Js 2:9-11). The hypocrisy of the legalists is in the fact that they pick and choose concerning the laws they favor. The judaizers were boasting about that part they kept, but ignoring that which they forsook. Jesus said that such teachers bind burdens that the people cannot bear (Mt 23:4).

**5:4 You have been severed from Christ:** If one returns to a system of justification by perfect law-keeping and meritorious deeds, then he is alienated from Christ. He is cut off from the grace of God. He is lost (See Rm 5:1,2; 11:6; Hb 12:15). No greater words of warning could have been written concerning the dangerous doctrine of legalism. Those who would turn the law of Christ into a legal system of justification are under such condemnation. Whether the teaching of judaizing teachers is in reference to the Sinai law, or legalistic teachers today in reference to the law of Christ, the result of condemnation is the same. By perfect performance of law no one can be

justified before God (2:16; Rm 3:20). All who would seek to supplement the grace of God through works of law or meritorious deeds are fallen from the grace of God.

**5:5** Through the Spirit: Paul has now turned from “you” to “we.” He includes himself and all who are sons of Abraham by faith. It is through the Spirit, as opposed to performance of the flesh, that we wait for our final redemption of heaven (See Rm 8:24; 1 Co 1:7ff; Ph 3:9-12; 1 Th 5:8).

**5:6 Faith working through love:** Paul makes a summation of his arguments. The point is that no meritorious work of either deeds or law will account one to be righteous before God. What is necessary is a faith that works through love (See Js 2:14-26; see 1 Th 1:3; 1 Jn 3:17,18). This is the obedient faith that responds to the grace of God (See Rm 1:5; 16:26; Ep 2:10). Paul's point here is that one's recognition of his salvation by the free gift of grace motivates one to work because of love and thanksgiving. In thanksgiving for grace we express our gratitude to God (See Rm 12:1; 1 Co 15:10). This spiritual growth comes from the heart. Legalism comes from the outside. One manner of growth is sincere and long-term. The other is only superficial, and often, temporary and empty. But when one trusts in God for his salvation by grace, he will lovingly respond in obedience to God with a better relationship with his fellow man.

### WARNING OF FALSE TEACHERS

**5:7 You were running well:** This metaphorical use of the word “run” emphasizes one's struggle toward a goal as if running in a race. The Galatians started off in the Christian race with the proper goal (2:5,14; 4:16). Jesus Christ and His crucifixion were clearly portrayed before them (3:1). However, they had since been diverted to a dead end destination that would bring destruction (See 2:2; 1 Co 9:24-27; Ph 2:16; 3:14; 2 Tm 4:6-8). **Who hindered you:** The Greek word used here was used in sports to refer to one who cuts in on another runner. The Galatians had been cut in on by someone who had pushed them out of their running lane. They were now headed in the wrong direction, and thus, would be disqualified if they

continued on their present course. We know who cut in and hindered them in their race. It was the legalistic judaizing teachers who had infiltrated their fellowship. These teachers were diverting the disciples toward their own beliefs (See 4:17; At 20:29,30). In doing such, they were hindering the spiritual growth of the Galatian disciples. Legalistic thinking and behavior hinders spiritual growth.

**5:8 *The One who calls:*** God had called them through the gospel (1:6; 1 Th 2:12; 2 Th 2:14). Paul wanted them to know that they were now being called into something where neither the calling nor teaching originated from God. Therefore, the calling was the work of Satan to divert them into believing that which would bring destruction. Any call that does not lead one to trust in God is a call to destruction. The conclusion here is clear. Paul classifies legal religion as a call away from grace, and thus, a call to legal performance of law that leads to condemnation.

**5:9 *A little leaven leavens the whole lump:*** The metaphorical use of leaven is sometimes used in the Bible to refer to the influence of good (Mt 13:33; 16:11; Mk 8:15; Lk 13:21). However, in this context it is used as a metaphor to illustrate the influence of a few judaizing teachers who were in the fellowship of the disciples and were influencing them to adhere to legal justification (See Hs 7:4; 1 Co 5:6). If their influence was not checked, it would turn all the disciples of southern Galatia away from the grace of God. The work of leaven is slow, but persistent. So is the influence of legalism among the disciples. Members of the body who are not taught concerning salvation by grace and faith are easily influenced by a show of behavior that takes pride in religious performances. Adherence to man-made codes and rules gives the pretense of spirituality. People are eager to follow those who give the impression of religiosity by the performance of religious rites and codes. However, members are innocently led into legalism where emphasis is on the outward submission to rites and codes that have become law, rather than inward submission to the grace of God. Code keeping gives a pretense of spirituality, whereas grace works

on the heart in order to produce the fruit of the Spirit. It is for this reason that disciples are dead to law by the body of Christ (See comments Rm 7:4). Since the leaven of legalism seeks to infiltrate the body in any area, Paul's challenge is to stop it immediately. Faithful brethren must arise and take a stand against the influence of those who would intimidate the brethren into submitting to legal justification by works of law and meritorious deeds. The leaven of legalism can spread only when the faithful refuse to take a stand against those who boldly promote opinions and traditions to be conditions for our salvation. We must not be as Peter when he was intimidated by legalistic brethren, and because of fear, succumbed to their influence (2:11-14).

**5:10 *I have confidence in you:*** The power of the word of God (Hb 4:12) is here manifested in Paul's assurance that the Galatians will submit to such. Paul is here doing what he would eventually do with the elders in Ephesus, that is, commend them to the word of God that would build them up (At 20:32; see 1 Th 2:13). Paul had confidence in the Christians of Galatia that they would respond to the letter he was writing. He had confidence that they would reject the influence of the legalistic teachers in their midst. Legalistic religion arises only when there are those who do not know their Bibles well enough to make a difference between Bible and opinion, or Bible and traditions. Thus in a state of biblical ignorance, Christians are easily led astray by those who propose doctrines that are simply their opinionated interpretations. By doing such they lead the disciples away after themselves (At 20:29,30). ***Will bear his judgment:*** One leads the sheep astray and after himself by intimidating the sheep to believe that his opinion or interpretation is the only and correct opinion or interpretation. Those who would steal the sheep of God in such a manner, and thus draw them away after their own legalistic religious beliefs, will receive their just judgment (See At 20:29,30; 3 Jn). Their judgment will be destruction from the presence of God (1:7; 2 Th 1:7-9). Those who trouble the church with their divisive opinions and legal demands will be troubled by God in the end (See Ja 7:25). For this

reason, preachers and teachers must be very cautious about how and what they teach (See Js 3:1).

