

REVEALING THE GOSPEL IN GALATIANS

Jack Sequeira



Chapter 1

The Galatian Problem

Galatians 1:1-10

Paul, an apostle — sent not from men nor by a man, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead — and all the brothers and sisters with me, to the churches in Galatia:

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself for our sins to rescue us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you to live in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel — which is really no gospel at all. Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel

other than the one we preached to you, let them be under God's curse! As we have already said, so now I say again: If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let them be under God's curse! Am I now trying to win the approval of human beings, or of God? Or am I trying to please people? If I were still trying to please people, I would not be a servant of Christ.

In this series of studies, we will turn our attention to one of Paul's most important letters that he ever penned and recorded in the New Testament.

When God sent His Son into this world, He sent Him not to condemn, but to save this world from the sin that came upon us as a result of the Fall. When Jesus finished His earthly mission, when He had obtained salvation full and complete for all mankind, He commissioned His disciples to go into all the world and preach this gospel, this unconditional good news, to all men, to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved.

But there is one who hates the gospel, one who does not want you to understand the gospel. He is the enemy of souls. The Bible calls him Satan. And ever since the birth of the Christian church, Satan has been attacking this gospel.

For example, in 2 Corinthians 4:3-4, Paul tells the Corinthian believers that if the gospel is hidden, it is hidden because the god of this world — that is, Satan — has blinded the eyes of those who do not believe lest they come to the light of the glorious gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ:

And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel that displays the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

But Satan does not stop there at the unbelievers. The moment we have accepted the gospel and are rejoicing in Christ, he will do his utmost to sidetrack us, to sidetrack every Christian

from the pure gospel that was proclaimed by the disciples. Wherever the apostle Paul proclaimed the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, and established churches, Satan's agents, the Judaizers, dogged his footsteps to undo his good work and rob Christians of their freedom in Christ.

One such church was that of Galatia. Paul's epistle to the Galatians is a stern, severe, and solemn letter with no commendation, no praise, and no thanksgiving. The Galatian believers, who had accepted the false teachings of the Judaizers, were in grave danger because the very foundation of their faith was being attacked. Hence, we can define Paul's epistle to the Galatians as a fighting letter.

Today, many Christians of all denominations have fallen into the same trap as the Galatian Christians. It is a subtle form of legalism, a confusion of the gospel which saves us and confusion regarding the fruits of the gospel which are the evidence of our salvation. These fruits make no contribution to our entitlement to heaven.

Even 20th Century Christians desperately need to consider Paul's message to the Galatians because Galatians is the New Testament declaration of emancipation or independence from any and every type of legalism. It is the strongest document in all of Scripture in defense of this vital doctrine called justification by faith alone. It is believed that Luther declared that the church stands or falls in its understanding of this important doctrine: justification by faith. It is God's powerful discussion on behalf of the most important truth of Scripture and Christian faith: salvation by faith in Christ alone.

In this epistle of Galatians, Paul is dealing with issues which are far from being dead. In every age, Satan, the enemy of souls, has tried to destroy the purity of the gospel and, thus, rob God's people of the joy and the assurance of salvation in Christ. A true understanding of Galatians is, therefore, one of the most powerful ways to guard the purity of the gospel in our age.

Beginning now, we are going to systematically

go through this epistle of Paul to the Galatians. From the time Paul was converted on the road to Damascus, to his imprisonment in Rome which led to his martyrdom, we have approximately 20 years. During this time, Paul traveled widely throughout the Roman Empire as an ambassador of Jesus Christ. On his three famous missionary journeys, he preached the gospel and planted churches in the province of Galatia, in Asia, in the northern and southern parts of Greece. These visits to these churches were followed by his letters by which he helped to supervise the early churches that he had founded, Galatians being one of his earliest, somewhere between 48 to 57 A.D.

After Paul left Galatia, false teachers infiltrated the churches of Galatia and convinced the believers that Paul was a self-appointed apostle and, therefore, his gospel that he gave them was his own idea. As soon as this news reached the apostle Paul, he wrote this severe letter. Our first study of this epistle will cover the first ten verses of chapter one in which Paul touches on the two main themes of this epistle, namely: his apostolic authority

which had come under fire and, secondly, the gospel which he proclaimed.

After Paul had established the churches in Galatia, these false teachers — called the Judaizers — came to these churches and mounted a powerful two-pronged attack on Paul's authority as well as his gospel. These Judaizers were Jewish Christians who believed in Christ as the Messiah, so they were believers, but they rejected Paul's message of salvation by grace alone. To counteract this gospel, they attacked his apostolic authority and, thus, undermined his message. They insisted that justification is not by faith alone in Jesus Christ. "Oh, yes, it includes that, but, besides faith, we must also be circumcised," they insisted. "We must do good works and we must keep the law." In fact, this was the first major controversy in the Christian church which resulted in the Jerusalem council recorded in Acts 15:1 onwards. There, in Acts 15, we will discover that these same Judaizers, who came to Antioch, insisted that the Gentile Christians had to be circumcised (verse 1) and had to keep the law (verse 5) in order to be

saved. Both Paul and Barnabas opposed this teaching with all their power and authority in order to undermine these Judaizers that were perverting the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Now, let us begin by reading the first ten verses of Galatians 1 and then we will go step by step. Paul says in, Galatians 1:1-5:

Paul, an apostle — sent not from men nor by a man, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead — and all the brothers and sisters with me, to the churches in Galatia:

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself for our sins to rescue us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

The first five verses are the introduction. Then in verses 6-10, he deals with the Galatian problem:

I am astonished that you are so quickly

deserting the one who called you to live in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel — which is really no gospel at all. Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let them be under God’s curse! As we have already said, so now I say again: If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let them be under God’s curse! Am I now trying to win the approval of human beings, or of God? Or am I trying to please people? If I were still trying to please people, I would not be a servant of Christ.

What is Paul saying here? Let us look at the introduction to this epistle that is, the first five verses of chapter one. Paul introduces himself as an apostle but then he adds in brackets “not sent from men.” Men in the plural is referring to some committee like the apostles who chose Matthias. Nor, he says, from man, singular. Paul is saying he is an apostle not chosen by some committee or by some church official or even himself but he is an

apostle called by Jesus Christ and God the Father. In other words, he is simply saying to the Galatian Christians, “These Judaizers are lying when they accuse me of being a self-appointed apostle.”

Read of Paul’s conversion in Acts 9:10-15 where God tells Ananias to go to this place where Paul is praying:

In Damascus there was a disciple named Ananias. The Lord called to him in a vision, “Ananias!”

“Yes, Lord,” he answered.

The Lord told him, “Go to the house of Judas on Straight Street and ask for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for he is praying. In a vision he has seen a man named Ananias come and place his hands on him to restore his sight.”

“Lord,” Ananias answered, “I have heard many reports about this man and all the harm he has done to your holy people in Jerusalem. And he has

come here with authority from the chief priests to arrest all who call on your name.”

But the Lord said to Ananias, “Go! This man is my chosen instrument to proclaim my name to the Gentiles and their kings and to the people of Israel.”

The Lord says, “He is my chosen instrument.” The word “apostle” means “one who is sent forth.” It is a term that is normally used for missionaries but it had a special meaning in the New Testament. It also meant the twelve apostles. You will find this in Acts 1:21-22. I believe that Paul took the place of Judas. When the disciples chose Matthias, they chose him before Pentecost. They should have waited. I believe that if the Spirit had been allowed to guide in this matter, He would have mentioned to them that His choice was the apostle Paul.

In verse 2, Paul, writing to the Galatians goes on to say that he, an apostle of God, is also being backed up by “all the brothers and sisters” who are

with him:

...and all the brothers and sisters with me, to the churches in Galatia....

Now please notice that he calls his coworkers “brothers and sisters” (“brethren” in some translations) because the word “apostle” refers only to the select twelve that God has chosen to be the pillars of the early Christian church. He calls them brothers and sisters or brethren. He does not call them apostles even though they are coworkers with him.

Then in verse 3 he says, “Grace and peace.”

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

This is the formal greeting and it is the shortest greeting that Paul ever penned in all his epistles recorded in the New Testament. Then he turns to the gospel, Jesus Christ. Verses 4-5:

...who gave himself for our sins to rescue us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Jesus is the one who gave himself for our sins. When Christ gave Himself for our sins, He gave everything. John 3:16 says:

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

What exactly did He give? Well, John, in his epistle, 1 John 5:11, tells us that gift was the life of Christ:

And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.

God gave His Son; Jesus gave Himself to deliver us from this present evil world. Why? Because this world stands doomed under the condemnation and the curse and the law of God.

But in Christ, we have salvation full and complete. And we can add nothing to this salvation. Salvation is not partly by grace and partly by what we do. The moment we add anything to the gospel of grace, we are perverting the gospel and are in danger of losing salvation altogether. This was the danger that the Galatian Christians faced. In fact, when we come to chapter 5 of Galatians, verse 4, Paul tells the Galatians that the moment they add law-keeping as a requirement for justification, they are fallen from grace. A clear understanding of Galatians will prevent us from falling into the same pit.

With this in mind, let us turn to the Galatian problem, verses 6-10:

I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you to live in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel — which is really no gospel at all. Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel

other than the one we preached to you, let them be under God's curse! As we have already said, so now I say again: If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let them be under God's curse! Am I now trying to win the approval of human beings, or of God? Or am I trying to please people? If I were still trying to please people, I would not be a servant of Christ.

Paul starts with the statement, "I am astonished." He is saying, "I am absolutely shocked." Why? Because of their overwhelming acceptance of the gospel and now so quickly deserting it. [The phrase "so soon removed," found in the King James Version, is misleading since the Greek is not in the passive or in the past but in the present tense, active voice.] Paul is saying here, "you have already begun turning away from the gospel, so quickly." Now, if Paul wrote this letter to the Galatians from Corinth, then they were turning away from the gospel only three years after they had accepted it. If this letter was written from Ephesus, then it was only one year from the time they had accepted the gospel that they were

now turning away from it. This is a danger that we all face. The moment you accept Jesus Christ as your Saviour and come under the umbrella of justification by faith alone, the devil will immediately come and side-track you as he did with the Galatians.

The essence of Paul's gospel was salvation by grace alone. You will find this, for example, in Ephesians 2:8-9:

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith — and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God — not by works, so that no one can boast.

Paul tells us the same thing in 2 Corinthians 5:18:

All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation....

Again, the same thing in Acts 20:24:

However, I consider my life worth nothing to me; my only aim is to finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me — the task of testifying to the good news of God’s grace.

Paul’s message of salvation was the message of grace alone. The Judaizers came with a different gospel. This gospel was salvation by grace plus circumcision, plus keeping the law, plus good works.

In verse 7, Paul makes it clear that this different gospel is not another gospel:

...which is really no gospel at all. Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ.

That word “pervert” is a strong Greek word. The Judaizers had actually changed the gospel from good news to bad news or to good advice. But the gospel is not good advice. It is unconditional good news. The good news is this:

that, in Jesus Christ, God has obtained for mankind salvation full and complete.

And so, Paul adds in verse 8:

But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let them be under God's curse!

The "we" refers to himself along with his coworkers or it could refer to the other apostles, which I think is what he meant.

"Let them be under God's curse, let him be anathema." That is how strongly Paul felt about those who try to pervert the gospel that God had given to the Gentile world. Paul is using a very strong term, "Let him be accursed." This term, the word "cursed," or "anathema," means lost forever. This term means, "May God's wrath come upon such a person." and verse 9 repeats it:

As we have already said, so now I say again: If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than

what you accepted, let them be under God's curse!

The repetition is to imply the seriousness of the danger of tampering with the gospel. Do not ever try to tamper with the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ for Paul's strong words in verse 10 clearly indicate that no one must ever be a man-pleaser but we must please God. We are the servants of Jesus Christ. What is the synopsis of this Galatian problem?

We saw that, first of all, Paul's epistle to the Galatians is his reaction, his astonishment at how the Galatians could be sidetracked from the gospel so soon. And his reaction is righteous indignation. This is not an outburst of anger. It is God speaking through the apostle Paul. The "we" and the "angel" can be anyone. It can include you; it can include me; it can include any human being; it can include any supernatural being who tries to pervert the gospel. Such a person comes under the curse of God. Galatianism is, therefore, a serious danger. The Galatians were in serious danger of losing their salvation completely by turning towards a

perverted gospel.

We must treat this epistle of Paul very seriously. Paul's strong words clearly indicate that he is not a man-pleaser but a faithful servant of God. That is what we must be. Paul's epistle to the Galatians is very much applicable today as it was in his day. The devil has not stopped sidetracking Christians from the wonderful truth as it is in Christ. That is why I want to take you step by step through this epistle. I want to show you that there is only one gospel for all mankind. Whether you lived in the Old Testament times or whether you live in the New Testament times, whether you are a Jew or whether you are a Gentile, there is only one gospel that is able to save mankind.

There are some today who say that there are many roads to heaven and Christianity is only one way. No, there is only one Mediator between a holy God and sinful man. There is only one way that you and I can qualify for heaven. There is only one way that we can stand legally just before

God's holy law and that is by faith in the doing and the dying of our Lord Jesus Christ.

When the Judaizers came to Antioch and tried to pervert this gospel, Paul and Barnabas did not take this lightly. Turn to Acts 15 and read what took place. It will show how Paul feels about anyone who tries to pervert the gospel. These are, in my concluding remarks, Paul's concerns about anyone who tries to pervert the gospel. In Acts 15, we read that certain men came and taught the believers that unless they were circumcised, they could not be saved. Acts 15:1:

Certain people came down from Judea to Antioch and were teaching the believers: "Unless you are circumcised, according to the custom taught by Moses, you cannot be saved."

Paul was not against circumcision. He definitely was not against good works and he certainly uplifted the law as a standard of Christian living, but the moment we add any of these three things, the moment we require these three things in

order to be saved, the moment we add the law or good works as a method or a contributing factor towards salvation, then we have perverted the gospel.

So we read in Acts 15:2:

This brought Paul and Barnabas into sharp dispute and debate with them. So Paul and Barnabas were appointed, along with some other believers, to go up to Jerusalem to see the apostles and elders about this question.

Friends, this was a crucial moment in the history of the Christian church. Would the apostles agree with the apostle Paul? I thank God the apostles in Jerusalem defended Paul for we read in Acts 15, what they said in verse 10:

“Now then, why do you try to test God by putting on the necks of Gentiles a yoke that neither we nor our ancestors have been able to bear?”

Then in verse 11:

“No! We believe it is through the grace of our Lord Jesus that we are saved, just as they are.”

“We” is referring to the Jews, the “they” is referring to the Gentiles. There is only one way mankind can be saved. It is through faith in the righteousness of Christ. And it is my prayer that, if you are a Christian, you will not allow anyone to sidetrack you from this gospel. If you happen to be an unbeliever or if you are being drawn by the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ but have not given your heart to Jesus Christ, my plea to you is that there is only one way you can make it to heaven: through faith in Jesus Christ and Him crucified. It is my prayer that as you study this important epistle, so relevant to you today, that you shall know the truth and the truth shall set you free and that no one will rob you of this freedom.

Chapter 2

The Origin of Paul's Gospel

Galatians 1:11-24

I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that the gospel I preached is not of human origin. I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it; rather, I received it by revelation from Jesus Christ.

For you have heard of my previous way of life in Judaism, how intensely I persecuted the church of God and tried to destroy it. I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my own age among my people and was extremely zealous for the traditions of my fathers. But when God, who set me apart from my mother's womb and called me by his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son in me so that I might preach him among the Gentiles, my immediate response was not to consult any human being. I did not go up to Jerusalem to see those who were apostles before I was, but I went into Arabia. Later I returned to Damascus.

Then after three years, I went up to Jerusalem to get acquainted with Cephas and stayed with him fifteen days. I saw none of the other apostles — only James, the Lord’s brother. I assure you before God that what I am writing you is no lie.

Then I went to Syria and Cilicia. I was personally unknown to the churches of Judea that are in Christ. They only heard the report: “The man who formerly persecuted us is now preaching the faith he once tried to destroy.” And they praised God because of me.

Not too long after Paul had established the churches in Galatia, false teachers — who were known as Judaizers — infiltrated these churches and directed a powerful attack on Paul’s apostolic authority and his gospel of salvation by grace alone. Galatians is Paul’s response to this two-pronged attack.

In our last study, we looked at the first ten verses of chapter one where Paul introduces to us

the Galatian problem. In the first five verses, he introduces himself as an apostle not chosen by some committee or by some men; he is not a self-appointed apostle, but he was chosen to be one by the authority of Jesus Christ and God, the Father. In other words, he is not an apostle like Matthias, who was chosen by the other disciples to replace Judas, but Paul was called by God the Father and Jesus Christ Himself to be an apostle.

Then, in verses 6-10, Paul directed his concerns to the Galatian Christians and their problem. He is astonished that they were so soon turning their backs to the true gospel, which they had received with great joy, and were accepting a perverted gospel that was robbing them of their joy and peace in Christ. He further warned them that anyone, any man or an angel, who modifies, or perverts the true gospel, who sidetracks anyone from the true gospel, will come under the irrevocable curse of God.

As mentioned in our last study, the problem of Galatia is not ancient history. Today, many

Christians of all denominations face this very same problem. That is why it is important that we come to grips with the message that Paul wrote to the Galatians. As we turn to the concluding verses of chapter one, verses 11-24, we discover that Paul turns his attention to the second attack of the Judaizers, the origin of his gospel.

Paul tells us that, just as his apostolic authority came directly from God, likewise his gospel of grace alone came directly by revelation, given to him by Jesus Christ Himself.

In Galatians 1:11,12, we have an introduction to our study:

I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that the gospel I preached is not of human origin. I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it; rather, I received it by revelation from Jesus Christ.

According to verses 6 and 10, there is only one gospel:

I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you to live in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel — which is really no gospel at all. Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let them be under God's curse! As we have already said, so now I say again: If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let them be under God's curse! Am I now trying to win the approval of human beings, or of God? Or am I trying to please people? If I were still trying to please people, I would not be a servant of Christ.

This is the measuring stick by which all human teaching is tested. Paul is saying that this one gospel, which he and the other apostles proclaimed, was not something that was invented by man. It is not a human philosophy or a human idea. But it came to him directly by the revelation of Jesus Christ. This is what Paul is saying about the origin of his gospel. In these verses, Paul is clearly

pointing out that the gospel is no mere human invention, nor did he learn it from any human source but directly from Christ Jesus Himself, just as the other eleven did during the three-year earthly ministry of Jesus Christ.