**5:11 Preach circumcision:** There may have been some judaizing teachers who were trying to use Paul's reputation as added proof of their position. In other words, they supposed that Paul was preaching that one should be circumcised. However, they would not get away with this slanderous distortion of his message in order to support their erroneous doctrine. Paul asked a rhetorical question. If he were preaching the doctrine of justification by works, then why was he being persecuted by those who were also teaching such? Paul's statement here concerning himself in reference to not preaching circumcision might give us some indication of why some judaizing teachers were preaching circumcision. In the early beginnings of the church in Jewish regions, those who were converted came under great persecution by the Jews. Some of the Jewish converts possibly compromised their belief in the grace of God by complying with the social or cultural demands of their culture, and thus, made circumcision a necessity for salvation and part of the law of Christ. By doing such, at least they escaped the stigma of social rejection on the subject of circumcision.

**Offense of the cross:** The offense of the cross is that one must reject reliance on oneself for salvation and trust in the grace of God that was manifested through Jesus on the cross. The legalist, however, cannot give up his meritorious religious system. It is too much for him to rely on God apart from his meritorious works, which works were promoted by those who brought the offenses. Nevertheless, the Jew's acceptance of a legal system of religion must be rejected in order to come to God through faith. We are not legally justified before God on the basis of law. Many Jews stumbled over this teaching (1 Co 1:23). Those who stumbled, and were thus religiously misguided, were persecuted by those who sought God's salvation by grace and faith.

**5:12 Those who are troubling you:** Paul refers to the legalistic teachers as if they were a third party in reference to himself and the faithful disciples in Galatia (See vs 10; 4:17). These teachers were agitators who continually

caused tension in the fellowship of the body. They were theological watchdogs who incessantly argued about opinions and interpretations in order to intimidate the disciples into conforming to their ecclesiastical pronouncements and dictates. **Cut themselves off:** Because they were causing such disturbance among the members, Paul used a graphic word here in order to explain what should happen. He wished that there would be a slip of the circumcision knife and that they would mutilate, or emasculate themselves. According to the keeping of the law, such a person would not be permitted to enter the assembly of the Lord (Dt 23:1). Paul is using a word that is translated "cut off" in a metaphorical sense in order to manifest what must happen in reference to the legalists' relationship with the body of Christ. They must be cut off from the fellowship of the church in order that their leaven not be spread among the faithful. They must be cut off in order to restore peace and harmony among those who trust in the grace of the cross. The one who binds where God has not bound, and uses the law as a legal system to add to God's grace, will become a contentious brother in the midst of those who understand salvation by grace. He thus denies the truth of the gospel and should be marked as one who causes division in the church (Rm 16:17,18). This is the person who goes onward and does not continue in the perfect law of liberty (2 Jn 9,10). He goes onward by binding where God has not bound. In this situation, therefore, it is the person who binds where God has not bound that causes the division, not the brother who is trying to stand fast in the liberty by which Christ made us free.

**5:13 Called to freedom:** Paul reminds them that they have been rescued by God out of the bondage of legal justification. They are now free from the necessity of justification by law-keeping and meritorious deeds (2:4; 5:1). They should allow no one to endanger this liberty by bringing them again under a legal system of justification by meritorious law-keeping. **Opportunity for the flesh:** Some would seek to use their liberty from law as an occasion for sin. Some would sin in order to supposedly increase the grace of God in their lives (Rm 6:1). Jude

says that some “turn the grace of our God into licentiousness” (Jd 4). Peter also warned, “As free, yet not using your freedom as a covering for evil” (1 Pt 2:16). Those who lose their thanksgiving and gratitude for their salvation, often claim that God’s grace covers all sin regardless of the moral behavior of the believer. Such is a gross misunderstanding of grace. We cannot sin so that grace may abound (Rm 6:1). Though the Christian may be set free from justification by law-keeping, he is not free from the law of Christ as a standard of moral behavior (See 1 Co 8:9; 1 Pt 2:16). Under grace, one’s love of God, not law, is the motivating factor that stimulates us to be subservient to the will of God. If one is not motivated to work and serve, he has no appreciation for the grace of God. Paul’s warning here is that grace does not produce a license to sin. When Christians lose their distinctive moral behavior and doctrinal stand, then they have no evangelistic message to the unbelieving religious world. Salvation by grace must never be twisted to justify a behavioral belief and practice that causes the disciples to lose their identity in a world of sin. Love: God calls on us to produce a faith that works through love (vs 6; 1 Co 9:19). It is by this love of one another that true disciples are known (Jn 13:34,35).

**5:14 Love your neighbor:** The foundation upon which law stands is love. Law governs our interaction with one another. Love of our neighbor motivates us to act in a lawful manner in our relationships with one another as the organic body in society (See Lv 19:18; Dt 6:4,5; Mt 7:12; 22:36-40; Mk 12:29-31; Lk 10:27; Jn 13:34,35; Rm 13:8-10; Js 2:8).

**5:15 Bite and devour one another:** Herein is the curse of legalistically oriented religion when it is carried out in personal relationships. When one man’s opinion is pitted against another, debates over issues will destroy the joy of fellowship (Js 4:1,2; see comments Ti 3:9-11). When brethren bind where God has not bound, fellowship will digress to senseless debates over issues that have no reference to salvation. It is sinful to allow debates over non-salvational issues to destroy the fundamental principle of unity among brethren, and thus, cause the weak to fall



(Ep 4:3; Cl 3:12-15). When non-salvational issues cause division that violates the salvational teaching of unity, then those who are promoting the issues sin against God. Any members who digress into such debates will eventually consume themselves. The saved will be lost and the lost will not be saved. An unfortunate curse of legalistic religion is that those who are caught up in the issues lose sight of the evangelistic outreach of the church. The debates over issues cause the members to be diverted to matters that take their minds off the lost. In the debates, tensions are developed that destroy joy, peace and harmony. The proponents of the debates view their mission to be a mission to save the saved. They take their minds off the lost and focus their attack on those they oppose in the church. In doing such, they establish a model of leadership that is followed by members who are led to believe that preaching and teaching are tasks to keep the church cloned after the established proclamations of traditional practices. In this scenario, the whole body is swallowed up in an environment of hostility and confusion. The lost remain condemned and the saved become condemned by returning again to a religion that brings condemnation. This is why Paul is so stern in this letter against the legalistic teaching and behavior of those who would bring the church into the bondage of legalistic religiosity. Those today who would refuse to recognize this warning are doomed to live it in their own religiosity. They are cursed with efforts to take pride in their own religious performances. Religious movements seem to always move toward traditionalism. Traditionalism moves the movement to reject the commandments of God in order that traditions be maintained to identify one's heritage (See comments Mk 7:1-9). For this reason, there must always be a plea for restoration to the grace of God. Grace is the truth of the gospel that we must never forget. The knowledge of the truth (grace) must continually be restored in our lives lest we bring ourselves into the bondage of our own traditions. It cost God a great price to deliver us to freedom. We must remember the price of redemption that God paid in order to set us free.