Then, in verses 13 to 24 of chapter one, Paul gives a detailed account of how this is true. Let us read it first and then analyze it:

For you have heard of my previous way of life in Judaism, how intensely I persecuted the church of God and tried to destroy it. I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my own age among my people and was extremely zealous for the traditions of my fathers. But when God, who set me apart from my mother's womb and called me by his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son in me so that I might preach him among the Gentiles, my immediate response was not to consult any human being. I did not go up to Jerusalem to see those who were apostles before I was, but I went into Arabia. Later I returned to Damascus.

Then after three years, I went up to Jerusalem to get acquainted with Cephas and stayed with him fifteen days. I saw none of the other apostles — only James, the Lord’s brother. I assure you before God that what I am writing you is no lie.

Then I went to Syria and Cilicia. I was personally unknown to the churches of Judea that are in Christ. They only heard the report: “The man who formerly persecuted us is now preaching the faith he once tried to destroy.” And they praised God because of me.

Oh, what a tremendous testimony coming from the pen of the apostle Paul.

First, Paul reminds his readers, the Galatian Christians, in verse 13, of his preconverted history. We will find this in detail in Acts 8:1-3 and also chapter 9, verses 1 and 2:

Acts 8:1-3:

And Saul approved of their killing him. On

that day a great persecution broke out against the church in Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria. Godly men buried Stephen and mourned deeply for him. But Saul began to destroy the church. Going from house to house, he dragged off both men and women and put them in prison.

Acts 9:1-2:

Meanwhile, Saul was still breathing out murderous threats against the Lord's disciples. He went to the high priest and asked him for letters to the synagogues in Damascus, so that if he found any there who belonged to the Way, whether men or women, he might take them as prisoners to Jerusalem.

In Philippians 3:6, Paul also tells us what he was like as a Pharisee:

...as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for righteousness based on the law, faultless.

But Paul reminds the Galatian Christians of his preconverted history, that he, as a Pharisee, as a Jew, as a worker for Judaism, had much success and that there was no human reason for him to give up Judaism. In other words, from the human point of view, there was absolutely no reason why he should give up Judaism where he was having tremendous success, more than his contemporaries.

But his turning around from Judaism to Christianity was initiated by God Himself. This is in verse 15:

But when God, who set me apart from my mother's womb and called me by his grace, was pleased....

God is the initiator by His grace, and this is not true only with Paul's history but with the history of every believer. God is the One who takes the initiative. God is the One who comes to us with the wonderful good news of the gospel. We, by nature, are running away from God because we are sinners. We are afraid of God but God comes to us

through the gospel and says, “Stop running away from Me. I have not come to destroy you. I have come to bring you good news.”

God called Paul by grace. Grace means undeserving merit. In 1 Corinthians 15:9, Paul refers to himself as the least of the apostles:

For I am the least of the apostles and do not even deserve to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.

In fact, he adds, “I don’t deserve to be an apostle because I persecuted the Christian church.” But God, through His grace, called Paul because, even though Paul persecuted the Christian church, God knew that his heart was right. He thought that in persecuting the Christian church, he was serving God. He brings this out clearly in Philippians 3:4-6:

...Though I myself have reasons for such confidence. If someone else thinks they have reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more:

circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee; as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for righteousness based on the law, faultless.

And because God knew that Paul was sincere and honest in his heart, God took the initiative and met him on the Damascus road and revealed to him His beloved Son. “God appointed me as an apostle, as a missionary to you Gentiles.” This is what Paul is saying in verse 16:

...To reveal his Son in me so that I might preach him among the Gentiles, my immediate response was not to consult any human being. I did not go up to Jerusalem to see those who were apostles before I was, but I went into Arabia. Later I returned to Damascus.

“I did not go to the apostles or to some human agent to find out what this gospel is all about.” Paul did not question God’s calling. He did not consult with any man but went straight to Arabia.

The word “Arabia” here does not mean or refer to the Arabia we know today. In Paul’s day, this Arabia was south of Damascus, so it was not a long distance as it is today. In Paul’s day, it was a neighboring country.

Then, in verse 18, Paul says, “After three years” that is, three years after his conversion:

Then after three years, I went up to Jerusalem to get acquainted with Cephas and stayed with him fifteen days.

There are many who believe that those three years in Arabia are to make up for the three years that Jesus taught His other apostles in His earthly mission. Paul is saying here that after three years — that is, three years after his conversion — he went to Jerusalem, where he saw Peter. He mentions that he saw Peter only for fifteen days. Why does he mention the number of days? Because he is making an important point. He is saying to his readers, that it was impossible in those fifteen days for Peter to give him the full

counsel of God that he had proclaimed to the Galatian Christians. In other words, “I could not have received this message from Peter.”

One other person he saw was James but also only for a short time. But he saw none of the other apostles. He is simply proving his point that he did not receive the message of the gospel from any man but from Christ Himself.

What did Paul do in those three years that he was in Arabia? He restudied the Old Testament in the light of Jesus Christ. Paul was very familiar with the Old Testament. He was a Pharisee. He knew the Old Testament inside out, but he had misunderstood the message of the Bible. In those three years, Christ did the same for Paul as He did for those two men on their way to Emmaus. Remember those two men who were walking to Emmaus after the resurrection of Christ, how Jesus met them and how they told him that they thought Jesus was the Messiah but now He was crucified; He was dead. Jesus said, “You are so slow to learn the truth.” And beginning with Moses and going

through all the Scriptures, He opened their eyes to all the prophecies that pointed to Him as the Messiah. You will find this in Luke 24:27 onwards. Luke 24:25-27:

He said to them, “How foolish you are, and how slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Did not the Messiah have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?” And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.

So during those three years in Arabia, God opened the true meaning of the Old Testament. The Old Testament, like the New Testament, points to Jesus Christ as our Savior.

At the end of the three years, Paul’s gospel was fully formulated through the abundance of revelation that God had given him. So having been armed with this full gospel, after three years, Paul returns to Jerusalem. He tells us in verses 18, 19, and 20 that he saw the apostles Peter and James for

such a short period that it was impossible for them to have given him the message that he was proclaiming:

Then after three years, I went up to Jerusalem to get acquainted with Cephas and stayed with him fifteen days. I saw none of the other apostles — only James, the Lord’s brother. I assure you before God that what I am writing you is no lie.

Now, we return to verse 21:

Then I went to Syria and Cilicia.

After he saw Peter and James, he tells us, “I went to the regions of Syria and Cilicia.” This is, the area of Tyre and Sidon. When he arrived, the Jews there would look upon him as a traitor because he who was defending Judaism, he who was persecuting the Christian church, had now become a Christian. We are told that, after he went to Syria, he “was unknown by face to the churches of Judea which were in Christ.” The people, the Christians of Judea, did not know Paul as a

Christian. They only knew him as a persecutor of Christianity. But they had heard, the news had reached them, that this man who was formerly a persecutor had made a complete turnaround and was now preaching the message of salvation in Christ which he once tried to destroy. As a result, what did the Christians in Judea do? “They glorified God in me,” except the Judaizers who opposed him.

Now, having said this, let us make a synopsis of chapter one of Galatians.

1. Paul makes it very clear in this first chapter that he is not a self-appointed apostle nor was he chosen by a committee or by any dignitary of the early Christian church. He was chosen to be an apostle. He was called to be a chosen vessel by Jesus Christ and God the Father. The reason he is doing this is not to defend his personal rights. The reason he is defending his apostleship is because the Judaizers, in order to undermine his message of salvation by grace alone, accused him of being a self-appointed apostle. Paul is defending his

apostleship, not because he is fighting for his rights but because he wants to defend the message he brought to Galatia.

2. Paul is astonished. He is shocked that the Galatian Christians are so soon sidetracked from the true gospel to a false gospel. When we come to chapter four, we will discover that the Galatians were so excited by this message of salvation by grace alone that they were even willing to pluck their eyes and give them to Paul because obviously he was having eye problems at that time. And now, so soon, either a year later or three years later, depending when Paul wrote this epistle — either from Corinth, which would be three years after their conversion, or from Ephesus, which would be only one year — they were so soon turning their backs to this wonderful message of salvation by grace alone. Do you know why they turned their backs to the gospel? There are two reasons:

a. We are by nature legalists. That means that we are, by nature, inclined to believe, to teach, and to practice salvation by works because sin, at its

very foundation, is living independent of God. This brings us to the second reason.

b. The gospel is salvation by grace alone. You and I can make no contribution to our salvation, which is very painful to our egocentric nature because, you see, we want some credit towards our salvation and the gospel takes the glory of man and puts it in the dust. When we accept the gospel, we have to admit that spiritually we are bankrupt and that is painful. It is very appealing to our egocentric nature, to our pride, that we can contribute towards our salvation. This is why the Galatians were deceived by the teachings of the Judaizers.

The Judaizers came to Galatia and said to the Galatian Christians, “We hear that you have been converted by the apostle Paul.” And they responded and said, “Yes, he came with a wonderful message of salvation, this wonderful good news and we are rejoicing in it.” The Judaizers would respond, “Yes, we thank God that you have accepted Jesus Christ as your Saviour.

But what Paul preached was not a complete message.” And they would say, “Really? We thought he gave us the full counsel of God.” “Oh, no. What he said is true but it is incomplete. Surely you don’t expect to go to heaven simply by believing in Jesus Christ. That’s too good to be true. Friends, God expects you to do something. He expects you to be circumcised. That’s why He gave it to Abraham. He expects you to do good works and He expects you to keep the law of Moses, otherwise you will never make it to heaven.” And these poor Galatian Christians were deceived by this perverted gospel. Paul is astonished that they could so easily be sidetracked from the gospel.

But the tragedy is that we can fall into the same trap. That is why we should carefully study this epistle to the Galatians. It is our only way of guarding against this terrible enemy of the gospel.

Then, finally in chapter one, Paul tells us that this gospel that he preached originated from Jesus Christ Himself and not from any man, not even the

apostles. In other words, Paul is saying here, “The day you refuse to accept the gospel that I gave you, you are not refusing my message; you are refusing the message of Jesus Christ Himself.” So this becomes a serious matter. Oh, yes, if the message that Paul preached was his idea, if it was some human invention, then there was no danger of turning their backs to this message. But, if the message that Paul preached was not a message from man, either from him or from the other apostles, but it came directly from Jesus Christ, then it becomes a very serious matter to turn our backs to this message. The truth of the gospel, friends, is:

1. Unchanging. Paul, Peter, and the other apostles all preached the same gospel. The emphasis, the style, may be different, since Peter preached to the Jews and Paul to the Gentiles. They may have approached the message from a different point of view, but the message, the essence, the substance of the message was identical.

2. The truth of the gospel must be maintained. The devil has not taken a vacation. He is here today to pervert the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ and he tries every means — through humanism, through the New Age movement, through infiltrating the Christian church with new truth which is no new truth but a perverted gospel. We, as Christians, must maintain the purity of the gospel because perverting the gospel is one of Satan's most powerful ways to pull men and women out of Christ. Paul told the Corinthians in 2 Corinthians 11:3-4 that, just as Satan deceived Eve by his subtlety, he would try and deceive the Corinthians by his crafty ways:

But I am afraid that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent's cunning, your minds may somehow be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ. For if someone comes to you and preaches a Jesus other than the Jesus we preached, or if you receive a different spirit from the Spirit you received, or a different gospel from the one you accepted, you put up with it easily enough.

And Satan, who is the father of lies, is still alive today and, in the name of an angel, he will come as an angel of light and try to pervert the gospel in your life and in my life.

As we conclude this first chapter of Galatians, it is very clear that Paul is an apostle of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is important that we listen to his message because almost half of the New Testament is Pauline epistles. It is Paul whom God set aside to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ. When Christ came to this world, He came primarily not to explain the gospel, but to be the gospel. It is Paul that God set aside to expound the gospel of Jesus Christ. Paul is the theologian of the New Testament and the message he proclaimed, which is recorded in the New Testament, is a message that came to him from Christ Himself directly by revelation. In Chapter 12 of 2 Corinthians, verse 7 onwards, Paul tells us that, because of the abundance of revelation that he received, because of the danger of pride infiltrating his heart, God allowed Satan to put a thorn in his flesh to keep

him humble. 2 Corinthians 12:7-10:

...Therefore, in order to keep me from becoming conceited, I was given a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ’s sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

As we study this wonderful, important epistle to the Galatians, my prayer is that you will be rooted and grounded in the truth as it is in Christ and that you will allow nothing and no one to sidetrack you from this truth. This is my prayer, as Jesus said to His disciples, that you shall know this truth and the truth will set you free. There is only one gospel, there is only one message, that can reconcile a holy God to sinful man and that is the

gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. This reconciliation already took place when Jesus died on the cross. All that is left is for mankind to be reconciled to God. May God preserve you from being sidetracked from this gospel.

Chapter 3

Only One Gospel

Galatians 2:1-10

Then after fourteen years, I went up again to Jerusalem, this time with Barnabas. I took Titus along also. I went in response to a revelation and, meeting privately with those esteemed as leaders, I presented to them the gospel that I preach among the Gentiles. I wanted to be sure I was not running and had not been running my race in vain. Yet not even Titus, who was with me, was compelled to be circumcised, even though he was a Greek. This matter arose because some false believers had infiltrated our ranks to spy on the freedom we have in Christ Jesus and to make us slaves. We did not give in to them for a moment, so that the truth of the gospel might be preserved for you.

As for those who were held in high esteem — whatever they were makes no difference to me; God does not show favoritism — they added

nothing to my message. On the contrary, they recognized that I had been entrusted with the task of preaching the gospel to the uncircumcised, just as Peter had been to the circumcised. For God, who was at work in Peter as an apostle to the circumcised, was also at work in me as an apostle to the Gentiles. James, Cephas and John, those esteemed as pillars, gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship when they recognized the grace given to me. They agreed that we should go to the Gentiles, and they to the circumcised. All they asked was that we should continue to remember the poor, the very thing I had been eager to do all along.

As we turn to chapter two of Galatians, keep in mind what we have already covered in chapter one in our last two studies. Here is a quick review before we turn to chapter two. Paul was ordained by God and Jesus Christ to be an apostle to the Gentiles. Wherever Paul went, the Judaizers — Jewish Christians who opposed Paul's message — dogged his footsteps. As soon as Paul planted a church in some location, these false teachers would

come and trouble the new believers with their perverted gospel, that is: salvation is not by faith alone in the righteousness of Christ but that we must also add circumcision and the keeping of the law as a requirement to be saved.

Unfortunately, these Judaizers had plenty of success both within and without the church. Did you know, for example, that most Islamic scholars consider Paul, especially in view of his message of salvation by grace alone, as the greatest heretic of Christianity? All those who would like to promote legalism in one form or another within Christianity often have a low opinion of Paul and his writings.

It is important that we come to grips with the issues Paul is discussing in Galatians. As we have already seen, in order to discredit Paul's gospel, the Judaizers launched a powerful two-pronged attack on Paul and his message. They accused him of being a self-appointed apostle and inventing his own gospel.

In chapter one, Paul made it clear that both his

apostolic authority, as well as the gospel he proclaimed, did not come from men or from himself but from God and Jesus Christ. But the Judaizers did not stop at this two-pronged attack. One of the powerful ways they tried to undermine Paul's gospel was by putting a wedge between Paul and the other apostles. They hinted to these Gentile believers that the gospel Paul preached was very different from the one that Peter and the other apostles were preaching in Palestine. Keep in mind that, in those days, communication was very poor. There was no way for these Gentile believers in Asia Minor, in Galatia and other places, to be sure what the apostles in Palestine were preaching. The Judaizers took advantage of this. Paul is proving there is only one gospel that he and the other apostles were preaching.

With this introduction, let us now turn to Galatians 2:1-10:

Then after fourteen years, I went up again to Jerusalem, this time with Barnabas. I took Titus along also. I went in response to a revelation and,

meeting privately with those esteemed as leaders, I presented to them the gospel that I preach among the Gentiles. I wanted to be sure I was not running and had not been running my race in vain. Yet not even Titus, who was with me, was compelled to be circumcised, even though he was a Greek. This matter arose because some false believers had infiltrated our ranks to spy on the freedom we have in Christ Jesus and to make us slaves. We did not give in to them for a moment, so that the truth of the gospel might be preserved for you.

As for those who were held in high esteem — whatever they were makes no difference to me; God does not show favoritism — they added nothing to my message. On the contrary, they recognized that I had been entrusted with the task of preaching the gospel to the uncircumcised, just as Peter had been to the circumcised. For God, who was at work in Peter as an apostle to the circumcised, was also at work in me as an apostle to the Gentiles. James, Cephas and John, those esteemed as pillars, gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship when they recognized the grace

given to me. They agreed that we should go to the Gentiles, and they to the circumcised. All they asked was that we should continue to remember the poor, the very thing I had been eager to do all along.

What a powerful, tremendous passage this is! What is Paul saying here in this passage? First, let us look at the opening statement:

Then after fourteen years....

Fourteen years after his conversion he went up again to Jerusalem. Remember, he had gone there the first time, as mentioned in chapter one, verse eighteen, when he stayed in Jerusalem only for fifteen days. But this time, he went with Barnabas (who was a fellow Jew and a coworker with Paul) and Titus, a Greek, a Gentile convert, who was an intern under Paul. Verse 2 tells us why he went to Jerusalem:

I went in response to a revelation....

Paul did not come to Jerusalem to be investigated by the other apostles. He went up because God directed him to go to Jerusalem. Why? Because of the damage the Judaizers were doing by their false teachings. They were implying to the Gentile believers that there was a discrepancy between the gospel that Paul had preached to them and the gospel that Peter, James and John, the pillars of the church, were preaching in Jerusalem.

God wanted to stop this problem immediately. Paul says:

I went in response to a revelation and, meeting privately with those esteemed as leaders, I presented to them the gospel that I preach among the Gentiles.

He shared, with the other apostles, the message that he had proclaimed to the Gentiles. But he did it privately to those who were of reputation. He does not mention in verse two who those people in reputation were but he does in verse nine. They

were James, Cephas (that is, Peter), and John. These were the pillars of the church in Jerusalem. He says:

I wanted to be sure I was not running and had not been running my race in vain.

It was not because Paul doubted his gospel but it was to report to the leaders so that they might be in perfect unity with the gospel they were both proclaiming. This unity should be our goal, also. There is only one gospel that the Christian church should preach and that is why it is important that we understand this epistle to the Galatians.

Now look at verse 3 of chapter 2 of Galatians:

Yet not even Titus, who was with me, was compelled to be circumcised, even though he was a Greek.

To understand this, keep in mind, that the Judaizers were insisting that the Gentiles be circumcised in order to be saved. In Acts 15, at the

first Jerusalem council, this was the central issue.
Acts 15:1-21:

Certain people came down from Judea to Antioch and were teaching the believers: “Unless you are circumcised, according to the custom taught by Moses, you cannot be saved.” This brought Paul and Barnabas into sharp dispute and debate with them. So Paul and Barnabas were appointed, along with some other believers, to go up to Jerusalem to see the apostles and elders about this question. The church sent them on their way, and as they traveled through Phoenicia and Samaria, they told how the Gentiles had been converted. This news made all the believers very glad. When they came to Jerusalem, they were welcomed by the church and the apostles and elders, to whom they reported everything God had done through them.

Then some of the believers who belonged to the party of the Pharisees stood up and said, “The Gentiles must be circumcised and required to keep the law of Moses.”

The apostles and elders met to consider this question. After much discussion, Peter got up and addressed them: “Brothers, you know that some time ago God made a choice among you that the Gentiles might hear from my lips the message of the gospel and believe. God, who knows the heart, showed that he accepted them by giving the Holy Spirit to them, just as he did to us. He did not discriminate between us and them, for he purified their hearts by faith. Now then, why do you try to test God by putting on the necks of Gentiles a yoke that neither we nor our ancestors have been able to bear? No! We believe it is through the grace of our Lord Jesus that we are saved, just as they are.”

The whole assembly became silent as they listened to Barnabas and Paul telling about the signs and wonders God had done among the Gentiles through them. When they finished, James spoke up. “Brothers,” he said, “listen to me. Simon has described to us how God first intervened to choose a people for his name from the Gentiles. The words of the prophets are in

agreement with this, as it is written: ‘After this I will return and rebuild David’s fallen tent. Its ruins I will rebuild, and I will restore it, that the rest of mankind may seek the Lord, even all the Gentiles who bear my name, says the Lord, who does these things’ — things known from long ago.

“It is my judgment, therefore, that we should not make it difficult for the Gentiles who are turning to God. Instead we should write to them, telling them to abstain from food polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, from the meat of strangled animals and from blood. For the law of Moses has been preached in every city from the earliest times and is read in the synagogues on every Sabbath.”

And here, in Galatians, Paul is saying that if there was a discrepancy between his gospel and the one that Peter, James, and John were preaching, if he was not in harmony with these three great men of God and that the Judaizers were correct, that circumcision was essential for salvation, then Titus, who was a Gentile, uncircumcised, would have been compelled by these leaders of the church

in Jerusalem to be circumcised. It was God who led Paul to take Titus with him as a test case. Titus was Exhibit A. The whole unity of the gospel depended on what these leaders in Jerusalem would do with Titus. The reason Paul took Titus was to make sure that Paul and the other apostles were in harmony.

Paul says in verse 4:

This matter arose because some false believers had infiltrated our ranks to spy on the freedom we have in Christ Jesus and to make us slaves.

If the Judaizers had succeeded in bringing a wedge between Paul and the other apostles, it is doubtful that the Christian church as it is today would have lasted for so long a period. We thank God that on this very important occasion, the apostles were perfectly united in their stand.

Paul adds in verse 5:

We did not give in to them for a moment, so

that the truth of the gospel might be preserved for you.

The “we” here refers to Paul, Peter, James, and John. Not for a single moment did they allow these Judaizers to pervert the gospel or to bring a wedge between Paul and the other apostles. Paul and the other apostles were in perfect harmony in the proclamation of the gospel. Yes, today the Christian church is fragmented with all kinds of issues but one thing must be clear: the church has to be united when it comes to defining what the gospel of Jesus Christ is.

Paul goes on (verse 6a):

As for those who were held in high esteem — whatever they were makes no difference to me; God does not show favoritism....

Paul is not being disrespectful to the leaders and the believers in Jerusalem. Reminding them of the priesthood of all believers, that God shows personal favoritism to no one for we all — apostles

and laity, leaders and members of the church, all of us — are one hundred percent sinners saved by grace. There is no distinction when you and I come under the umbrella of the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Then he makes this wonderful statement at the end of verse six:

...They added nothing to my message.

The leading brethren of the church in Jerusalem, Peter, James and John, did not contradict, they did not add, they did not modify or supplement Paul's gospel. The message Paul preached was full and complete: salvation for all men is by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and nothing else. He continues in verses 7-8:

On the contrary, they recognized that I had been entrusted with the task of preaching the gospel to the uncircumcised [Gentiles, i.e., anyone who wasn't Jewish], just as Peter had been to the circumcised [Jews]. For God, who was at work in

Peter as an apostle to the circumcised, was also at work in me as an apostle to the Gentiles.

The source of the gospel is Jesus Christ. The gospel proclaimed by Peter to the Jews and the gospel proclaimed by Paul to the Gentiles was the same gospel. There was no distinction. Paul and Peter preached the same gospel. True, it was to a different audience, therefore their style may have been different; their approach may have been different but the substance of the message they preached was one.

Paul says in verse 9:

James, Cephas and John, those esteemed as pillars [leaders of God's church in Jerusalem], gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship when they recognized the grace given to me. They agreed that we should go to the Gentiles, and they to the circumcised.

In other words, these apostles said to Paul and Barnabas, "Continue the good work. We are

perfectly united.” This was a very crucial moment in the history of the Christian church. Thank God, this meeting proved extremely successful. It showed that the Judaizers were liars and deceivers, that they were agents of Satan who came to destroy the truth as it is in Christ. We read that, before Paul and Barnabas left Jerusalem, they had come to an agreement that the message they preached was one and the same message. They desired only one thing, said Paul in verse 10, that these Gentile believers remember the poor Jewish believers who were being persecuted and who were facing financial and material hardship:

All they asked was that we should continue to remember the poor, the very thing I had been eager to do all along.

There are two important facts that we must remember concerning this message in Galatians 2:1-10:

1. The truth of the gospel is unchanging. Paul said in Galatians 1:8-9 that anyone who perverts

this gospel, anyone who brings about another gospel other than the one that he, Paul and the other apostles preached, let him be accursed of God even though that person, that individual may be an angel from heaven. Peter and Paul and the other apostles all preached the same gospel. They were perfectly united as to how man was justified before God. So those who preach the gospel today must also be united. The moment we preach different gospels, we are doing great damage to the cause of Jesus Christ. Yes, our emphasis, our style may be different. For example: Paul's greatest enemies in his proclamation of the gospel were the Judaizers. His greatest enemy was legalism and so Paul, in his writings, speaks against legalism with much emphasis. James, on the other hand, writing to Jewish believers, is dealing with an opposite problem: antinomianism (literally, "anti-legalism" or lawlessness; the theological doctrine that by faith and God's grace a Christian is freed from all laws, including the moral standards of the culture), or what is called "cheap grace." Both were preaching the same gospel, both were in perfect harmony, but they were dealing with two different

problems, two different groups of people, so their approach was somewhat different. But their message was the same.

2. The second truth that our passage brings out is that the truth of the gospel must be maintained at all cost. Perverting the gospel is one of Satan's most powerful ways of destroying the faith of believers and the unity of the Christian church. Paul tells us in Galatians 5:3-4 that anyone who adds law keeping to justification by faith alone in the righteousness of Christ is fallen from grace and Christ has become of no value:

Again I declare to every man who lets himself be circumcised that he is obligated to obey the whole law. You who are trying to be justified by the law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace.

All through his ministry, Paul warned his believers to be on guard against perverting the gospel. We find an example in 2 Corinthians 4:3-4:

And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel that displays the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

The devil has, to a large degree, put a veil in front of the eyes of many of the church people today. He has convinced them that man has, in himself, the power to save himself. This is the mistake that Karl Marx made; this is the mistake that many who believe in humanistic methods have made. But the Bible is clear that there is no one who is able to save himself from sin by his own good works because sin is not only an act that condemns us but sin is a slavery; sin is a law; it is a principle that dwells in our sinful nature which makes holy living impossible. When we come to Galatians 3:10, Paul makes it clear that all who are depending on the law for their salvation will be under the curse:

For all who rely on the works of the law are

under a curse, as it is written: “Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law.”

“Cursed is everyone who does not obey the law perfectly and continually,” something that none of us have been able to do. We must maintain the purity of the gospel for we do not want this gospel to be perverted.

Another passage in the same book is 2 Corinthians 11:3-4:

But I am afraid that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent’s cunning, your minds may somehow be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ. For if someone comes to you and preaches a Jesus other than the Jesus we preached, or if you receive a different spirit from the Spirit you received, or a different gospel from the one you accepted, you put up with it easily enough.

We need to give serious thought to what Paul

says here. Paul is saying, “I am concerned for you Corinthian Christians. It is so easy to sidetrack you from the true gospel.” What Paul is saying about the Corinthians is true of all of us today because legalism is very appealing to our egocentric nature. The gospel is a standard. It shows us how poverty-stricken we are when it comes to the spiritual realm. It is important that, as Christians, we maintain the purity of the gospel, that we allow none to pervert the gospel. This is what the devil has been trying to do right from the beginning.

On this historical occasion — fourteen years after Paul’s conversion, when he came to Jerusalem for the second time — if the apostles disagreed in terms of the content of the gospel, the whole destiny of the Christian church was at stake. It is true that Paul, in this passage that we have just studied, was referring to the Jerusalem Council because there is a close similarity between Paul’s statement in Galatians 2:1-10 and in Acts 15, especially verses 6-11. In conclusion, to show the similarity, read Acts 15:6-10:

The apostles and elders met to consider this question. After much discussion, Peter got up and addressed them: “Brothers, you know that some time ago God made a choice among you that the Gentiles might hear from my lips the message of the gospel and believe. God, who knows the heart, showed that he accepted them by giving the Holy Spirit to them, just as he did to us. He did not discriminate between us and them, for he purified their hearts by faith. Now then, why do you try to test God by putting on the necks of Gentiles a yoke that neither we nor our ancestors have been able to bear?”

Keep in mind that the issue was circumcision and the keeping of the law as a requirement for salvation. This is the response of the apostles at this Jerusalem Council. Peter is reminding the Judaizers that Judaism, after 1,500 years, had miserably failed to produce a righteousness that can stand before the judgment seat of God. In Acts 15:11, the next verse, we read Paul’ conclusion:

“No! We believe it is through the grace of our

Lord Jesus that we are saved, just as they are.”

In other words, there is only one way that God saved mankind. It does not matter whether you are a Jew or a Gentile, it does not matter whether you are male or female, educated or uneducated, whether you are living in the first world or the third world, there is only one way that sinful man can be justified before a holy God: it is through grace that we are saved by faith and not by works.

It is my prayer that you will know this truth and this truth will set you free and you will allow no one to sidetrack you from this gospel of grace alone. Thank God for Paul, the champion of the gospel. We thank God that almost half of the New Testament is Pauline epistles, especially for his epistle to the Galatians which has been preserved for your benefit and mine that you and I may know the truth and may stand by the truth. The truth which is Jesus Christ and Him crucified will set us free.

Chapter 4

Justification by Faith Alone

Galatians 2:11-21

When Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned. For before certain men came from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles. But when they arrived, he began to draw back and separate himself from the Gentiles because he was afraid of those who belonged to the circumcision group. The other Jews joined him in his hypocrisy, so that by their hypocrisy even Barnabas was led astray.

When I saw that they were not acting in line with the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas in front of them all, “You are a Jew, yet you live like a Gentile and not like a Jew. How is it, then, that you force Gentiles to follow Jewish customs?”

“We who are Jews by birth and not sinful Gentiles know that a person is not justified by the

works of the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law, because by the works of the law no one will be justified.

“But if, in seeking to be justified in Christ, we Jews find ourselves also among the sinners, doesn’t that mean that Christ promotes sin? Absolutely not! If I rebuild what I destroyed, then I really would be a lawbreaker.

“For through the law I died to the law so that I might live for God. I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. I do not set aside the grace of God, for if righteousness could be gained through the law, Christ died for nothing!”

In our last study, which was Galatians 2, verses 1-10, Paul described his second visit to Jerusalem, 14 years after his conversion. This second visit,

and what transpired there, proved conclusively that the gospel Paul preached to the Gentiles was the same or identical gospel that Peter, James, and John — the pillars of the church — had been preaching to the Jews in Jerusalem.

Now, in this study, in Galatians 2:11-21, the scene changes from Jerusalem, which was the capital of the Jewish nation, to Antioch, the chief city of Syria. Here Paul describes his clash with Peter. This is without doubt the most tense and dramatic episode in the New Testament. Here are two leading apostles of Jesus Christ face to face in open conflict.

What prompted Paul to publicly oppose Peter? Had he lost his temper or did Paul feel threatened by Peter's presence in his territory? After all, Peter was chosen by God to be an apostle to the Jews and Paul to the Gentiles. Therefore, was Paul trying to downplay Peter as one presidential candidate downplays another in a presidential election? Or was Paul jealous of Peter? None of these is true. But, before we consider the issue in this passage,

Galatians 2:11-21, it is important that we keep in mind four facts.

1. Both Paul and Peter are born again Christians.
2. Both are genuine apostles of Jesus Christ.
3. Both were used by God mightily. We discover in the book of Acts that the first half describes how God used Peter mightily and the second half how God used Paul mightily.
4. Both played a leading role in establishing the Christian church.

Yet, here we find them in open conflict. We will begin with verses 11 to 16 and then we will look at it in detail. It is important that we see these truths from the Word of God itself.

When Cephas [Peter] came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned. For before certain men came from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles. But when they arrived, he began to draw back and separate

himself from the Gentiles because he was afraid of those who belonged to the circumcision group. The other Jews joined him in his hypocrisy, so that by their hypocrisy even Barnabas was led astray.

When I saw that they were not acting in line with the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas in front of them all, “You are a Jew, yet you live like a Gentile and not like a Jew. How is it, then, that you force Gentiles to follow Jewish customs?”

“We who are Jews by birth and not sinful Gentiles know that a person is not justified by the works of the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law, because by the works of the law no one will be justified.”

What is Paul saying here? First, he says, “When Peter came to Antioch.” As already mentioned, Antioch was the chief city of Syria. It was an important place, not only for the commercial world but also for Christianity because

it was here at Antioch that the believers were first called Christians.

The moment Peter came to Antioch, Paul withstood him. Why? Because he was to blame (or “he stood condemned,” he was in the wrong). To blame for what? What was the problem for which Peter had to be publicly rebuked? The answer is found in verse 12. Before the Judaizers — who were Jewish Christians — came, Peter would eat with the Gentiles. But when these Jewish Christians came to Antioch, he withdrew from the Gentiles’ company and he went to eat only with the Jews, fearing those who were of the circumcised or these Jewish brethren from Jerusalem. Verse 12:

For before certain men came from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles. But when they arrived, he began to draw back and separate himself from the Gentiles because he was afraid of those who belonged to the circumcision group.

Now, to understand verse 12, we have to

remember that, in the early church, the believers often ate a common meal called the agape feast. The food was pooled together and all partook of this meal. For many slaves who had become Christians, this meal was the best meal of the week. This common meal was shared together by both Jews and Gentile Christians, by slaves and masters. To the Jew who partook of this meal, it was a complete contradiction to his culture and his religious background. A strict Jew, in the days of the New Testament, and to some degree today among the Orthodox Jew, was forbidden to do business with a Gentile. He was not allowed to go on a journey with a Gentile. He must never be hospitable to a Gentile. The story of the Samaritan that Jesus told graphically portrays this. Neither was the Jew to accept hospitality from a Gentile. The gospel had liberated the Christian Jews from this attitude. Paul clearly brings out in Ephesians 2:14-18, that Jesus Christ, by His death on the cross, had broken down or done away with the partition wall that separated the Jews and the Gentiles in the temple of Jerusalem:

For he himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by setting aside in his flesh the law with its commands and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity out of the two, thus making peace, and in one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.

There was to be no barrier between Jews and Gentiles. In fact, in Galatians 3:28, Paul says:

There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

This is one of the wonderful privileges of being a member of the Christian church. It removes all distinctions.

Before Peter understood this truth, he practiced this separationism just as the other Jews. God had to open his eyes about this problem. In Acts 10:9-23, we discover how God solved this problem in the mind of Peter:

About noon the following day as they were on their journey and approaching the city, Peter went up on the roof to pray. He became hungry and wanted something to eat, and while the meal was being prepared, he fell into a trance. He saw heaven opened and something like a large sheet being let down to earth by its four corners. It contained all kinds of four-footed animals, as well as reptiles and birds. Then a voice told him, “Get up, Peter. Kill and eat.”

“Surely not, Lord!” Peter replied. “I have never eaten anything impure or unclean.”

The voice spoke to him a second time, “Do not call anything impure that God has made clean.”

This happened three times, and immediately the

sheet was taken back to heaven.

While Peter was wondering about the meaning of the vision, the men sent by Cornelius found out where Simon's house was and stopped at the gate. They called out, asking if Simon who was known as Peter was staying there.

While Peter was still thinking about the vision, the Spirit said to him, "Simon, three men are looking for you. So get up and go downstairs. Do not hesitate to go with them, for I have sent them."

Peter went down and said to the men, "I'm the one you're looking for. Why have you come?"

The men replied, "We have come from Cornelius the centurion. He is a righteous and God-fearing man, who is respected by all the Jewish people. A holy angel told him to ask you to come to his house so that he could hear what you have to say." Then Peter invited the men into the house to be his guests.

The next day Peter started out with them, and some of the believers from Joppa went along.

Peter was upstairs, waiting for the ladies downstairs to cook his meal. He was hungry. He fell asleep. Remember, God, in a vision, brought down all kinds of unclean animals in a net and in the vision Peter was told to slay these animals and eat. In response Peter said, “I have never eaten anything unclean.” The response was, “Peter, what God has cleansed you must not call common.” God here was not referring, in this vision, to a diet or eating. God was simply using the unclean animals of the Old Testament to bring out a lesson to Peter concerning the Gentiles, because the Gentiles were looked upon by the Jews as an unclean people. Peter was told by God through this vision, “No longer must you treat the Gentiles as ‘unclean.’”

Peter had already learned this. Remember the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15, especially verses 6-11? Peter, who was the spokesman, made it very clear that there is no distinction in the eyes of God,

through the gospel, between Jews and Gentiles:

The apostles and elders met to consider this question. After much discussion, Peter got up and addressed them: “Brothers, you know that some time ago God made a choice among you that the Gentiles might hear from my lips the message of the gospel and believe. God, who knows the heart, showed that he accepted them by giving the Holy Spirit to them, just as he did to us. He did not discriminate between us and them, for he purified their hearts by faith. Now then, why do you try to test God by putting on the necks of Gentiles a yoke that neither we nor our ancestors have been able to bear? No! We believe it is through the grace of our Lord Jesus that we are saved, just as they are.”