## WALK AFTER THE SPIRIT

**5:16 Walk in the Spirit:** Since the Greek article is not in the text here, the phrase would read, “walk in spirit.” The capitalization of the word “spirit” is only a translator’s opinion. With the translation “walk in spirit,” emphasis would be on walking in a spiritual life after the spirit-inspired word as opposed to following the carnal desires of the flesh, or walking after a legal performance of law and works. If the word “spirit” is used in reference to the Holy Spirit, then the meaning is the same. Living after a spiritual manner is living after the direction of the Holy Spirit which He gives through the word of God (Hb 4:12). Christians would not know how to behave themselves in a godly manner if they were not directed by the inspired instructions of the Bible (See At 20:32; 2 Tm 3:16,17). Therefore, credit for the spiritual life that is according to the word of God must go to the Spirit’s work of inspiration through the word of God. When one follows the inspired word, he or she truly walks in spirit. An interesting phenomenon of legal religion is that adherents to such often check off their legal requirements, while at the same time, they neglect their moral behavior in reference to God and their fellow man (See Mt 23:4). The legalist often performs outwardly in a religious manner, but inwardly he may harbor hate, an unforgiving spirit, meanness, or a host of other ungodly attitudes. The legalist justifies his actions by the belief that he can meritoriously perform good works to atone for sin. As long as he believes he is ceremonially correct in his relationship to law, he gives himself allowances for immoral behavior against law. He can rationalize some immoral behavioral practices because he has checked off that which is legally required by his ceremonial practice of law. Because of this characteristic of legalistic religion, Paul moves now into a section of teaching that emphasizes the moral behavior that God demands of those who have been freed by grace from the necessity of perfect law-keeping. **Lust of the flesh:** Reference here is to fulfilling the carnal desires to live after our selfish ambitions (See Rm 6:12; 1 Pt 2:11; 1 Jn 2:15). We must not miss the point that Paul is here discussing. He is discussing a behavior of life. This

is the life that is contrary to the direction of those who are motivated by the grace of God.

**5:17 *Flesh lusts against the Spirit:*** The life that is directed by the Spirit is opposed to the life that has been given over to fulfill the carnal desires of the flesh. Because of this, individuals must always choose between the will of God and their own will. Paul referred to this struggle in his own life when he said, “*But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified*” (1 Co 9:27; see Rm 7:15,23). Those who do not exercise self-discipline will eventually give themselves over to the work of the flesh.

**5:18 *Led by the Spirit:*** To the Romans Paul explained, “*For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are the sons of God*” (Rm 8:14; see Rm 8:14-17; Ep 5:3-5). In the context here, Paul contrasts the life that is conducted after the instructions of the Spirit with the life that is conducted after the flesh. Those who were legalizing the gospel into a system of justification by law, were behaving after the lust of the flesh in that they emphasized the fleshly behavior of man as opposed to guidance by the Spirit of God. The underlying difference between the flesh and the Spirit is obvious. Those who seek a spiritual relationship with God will seek God's direction through the inspired word of God. Those who are legalistically oriented in their approach to God will always concentrate on their performance of law. They concentrate on the flesh, on man's ability to perform law in order to justify one's self before God. ***Not under law:*** In the Greek text, the article “the” is absent. Reference is to law in general. Therefore, emphasis is on the fact that if one seeks to live after the strict legal requirements of any law in an effort to seek justification before God, he is under bondage. However, if one seeks to live after the law of grace and faith, he is not in bondage to a legal system that demands sinless living in order to be saved. The behavior of his life is not by the constraint of law, but by dependence on that which is above law. The legalist depends on himself. He depends on his ability to keep law. Those who are led by the Spirit depend on God. They depend

on God for salvation because they realize that they cannot keep law perfectly. These two concepts of religion are completely contrary to one another. One brings condemnation because no man can behave in a manner to be justified before God through works of law. The system of justification by perfect law-keeping and meritorious deeds brings condemnation because it is a denial of the sufficiency of the grace of God. However, grace and faith bring life because God's grace saves. Grace motivates obedience to law, and thus, law is established in the life of the obedient (Rm 3:31; 2 Co 4:15).

**5:19** Works of the flesh: Paul gives a general list of those behavioral patterns of life that are considered desires of the carnal nature of man (See Mt 7:20-23; Rm 1:27-32; 1 Co 6:9,10; 1 Tm 1:9,10; 2 Tm 3:1-8). These actions, or "works," are in contrast to the fruit of the Spirit, that is, the product that comes forth from the one who is dependent on God. Even in this listing Paul is emphasizing the difference in the nature of legalistic religion as it is opposed to the obedient who respond with thanksgiving to the grace of God (2 Co 4:15). It is not coincidental that Paul mentions the following works of the flesh in the context of this letter. The nature of legalistic religion certainly produced in the lives of some these particular behavioral sins. When Paul mentions "such like" in verse 21 in reference to these sins, it is assumed that the spirit of some was toward the carnal nature of man. Those who do not love their neighbor as themselves will behave after the nature of the works of the flesh he here defines. Thus the works of the flesh struggle against the work of the Spirit. In the flesh is no good thing (Rm 7:18). The flesh produces dead works (Hb 9:14). We should thus put no confidence in the flesh (Ph 3:3). Those who live after the flesh are not subject to the law of God (Rm 8:7). Paul says that those who are living after the flesh are not pleasing God (Rm 8:8). Therefore, we should not feed the flesh with that which it desires (Rm 13:14). In the context here, Paul makes specific mention of those things that feed the flesh. **Adultery:** Some texts include this word. This is illicit sexual intercourse outside the bond of marriage (Mt 5:27,28,32; Mk 10:11). The mean-

ing is that one breaks his or her marriage covenant with a partner by violating the conditions of that covenant. **Fornication:** This is a broader term than adultery in reference to illicit sexual activity. It refers to sexual activity such as homosexuality, lesbianism, unchastity and prostitution (See Mt 5:32; 15:19; 19:9; At 15:20,29; 21:25; 1 Co 5:1; 6:13,18; Ep 5:3; Cl 3:5; 1 Th 4:3). **Uncleanness:** This is the unchaste or impure life, a filthiness of heart and mind (See Ti 1:15). It is taken from the Sinai law in reference to that which is ceremonially unclean before God (Lv 7:19-21). **Lewdness:** This would include sensuality, lewd dancing, lasciviousness, debauchery, immoral dress and indecent conduct (See 2 Co 12:21; Ep 4:19; 1 Pt 4:3). This is the wanton sensuality that knows no shame.