These Jewish brethren claimed that they were sent by James who was the main leader, the chairman or the President of the Christian church in Jerusalem. This claim is questionable. There was no way the people in Antioch could prove that James had sent them. But the real problem was that, when they came, Peter, whose custom it was

to eat with the Gentiles, left them and went to eat with the Jews, “fearing those who were of the circumcision.” That great apostle Peter was not infallible. He submitted to peer pressure and he did something that set a very bad example. He became a stumbling block for the cause of Jesus Christ.

That is why Paul openly rebuked him. As a result of Peter’s action, the rest of the Jews, along with Barnabas, practiced what Paul calls hypocrisy. A hypocrite is somebody who pretends to be good when he is not. The Jews, because they felt that God had given them the law and God had called them His chosen people, thought they were better than the Gentiles. Peter, not by his conviction but by his behavior, was giving the impression that the Gentiles, who had accepted Christ, were “unclean.” What he did was a contradiction of the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

So what did Paul do? Galatians 2:14 tells us:

When I saw that they were not acting in line

with the truth of the gospel...

The “they” is Peter and the other apostles, including Barnabas, who was a co-laborer with Paul. He was one of the men who fought against the Judaizers in the Jerusalem Council. They now submitted to the same weakness as Peter. Paul, the great champion of the gospel, when he saw what was happening, straightway rebuked Peter publicly because what Peter did was a contradiction which the truth of the gospel revealed to them. We read in the second half of verse 14 of Galatians 2 the words of Paul to Peter before them all:

...I said to Cephas in front of them all, “You are a Jew, yet you live like a Gentile and not like a Jew. How is it, then, that you force Gentiles to follow Jewish customs?”

This can only be understood when we put ourselves in the place of Peter and Paul and the Jews at that time. Remember, the reason the Jews would not associate with the Gentiles was because they looked upon the Gentiles as sinners and

themselves as the children of God. When Peter ate with the Gentiles, he was admitting two things: that he, like the Gentiles, was a sinner, and that both of them were saved by grace alone. Peter's previous behavior, even with the Gentiles, was upholding the truth of the gospel, that there is no distinction in God's eyes between Jew and Gentile. All have sinned, as Paul says in Romans 3:23, both have come short of the glory of God and are both justified freely by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ:

...For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God....

When Peter moved from the Gentiles table and took the other Jews with him and ate separately from the Gentiles, he was implying by his act that the Gentiles were "unclean." He was giving ammunition to the Judaizers, these Jewish Christians who had come from Jerusalem under the guise of having been sent by James. This ammunition was that the demands of the Judaizers were right. These demands were circumcision and

the keeping of the law as a requirement of salvation.

Peter, not by his words but by his act, was contradicting what he already said to the congregation there in the Jerusalem Council. He was contradicting his own stand that he took at the Jerusalem Council. Paul is reminding him in verse 16:

[We...] know that a person is not justified by the works of the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law, because by the works of the law no one [Jews or Gentiles] will be justified.

Paul says, “Peter, you know the truth; you defended it in the Jerusalem Council, now why have you contradicted this wonderful truth by leaving the Gentile table and going to the Jews?”

Now he gives Peter some food for thought. Look at verses 17 to 21:

“But if, in seeking to be justified in Christ, we Jews find ourselves also among the sinners, doesn’t that mean that Christ promotes sin? Absolutely not! If I rebuild what I destroyed, then I really would be a lawbreaker.

“For through the law I died to the law so that I might live for God. I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. I do not set aside the grace of God, for if righteousness could be gained through the law, Christ died for nothing!”

This is a very precious message that Paul is telling Peter. First of all, in verse 16, Paul sums up for Peter the fundamental truth of the gospel. In many ways, Galatians 2:16 is the key passage in the whole of this epistle to the Galatians. The reason for this is because it deals with the central thrust of Paul’s concern in this letter and which is that justification is by faith alone and nothing else.

As we consider this verse, along with the rest of chapter 2, we will see an important word which occurs for the first time in Galatians. This word is:

1. central to the message of God,
2. central to the gospel Paul preached, and
3. central to Christianity itself.

Nobody has truly understood Christianity who does not understand this word. What is this word? It is the word “justified.” The verb form is used three times in verse 16 and once in verse 17. And the noun form, “justification,” appears once in verse 21.

Since verse 16 is a key verse in this epistle, let us pick this verse apart so that we fully understand the significance of this statement.

[We] know that a person is not justified by the works of the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the

works of the law, because by the works of the law no one will be justified.

The word “know” means Paul is telling Peter, “This is a truth that you already know. This is not something new. You declared it in the Jerusalem Council (found in Acts 15:10-11). You declared that we are justified by faith apart from the works of the law.” This word “justified” is a legal term which means to declare a person righteous. Acts 15:10-11:

Now then, why do you try to test God by putting on the necks of Gentiles a yoke that neither we nor our ancestors have been able to bear? No! We believe it is through the grace of our Lord Jesus that we are saved, just as they are.”

For example, we find the definition of this word by looking at the book of the law. We read in Deuteronomy 25:1 where this word justified is used in its clear legal sense:

When people have a dispute, they are to take it

to court and the judges will decide the case, acquitting [or “justifying,” in some translations] the innocent and condemning the guilty.

It is true, according to the law, that the law can only justify the righteous. For 1,500 years, the Jews tried to justify themselves by the works of the law. This phrase “works of the law” is the Pauline phrase for what we would call today “legalism.” There was no Greek word in Paul’s day that was equivalent to our English word “legalism.” So whenever you read the phrase “works of the law,” that does not mean that Paul is against the law but he is against the law being used as a method or as a means of salvation.

The Jews, who tried to justify themselves by the works of the law, had failed miserably. Paul brings this out clearly in Romans 9:30-33:

What then shall we say? That the Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, have obtained it, a righteousness that is by faith; but the people of Israel, who pursued the law as the way of

righteousness, have not attained their goal. Why not? Because they pursued it not by faith but as if it were by works. They stumbled over the stumbling stone. As it is written: “See, I lay in Zion a stone that causes people to stumble and a rock that makes them fall, and the one who believes in him will never be put to shame.”

Peter knew this. It was not a question of being ignorant and yet what he did contradicted his belief. There are many Christians who limit the word “justified” only to forgiveness. It is true, for a sinner to be justified before God, his or her sin has to be forgiven. But justification in the New Testament sense, in the way it is used in the gospel, means more than forgiveness, wonderful as this may be, for forgiveness simply means that our sins have been canceled.

But justification by faith as preached by Paul, includes a positive righteousness. Paul brings this out in Romans 5:19:

For just as through the disobedience of the one

man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man [Jesus Christ] the many will be made righteous.

Justification to life requires not only forgiveness but positive righteousness. To be justified before God's holy law, two things are required of us sinners:

1. Perfect obedience, and
2. Perfect justice.

Only in Christ do we have both of these. Apart from Christ Paul tells us it is impossible to save ourselves, to justify ourselves before God.

In Galatians 2:17, Paul makes a rather difficult statement:

But if, in seeking to be justified in Christ, we Jews find ourselves also among the sinners, doesn't that mean that Christ promotes sin? Absolutely not!

This difficult statement could have two meanings.

It could be that Paul is referring to an ethical issue. By eating with Gentiles, Peter acknowledged that they were justified just as the Jews were. By his cowardly act, he implied that the Gentile believers were still “unclean” and, if this is true, he is making Christ, who had justified the Gentiles by faith, the minister of sin. Here is an ethical issue that is involved.

But is it possible that Paul also was talking about what is called “cheap grace”? The Judaizers, who opposed Paul’s method of grace, were including the keeping of the law as a requirement for salvation or justification because they insisted that, if you tell mankind, sinful human beings, that we are justified by faith alone based on the doing and dying of Christ, then you are opening the door for what we call in theology “antinomianism” or cheap grace. In other words, one might say, “Since I am already justified by faith in the perfect history of Jesus Christ that took place 2,000 years ago,

then I can say what Paul says,” (Romans 6:1):

What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase?

This is one of the things of which the Judaizers were accusing Paul.

Paul may have had both in mind. His answer is “it is unthinkable” to both these issues, the ethical issue as well as the issue of cheap grace. Look at verses 19 and 20 of Galatians 2, which explains Paul’s application of the gospel to the justified believer:

For through the law I died to the law so that I might live for God. I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

He says two things to us in verse 19. “As far as

the law is concerned, I am dead.” Now, if we look at Romans 7:1:

Do you not know, brothers and sisters — for I am speaking to those who know the law — that the law has authority over someone only as long as that person lives?

Paul tells us there that the law has dominion over us as long as we are living. The moment we accept our death in Christ, the law no longer has dominion over us. But Christ did not set us free from the law so that we can live as we please. He set us free that we may live for God. Paul brings this out in verse 20 of Galatians 2:

I have been crucified with Christ [It is there that I was redeemed from under law] and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

Justification by faith means that the true believer says, “I am crucified with Christ. It is no

longer I but Christ who must live in me.” True justification by faith says, “Not I, but Christ.” And since Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever, the life He lives in the believer will be the life He lived 2,000 years ago, a life of righteousness, a life going about doing good. This is genuine justification by faith. Yes, what Christ does in us does not contribute towards our salvation; we are justified by faith alone in the perfect history of Christ, but the fruits of justification by faith must be holiness of living.

Paul brings this out clearly in Romans 6, especially in verse 22:

But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the benefit you reap leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life.

Paul concludes in Galatians 2:21, by these words:

I do not set aside the grace of God, for if righteousness could be gained through the law,

Christ died for nothing!

On the one hand, we are justified by faith alone in the righteousness of Christ and what we do, even what the Holy Spirit does in us, does not contribute towards that justification. On the other hand, a justified Christian will always say: “I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live but the life I now live is Christ living in me through faith in Him who loved me and gave Himself for me.”

This is the balanced message that Paul preached. On the one hand, we are justified by faith in the doing and dying of Christ and nothing else. On the other hand, this wonderful truth that has set us free, produces a life of holiness. May this be your experience.

Chapter 5

You Foolish Galatians

Galatians 3:1-9

Throughout Chapter 1 and 2 of Galatians, which we have already covered in previous studies, the great apostle Paul had been strongly defending the divine origin of his apostolic calling and the gospel of grace he preached. Now, beginning with Chapter 3 of Galatians, the apostle turns to the Galatians themselves and their own experience with regards to their initial response to the gospel message. Our study will cover the first nine verses of chapter three. Let us read these first nine verses before we analyze what Paul is saying here:

You foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? Before your very eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed as crucified. I would like to learn just one thing from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by believing what you heard? Are you so foolish? After beginning by

means of the Spirit, are you now trying to finish by means of the flesh? Have you experienced so much in vain — if it really was in vain? So again I ask, does God give you his Spirit and work miracles among you by the works of the law, or by your believing what you heard? So also Abraham “believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.” Understand, then, that those who have faith are children of Abraham. Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: “All nations will be blessed through you.” So those who rely on faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith.

Notice that this passage we just read is divided into two parts. Verses 1-5 deal with the experience of the Galatian Christians by way of a series of questions and then, in verses 6-9, Paul is speaking of Abraham who is the father of all who believe. He is dealing with Abraham as our example, as our prototype, and with how the gospel saves us individually.

With this introduction, let us look carefully at this passage and see what lesson we can draw out of it for we who are living today. Paul begins by a very strong statement:

You foolish Galatians!

The word “foolish” really means “unthinking” or “idiotic,” implying irrational behavior or stupidity. If Paul was living today, he very likely would have said, “You stupid” or “idiotic Galatians.” Any Christian who turns from the glorious gospel of salvation by grace alone and desires to be saved by his own personal good works really deserves to be called foolish for that is pure stupidity.

It is just like a farmer who deliberately gives up using his tractor to plow his land and goes back to plowing by oxen. Paul feels that their behavior was so irrational that he wondered if someone had not cast a spell on them. Please notice what he says:

Who has bewitched you?

“Who has cast a spell on you?” The word “who” here is in the singular, but the Judaizers, who had caused the problem, were really a group of people. Therefore, the implication is that, behind the Judaizers, was the enemy of all souls, which is Satan. In 2 Corinthians 11:3-4, Paul tells the Corinthian believers that just as the devil deceived Eve, Paul is afraid that Satan might use the same deceptive method to deceive them and bring them another gospel that doesn’t belong to the truth:

But I am afraid that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent’s cunning, your minds may somehow be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ. For if someone comes to you and preaches a Jesus other than the Jesus we preached, or if you receive a different spirit from the Spirit you received, or a different gospel from the one you accepted, you put up with it easily enough.

Paul is concerned that the Galatians had turned their backs to the one and only hope of salvation, Jesus Christ and Him crucified. He is stating to them by a question, “Tell me, you who obeyed the truth, did you obey the fact that Jesus Christ was portrayed before you crucified?” The message that Paul had brought to the Galatians was Jesus Christ and Him crucified, man’s only hope. This was at the very heart of Paul’s message. In 1 Corinthians 1:17-18, Paul identifies the cross of Christ with the gospel, the power of God for salvation. He says that this message is foolishness to those who do not believe but to us who believe, the cross is the power of God for salvation:

For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel — not with wisdom and eloquence, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power. For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

Then, in chapter 2 of 1 Corinthians, in the first two verses, Paul tells us that the main emphasis of

his message when he came to Corinth, was Jesus Christ and Him crucified:

And so it was with me, brothers and sisters. When I came to you, I did not come with eloquence or human wisdom as I proclaimed to you the testimony about God. For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified.

“I wanted to know nothing else among you when I came to you,” Paul says, “except Jesus Christ and Him crucified.” This is the heart of the gospel message. Man’s redemption is centered around the cross of Christ.

Paul then tells the Galatians, “Tell me.” he says in verse 2 of Galatians 3, “I want to learn this from you. Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law or by hearing of faith?”

I would like to learn just one thing from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by believing what you heard?

And here Paul describes the two fundamental methods of salvation. The phrase “works of the law” is a typical Pauline expression referring to legalism or salvation by our own good works or observing the law. There was no Greek word in Paul’s day equivalent to our English word “legalism.” So, whenever you come across that phrase “works of the law,” that is what it means.

Paul is not against the law, but he is against anyone using the law as a method or as a means of salvation. When we come to chapter 5 of Galatians, we will discover that Paul does uphold the law as a standard of Christian living. But, as a means of salvation, there is only one way you and I can go to heaven and that is through Jesus Christ and Him crucified.

Paul is saying in verse 2 of Galatians 3: “Did you receive the Spirit by the observance of the law, using the law as a method of salvation, or did you receive the Spirit through faith in Jesus Christ as your Savior?”

Under the law, the law requires us personally to obey it. We cannot receive any help from outside of ourselves. The law demands we, as individuals, obey it perfectly and continually if we want to be saved through the law. It is only under grace that God supplies us the Holy Spirit. The work of the Holy Spirit is not to save us since we are saved by the doing and dying of Christ. But the work of the Holy Spirit is to make real in our experience what is ours through faith in Jesus Christ.

The answer to this question is obvious. The Galatians received the Holy Spirit by accepting Jesus Christ as their Savior. The new birth experience does not come to the legalist. It comes only to those who have accepted Jesus Christ as their Savior. That is why Jesus had to remind Nicodemus that all his performance could not save him. He had to be born from above. In John 3:6, Jesus says:

Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit.

“That which is born of the flesh is flesh. You need, Nicodemus, to be born from above, otherwise you can never enter the kingdom of heaven.” We are born from above only by faith in Jesus Christ.

Now, in verse 3 of Galatians 3, Paul reminds them, “after beginning by means of the Spirit.” Are you so foolish? How can you be so stupid? You began on the platform of justification by faith; you by faith entered under the umbrella of grace and now, having had this wonderful experience of salvation by faith alone in the righteousness of Christ, you turn back to legalism. How stupid can you be? Paul says to the Galatians, “Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh?”

Are you so foolish? After beginning by means of the Spirit, are you now trying to finish by means of the flesh?

What is Paul trying to tell them here? Paul is

saying here that the righteousness we received through faith in Jesus Christ is a perfect, a complete righteousness. We cannot add to it and we cannot improve on it. Paul tells us in Galatians 5:4, the moment we try to do this, we have fallen from grace:

You who are trying to be justified by the law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace.

It is either all of Christ's righteousness or none of it. The moment we try to improve our standing before God by our own performance, we are denying the perfect righteousness of Christ which qualifies us for heaven. Justification is by faith alone.

Then he reminds the Galatians in verse 4:

Have you experienced so much in vain — if it really was in vain?

When the Galatians first accepted the gospel,

they came under persecution. They were opposed by those who rejected the gospel. They were persecuted by the enemies of Jesus Christ. And they were willing to suffer because the joy of salvation was greater than all the suffering that they were involved in through the persecution they came under. Now Paul is reminding them, “You suffered so greatly. You were willing to give up so much for this gospel. What has happened now? Why have you changed your mind?” Then, in verse 5 he says:

So again I ask, does God give you his Spirit and work miracles among you by the works of the law, or by your believing what you heard?

The Judaizers, the Jewish Christians, had convinced the Galatians that salvation by faith alone is not enough. They had to add their own performance to that. They had to be circumcised. They had to do good works and they had to keep the law. But, Paul is saying, “Tell me, were you accepted as a child of God? Were you justified by faith alone or by faith plus some other things that

you added to your performance?” The answer is obvious. Man is justified by faith alone. There is nothing we can add to our salvation. Thank God for that because all our righteousness, Isaiah says in chapter 64, verse 6, is like filthy rags:

All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags; we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away.

Why? Because it is polluted with self. The only righteousness that qualifies us for heaven is the righteousness of Christ. And that righteousness is made effective by faith alone, not by faith plus something else.

Having reminded them of their own personal experience when they first accepted the gospel, Paul now turns his attention to Abraham in verse 6 of Galatians 3:

So also Abraham “believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.”

Why Abraham? Remember, the Judaizers were Jews. To them, Abraham was their father and, to the Jews, the father meant not only somebody who created or produced them but also somebody who was their prototype, their example. He is reminding these Galatian Christians, who were Gentiles, that even the father of the Jews, who also happens to be the father of all who believe, was saved by faith alone. Paul quotes Genesis 15:6 where we are told so clearly that Abraham believed God and it was accounted to him for righteousness:

Abram believed the Lord, and he credited it to him as righteousness.

In verse 7 [of Galatians 3], he adds:

Understand, then, that those who have faith are children of Abraham.

Then he quotes the Old Testament Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the nations, not just the Jews, but the human race, the Gentiles

included, by faith alone (verse 8):

Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: “All nations will be blessed through you.”

In Romans 4:13-14, the great apostle Paul speaks about Abraham as the father of all who believe:

It was not through the law that Abraham and his offspring received the promise that he would be heir of the world, but through the righteousness that comes by faith. For if those who depend on the law are heirs, faith means nothing and the promise is worthless...