**5:20 Idolatry:** This would be creating anything of this world that would turn the attention of the individual away from God (See 1 Co 10:14; Cl 3:5; 1 Pt 4:3; Rv 21:8; 22:15). **Sorcery:** This would be witchcraft. In ancient times such was practiced by using drugs to stimulate minds into a semiconscious state. It later came to refer to witches, sorcerers, wizards and witchdoctors who falsely attempted to exercise emotional power in order to control people by fear. Such practices were condemned in the Old Testament (See Ex 7:11,22; Lv 20:6,7; Dt 18:9-22; Is 47:9,12; Rv 21:8). **Hatred:** This is enmity with the intent that harm comes to others (See Ti 3:3; 1 Jn 3:15). **Strife:** This is the strife, quarrels and disputes that would characterize those who did not love their neighbors. This is the spirit of those who seek to divide the disciples over non-fundamental issues. Paul told Titus to avoid those who cause strife (Ti 3:9-11; see Rm 2:8; 1 Co 11:16). **Jealousy:** This would be emulations, or one's desire to have positions or possessions that others have. This emotion prevents one from rejoicing over the accomplishments of others. It also prevents one from giving honor to whom honor is due. **Outbursts of anger:** This is uncontrollable anger or fits of rage. Those who do not get their way often succumb to this base behavior where one is uncontrollable. **Selfish ambitions:** Here is the desire of the individual to receive recognition. Too often, those in the religious world use the church as an

opportunity to receive public attention. There are too many who care little for the reputation of others in order to exalt their own cause. These are misguided by thinking that they are contending for the faith when actually they cut and devour others with their unspiritual swords of selfish ambition. The recruiting by the legalistic judaizing teachers was certainly self-seeking as Paul pointed out in 4:17 and 6:12. **Dissensions:** Seditions arise out of a sectarian attitude to divide the disciples over nonessential issues. Contrary to the unity that is based on grace and faith, those of this persuasion produce division by trumpeting their favorite opinions to be law (See At 15:1,25). **Heresies:** Here is the nature of those who generate a party spirit among the disciples in order to gain allegiance to their traditions or opinions (See 4:17; 6:12). Their sectarian spirit moves them to produce parties around either personalities, traditions or opinions. In the context of Galatians, the judaizers were the heretics according to Paul's description. Those who would bind on the church that which God has not bound, are committing heresy (2 Jn 9,10). They divide the church around those teachings that are the result of their sectarian behavior. They make their opinions conditions for salvation, and thus, convince unwary brethren that such legal doctrines must be adhered to in order for one to be pleasing to God.

**5:21 Envyings:** Envy is feeling uncomfortable with what someone else has or is. Reference may be either to possessions or positions (See Pv 14:30; Mt 27:18; 1 Tm 6:4; Ti 3:3; 1 Pt 2:1). **Drunkeness:** This is being intoxicated with alcoholic drink (See 1 Co 11:21; 1 Tm 3:3,8). It is drinking alcohol for the purpose of losing control of one's senses. **Revellings:** Reference is to excessive feasting that was usually followed by ungodly orgies. **Such like:** In the above list it was Paul's goal only to list examples of the lusts of the flesh. From the list we can certainly understand his meaning. These are the sins of the unregenerate life, the life of living after the base nature of man. **Kingdom of God:** Those who practice the sins of the flesh can in no way enter into the new heavens and earth that are yet to come (See Rv 21:8; 22:15).

**5:22 The fruit of the Spirit:** Those who have turned from depending on themselves, have turned to depend on the direction of God. Thus, the fruit of the Spirit is brought forth in the lives of those who seek direction from God for moral attitudes and behavior. Paul's list of the fruit of the Spirit is the true manifestation of those whose lives are motivated by thanksgiving. The fruit of the Spirit is the result of one's recognition of God's grace in his or her life. It is the result of recognizing God's mercy, and therefore, presenting oneself a living sacrifice (Rm 12:1,2). As we study through the fruit of the Spirit, it is significant to note that love is the foundation upon which all the qualities of the fruit are built. If one loves his neighbor as himself, then he will bring forth in his life these characteristics of godly behavior. One fruit leads to another. We begin with love. The result of love is joy, then peace with our neighbor, then longsuffering. **Love:** God reached out to humanity with *agape* (love), that is, His grace was unconditional (Rm 5:8). We did not earn it. When one recognizes this degree of love, he will in turn express such to others (See 1 Co 13; Cl 3:14; 1 Jn 4:19). Love then becomes the foundation upon which we establish relationships with others. **Joy:** Love produces joy, for in giving unconditional love to others, the serendipity, or result, is joy in one's own heart (See Jn 13:15-17; Rm 5:3,4; 14:17; 2 Co 6:10; 1 Th 1:6; Hb 12:2; Js 1:2). **Peace:** The natural result of joy is peace in one's heart, and also peace with others. Recognizing salvation by grace brings an end to the inner anxiety one has when he is not quite sure of his salvation (See Rm 12:18; Ph 4:7). **Patience:** The natural result of peace with God, because of His mercy and grace is, our own longsuffering and mercy toward others (See Mt 18:21-35; Cl 3:12). This is the capacity to patiently endure with the faults of others. **Kindness:** Here is the inner gentle nature of the individual that is produced as a result of dependence on the grace of God (See 1 Co 13:4; 2 Co 6:6; Cl 3:12). When one loves his neighbor he will seek to be kind in attitude toward his neighbor in order to guard the peace that exists between himself and his neighbor. Kindness then leads to doing good to our neighbor. **Goodness:** The out-

ward expression of inner kindness is doing good toward others (See 6:10; Rm 15:14). **Faithfulness:** Since God was faithful in saving us by grace, recognition of such will produce faithfulness toward our fellow man (See 1 Co 13:7). We become committed to our neighbor because we have developed a relationship that is based on love of one another.