The moment we add our own performance to our salvation, then we are denying that we are saved by grace alone. Romans 4:15:

...because the law brings wrath. And where there is no law there is no transgression.

The law does not save us; it condemns. It does the very opposite of what the gospel does because the law constantly demands perfect obedience, from a person who is to be saved through the law. Paul adds, in verse 16:

Therefore, the promise comes by faith, so that it may be by grace and may be guaranteed to all Abraham's offspring...

Then he defines what he means by "all Abraham's offspring" or all the descendants of Abraham:

...to all Abraham's offspring — not only to those who are of the law [the Jews, who are the physical descendants of Abraham] but also to those who have the faith of Abraham. He is the father of us all.

"Us all" means all the believers, Jews and Gentiles. In what sense is Abraham our father? He brings this out in verses 17-18:

As it is written: “I have made you a father of many nations.” He is our father in the sight of God, in whom he believed — the God who gives life to the dead and calls into being things that were not. Against all hope, Abraham in hope believed and so became the father of many nations, just as it had been said to him, “So shall your offspring be.”

The context in which Paul makes this statement is the birth of Isaac. God had promised Abraham a son when he was 75 years old. Abraham believed and was counted righteous. But God waited until it was impossible for Sara to have a child the normal way. God waited almost 25 years until Sara had passed the age of childbearing. He waited until it was impossible for Abraham himself to produce a child through Sara because she had now passed the age of childbearing.

Then God came to Abraham and said, “Do you believe that I can give you a child?” Against hope, against all scientific evidence, against all human rationale, Abraham believed because faith is taking

God at His Word. Faith is not based on our feelings or our performance or what the scientific method tells us. Faith is based on the Word of God. Faith is taking God at His Word and, when God justifies a sinner through faith in Jesus Christ, the believer believes that he stands righteous in Christ even though he may not feel righteous. Paul is saying this is how Abraham was justified. He is the prototype of all believers. In Galatians 3:7, speaking to the Galatians, Paul says:

Understand, then, that those who have faith are children of Abraham.

This is how we today, are justified, by faith alone in Jesus Christ.

Paul continues in Galatians 3:8-9:

Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: “All nations will be blessed through you.” So those who rely on faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith.

God promised Abraham that one of his children would be the Messiah and, in chapter 4 of Galatians, Paul defined that seed, singular, as Christ. Through Him, not only the Jews but the whole human race, will be saved. This salvation is made effective by faith alone. So then, those who are of faith, are blessed along with believing Abraham. When we study Galatians 3:27-29, we will discover that there is only one way God saved mankind. Whether a person lived in Old Testament times, or in New Testament times, whether a male or a female, a Jew or a Gentile, educated or uneducated, there is only one way that mankind is saved. There is only one way we can be the spiritual descendants of Abraham. Paul says in Galatians 3:26:

So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith....

Isn't that beautiful? We are all children of God. Yes, through the Fall, we became the children of the devil, but, through grace, we have

become children of God. This becomes a reality the moment you believe in Jesus Christ as your Savior.

Paul adds in verse 27:

...for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.

This is why Jesus in Mark 16:15-16 commissioned the disciples:

He said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.”

Paul is reminding the Christians that as many of us who were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. We have become one with Christ. His life becomes our life. His death becomes our death. His burial becomes our burial and His resurrection becomes our resurrection. Galatians 3:28:

There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

Then, in verse 29, we read these words:

If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

The mistake the Jews made was in believing that the physical descendants or the literal descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob constitute Israel or God's people. But Paul makes it clear in Romans 9 and here in Galatians 3, that it is having the faith of Abraham which makes a true Israelite. In Romans 9, a true Israelite is one who has the faith of Abraham, who has experienced the new birth as Isaac who was born from above and whose faith endures to the end like Jacob when his name was changed from Jacob, "the schemer," to Israel, the "one who prevailed."

What is Paul saying here? He is saying to the

Galatians how absolutely foolish they are to turn from the pure gospel of grace alone to salvation by faith plus works. This is something we must not do. There is no way that we can marry these two methods of salvation. It is either salvation by grace alone through faith in Jesus Christ or salvation by our performance, by works, by keeping the law, by being circumcised. We can only have one or the other. We cannot mix the two.

In concluding, we will examine four reasons why we cannot mix the two methods of salvation, because the moment we do, we are in trouble. Salvation is by grace alone.

1. The gospel is good news only to those who have no confidence in themselves and are resting entirely in Jesus Christ. The moment we add our own works, we are no longer depending on Christ. We are depending partly on Christ and partly on ourselves and this is the problem of the Galatian Christians. It is a problem that we must avoid.

2. The reason so many Christians fall into this

trap of “I plus Christ” is because they project human love to God and human love is reciprocal. In other words, “I love you only if you love me.” That is not the basis of our salvation. Our salvation is based on God’s unconditional love.

3. The flesh is proud. It is egocentric and, therefore, wants to make some contribution towards salvation. We have to admit that we are spiritual beggars in order for us to be saved by grace alone. We cannot add our works.

4. Finally, mankind is by nature a legalist. We are born with a nature that naturally wants to save ourselves through our performance. The book of Galatians is crucial because the problem of partly by grace and partly by works is one that did not only exist in Paul’s day. It is a problem today among many Christians.

It is my prayer that you will realize that you cannot mix the two methods of salvation, that you will accept Jesus Christ as your Savior and nothing else, for Jesus said you shall know the truth and the

truth shall make you free. By the word “Truth,” He meant Himself. John 8:36 says:

So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.

It is my prayer that not only have you been set free in Jesus Christ, but that it is your determined purpose that nothing, no human being, no philosophy will ever sidetrack you from this wonderful truth of salvation by grace alone which is made effective by faith in Jesus Christ.

Chapter 6

The True and False Gospel

Galatians 3:10-14

Throughout chapters one and two of Galatians, Paul strongly defended the divine origin of his apostolic calling and the gospel of grace he preached, both of which had come under fire from the Judaizers.

Then, in chapter three, verses 1 to 9, which is what we covered in our last study, Paul points out to the Galatians how stupid they were in turning their backs to the gospel of grace alone and returning to a subtle form of legalism: salvation partly by grace and partly by their performance. He reminds them that Abraham, not the Judaizers, is the true father of the Jews. He is the true prototype of salvation for all men and he was justified by faith alone and nothing else.

Now, in verses 10 to 14 of Galatians 3, Paul

will contrast the false gospel that the Judaizers were preaching — salvation by faith plus works of the law — or the same thing, salvation by legalism, with the true gospel, which is salvation by faith in Christ alone. This is the fundamental issue Paul is addressing in the whole of the epistle to the Galatians. It is a battle between the true gospel that Paul proclaims and the false gospel the Judaizers were preaching.

As we study this passage, Galatians 3:10-14, it will become absolutely apparent that these two roads to heaven can never meet in partnership for they are two opposite methods of salvation. They totally contradict each other. They are mutually exclusive.

With this in mind, let us start by reading Galatians 3:10-14. What is Paul saying here?

For all who rely on the works of the law are under a curse, as it is written: “Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law.” Clearly no one who relies

on the law is justified before God, because “the righteous will live by faith.” The law is not based on faith; on the contrary, it says, “The person who does these things will live by them.” Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: “Cursed is everyone who is hung on a pole.” He redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus, so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit.

This is a passage full of meaning. “For all who rely on the works of the law are under a curse.” Paul is saying here, “All who rely on observing the law as a means of going to heaven.” The word “rely” means depending on the law or our observance of the law for salvation. The phrase Paul uses is “the works of the law.” It means using the law as a method of salvation. We would call that in English, “legalism.” Such people, Paul says, are under the curse. Why? He quotes Deuteronomy 27:26 and what does that text say? It is part of the book of the law. It says:

“Cursed is anyone who does not uphold the words of this law by carrying them out.” Then all the people shall say, “Amen!”

In other words, if you are trying to be saved through the law, the law demands from you two things:

1. It demands perfect obedience, and
2. This perfect obedience has to be continual.

We fall once and we have failed. That is what happened to Adam and Eve. God placed them in the Garden of Eden and gave them a commandment. The first time Adam and Eve sinned, they came under the curse of the law. If we want to be saved under the law, our performance has to be perfect and continual. As we know, this is impossible. Paul says in verse 11 of Galatians 3:

Clearly no one who relies on the law is justified before God, because “the righteous will live by faith.”

What is the evidence Paul is referring to here?
It is basically two things:

1. It is evident from our own experience, if we are honest with ourselves, that our law-keeping is never perfect, that all of us are coming short in performance when it comes to our own good works.
2. It is evident also from Scripture.

Let me remind you of two statements Paul made in Romans 3 where he concludes dealing with the sin problem. In Romans 3:9, he says:

What shall we conclude then? Do we have any advantage?

The “we” is referring to the Jews and “they” is referring to the Gentiles. His answer (in the rest of that verse) is:

Not at all! For we have already made the charge [or proved] that Jews and Gentiles alike are

all under the power of sin.

In Romans 6:14, the word “under” means “to be ruled by” or “to be dominated by.” This is a term that was used in slavery.

For sin shall no longer be your master, because you are not under the law, but under grace.

Then, to prove his point, Paul quotes from the Old Testament. Let us read two of those quotations.

1. The first is found in Romans 3:10:

As it is written: “There is no one righteous, not even one....”

It is evident from Scripture and from our own personal experience that there is no one who is righteous, not a single person. In 1 John 1:8, John tells us that anyone who says he has no sin is a liar:

If we claim to be without sin, we deceive

ourselves and the truth is not in us.

2. Then in Romans 3, verse 12, the second half, Paul makes this statement:

...There is no one who does good, not even one.

Paul is saying, in Galatians 3:11, it is absolutely evident — both in terms of our subjective experience as well as the Word of God — there is none who has produced perfect obedience. There is only one Man in this world who has ever lived a perfect, sinless life. It is our Lord Jesus Christ and He did it in order that we might be saved.

Paul, talking to the Galatians, using the clear evidence of Scripture, now quotes Habakkuk 2:4. This is in Galatians 3:11, last part:

...The righteous will live by faith.

What Habakkuk actually wrote is:

...But the righteous person will live by his faithfulness....

This is a better translation. The only way we can conquer the grave and obtain eternal life is through faith in Jesus Christ. This text that Paul quotes from Habakkuk 2:4 is Paul's favorite text. This is why he repeats it many times.

Paul tells us in Galatians 3:12:

The law is not based on faith; on the contrary, it says, "The person who does these things will live by them."

What is Paul saying here? If we want to be saved by the law, we can't come to the law and say, "Law, we believe in every single commandment that you have given us." The Jews believed the total writings of the Torah. Many Christians believe the Ten Commandments but the fact that we believe the Ten Commandments or the Torah, the first five books of the Old Testament, does not qualify us for salvation according to the

law method. This is because the law does not save through faith. The law saves through performance. This is why the law method is impossible. Paul tells us in Galatians 2:16 (end part):

...By the works of the law no one will be justified.

He reminded Peter of this when he confronted him on that very crucial moment when Peter left the Gentile table and went to the Jewish table, implying the Gentiles were still looked upon as sinners. No, the moment we believe in Jesus Christ we are no longer looked upon by God as a sinner because, by faith, we can be declared righteous, the righteousness of Christ is imputed to us and His righteousness is perfect. But the moment we try to be saved by the law, all our faith is meaningless because the law doesn't justify us by faith. It justifies us by perfect, persistent, continual obedience.

As far as the law is concerned, every one of us has failed. Paul reminds the Roman believers in

Romans 3:22-23:

There is no difference between Jew and Gentile, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God....

Paul tells the Galatians 3:13, Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law having become a curse for us:

Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: “Cursed is everyone who is hung on a pole.”

If we go back to Romans 3 and read verse 19:

Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God.

Here Paul concludes his discussion on the universal sin problem; he says the whole world, Jews and Gentiles with no exception, stands guilty

or condemned under the law of God.

When God created mankind in Adam and placed him under the law, the moment Adam sinned and the moment we add our own personal sins to Adam's sin, we are under the curse of God. There is no way we can redeem ourselves from that curse. We were born on death row. We were born hopelessly lost so that we could not and cannot save ourselves no matter what we do, no matter where we go. That is our predicament.

But, the unconditional good news of the gospel is that Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law. Then Paul quotes from Deuteronomy 21:23a:

...You must not leave the body hanging on the pole overnight. Be sure to bury it that same day, because anyone who is hung on a pole is under God's curse.

These are important words. To understand this statement, we need to look at the cross of Christ. John 19:5-6a:

When Jesus came out wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe, Pilate said to them, “Here is the man!” [In other words, “Is this not enough?”]

As soon as the chief priests and their officials saw him, they shouted, “Crucify! Crucify!”

This is really a strange demand from the Jews because crucifixion was not practiced by the Jews. The cross was invented by the Phoenicians about 600 years before Christ and was adopted by the Egyptians. The Romans took it from the Egyptians and refined it, using it to execute their runaway slaves and their worst criminals. The Jews never practiced crucifixion. It was not a Jewish method. But here, we find the Jews crying out to Pilate, “Crucify Him!” What did they have in mind when they cried out in unison, “Crucify Him”? They had to give a reason which we find in John 19:6b-7:

But Pilate answered, “You take him and crucify him. As for me, I find no basis for a charge against

him.”

The Jewish leaders insisted, “We have a law, and according to that law he must die, because he claimed to be the Son of God.”

The Jews answered Pilate, who represented Rome, who found no fault in Jesus, who found no reason why Jesus should be crucified. This is what the Jews said, “We have a law and, according to our law, he ought to die because he made himself the Son of God.”

The law the Jews were referring to was the law of blasphemy. It is found in Leviticus 24:16:

Say to the Israelites: Anyone who curses their God will be held responsible; anyone who blasphemes the name of the Lord is to be put to death. The entire assembly must stone them. Whether foreigner or native-born, when they blaspheme the Name they are to be put to death.

It is extremely important that we Christians read this law. It is true the law demands death for blasphemy, but it also stipulates how that person is to die. It is by stoning.

Did the Jews, who rejected Jesus as the Messiah and as the Son of God, who believed that His claim to be equal with the Father was blasphemy, know that the law of blasphemy also stipulated stoning as the method of execution? And the answer is yes, they certainly knew it. We turn to John 10 to read the words of Jesus Christ in verse 30, where Jesus said:

I and the Father are one.

To the unbelieving Jews, this was blasphemy. We read in John 10:31:

Again his Jewish opponents picked up stones to stone him....

This means it was not the first time they did this. They took up stones “again” to stone Him

because they believed that this Man was a blasphemer and they were obeying a law that God had given them.

The question remains, why did the Jews cry out, “Crucify Him”? They had a reason, which is given to us by Paul where he quotes Deuteronomy 21:23:

...You must not leave the body hanging on the pole overnight. Be sure to bury it that same day, because anyone who is hung on a pole is under God’s curse. You must not desecrate the land the Lord your God is giving you as an inheritance.

The Jews did not believe in an immortal soul. This was a Greek concept. The Jews believed that death was good-bye to life. If a Jew committed a sin that was worthy of death and the judge sentenced him to death, he could go on his knees before he was executed by stoning and ask Yahweh to forgive him. Forgiveness was available because of the daily — morning and evening — sacrifices in the Sanctuary services. But, if the judge insisted

that this criminal was to be hung on a tree, this meant to the Jews the irrevocable curse of God. It meant good-bye to life forever. It meant what we would call in the New Testament, the unpardonable sin. So, when the Jews cried, “Crucify Him!” they had this reason in mind because, in the days of Christ, crucifixion, to the Jews, was synonymous with hanging on a tree [or pole].

This is the reason that, when the disciples preached the gospel to the Jews in the early history of the Christian church, often they would not use the word “cross.” They would use the word “tree.” In many texts, the word “tree” is used in the original text. For example, in Acts 5:30:

The God of our ancestors raised Jesus from the dead — whom you killed by hanging him on a cross.

Acts 10:39:

We are witnesses of everything he did in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They killed

him by hanging him on a cross....

Acts 13:29:

When they had carried out all that was written about him, they took him down from the cross and laid him in a tomb.

1 Peter 2:24:

“He himself bore our sins” in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; “by his wounds you have been healed.”

These statements were made to their fellow Jews. Why? Because, crucifixion was identified with hanging on a tree. So when the Jews cried out, “Crucify Him!” they were demanding not only that this Man should be put to death, but, more than that, they were demanding that God should curse this Man for being a blasphemer.

In John 7:30, and in John 8:20, we read that the

times the Jews tried to kill Jesus, they failed because His hour had not yet come:

At this they tried to seize him, but no one laid a hand on him, because his hour had not yet come.

He spoke these words while teaching in the temple courts near the place where the offerings were put. Yet no one seized him, because his hour had not yet come.

We read in Luke 22:53 Jesus' words to the angry mob, when He was taken captive in Gethsemane:

Every day I was with you in the temple courts, and you did not lay a hand on me. But this is your hour — when darkness reigns.

God removed His protection at Gethsemane so that the Jews could crucify the Son of God. To the Jews, it meant the curse of God. Isaiah 53:4 says:

Surely he took up our pain and bore our

suffering, yet we considered him punished by God, stricken by him, and afflicted.

But the question is, “Did God allow Jesus to be cursed for blasphemy?” The answer is, “No.” The reason God allowed Jesus to be crucified is explained to us in Romans 8:31-32:

What, then, shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all — how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?

God brought the curse of sin that belongs to us to fall upon Jesus Christ, not the sin of Jesus because He had none, but your sins and mine. When Jesus died on the cross, it wasn't just the physical torture of the cross that He suffered. One writer tells us that He hardly felt the physical torture of the cross because there was something else He was suffering. It was the irrevocable curse of God. It is this and not the physical torture of the cross that makes the death of Christ the supreme

sacrifice.

Jesus was tasting death for every man.
Hebrews 2:9:

But we do see Jesus, who was made lower than the angels for a little while, now crowned with glory and honor because he suffered death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.

Jesus, by His own death, was abolishing death and bringing immortality and life through the gospel. 2 Timothy 1:10:

...But it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior, Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.

That which makes the cross of Christ the supreme sacrifice is not the torture of the crucifixion. It is the curse of God that was placed upon Jesus Christ as our Sin-Bearer.

As Jesus hung on the cross, He could not see through the portals of the tomb. Hope did not present to Him a resurrection. He felt that sin was so offensive that the separation was to be eternal. This is why He cried out in agony (Matthew 27:46):

About three in the afternoon Jesus cried out in a loud voice, “Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?” (which means “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”).