**5:23 Gentleness:** The spiritual nature of the saved is characterized by a meek attitude toward others. The meek are courteous and considerate of their neighbors (See Mt 5:5; 2 Co 10:1). **Self-control:** Gentleness refers to one's ability to control outbursts of emotion in order to guard the relationship of peace that we have with our neighbor. The gentle person is in control of his being. Therefore, the natural result of the gentle person is self-control and self-discipline when it comes to maintaining the loving relationship we have established with others (See 1 Co 9:25). **Against such there is no law:** In view of 5:14, Paul would be saying that law does not work against the preceding qualities, or those who possess them. If fact, the one who behaves after the fruit of the Spirit does not need law to tell him how he should behave in relation to his neighbor (See comments 1 Tm 1:9). Love motivates him to be considerate in all things in his relationship with others. A legalist would often neglect the fruit of the Spirit because strict adherence to a legal code that emphasizes outward performance in his relationship with God, is usually considered more important than a personal relationship with others. For the legalist, law would reign over the fruit of the Spirit. However, he misunderstands the nature of the law of liberty. The fruit of the Spirit springs forth in the life of the one who feels totally dependent on the grace of God. Obedience to law, therefore, is the natural response of those who are sons by faith (Rm 3:31; 1 Co 15:10). The legalist, however, is depending on himself, and in doing so, elevates his performance of law above the fruit of the Spirit. His self-imposed religious regulations move him to concentrate on the outward performance of law instead of the inner attitudes of the heart in relation to his neighbor. In doing this, he brings law into conflict with the fruit



of the Spirit in the sense that he feels he can practice such things as circumcision and ceremonies, while at the same time, cause division among the disciples or harbor animosity against his neighbor. But those who trust in God's grace first start with the heart. Law is not against, or does not work contrary to their spiritual growth. In fact, their response to God's grace establishes or applies law (Rm 3:31). In other words, they obey because they work in gratitude of God's grace. Law is thus confirmed in the lives of the obedient. Law does not work against the salvation of those who are saved by grace in order to condemn them. Law works in order to direct them.

**5:24 *Crucified the flesh:*** Those who belong to Christ have put to death efforts to work themselves to heaven by perfect law-keeping and meritorious deeds. They are thus not of the nature of the works of the flesh, but of the nature of the fruit of the Spirit. The correct conclusion to those who are legally seeking justification is that they are not of Christ. Those who are of Christ "*are not in the flesh but in the Spirit*" (Rm 8:9). They are not trusting in performance, but in God's grace. When one is immersed in obedience to the gospel, the old man is crucified in that one places his salvation into the merciful hands of God (Rm 6:6; see Cl 3:5). One must crucify himself by trusting in God's grace (2:20). Those who seek legal justification are actually reverting to the power of self in relation to their salvation instead of the power of God. But Paul here reminds us that the Christian has crucified the desires and passions that encourage one to follow after one's performance and desires of the flesh.

**5:25 *Live in the Spirit:*** The Christian life is within the realm of the Spirit's direction through the word of God. When we live according to the direction of God's word, we are living in the Spirit. **Walk:** Reference is to obedience to the direction of the Spirit (See 5:16,18; Rm 8:4,5). In order to be within the realm of the Spirit one must behave after the Spirit-inspired word of God. Paul is here calling on the Galatians to bring their lives into harmony with the direction of the Spirit.

**5:26 *Let us not be desirous of vain glory:*** Here is a last appeal to put off the attitudes that are often developed

by those who seek a following by intimidating others to conform to their manner of doctrine. Vainglory in church leaders too often leads to the devouring and consuming of one another in senseless debates over issues that have no relevance to one's salvation (5:15; see 1 Co 1:31; 2 Co 2:17; Ph 2:3; see comments Ti 3:9-11). In contrast to the sectarian spirit that characterized the judaizing teachers (vss 20,21), Paul here admonishes the faithful among the Galatian disciples not to seek recognition by conforming to the desires of those who would bring them again into bondage. On the contrary, they must provoke one another to love and good works (Hb 10:24). They must encourage one another to express their love of one another through good works (6:10).

## Chapter 6

### DISCIPLESHIP RELATIONSHIPS

In this concluding chapter Paul admonishes the Galatian disciples concerning their responsibilities toward one another in Christian service. These are positive things that must be done in order to combat the negative relationships that resulted from the seed of legalistic religion that had been planted in the hearts of some disciples. The fruit of the Spirit produces the ministry mentioned in this chapter.

**6:1 *If a man is overtaken:*** Those who do not keep up their guard against the work of Satan will be overtaken by those who would bring them into bondage. For this reason, disciples must be vigilant in living the godly life, since Satan is seeking those whom he may devour (1 Pt 5:8). ***You who are spiritual:*** It is the responsibility of the strong in the faith to watch out for the weak (Compare comments Rm 14). This does not mean that the spiritual are beyond temptation and sin. No man is perfect. However, one's imperfections do not relieve him of the responsibility of restoring his fallen brother or encouraging those who are struggling (See 1 Jn 5:16). ***Restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness:*** Those who have given in to the attack of the other gospel must be restored. In the context of this letter, it seems that the faithful are those who have kept their senses concerning the nature

of God's grace. The fallen are those who have succumbed to the influence of the judaizing teachers. Those who have succumbed must be restored by those who have heeded Paul's teaching on grace and faith. It must be added that Paul is here contrasting the behavior of the legalistic religionist with the work of the Spirit. Legalistic religion is manifested by the behavior of the adherents toward those who have fallen. They are the first to bring the woman caught in adultery before the judge (See Jn 8). They are the first to condemn, and then ask for others to conform to their judgment. They conduct witch hunts, and then send out judgments in order that others be intimidated into conforming to their condemnation of the witch. Instead of having a love that covers a multitude of sins (1 Pt 4:8), they are harsh and judgmental (Mt 7:1; Rm 14:4,13; Js 4:11,12). **Spirit of gentleness:** Legalism promotes spiritual and intellectual arrogance, and thus the legalist is harsh toward others. Paul stated that we are not saved by works "lest anyone should boast" (Ep 2:9). If one is saved by works of law and meritorious deeds, then there is the occasion where brothers can be puffed up in their relationship with one another. Since salvation is based on total dependence of God's grace, then there is no occasion for boasting concerning one's works. Paul wrote, "Where then is boasting? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? No, but by the law of faith" (Rm 3:27; see 1 Co 1:29). Because we must trust in God's grace for salvation by faith, there is no room for boasting of one's accomplishments that he may be performing for his salvation. Therefore, the faithful in the context of Galatians, are those of faith who must reach out to those who have fallen to legalistic influences. They must maintain their spirit of meekness in order to manifest the fruit of the Spirit in their work of restoration (See 1 Co 10:12; Hb 3:12,13). The faithful brother will restore the fallen with a spirit of gentleness. However, the legalist will often manifest a spirit of harshness and pride (Lk 18:9-14). The faithful brother will restore the unfaithful on the basis of knowing that he could also fall. However, the legalist will arrogantly assume that he has marked off all his checklist, and thus, will seek to restore one to his

checklist. Instead of the competitive spirit that is manifested by the legalist, the faithful realize that salvation is dependent on the grace of God, not on one's absolute correctness in the doctrines of men or his behavior.

**6:2 Bear one another's burdens:** This is in contrast to the legalist who would add burdens to the fallen. He adds the burden of his traditions and opinions that he will place on the back of the religious conscience of those who are sincerely seeking to serve God (See Mt 23:2-4; At 15:10). It is our responsibility as brothers in Christ to help one another in the faith (See Rm 12:10; 15:1-3; 1 Co 9:21; 1 Th 5:11,14; Js 5:16; 1 Pt 4:9). Christianity does not isolate individuals from one another. Christians must individually and collectively exhort one another to be faithful (See Ph 2:4; Hb 10:23,24; Js 5:16). **Fulfill the law of Christ:** The law of Christ is to love one another (Jn 13:34,35; 15:12; Js 2:8). This law of Christ brings individuals together into a common bond and fellowship. The practice of law after a legalistic manner divides brothers by the binding of stringent hairsplitting opinions and interpretations. The law of Christ is "*faith working through love*" (5:6,14). A legalistic view of law produces suspicion in an environment of strict conformity to established rules and regulations where God has not spoken (See Cl 2:20-23).

**6:3 Thinks himself to be something:** Legalistic thinking promotes arrogance. One begins to measure his performance of law and meritorious labors with others (Rm 11:6; Ep 2:9). **He deceives himself:** The legalist has deceived himself into thinking that his works have justified him before God. But they have not, for by meritorious works of law, or law-keeping, no one can be justified before God (2:16; Rm 3:20). Legalism promotes arrogant self-deception, and thus, clouds one's mind of the grace of God. Those who think they stand, therefore, should take heed lest they fall (See Rm 12:3; 1 Co 8:2; 2 Co 3:5; 10:12,18).

**6:4 Prove his own work:** One must consider his own work in reference to God alone. One should not boast of his own works by contrasting his works with the faults of his brother. The legalist is prone to use his behavior in

relation to law as the standard of behavior by which others are to be measured. He judges others according to his own standard of law-keeping (Lk 18:11; see Jn 8:1-11). Those of faith, however, view their work in reference to their response to God's grace (See 1 Co 15:10). The faithful realize that they have not worked themselves into the grace of God, but grace has worked them into God's work (Ep 2:10). Paul wants us to understand that we are not saved by works, but saved in order to work (Ep 2:9). The point is that those who are of the faith of Abraham view their work in response to God's grace. The legalist views his work in comparison to his brother. Those of the faith of Abraham work in thanksgiving (See 2 Co 4:15). The legalist works and compares his work with his brother (2 Co 10:11). If we work in competition with our brother, our work is competitive and legal. We are pitting our efforts in competition with those of our brother, and thus, setting our works as the standard by which our brother must measure his. Instead of proving his work in reference to the will of God, he seeks not only to use his works as a measurement by which his brother should measure his, but also the standard by which he judges his brother. The legalist also assumes that he is doctrinally correct on all issues. In this way, he compares his beliefs with those of his brother. If his brother does not agree with his opinions and interpretations, then the legalist considers his brother to be liberal, and thus, fallen from the "truth of the gospel." In other words, he has not fallen from a canon of doctrine, but from the standard of the gospel. It is as Paul exhorted the Philippian disciples, "Let your behavior be worship of the gospel of Christ" (Ph 1:27; see comments). One has fallen from the truth of the gospel by not living up to the standard of the gospel. He has not lived worthy of the gospel.

**6:5 Bear his own load:** Paul uses a Greek word here (translated "bear") that is different from the one he used in verse 2. The word in verse 2 refers to a heavy burden to be borne. The one here refers to the burden of a soldier. Every soldier must carry his own pack. So it is with the Christian. There is a burden of responsibility each Christian must bear. The word used here refers us

back to the thoughts of verse 4. Paul is thus stressing the individual's responsibility toward God. Each Christian is responsible for himself in his relationship with God (See Rm 2:6; 1 Co 3:8; 2 Co 5:10). When it comes to final judgment, no one will be responsible for another's personal behavior. We must give account of ourselves before God (Rm 14:10,12; 2 Co 5:10). Therefore, no legalist can stand in judgment over any brother here on earth. For this reason James wrote to every legalist, "*There is one Law-giver who is able to save and to destroy. Who are you to judge another?*" (Js 4:12). Legalism lends itself to making judges out of every self-appointed theologian who has deceived himself into believing that he is right in every doctrinal corner of religious thought. In his state of self-deception, he exalts himself in order to proclaim his dictates to those he would separate unto his own party (denomination). Those who do not conform to his proclamations are labeled with derogatory terms in order that they be defamed and banned from his circle of sectarian theologians (See comments 3 Jn). He shows no mercy. And thus, James says of such, "*For judgment is without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy*" (Js 2:13). Mercy, not compromise, must be extended to others concerning those things with which we disagree.

### SHARING

**6:6 *Share in all good things:*** The Greek word used by Paul in this verse is *koinonia*. Though the word is used in a broad assortment of contexts with varying definitions, a general definition is "to share in joint partnership." It is used here as in Acts 2:42, 2 Corinthians 8:4 and Hebrews 13:16 in reference to sharing material things. This verse teaches that the student must financially support the teacher. Here is the teaching of Paul in the context of 1 Corinthians 9:9-19. "*If we sowed to you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we reap your material things?*" (1 Co 9:11; see comments 1 Co 9:13,14; see Lk 10:7; 2 Co 11:7ff; Ph 4:10-17; 1 Th 2:6-9; 1 Tm 5:14ff). God will not bless those disciples who do not follow this principle. This is brought out in verse 7.

**6:7** The context of this verse is in reference to the pre-

ceding statement that the students must support their teachers. It seems that the Galatians were doing what the Achaians were doing, that is, supporting the wrong teachers. When Paul later wrote to the church of Achaia, it seems that the Achaians were supporting those who were denying the apostleship of Paul and upholding an assortment of other false teachings (See 1 Co 9:12; 2 Co 11:20). This is what the Galatians were doing. They were supporting the judaizing teachers who were teaching those things that would eventually bring them into condemnation. Paul thus warns them in these verses that they will reap what they sow. If they sow by supporting those who are emphasizing the works of the flesh in reference to law-keeping and meritorious works, then they will reap the results of such behavior. However, if they sow to the Spirit, they will reap the kingdom of God. Paul's conclusion is that they must stop supporting the judaizing teachers. These legalists must have their support dropped, for they are taking the disciples back to a law and covenant of condemnation. **Not deceived:** Men may deceive themselves and one another. However, no one can deceive God (See Jb 13:9; 1 Co 6:9; 15:33; Js 1:16). If one sows to spiritual things, he will reap from such. If he sows to the flesh, he will reap what the flesh produces. In the context, the flesh refers to legalistic law-keeping. What one will reap from such is destruction from the presence of God (2 Th 1:7-9). **He will also reap:** It is a principle of life that one reaps what he sows (See Hs 8:7; Mt 7:15; Rm 2:6; 2 Co 9:6). One must not deceive himself into thinking that he can escape the consequences of his behavior. To think one can, is to mock God, for God says that we will reap what we sow, not only in this life, but also in that which is to come (Rm 2:6).