Jesus pleaded in Gethsemane, sweating blood, “Father, if it is possible, remove the cup.” Matthew 26:39:

Going a little farther, he fell with his face to the ground and prayed, “My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will.”

The cup wasn't the cross. The cup was the irrevocable curse of God. It was the wrath of God

poured upon Him without any mixture of mercy. This is the supreme sacrifice. It is this which redeems us from the curse of the law. He became a curse for us. He was made a curse for us there on the cross by His own Father. It was not because the Father had turned against Jesus, but because the Father so loved the world that He gave us His only begotten Son [John 3:16].

Jesus hung on the cross, abandoned by the Father. Remember, Jesus was depending on the Father for the resurrection. He said more than once (John 5:30a):

By myself I can do nothing....

Jesus was raised by the Father but now on the cross, the Father had forsaken Him, had abandoned Him. The devil came to Him three times. We will find this in Luke 23:35-39:

The people stood watching, and the rulers even sneered at him. They said, “He saved others; let him save himself if he is God’s Messiah, the

Chosen One.”

The soldiers also came up and mocked him. They offered him wine vinegar and said, “If you are the king of the Jews, save yourself.”

There was a written notice above him, which read: **THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS.**

One of the criminals who hung there hurled insults at him: “Aren’t you the Messiah? Save yourself and us!”

Three times, on the cross, the devil came to Him, once through the soldiers, once through the priests, and once through the thief on the left-hand side, “Come down and save Yourself. Stop being a fool. These people are mocking You. They have crucified You. Why are You laying down Your life for them?” But on the cross, Jesus revealed a most significant truth. He could come down and save Himself but He could not save Himself and the world at the same time. He had to make a choice and He chose, “I will die that they might

live.” Paul tells us in Romans 5:8 God demonstrated His self-emptying love for us, His agape love for us, in that Jesus died for us:

But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

On the cross, Jesus demonstrated that He loves us more than He loves Himself. This is the God we worship. This is Jesus Christ, the Savior of all mankind. He redeemed us from the curse of the law. Paul tells us in Romans 10:4, Christ is the end, the completion of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes:

Christ is the culmination of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes.

Anyone who rejects this gospel, anyone who turns his back to this wonderful truth and tries to redeem himself by his performance really deserves to be called stupid.

Paul says in Galatians 3:14:

He redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles [us] through Christ Jesus, so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit.

Don't let any human being, any philosopher, any teaching — no matter how convincing it may be to your rationale — convince you that you are saved partly by grace and partly by what you do. No, the New Testament is clear. Paul is absolutely clear, you are saved by grace alone. You are saved by the doing and dying of Jesus Christ and nothing else. As long as you believe in Jesus Christ as your Savior, your salvation is guaranteed. It is assured. But the day you turn your back to this wonderful truth, Paul will tell you in Galatians 5:4:

You who are trying to be justified by the law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace.

It is my prayer that you not only believe in Jesus Christ, but that your faith will endure unto the end, that you will let no one take you out of Christ through unbelief.

May God bless you that you and I will be justified by faith now and to our dying day.

Chapter 7

Law Versus Promise

Galatians 3:15-29

In our last study, which was Galatians 3:10-14, we looked at Paul's scriptural argument proving from the Old Testament that God saves sinners through faith in Christ alone and our law-keeping or good works does not contribute one iota towards our salvation.

We will consider Paul's logical argument in which he proves, using Jewish logic, that we are saved by God's promise and not the law. This argument begins with Galatians 3:15-29. Since this is a rather involved argument which requires an understanding of the Jewish mind, we shall analyze this passage in three stages, verses 15 to 18, dealing with the changeless promise of God. Then, in verses 19 to 25, Paul tells us the purpose of the law. Finally, in verses 26 to 29, he discusses sons and daughters and heirs of the kingdom of

God.

With this in mind, let us now look at the first section, which is Galatians 3:15-18. This passage has very important lessons for us today:

Brothers and sisters, let me take an example from everyday life. Just as no one can set aside or add to a human covenant that has been duly established, so it is in this case. The promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. Scripture does not say “and to seeds,” meaning many people, but “and to your seed,” meaning one person, who is Christ. What I mean is this: The law, introduced 430 years later, does not set aside the covenant previously established by God and thus do away with the promise. For if the inheritance depends on the law, then it no longer depends on the promise; but God in his grace gave it to Abraham through a promise.

What is Paul trying to prove here? First, he takes the covenant [or “will,” in some translations] that was used in the days of Paul as a method of

explaining God's promise to man. In verse 15 he says:

Brothers and sisters, let me take an example from everyday life. Just as no one can set aside or add to a human covenant that has been duly established, so it is in this case.

According to Greek culture or Greek custom in Paul's day, once a covenant or will was made and signed, it could not be changed.

Now, taking this as a method or model, Paul tells the Galatians in verse 16, that God made a will or a promise to Abraham. That promise was that [Genesis 22:18]:

...And through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed....

Galatians 3:16a:

The promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed....

The word “seed” in the promise is in the singular. This may not make sense to our Western way of thinking but, in the Jewish concept, in the Jewish way of understanding, the word “seed” had a corporate significance. Just like the word “Adam” has a collective significance and includes the whole human race, so, also, Paul is telling the Galatians that the word “seed” here had a corporate significance affecting the whole human race but based on one person. This one Person is Jesus Christ. He makes that clear in the last part of verse 16:

Scripture does not say “and to seeds,” meaning many people, but “and to your seed,” meaning one person, who is Christ.

God created all men in one man, so that when Adam sinned, the condemnation of the law or the condemnation of death came upon all men. Likewise as we see in Romans 5, verses 12 to 21, when Christ obeyed, justification of life came to all men:

Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all people, because all sinned —

To be sure, sin was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not charged against anyone's account where there is no law. Nevertheless, death reigned from the time of Adam to the time of Moses, even over those who did not sin by breaking a command, as did Adam, who is a pattern of the one to come.

But the gift is not like the trespass. For if the many died by the trespass of the one man, how much more did God's grace and the gift that came by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, overflow to the many! Nor can the gift of God be compared with the result of one man's sin: The judgment followed one sin and brought condemnation, but the gift followed many trespasses and brought justification. For if, by the trespass of the one man, death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive God's abundant

provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ!

Consequently, just as one trespass resulted in condemnation for all people, so also one righteous act resulted in justification and life for all people. For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous.

The law was brought in so that the trespass might increase. But where sin increased, grace increased all the more, so that, just as sin reigned in death, so also grace might reign through righteousness to bring eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

So when Christ obeyed, justification of life came to all men. Why? Because Jesus, the seed of Abraham, was the second Adam, the second mankind. He was not one man among many men but the whole human race was gathered up together

in Him. This is why Paul, in Corinthians, calls Him the second, or last, Adam. 1 Corinthians 15:45:

So it is written: “The first man Adam became a living being”; the last Adam, a life-giving spirit.

In verse 17 of chapter 3, Paul tells the Galatians the promise God had made to Abraham is that, in this seed of Abraham, which is Christ, the whole world will be blessed. In verse 17, he says this promise could not be annulled, could not be changed or done away with, through the law which was given 430 years after God had made the promise to Abraham:

What I mean is this: The law, introduced 430 years later, does not set aside the covenant previously established by God and thus do away with the promise.

What is Paul saying here? He says that the law given through Moses did not change the promise in any way. If we look at salvation through the law

and salvation through grace, which is through the promise of God, as shown in our last two studies, there are two opposite systems of salvation. The two systems can never be mixed together. The law says, “Thou shalt or thou shalt not, in order to be saved.” The promise of God says, “I shall save you in spite of the fact that you are a sinner.” The law saves us by our performance, by our good deeds which have to be perfect. The promise of God saves us through God’s work in Christ and we make no contribution to it except to receive it by faith.

Thirdly, salvation through law is a religion that is based on human salvation, human religion. All non-Christian religions are based on man’s performance. Unlike this, God’s way of saving mankind, which is through grace, which is through the promise, is entirely a gift to mankind. Paul is saying that God, giving the law 430 years after He gave the promise to Abraham, could not annul or change the promise because the promise was equivalent to a will that is unchangeable.

In verse 18, Paul tells the Galatians:

For if the inheritance depends on the law, then it no longer depends on the promise; but God in his grace gave it to Abraham through a promise.

The moment we try and add the law as a requirement for salvation, it ceases to be a promise. But God gave Abraham the promise of salvation as a will which the law, given to the human race 430 years later, could not change or annul. If mankind is saved entirely by the promise of God made to Abraham, then why did He give the law 430 years later? Did God come to Moses and say to Moses, “By the way, when I gave the promise of salvation to Abraham, I totally forgot a very important item. I forgot to give him the law. So Moses, I am giving the law to you to make up what I failed to give to Abraham.” Is this what God said to Moses? No. God never told Moses that He was adding an extra requirement to His promise for salvation.

The question still remains: why then, did God give the law through Moses 430 years after He

promised by a will that He would save all men through one of Abraham's seed which of course, is Jesus Christ? Read the question and answer Paul gives as we turn to the second section of our study, the purpose of the law, Galatians 3:19-25. We will read this passage first and then we will look at it in detail:

Why, then, was the law given at all? It was added because of transgressions until the Seed to whom the promise referred had come. The law was given through angels and entrusted to a mediator. A mediator, however, implies more than one party; but God is one.

Is the law, therefore, opposed to the promises of God? Absolutely not! For if a law had been given that could impart life, then righteousness would certainly have come by the law. But Scripture has locked up everything under the control of sin, so that what was promised, being given through faith in Jesus Christ, might be given to those who believe.

Before the coming of this faith, we were held in custody under the law, locked up until the faith that was to come would be revealed. So the law was our guardian until Christ came that we might be justified by faith. Now that this faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian.

What is Paul saying in this rather difficult passage. First, he is asking a question: What purpose then, does the law serve? Why did God add the law 430 years after He promised salvation to Abraham as a gift? The answer is it was added because of transgression. Notice the word for “sin” that Paul chose here in the Old Testament. There are actually twelve words but only three basic words:

1. Sin. The first word is “sin” which simply means missing the mark, coming short of the glory of God. Paul brings this out in Romans 3:23:

...For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God....

2. Iniquity. The word “iniquity” primarily has to do with our condition, because the word iniquity in Hebrew means to be crooked or bent. When Isaiah tells us [Isaiah 53:6]:

We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

He is talking of a condition. David, for example, in Psalms 51:5, tells us that he was shapen in iniquity from his mother’s womb:

Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me.

Iniquity is our selfish bent, which is the basis of our sinful nature.

3. Transgression. The word “transgression” simply means a deliberate violation of a law. The prerequisite for transgression is a knowledge of the law. From Adam to Moses, the human race was sinning. Paul brings this out in Romans 5:13:

To be sure, sin was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not charged against anyone's account where there is no law.

But the moment God gave the law through Moses, sin became a transgression. Sin became a willful, deliberate violation of the law.

The law or the giving of the law did not solve our sin problem. It made it worse. For the law now convinces us that we deserve nothing but death. Then in verse 20, he says:

A mediator, however, implies more than one party; but God is one.

This is a difficult statement so we need to understand what Paul is saying here.

The word "covenant" can be used in two ways. In the Greek, we have two separate words that can be translated by the word "covenant" in English. What is the difference? It is between a will and a

contract. A will is made by one person but may affect many. A contract is made between two persons. The giving of the law is like a contract. God gave the law and the Jews said, “All that you have said we will do.” Exodus 24:3:

When Moses went and told the people all the Lord’s words and laws, they responded with one voice, “Everything the Lord has said we will do.”

But the reason God gave the law, says Paul in Galatians 3:21 onwards, is not to save us, not a new method of salvation but to convince us that we are sinners in need of a Savior.

Look at verses 21 and 22:

Is the law, therefore, opposed to the promises of God? Absolutely not! For if a law had been given that could impart life, then righteousness would certainly have come by the law. But Scripture has locked up everything under the control of sin, so that what was promised, being given through faith in Jesus Christ, might be given

to those who believe.

Did God change His mind from a promise to a contract? Did God change the will that He made to Abraham into a contract when He gave the law to Moses? The answer is, “Certainly not!” For if God had intended man to be saved through a law, for if there had been a law given through which we could have life, then there would be no need of a promise. But the reason God gave the law is to confine all human beings under sin that the promise by faith in Christ might be given to those who believe. In other words, the giving of the law convinces man that he is a sinner in need of a Savior and, therefore, makes the gospel more desirable.

Sin is not only transgression of the law but sin is a deceiver. Sin comes to us and tells us that we are not that bad but if we build up our willpower we can do something that can cause us to be saved. Sin wants us to look at God eye to eye. “God, You give us the rule; we’ll keep it and then, in turn, You give us life.” But when we realize what the law

demands in human nature, perfect obedience in thought, word, and deed, then we realize that by the works of the law, no one can be justified before God.

God gave the law to convince the human race that they are prisoners to sin and in need of a Savior. Now we come to this wonderful statement in verse 23:

Before the coming of this faith....

There is a word missing in this statement in some translations that, unfortunately, gives a wrong meaning. The word “faith” in the original is preceded by the definite article “the” or “this.” Paul really wrote, “Before the faith came.” This gives us a completely different meaning of the word “faith.” Without the definite article, the word “faith” could mean the believer’s faith but Paul is not discussing the believer’s faith here. He is saying, “Before the faith,” the source or the basis of our faith which is Jesus Christ. Verse 23 says,

that before Christ, the Seed, came, we were kept under God by the law, kept for the faith which would afterward be revealed:

Before the coming of this faith, we were held in custody under the law, locked up until the faith that was to come would be revealed.

When God gave the law to Moses or through Moses, the human race now became guilty of transgression. Before the law was given, sin was not accountable. Paul brings this out clearly in Romans 5:13:

To be sure, sin was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not charged against anyone's account where there is no law.

Paul is saying that, where there is no law, God has no right to legally, lawfully accuse us of sin; but the moment God gave the law, we stood inexcusable. The law condemned the whole human race, kept us in prison, kept us in death row until Christ came and liberated us.

Historically, the whole human race was under condemnation, legally, lawfully, from Moses until Christ came. Therefore, Paul says in verse 24 that the law was our guardian or, in some translations, tutor. Galatians 3:24-25:

So the law was our guardian until Christ came that we might be justified by faith. Now that this faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian.

“Tutor” is not the best translation. Even schoolmaster is not the best word. The word Paul used in Greek had a special meaning that we do not use today. This word referred to a trusted slave the master used to discipline and look after his child. Because in those days there were no schools, education was based on a private tutor. The trusted slave would hold the young child’s hand and take him to the home of the tutor. This child had no way of escaping until the slave brought him to the tutor’s house. Then and then only was he released. Paul is saying here that the law acted like our guardian or like the policeman who held us in his

grip with no escape until Christ came to the scene so that we might be justified by faith in the promise of God.

From Adam to Christ, salvation was based on a promise. Abraham was saved by a promise. So was Noah. To make the promise more meaningful, God gave the law through Moses. The law did not save us. The law simply convinces us that we are sinners. The law made our sins a legal offense which is what the word transgression means. Actually, the giving of the law made our situation far worse than it was before God gave the law.

But God had a purpose in this. The purpose was that the gift of the promise of salvation in Jesus Christ would become more desirable, more meaningful to us. For example, if you offer a plate of food to somebody who just came from a banquet, that plate of food would become meaningless to this person. But maybe this person hadn't eaten for the last three days. He was starving and you offered him a plate of food. He would accept it with deep gratitude. It is the same

here. God gave the law to show us that we are one hundred percent sinners. We are sinners by nature. We are sinners by performance. We are sinners by thought. Paul told the Galatians in chapter 2, verse 16, that by the works of the law no human being will ever make it to heaven. The law simply put us in death row. The law locked us up in prison with no hope of escape until Christ came. Galatians 2:16:

...Know that a person is not justified by the works of the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law, because by the works of the law no one will be justified.

When Christ came and perfectly satisfied the demands of the law by His life and His death, when Christ came and perfectly met the demands of the law by His doing and the justice of the law by His dying, He redeemed all mankind. That is the promise of God; this is salvation by grace. This salvation is made effective by faith alone and

nothing else.

Paul concludes this section in Galatians 3:25:

Now that this faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian.

After Christ came historically, the human race is no longer under the law because of the fact that now there is another umbrella, another platform by which man is saved and that is, under grace. This doesn't mean that every human being is born under grace automatically. Here, in this section, Paul is dealing with the objective facts of the gospel. And the objective fact of the gospel is that God so loved the world that He gave us His only begotten Son. This is God's gift to mankind. But like any other gift, it cannot be enjoyed, it cannot bring us a blessing, until we receive it. The way we receive the gift of God is not by doing something but by believing, by faith in Jesus Christ. The moment we believe in Jesus Christ, we have passed from condemnation to justification, from death to life. This is what Jesus told His hearers in John 5:24:

“Very truly I tell you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be judged but has crossed over from death to life.”

Paul addresses the Galatian believers who are Christians, who were baptized already in Christ but who were sidetracked from the gospel through the false teaching of the Judaizers. Paul tells them, after proving that we are saved by grace alone, after showing the Galatians the purpose of the law, in Galatians 3:26-29 with these words:

So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.

What a wonderful statement!

Remember, Jesus, in the New Testament, is referred to as the Son of God. By joining Himself to the corporate human race and rewriting our history, He gave us the privilege of becoming sons and daughters of God by uniting us with Him through faith. Paul is saying in verse 26 that all believers, by their faith union in Christ, have become sons of God. John, in his epistle, 1 John 3:1a, says:

See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!

Faith is not simply a mental assent to truth. Faith is identifying ourselves with Jesus Christ and Him crucified. At the incarnation, God put all men into Christ so that He became the second Adam. By faith, we identify ourselves with Christ and His holy history. This is what happens at our baptism. We read in Galatians 3:27:

...For all of you who were baptized into Christ

have clothed yourselves with Christ.

Notice, baptism is always into Christ. Paul brings this out clearly in Romans 6:3-5 where he tells them that our baptism into Christ is not in any vague manner but we are baptized into Christ's death:

Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly also be united with him in a resurrection like his.

His death becomes our death. His burial becomes our burial. His resurrection becomes our resurrection. In the New Testament times, in the early Christian church, baptism was always by immersion which beautifully portrays the truth of baptism. This is our identification with Jesus

Christ crucified, buried, and resurrected.

Having said this in verse 27, Paul tells us in verse 28, the moment you and I have become Christians, have been baptized into Christ, all distinctions go:

There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

In the Christian church there should be no distinction between Jew or Gentile, between slave or master, between male or female because in Christ we are all one. There is no distinction of race, no distinction of rank, no distinction of sex because in Christianity, we are one body. The Head is Jesus Christ; the church is the body. If we have become one with Christ, we have joined ourselves to the seed of Abraham through whom God promised salvation. The conclusion in Galatians 3:29 is:

If you belong to Christ, then you are

Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

It is my prayer that you will accept this only method of salvation, the promise of God made to Abraham, realized in Jesus Christ and made effective in your life through faith alone. May this be your experience. May this be the platform on which you stand.