**6:8 Sows to his flesh ... Spirit:** Paul here concludes what he has been teaching throughout the letter. He is contrasting those who sow to the Spirit (5:16,18,25) with those who are sowing to the flesh (5:13,19). Those who sow to the flesh will reap the anathema of God (See 1:6-9). Those who sow to the Spirit, will reap the kingdom of God (5:21). **Reap eternal life:** This is the same as the "kingdom of God" that one will reap as a result of sow-

ing the fruit of the Spirit (5:21). Living after the words of the Spirit brings quality to this life (Jn 10:10) and the inheritance of the new heavens and earth to come (Rm 2:7,8; 2 Pt 3:13). As those who sow to the works of the flesh will reap certain destruction, so those who sow to the Spirit will reap certain life. The Greek word *aionion* (everlasting) is here used in reference to the quality of life to come. Though the life is without end in the presence of God, *aionion* is a word that emphasizes the certainty of our unending existence in the presence of Deity. Christians have this life now as a result of God's grace (1 Jn 5:11), but it will continue into the future in the presence of God. As the destruction of those who sow to the flesh is certain and sure, so certain and sure is the life that will come as a result of those who sow to the Spirit (See Mt 25:46). Those who sow to the Spirit reap the abundant life that is now in existence (Jn 10:10), but also existence in the presence of God in the life to come (See Mk 10:30).

**6:9 *Let us not become weary in doing good:*** Christians must be zealous to do good works, for this is one reason why they have been brought forth in Christ (Ep 2:10). They must not become lazy or discouraged in doing that which brings glory to the Father (See Mt 21:15; 24:13; 1 Co 15:58; Ep 2:10; 2 Th 3:13; Ti 3:8; Rv 2:10). Christians do good, not for the purpose of putting God in debt to reward one with heaven (See Rm 4:4). They do good because of a feeling of thanksgiving for their salvation by God's grace (1 Co 15:10; 2 Co 4:15). They do good because they are saved, not in order to become saved. They do good works because they are in Christ, not in order to come into Christ (Ep 2:10; see Ph 2:12,13). Those who are sons of Abraham by faith work because of their salvation by God's grace. Their assurance of salvation is not based on pride in their own accomplishments. Their trust is in God. On the other hand, the legalist is always in doubt concerning his salvation because he does not know if he has done enough good works to atone for his sin. He is always in doubt concerning his salvation because he knows he has not kept law perfectly. The sons by faith go to the judgment with boldness because of the atonement



of Jesus. The legalist goes to judgment in doubt because he has trusted in his own performance.

**6:10 Do good to all men:** The Christian's good must not be focused exclusively on other Christians. He must be careful to maintain good works to all (Ti 3:8). Even if Christians are treated wrongfully for doing good, they should still maintain good works (1 Pt 2:20). In this way they are the preserving salt of society (Mt 5:13). **The household of the faith:** The Christian's good must extend beyond the fellowship of the church (See Ep 2:19). Every opportunity must be taken to work that which is good, because we were brought forth by the grace of God (Ep 2:10). In doing good to those who are not of the household of the faith, Christians proclaim that Jesus is their Lord. They proclaim the value system of Christianity to all the world in order to draw the world to Christ (Jn 13:34,35).

### THE NEW CREATION

**6:11 Large letters I have written:** Some have suggested that Paul personally wrote this letter in large letters because he was going blind. However, an alternative interpretation is that he was writing the letter in large letters in order to emphasize the seriousness of the theme. It may have been also that he wrote only these last lines in large letters. He wanted to emphasize his final warning against the judaizing teachers.

**6:12 Good showing in the flesh:** Herein is revealed one of the primary motivations of the judaizing teachers. They sought to be recognized, to be popular among the disciples. They wanted status in the church, and thus, recruited disciples to follow after their legalistic behavior. Paul warned the Corinthians, "Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall" (1 Co 10:12). To the Romans he said, "Do not be haughty, but fear" (Rm 11:20). The legalistic teachers wanted to be recognized in the church, and thus, they recruited a following. **They compel you to be circumcised:** The meaning of the word translated "compel" is "to constrain." It is a strong word in the Greek language (Also used in 2:14). It refers to strong persuasion. The judaizing teachers used strong persua-

sion (intimidation) in order to recruit the unsuspecting to side with them. They used brotherhood intimidation, slander, rumor and innuendo in order to submit others to their rules and judgments. Such worked in the case of Peter and the Antioch brethren (2:11-13). The legalistic judaizers were using the same tactics among the disciples in southern Galatia. **That they might not suffer persecution:** They were compelling the Gentile Christians to be circumcised in order that they might make an appearance of being in conformity to law, and thus, escape the persecution that came with preaching freedom in Christ (See At 14:22; Ph 3:18). It seems that a cult of intimidation was established among the disciples. Those who were sent out to intimidate others to conform, had themselves been intimidated by a group of legalists who controlled a great number of disciples. This cult of legalists, therefore, was sending out delegations with a mission to save the saved by binding what God had not bound. The practice of the judaizing teachers thus illustrates the mission of those who are of a legalistic persuasion. Their goal is to save the saved, and thus, they go about the world recruiting individuals in order to report back to their supporters that so many have turned to their teaching. In their misguided glory, they are, according to Paul, reporting recruits who had now come into a religion of condemnation.

**6:13 Keep the law:** Paul not only explains the motivation of the judaizers, he shows their hypocrisy. They were zealous for one part of the law (circumcision), but they were zealous for such only on the basis of receiving praise from fellow Jews who were of their theological persuasion. Thus their purpose for recruiting converts was to make a show among those who had sent them. Their hypocrisy was manifested in the fact that they said, but did not (Mt 23:3). They do not keep the whole law that they are enticing others to keep (Js 2:9-11). They demand conformity to their standards, but fail to measure up to perfect law-keeping of their own standards.