Chapter 8

From Slaves to Sons

Galatians 4:1-11

What I am saying is that as long as an heir is underage, he is no different from a slave, although he owns the whole estate. The heir is subject to guardians and trustees until the time set by his father. So also, when we were underage, we were in slavery under the elemental spiritual forces of the world. But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship. Because you are his sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, “Abba, Father.” So you are no longer a slave, but God’s child; and since you are his child, God has made you also an heir.

Formerly, when you did not know God, you were slaves to those who by nature are not gods. But now that you know God — or rather are

known by God — how is it that you are turning back to those weak and miserable forces? Do you wish to be enslaved by them all over again? You are observing special days and months and seasons and years! I fear for you, that somehow I have wasted my efforts on you.

This study, Galatians 4:1-11, is really a continuation of our last study, which was Galatians 3:15-29. Let us review what we learned.

God came to Abraham and promised him salvation for all mankind through His seed (singular) which Paul identifies as Christ. Then, 430 years after making this promise, God gave the law to the human race through Moses. The law was existing from the beginning, otherwise sin would not exist from the beginning. But it was existing in an implicit manner in the hearts of men, that is, in their consciences. Paul brings this out clearly in Romans 2. But, when God handed the law in this explicit written form, to Moses, sin no longer was just missing the mark. It became transgression or a legal offense. This meant that,

from Moses onwards, mankind stood condemned, not only in Adam, but mankind was also guilty of their own personal sins. In other words, the giving of the law made the human race legally accountable or under the curse of the law with the only hope of escape from death being the coming of Christ some 1,500 years later.

Paul compares this historical period from Moses to Christ, the period under law, with that of a child of a nobleman under the discipline of an entrusted slave. According to Roman practice, a child of a wealthy man who was one day to inherit the wealth of his father, from the time he was a toddler until he reached the legal age that the father set, was kept under the discipline of an entrusted slave. This legal age of liberation was anything between 14 to 17 years old. The date that the father set was called *liberlia*. When this date arrived, when the toddler had reached maturity, not only was he released from the discipline of the entrusted slave, but the father would hold a tremendous banquet in honor of his son, place a special gown over him called the *toga* and, from

then onwards, this man was no longer under the discipline of the slave but was a free man.

Paul compares this child under discipline with the human race under the law from Moses to Christ. In Galatians 4, especially the first seven verses, he is telling us that we, as human beings, were no different than this child under the discipline of a slave during that period.

Having reviewed this, we now look at what Paul is saying in Galatians 4:1-7. Our study goes to verse 11, but we will divide it in two parts. In verses 1-7, Paul is talking about how we moved from slaves to sons when Christ came and liberated us from under the law. Galatians 4:1-7:

What I am saying is that as long as an heir is underage, he is no different from a slave, although he owns the whole estate. The heir is subject to guardians and trustees until the time set by his father. So also, when we were underage, we were in slavery under the elemental spiritual forces of the world. But when the set time had fully come,

God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship. Because you are his sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, “Abba, Father.” So you are no longer a slave, but God’s child; and since you are his child, God has made you also an heir.

This is a wonderful passage. Let’s study it step by step.

The first two verses are describing the Roman practice. Paul is saying: “Now I say that the heir, as long as he is a child, does not differ at all from a slave though he is master of all.” A child of a rich man was, one day, to inherit all that belonged to his father. In actual fact, this child is basically a wealthy child but as long as he is a child he is placed under the discipline of an entrusted slave, which means that he has no more freedom than the slave himself. He is under rulership; he is to do everything that the slave tells him to do. The slave has authority to punish the child, to discipline the child if he disobeys.

This toddler, from the time he is handed over to the slave to the time that he is set free by the father, is no different than the slave. The age this child reaches, which the father has appointed, could be anything between 14 to 17 years old. The date or age was not set by the state but by the father. The father would decide beforehand, “At this age, on your 14th (or your 17th) birthday, you shall be liberated from under that slave.” When that date arrived, there was a great party that was given in honor of that child. He put on the toga, this gown that symbolized his newfound freedom and no longer was he under the discipline of that slave.

Using this Roman practice, Paul tells us in Galatians 4:4:

But when the set time had fully come [the appointed time that God promised Abraham], God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law....

Paul is telling us that, in the incarnation, God

did something very special. He took the divine life of His Son and the corporate life of the human race and united these two in the womb of Mary. In the womb of Mary, Jesus (the Son of God) and the human race were joined together in one Person and Jesus became one of us. That is why He is called Emmanuel, "God with us." This did not save us. This did not redeem us from under the law but this qualified Jesus to be our Substitute.

One of the most difficult problems we face in presenting the gospel to the non-Christian world, which is approximately seventy percent of the world's population, is the ethical issue of the gospel, a problem that existed all through the Christian era and especially since the Reformation.

The ethical issue of the gospel is: How can one Man be the Savior of all men? Or still more important: How can an innocent Man, Jesus Christ, bear the guilt and punishment of the guilty human race? No law, God's or man's, allows guilt and punishment to be transferred from the guilty to the innocent. God made that clear in Deuteronomy

24:16:

Parents are not to be put to death for their children, nor children put to death for their parents; each will die for their own sin.

God repeated this in Ezekiel 18:1-20:

The word of the Lord came to me: “What do you people mean by quoting this proverb about the land of Israel: ‘The parents eat sour grapes, and the children’s teeth are set on edge’?

“As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign Lord, you will no longer quote this proverb in Israel. For everyone belongs to me, the parent as well as the child — both alike belong to me. The one who sins is the one who will die.

“Suppose there is a righteous man who does what is just and right. He does not eat at the mountain shrines or look to the idols of Israel. He does not defile his neighbor’s wife or have sexual relations with a woman during her period. He does

not oppress anyone, but returns what he took in pledge for a loan. He does not commit robbery but gives his food to the hungry and provides clothing for the naked. He does not lend to them at interest or take a profit from them. He withholds his hand from doing wrong and judges fairly between two parties. He follows my decrees and faithfully keeps my laws. That man is righteous; he will surely live, declares the Sovereign Lord.

“Suppose he has a violent son, who sheds blood or does any of these other things (though the father has done none of them): He eats at the mountain shrines. He defiles his neighbor’s wife. He oppresses the poor and needy. He commits robbery. He does not return what he took in pledge. He looks to the idols. He does detestable things. He lends at interest and takes a profit. Will such a man live? He will not! Because he has done all these detestable things, he is to be put to death; his blood will be on his own head.

“But suppose this son has a son who sees all the sins his father commits, and though he sees

them, he does not do such things:

“He does not eat at the mountain shrines or look to the idols of Israel. He does not defile his neighbor’s wife. He does not oppress anyone or require a pledge for a loan. He does not commit robbery but gives his food to the hungry and provides clothing for the naked. He withholds his hand from mistreating the poor and takes no interest or profit from them. He keeps my laws and follows my decrees. He will not die for his father’s sin; he will surely live. But his father will die for his own sin, because he practiced extortion, robbed his brother and did what was wrong among his people.

“Yet you ask, ‘Why does the son not share the guilt of his father?’ Since the son has done what is just and right and has been careful to keep all my decrees, he will surely live. The one who sins is the one who will die. The child will not share the guilt of the parent, nor will the parent share the guilt of the child. The righteousness of the righteous will be credited to them, and the

wickedness of the wicked will be charged against them.”

Guilt cannot be transferred. Righteousness cannot be transferred from one person to another. No law allows that.

The question is: How can God justify the ungodly through Jesus Christ and still maintain His integrity to His holy law? This was the central issue in the Reformation. This is why the Roman Catholic scholars accused the Reformers of legal fiction. But the answer to this problem is this:

Before God could save us in Christ, He had to qualify Christ to be our Savior. He did this by uniting the divine life of Christ with our corporate human life which we all possess. Divinity was united to our corporate humanity in the womb of Mary. Jesus became the second Adam under the law as our Substitute and Representative. This truth is beautifully explained in 1 Corinthians 1:30. Let us read that passage so that we understand how God saved us in Christ Jesus and still maintains His

integrity to His holy law. Paul says:

It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus...

Notice, three people are involved in that statement. “Him” refers to God the Father; the “You,” which is in the plural form, in the original, refers to us; and Christ is the second Person of the Godhead, the Son of God. Paul is saying that God took the corporate human race, the corporate human life, and joined it to Christ in the womb of Mary. By doing this, Christ and we became one and Jesus became the second Adam. Adam in Hebrew means mankind. It has a collective significance.

Continuing 1 Corinthians 1:30, Paul says:

It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God — that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption.

That word “wisdom” in the Greek means

special knowledge. Remember what Jesus said in John 8:32:

Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.

What is this truth? By uniting us to Christ and by His perfect life and sacrificial death, Christ became our righteousness, our sanctification, our redemption. Paul says in verse 1 Corinthians 1:31:

Therefore, as it is written: “Let the one who boasts boast in the Lord.”

Going back to Galatians 4:4-5:

But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship.

Paul tells us that when the right time came, when the appointed time arrived, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under law. When

Christ united Himself with us, what we are, He became. By doing that, He qualified to be our Savior. Then by His doing and by His dying, He redeemed us from under the law that we might receive adoption of sons. Paul is saying here, that in Jesus Christ, He gave us, He gave all mankind, a new history in which we stand perfect before God's law. This new status, this new history, is God's gift to man. The moment we receive, by faith, that gift, Jesus Christ, we become sons of God. In verse 6 of Galatians 4 Paul says:

Because you are his sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, "Abba, Father."

Another passage says the same thing in a clearer way, Romans 8:16-17:

The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs — heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.

This is an exceptional statement. When we become Christians, we are not only forgiven sinners; we are not only justified sinners but we become sons and daughters of God. Do you know what that means? It means that we are no longer members of this world. We have become citizens of heaven, joint heirs with Christ. Paul, especially in Romans 5:12-21, tells us that what we receive in Christ is much more than what we lost in Adam:

Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all people, because all sinned — To be sure, sin was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not charged against anyone's account where there is no law. Nevertheless, death reigned from the time of Adam to the time of Moses, even over those who did not sin by breaking a command, as did Adam, who is a pattern of the one to come.

But the gift is not like the trespass. For if the many died by the trespass of the one man, how

much more did God's grace and the gift that came by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, overflow to the many! Nor can the gift of God be compared with the result of one man's sin: The judgment followed one sin and brought condemnation, but the gift followed many trespasses and brought justification. For if, by the trespass of the one man, death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive God's abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ!

Consequently, just as one trespass resulted in condemnation for all people, so also one righteous act resulted in justification and life for all people. For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous.

The law was brought in so that the trespass might increase. But where sin increased, grace increased all the more, so that, just as sin reigned in death, so also grace might reign through

righteousness to bring eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

According to the Bible, in the Old Testament and also in the book of Hebrews, man, in Adam was created a little lower than the angels. Psalm 8:4-8:

What is mankind that you are mindful of them, human beings that you care for them? You have made them a little lower than the angels and crowned them with glory and honor. You made them rulers over the works of your hands; you put everything under their feet: all flocks and herds, and the animals of the wild, the birds in the sky, and the fish in the sea, all that swim the paths of the seas.

Hebrews 2:5-9:

It is not to angels that he has subjected the world to come, about which we are speaking. But there is a place where someone has testified:

“What is mankind that you are mindful of them, a son of man that you care for him? You made them a little lower than the angels; you crowned them with glory and honor and put everything under their feet.”

In putting everything under them, God left nothing that is not subject to them. Yet at present we do not see everything subject to them. But we do see Jesus, who was made lower than the angels for a little while, now crowned with glory and honor because he suffered death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.

God is the highest, angels are next, and we were created a little lower than the angels. Then, Adam sinned and he brought the human race to the bottom of the pit. He put us all into death row with no way of escape except through Jesus Christ.

Then, Christ joined Himself to the human race that needs redeeming. He became the second Adam and then, by His life and by His death, He redeemed mankind. Does He return us back to our

lost status? The answer is, “No.” He takes us to the very throne of God. He takes us to where He is at the right hand of God the Father so that, in Christ, we are not lower than the angels but we are above the angels. We are joint heirs with Christ and one day we shall rule and judge angels. This is much more. This is over-abundant grace. Our position, in Christ, is far better than we ever were in Adam even before the Fall.

Therefore, don't ever moan and groan, “Why did God allow sin to enter this world?” One reason He allowed sin to enter this world is so that He could make us better in Christ than we ever were in Adam. When we accept Christ, God sends the Holy Spirit to dwell in our hearts. We call this the new birth experience. This new birth makes us sons and daughters of God. This new birth makes us joint heirs with Christ. And the Spirit that dwells in us, through the new birth experience, convinces our spirit, our conscience, that we are God's children. And if we are God's children, then we can address God as “Dear Father.”

In verse 7, Paul says:

So you are no longer a slave, but God's child; and since you are his child, God has made you also an heir.

You are no longer a slave but a son. If you are a son, then an heir of God through Christ. What a privilege this is!

Having made this clear explanation of our situation as Christians, Paul, in verses 8-11, speaks about his great fear for the Galatian Christians:

Formerly, when you did not know God, you were slaves to those who by nature are not gods. But now that you know God — or rather are known by God — how is it that you are turning back to those weak and miserable forces? Do you wish to be enslaved by them all over again? You are observing special days and months and seasons and years! I fear for you, that somehow I have wasted my efforts on you.

What is Paul saying here? He is taking this truth that he has just expounded in chapter 4, verses 1-7, and is applying it to the situation of the Galatians. He is telling them in Galatians 4:8 that, when they were pagans, before their conversion, when they were believers of false gods which were not gods, they had no joy. They had no peace and no hope because in all pagan religions, salvation is by our performance. Since our performance is always coming short of the mark, people who are under legalism, people who worship false gods, have no peace, have no joy. They were serving these beggarly elements which Paul calls the rules, the “dos” and “don’ts” of all non-Christian religions. They were in bondage. They observed days and months and seasons hoping to appease an angry god, hoping that one day, for some reason, the gods of heaven will take them to where they belong.

They gave up all this with joy when they heard the gospel Paul preached to them. They, from deep heartfelt gratitude, accepted Jesus Christ as their Savior. So much so that they were willing to pluck

their eyes and give them to Paul because of the problem he was facing with his eyes. Now, suddenly, these Judaizers had convinced these Galatian Christians that they must go back to bondage; they must go back to “dos” and “don’ts” as their requirement for salvation. They were trapped into a subtle form of legalism by these Judaizers. Paul, with a pastor’s heart, pleads with them, “Have I labored with you in vain?” “Have I given you the good news for nothing now that you have turned your backs to the gospel?”

Paul is expressing here, his deep concern for the Galatian Christians. This is a problem that we face even today. The Galatians were turning from the good news of salvation in Jesus Christ to legalism. And Paul is concerned. He is not only a theologian; he has the heart of a pastor, a heart that longs to see his believers ultimately saved in Christ.

Paul says the sad fact is, after they found freedom in Christ, they returned to a religion of bondage, a religion of “dos” and “don’ts” which

makes no sense to him. “How can you do it?” Paul says. “How can you turn from the good news of salvation to legalism which robs you of all peace, joy, hope?” The devil is very much alive today. And just as he led the Galatian Christians, using the Judaizers as a tool, just as he sidetracked these Galatian Christians from the pure truth of the gospel, he would like to do the same to us. Every Christian, living today in the 20th Century must come to grips with Paul’s epistle to the Galatians. It has been recorded for our benefit upon whom the ends of the world would come. You see, man by nature is a legalist. As one young Christian told me who gave up the gospel for legalism, “Anything I need in this world, I must work for it. Why should salvation be different?”

The reason salvation is different is because God’s ways are not man’s ways. The prophet Isaiah tells us that, as far as the stars are, millions of light years away, so are God’s ways from our ways.

It is true, in this world, we have to work for

anything we want. This world is a result of a sin problem. God told Adam after the Fall, “By the sweat of the brow, you will eat your bread.” But when it comes to our redemption, there is nothing we can do to save ourselves. We are sold as slaves to sin. We are under sin, dominated by sin. Paul makes it very clear in Galatians 2:16:

...Know that a person is not justified by the works of the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law, because by the works of the law no one will be justified.

That is why God’s way of saving sinners is through faith in Jesus Christ. Salvation is by grace alone. This is the wonderful truth that Luther and his fellow Reformers recovered from the Dark Ages of Christianity.

The devil had deceived, not only the Galatians, but the early Christian church. After the third and fourth century, he came with false ideas and

plunged the church into darkness. Then came the Reformers. They came with the restoration of the gospel that man is saved by faith alone and nothing else, faith in Jesus Christ. Faith alone and grace alone were the two wonderful truths of the gospel that were restored by the Reformers.

But the devil, through modern liberal theology, through all his crafty ways, is trying to sidetrack us even today from the pure gospel of Jesus Christ. Yes, we are living in a scientific age. Man has made tremendous advances in technology but just like Rome, so it is today. The scientific method cannot redeem sinful man. We need a Savior and the good news is that God did send a Messiah. He did send a Savior by which all men, Jews and Gentiles, can be redeemed.

If you haven't accepted Jesus as your Savior, I plead with you to do it now. There is no other name under heaven by which you can be saved except through Jesus Christ. And if you are a believer, rejoicing in Christ, don't you ever allow any human being to rob you of this wonderful

peace and joy you have in Jesus Christ.

In ending, let me give you the clear, distinction between salvation under the law and salvation under grace. There are three major distinctions.

1. A religion under law is a religion of fear. Why? Because we are constantly living under the curse of the law. Cursed is everyone who does not obey the law. Galatians 3:10:

For all who rely on the works of the law are under a curse, as it is written: “Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law.”

Whereas, under grace, it is a religion of love and joy and peace. 1 John 4:17-18 tells us that perfect love, the love of God, casts out fear:

This is how love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment: In this world we are like Jesus. There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear,

because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love.

There is no fear in the believer because, as He is in heaven, so are we on this earth. As Christ is, so are we because we stand perfect in Christ through faith.

2. The religion of the law is a religion of insecurity. One of the biggest problems that mankind is facing today is the problem of insecurity. We are insecure but under grace we have full assurance of salvation because we know in whom we believe and that He is able to save us to the uttermost, all who come to God through Him, Jesus Christ.