**6:14 Boast ... in the cross:** Though the preaching of the cross brought persecution, Paul would not cease preaching the manifestation of God's grace (Rm 1:16). Though

the atonement of the cross by the grace of God was foolishness to some (1 Co 1:23), he would still proclaim that God's grace was revealed by His Son hanging on the cross outside the city walls of Jerusalem (Ph 3:3-7). The legalist will praise himself in his ability to keep law and in his meritorious labors. However, Paul affirmed that he personally would glory only in the grace that proceeds from the cross. **The world has been crucified to me:** All that Paul had gained in the world, he had sacrificed for the grace that came forth from the cross (Ph 3:3-7). His old man of sin had been crucified when he came to Jesus (2:20; Rm 6:6). It is the nature of those who depend on the grace of God for their salvation to exemplify in their lives and speech the glory of the cross. Those who trust in themselves, will glory in the glowing reports of their works. One religion, therefore, brings glory to God. The other brings glory to man.

**6:15 Circumcision ... nor uncircumcision accomplishes anything:** Circumcision here stands for a legal system of religion and all that such would entail. Thus any work of the flesh as a meritorious action to acquire justification before God, accomplishes nothing. There is no religious significance to the act of circumcision. Therefore, it makes no difference whether one is either circumcised or not circumcised. **New creation:** What is important, and necessary, is that one be a new creature by being baptized into Christ (See 3:26-28; 5:5,6; 1 Co 7:19; 2 Co 5:17). What is necessary is that one come into contact with the atoning blood of Jesus that was poured out for the remission of sins for all men (At 2:38; 22:16). One becomes a new creature (creation) by the blood of Jesus.

**6:16 Walk according to this rule:** The rule by which we must conduct our lives is to work after the manner that Paul expressed in 1 Corinthians 15:10. "*His grace toward me was not in vain, but I labored more abundantly.*" God's grace is not in vain in the life of the one who has given himself to thank God through obedience. He works not in order to acquire salvation. He works in order to thank God for all that was accomplished on the cross on his behalf (2 Co 4:15). This is the Christian's walk of life. **Israel of God:** Reference here is probably to the true Jews who

became children of Abraham by faith, not by works of law. At least this understanding would be in harmony with Paul's definition of the true Jews who were such by faith (See Rm 2:28,29; 3:28,29; 4:13-16; 9:6-8; Ph 3:3). The meaning, therefore, would be in reference to the entire *ekklesia* of disciples, the holy nation of God (1 Pt 2:9), the nation bringing forth fruit to the glory of God (Mt 21:43). All Christians are sons of Abraham by faith, and thus, part of the one universal body of Christ.

**6:17 *Marks of the Lord Jesus:*** The judaizers boasted of their works in relation to law. However, Paul, a true soldier of the cross, had only the scars left by those who laid lashes on him for preaching the gospel of grace and faith (See At 14:19; 2 Co 1:5; 4:10; 11:18-33). The judaizers might boast to their supporters concerning the mark of circumcision, which indicated their recruitment of the saved. However, Paul only had the scars of beatings for preaching the cross in order to deliver men from the bonds of paganism. There are those as Paul who are on the cutting edge of the kingdom. They suffer the hardships and persecution that come with world evangelism. Paul fought the battles of the faith, and then came the judaizing teachers to steal the work of God. We can understand why Paul was so bold and stern in this letter. The legalists were stealing the work of God that had been brought forth by the grace of God and his hard work.

**6:18 *The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ:*** How else could Paul have closed such a great document that upholds the true nature of Christianity. His theme for the book defines the core of Christianity, and that which separates Christianity from all man-made religions of the world. It is grace that goes forth to all the world with every Christian. This is the message of the gospel. Through grace we have boldness against judgment, for we will stand before God, not on the merit of our own performance of law or supposed meritorious good works, but on the foundation of the mercy of God. The Christian will stand before his merciful Creator on the basis of grace, not his religious heritage. Herein is the confidence of the Christian. Herein is the freedom that Jesus the Son of God has to offer to the world. It is as Paul wrote to the Corinthians,

*“Yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me”* (1 Co 15:10). All credit for Christian motivation must go to the grace of God, for it is by His grace that we are moved to work in thanksgiving to God for His Son (2 Co 4:15). Faith in God's grace is our victory that allows us to overcome the world (1 Jn 5:4). We must never forget this truth: *“For by grace you are saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God”* (Ep 2:8). When we discuss our salvation, therefore, we must always be reminded that it is “not of ourselves,” but totally on the part of the incarnate Son of God who came into this world on our behalf in order to take us out of this world.

Commentary by Roger E. Dickson

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## ABREVIATIONS

### OLD TESTAMENT

Genesis - **Gn**, Exodus - **Ex**, Leviticus - **Lv**, Numbers - **Nm**, Deuteronomy - **Dt**, Joshua - **Ja**, Judges - **Jg**, Ruth - **Rt**, 1 Samuel - **1 Sm**, 2 Samuel - **2 Sm**, 1 Kings - **1 Kg**, 2 Kings - **2 Kg**, 1 Chronicles - **1 Ch**, 2 Chronicles - **2 Ch**, Ezra - **Er**, Nehemiah - **Ne**, Esther - **Et**, Job - **Jb**, Psalms - **Ps**, Proverbs - **Pv**, Ecclesiastes - **Ec**, Song of Solomon - **Ss**, Isaiah - **Is**, Jeremiah - **Jr**, Lamentations - **Lm**, Ezekiel - **Ez**, Daniel - **Dn**, Hosea - **Hs**, Joel - **Jl**, Amos - **Am**, Obadiah - **Ob**, Jonah - **Jh**, Micah - **Mc**, Nahum - **Nh**, Habakkuk - **Hk**, Zephaniah - **Zp**, Haggai - **Hg**, Zechariah - **Zc**, Malachi - **Ml**

### NEW TESTAMENT

Matthew - **Mt**, Mark - **Mk**, Luke - **Lk**, John - **Jn**, Acts - **At**, Romans - **Rm**, 1 Corinthians - **1 Co**, 2 Corinthians - **2 Co**, Galatians - **Gl**, Ephesians - **Ep**, Philippians - **Ph**, Colossians - **Cl**, 1 Thessalonians - **1 Th**, 2 Thessalonians - **2 Th**, 1 Timothy - **1 Tm**, 2 Timothy - **2 Tm**, Titus - **Ti**, Philemon - **Pl**, Hebrews - **Hb**, James - **Js**, 1 Peter - **1 Pt**, 2 Peter - **2 Pt**, 1 John - **1 Jn**, 2 John - **2 Jn**, 3 John - **3 Jn**, Jude - **Jd**, Revelation - **Rv**

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