3. Finally, the religion of under law is a religion that ends in spiritual poverty, bankruptcy, and burnout. There comes a time when we give up because our performance never reaches the requirement of the law. But those who are under the umbrella of grace, have a religion where they never get tired because they have peace with God.

It is my prayer that you will cling to this message of salvation by grace alone and that nobody will rob you of your peace, your joy, your assurance of salvation.

Chapter 9

The Effects of Legalism

Galatians 4:12-20

I plead with you, brothers and sisters, become like me, for I became like you. You did me no wrong. As you know, it was because of an illness that I first preached the gospel to you, and even though my illness was a trial to you, you did not treat me with contempt or scorn. Instead, you welcomed me as if I were an angel of God, as if I were Christ Jesus himself. Where, then, is your blessing of me now? I can testify that, if you could have done so, you would have torn out your eyes and given them to me. Have I now become your enemy by telling you the truth? Those people are zealous to win you over, but for no good. What they want is to alienate you from us, so that you may have zeal for them. It is fine to be zealous, provided the purpose is good, and to be so always, not just when I am with you. My dear children, for whom I am again in the pains of childbirth until

Christ is formed in you, how I wish I could be with you now and change my tone, because I am perplexed about you!

So far, in our studies of Galatians, we read the writings of Paul as the apostle of Jesus Christ, Paul, the theologian and Paul, the defender of the faith. But now, as we turn to Galatians 4:12-20, we will read the writings of Paul, as the pastor, the passionate lover of his flock. In this passage, Paul appeals to the Galatians with deep feelings and great tenderness. In verse 12, for example, he calls the Galatians his brothers and sisters. Remember that Paul was a Jew. The Galatians were Gentiles. For a Jew to call Gentiles brothers and sisters was quite a statement of tenderness and acceptance.

In verse 19, he calls the Galatians, “My dear children,” an expression the apostle John, a disciple of love, was very fond of. But Paul goes even further than John, in verse 19, for he likens himself to their mother who is in labor over them until Christ is formed in them. Not only did the legalism, introduced by the Judaizers to the

Galatians, endanger their salvation, but it had affected their lives so there was no longer a loving church but a church that was split up into factions. Paul tells them, in Galatians 5:15:

If you bite and devour each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other.

According to the doctrine of justification by faith, we all are 100% sinners saved by grace. But the moment we decide to be saved by legalism, the moment we come under the umbrella of legalism, salvation by works or salvation by keeping the law, then, we begin to compare ourselves with each other. We begin to judge each other on the basis of our performance just as the Pharisees did in the days of Christ. These are the effects of legalism.

With this as a foundation, let us read Galatians 4:12-20. Paul wrote:

I plead with you, brothers and sisters, become like me, for I became like you. You did me no wrong. As you know, it was because of an illness

that I first preached the gospel to you, and even though my illness was a trial to you, you did not treat me with contempt or scorn. Instead, you welcomed me as if I were an angel of God, as if I were Christ Jesus himself. Where, then, is your blessing of me now? I can testify that, if you could have done so, you would have torn out your eyes and given them to me. Have I now become your enemy by telling you the truth? Those people are zealous to win you over, but for no good. What they want is to alienate you from us, so that you may have zeal for them. It is fine to be zealous, provided the purpose is good, and to be so always, not just when I am with you. My dear children, for whom I am again in the pains of childbirth until Christ is formed in you, how I wish I could be with you now and change my tone, because I am perplexed about you!

Here, the beloved Paul, with deep concern, responds as a pastor to the flock he had established in Galatia. Here is what legalism does to a church. Let's take this step by step. In verse 12, Paul says:

I plead with you, brothers and sisters, become like me, for I became like you. You did me no wrong.

Paul is saying there was a time that he was like these Judaizers — a legalist — but he gave it all up for the gospel. In verse 12 Paul is saying, “Please follow my example.”

To know what Paul really meant here, he expresses the same idea in Philippians 3:3-9. Let us read this so we will understand what Paul is saying to the Galatians and to us who may be trapped in legalism. In Philippians 3:3, Paul describes the true Christian. He says:

For it is we who are the circumcision, we who serve God by his Spirit, who boast in Christ Jesus, and who put no confidence in the flesh....

To Paul, a genuine Christian is one who is totally resting in Christ for salvation because this believer recognizes that he is a 100% sinner, saved by grace alone.

In Philippians 3:4, Paul adds:

... though I myself have reasons for such confidence. If someone else thinks they have reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more....

The word “flesh” here refers to anything that is true of us. It could be our birth, our performance, our standing in the church, our status, that we are depending on fully or partially for our salvation. Paul tells the Philippians, if there is anyone who can brag about what they accomplished through their own efforts, he can more than any Philippian.

In verses 5 and 6, he explains what he was as a Pharisee, a man zealous for God and a man zealous for the law. Read what Paul says about himself before his conversion. Philippians 3:5-6:

... circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee; as for

zeal [zeal for God], persecuting the church; as for righteousness based on the law, faultless.

Paul thought of himself, before his conversion, as a very successful believer in God.

Verses 7-8 adds:

But whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ....

Verse 9:

...and be found in him [Christ], not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ — the righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith.

Paul knew by experience what it meant to be a

legalist. But when he found Jesus Christ and His righteousness, legalism no longer had any meaning for him. It was filthy rags. It was rubbish, or garbage, as he says in Philippians.

Paul is telling the Galatian Christians, “Please don’t return back to legalism. Please become like me as I became like you.” Or, “I accepted Jesus Christ as so did you at the beginning.” In Galatians 4:13-14, Paul says:

As you know, it was because of an illness that I first preached the gospel to you, and even though my illness was a trial to you, you did not treat me with contempt or scorn. Instead, you welcomed me as if I were an angel of God, as if I were Christ Jesus himself.

Paul is appealing to their emotions. He is appealing to their past experience. He is reminding them, when he first came to Galatia and preached the gospel, he was suffering from terrible pain. Obviously, as we read in verse 15, the problem he had was concerning his eyes:

Where, then, is your blessing of me now? I can testify that, if you could have done so, you would have torn out your eyes and given them to me.

Some scholars feel that this could have been because of the Damascus experience but that is not necessarily so. All we know is that his eyes must have looked awful. They must have been full of pus and he must have been an unsightly person. Yet the Galatians didn't mind this. They were willing to ignore this terrible condition. They were willing to do all this because they were so appreciative of the gospel that Paul had brought them. In verse 15, Paul is saying that they were so appreciative that they were willing to pluck out their own eyes and give them to him in gratitude for the good news he had brought to them.

Paul is now pleading with the Galatians in verse 15, "Where, then, is your blessing of me now?" He says, may he remind them, of the way they responded to this wonderful message, and now that they have listened to the Judaizers, have

they turned against him? Has he become their enemy? Here he was, in Galatia, bringing good news at tremendous cost to himself. He says, he could have used this eye problem as an excuse not to preach to them, but he wanted them to know Jesus Christ. He wanted them to hear the good news in which they rejoiced, and he was willing to suffer so that he may bring to them Jesus Christ, the Savior of the world. What, he asked, “has happened, dear Galatians?” This is his plea as a pastor to his flock. Verse 16:

Have I now become your enemy by telling you the truth?

In verses 17-18 of Galatians 4, Paul now discusses the Judaizers. This is what he tells the Galatians:

Those people are zealous to win you over, but for no good. What they want is to alienate you from us, so that you may have zeal for them. It is fine to be zealous, provided the purpose is good, and to be so always, not just when I am with you.

Legalists win converts, not to Jesus Christ, but to themselves. The Judaizers were guilty of this. They were zealous. They were very determined. They worked hard, not to lift up Christ, but to draw disciples towards them so that they may glory in the flesh. Galatians 6:13:

Not even those who are circumcised keep the law, yet they want you to be circumcised that they may boast about your circumcision in the flesh.

They glory in what they have accomplished by bringing people towards them.

Paul says to the Galatians, the true motivation behind the Judaizers was not their salvation but their own pride and glory. Paul says in Galatians 4:19:

My dear children, for whom I am again in the pains of childbirth until Christ is formed in you....

Paul likens his flock to children who have been

produced by a mother. A mother goes through a lot of pain when she delivers her children but after that she rejoices in the fact that they are born into this world. They bring joy and hope to her. Paul is saying, “I am like your mother. I was willing to go through all this terrible pain so that you may be found in Christ. And now, I am still in pain until you are fully and totally established in Christ.”

When we become Christians, we change our citizenship from citizens of this world — which is under Satan — to citizens of heaven — which is under Christ. But, physically, we are still living in this world, so Christians are really citizens of heaven living in enemy territory. As the apostle John, in his epistle 1 John 5:19, tells us, the whole world, apart from believers, is under the evil one:

We know that we are children of God, and that the whole world is under the control of the evil one.

When you become a Christian, Satan has lost a subject. Do you think he will give up without a

fight? The answer is, “No.” He will do his very best to gain you back into his kingdom. And one of the means by which he destroys a believer’s faith is by perverting the gospel. This is what he did to the Galatians through the Judaizers. He deceived them. He cast a spell over them, as Galatians 3 brought out. And now, he is trying to deprive them of the joy of salvation that they had received in Christ.

Paul is pleading with the Galatians that they return to Christ. Paul will not let go of this situation. He will continue working for them, pleading with them until they are fully established in Christ.

Then, he ends in verse 20:

...How I wish I could be with you now and change my tone, because I am perplexed about you!

Paul would have loved to come to Galatia again physically. but he had much to do. Transportation

in those days was very difficult. He is saying to the Galatians that he questions whether they will turn back. He wants to be there so that he can see them turning back to Christ and he has doubts because he knows the power of legalism is very strong. He is pleading with them to turn back to Christ as their only hope.

With great pain, Paul first preached the gospel to the Galatians. He was willing to ignore his suffering to bring good news of salvation to the Galatians. And now, he is willing to go through the same pain all over again to restore them to Christ. These verses truly express the heart of Paul who reflected God's agape love.

In Romans 9:2-3, he expresses the same thing towards his own fellow-Jews who hated him and who had turned against him. He says:

I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my people, those of my own race....

“I am willing to be accursed that my own fellowmen should be saved.” Paul was not just a theologian but “the” theologian of the New Testament. Paul was a pastor at heart. He had a great concern, a great burden for the people he had converted. He was not just an evangelist. He did not come to a church, establish it, and then leave for home and let them fend for themselves. No, Paul was a pastor at heart. When he heard anything negative about the people he had converted, he would write to them. Here he writes this very stern letter telling them, “I wish I could use kinder words but I am afraid that if I do so, you may not realize the seriousness of your problem. So I am using these strong words that you, dear Galatians, will turn back to Jesus Christ as your Savior.”

What Paul is saying to the Galatians is also true of us today. We are still living in enemy territory. It is still very easy for the devil to sidetrack us from the gospel and turn us back to legalism. As mentioned in our last two studies, legalism is not

something we have to learn. It is part of our very being. It is part of our culture. It is part of our very nature. All I have to do is stop preaching the gospel and my people will sooner or later end up on the road to legalism. It is important that we constantly need to preach the gospel in clarity so that there is no mistake, that there is no idea that man can, by his own performance, save himself.

We must take this message to heart. We need to take Paul's burden for the Galatians and apply it personally to ourselves. Paul, the great pastor, wants no one to be lost because, if we turn back to legalism, the devil has pulled us out of Christ. He tried this all through the history of the early Christian church. He tried to do this to the Jewish Christians. The Judaizers, who had accepted Christ, were in danger of losing their salvation. The book of Hebrews is constantly reminding the Jewish Christian, "Please, don't go back to Judaism. Please don't go back to the legalism you were raised up with."

As we conclude this study, let us read Hebrews

10. This is very meaningful to those who have been trapped into legalism. This is very much in harmony with what we have just studied in Galatians 4:12-20.

In Hebrews 10:36-39, the writer of Hebrews says to the Jewish Christians who were facing the same danger as the Galatians:

You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised. For, “In just a little while, he who is coming will come and will not delay.” And, “But my righteous one will live by faith. And I take no pleasure in the one who shrinks back.” But we do not belong to those who shrink back and are destroyed, but to those who have faith and are saved.

It is not enough to just believe in Jesus Christ. Yes, justification is by faith alone but Jesus Himself made it clear in Matthew 10:22 that faith must endure unto the end:

You will be hated by everyone because of me, but the one who stands firm to the end will be saved.

The writer of Hebrews is saying in Hebrews 10:35:

So do not throw away your confidence; it will be richly rewarded.

“Therefore do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward, for Christians need to be patient. They need to endure unto the end. They need to cling to their faith until the reality of salvation takes place at the Second Coming of Christ.”

The righteousness that qualifies us for heaven, now and in the judgment, is always in Christ, never in us. Not even what God does in us. But the faith that makes the righteousness of Christ effective in our lives or in us, is not in heaven but in us. This faith can be touched. This faith can be destroyed. This is the real purpose of Satan when he enters the

Christian church and perverts the gospel. But the writer of Hebrews says in verse 36 of chapter 10:

You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God [that your faith endures unto the end], you will receive what he has promised.

We have this promise brought out in verses 37 and 38:

For, “In just a little while, he who is coming will come and will not delay.” And, “But my righteous one will live by faith. And I take no pleasure in the one who shrinks back.”

Living by faith is the only way you and I can be saved. “But [there is a “but” here], if anyone draws back, my soul has no pleasure in him.” God is a God of love and, where there is love, there can be no compulsion. As long as we are believers, we are giving God the permission, the right, to take us to heaven, not because of our faith but because of the righteousness of Christ. Faith doesn’t contribute towards our salvation. Faith is only an

instrument, a channel by which we receive the righteousness of Christ. The New Testament is absolutely clear. We are not saved because of our faith but we are saved by faith or through faith.

Paul is saying to the Galatians, “Hold on to your faith. Turn back to Jesus Christ.”

We read in Hebrews 10:39:

But we do not belong to those who shrink back and are destroyed, but to those who have faith and are saved.

So it is not enough, to believe in Jesus Christ as our Savior. This is the beginning, but our faith must endure unto the end. Paul, writing to young Timothy, says in 2 Timothy 4:7:

I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.

Faith is a battle in the sense that we must not give it up. The devil will do everything to pull us

out of Christ but, thank God, as long as we keep our eyes on Jesus Christ, as long as we recognize that we are 100% sinners, saved by grace, the devil cannot touch us. But legalism tells us that we have something good in us, that we can save ourselves by our performance. We cannot come to Christ and, because we admit that we are 100% sinners, receive His righteousness and then, after accepting Him, admit that we can do something good towards our salvation. No, it is either all of Christ or none of Him.

It is my prayer, as you wrestle with your faith, that you will not give it up. May your faith endure to the very end. May you, like Paul, say to God or to your fellow believers, “I have fought the fight. I have kept the faith. Now, there is waiting for me, a crown of righteousness and not only for me, but for all who love His appearing.”

Legalism is one of the greatest enemies of the gospel. Legalism is one of the greatest dangers of the Christian believer. You must constantly remind yourself that you are by nature and by

performance a 100% sinner. Oh yes, your performance may not be 100% but your nature is 100% sinner so that even if you have not committed a single sin for the last two hours, you are still a sinner during those two hours because your sins are simply the fruits of what you are. God so loved the world that He sent His only begotten Son, not to condemn you but that, through His performance — through His doing and dying — you and all mankind could be saved.

Now that you have accepted Jesus Christ as your Savior, I plead with you, do not allow anything, anybody, any philosophy, to pull you out of Christ. Be on your guard against legalism that may come to you in a very subtle form, in a very religious garb so that you may be deceived.

It is my prayer that you shall know the truth and you shall constantly hold onto this truth and you, having obeyed the truth, may be set free so that, one day, when Christ comes, you may with great jubilation cry out, “This is my God, I have been waiting for Him.” Man’s only hope is Jesus

Christ and His righteousness. Justification is by faith alone and nothing else.

Chapter 10

The Two Covenants

Galatians 4:21-31

Tell me, you who want to be under the law, are you not aware of what the law says? For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by the slave woman and the other by the free woman. His son by the slave woman was born according to the flesh, but his son by the free woman was born as the result of a divine promise. These things are being taken figuratively: The women represent two covenants. One covenant is from Mount Sinai and bears children who are to be slaves: This is Hagar. Now Hagar stands for Mount Sinai in Arabia and corresponds to the present city of Jerusalem, because she is in slavery with her children. But the Jerusalem that is above is free, and she is our mother. For it is written: “Be glad, barren woman, you who never bore a child; shout for joy and cry aloud, you who were never in labor; because more are the children of the desolate

woman than of her who has a husband.” Now you, brothers and sisters, like Isaac, are children of promise. At that time the son born according to the flesh persecuted the son born by the power of the Spirit. It is the same now. But what does Scripture say? “Get rid of the slave woman and her son, for the slave woman’s son will never share in the inheritance with the free woman’s son.” Therefore, brothers and sisters, we are not children of the slave woman, but of the free woman.

This study is based on Galatians 4:21-31, which is considered by many as the most difficult passage in Galatians. The reason for this is threefold.

1. It presupposes a knowledge of the Old Testament which few Christians possess today.
2. Paul’s argument is somewhat technical in this passage, familiar to the rabbinical school of his day but not to 20th century Christians.
3. Finally, this passage is difficult because its

truths contradict the teachings of many who limit the term Old Covenant and the term New Covenant only to time. They say the Old Covenant refers to the period of history from Moses to Christ and the New Covenant refers to the period from Christ on earth to the end of time.

According to the New Testament, especially Paul, the term Old and New Covenant has two applications. It has an historic application and second, it has a theological application.

1. Historically, the term Old Covenant, and the term New Covenant, has to do with time, that is true. When God gave the law through Moses, sinful humanity came legally under the law and its curse until Christ came and redeemed mankind some 1,500 years later at the cross.

Galatians 3:23-25 dealt with this Old and New Covenant terminology which we have already covered. But the terms Old and New Covenant also have a theological meaning.

2. Theologically, when these terms are used, the term Old Covenant refers to salvation by works of the law. In contrast, the New Covenant refers to salvation by grace. When we use these terms theologically, they are timeless.

For example, if we, today, were to promise God to be good in order to be saved, we are really entering into an Old Covenant agreement with God. It is in this theological sense, it is in this second sense that Paul is dealing with the two terms Old and New Covenant in Galatians 4:21-31.

With this foundation, let us now look at the arguments of this passage. We will discover that Paul's arguments here fall into three steps. The first ones are verses 21 and 23. Here Paul gives us the historical background of his argument, that is, Abraham had two sons. One was Ishmael, the other Isaac. Then, in verses 24-27, Paul uses these two sons as types or symbols of the two methods of salvation.

1. Salvation by keeping the law or salvation by

works which is identified with the Old Covenant, a religion that brings a person into bondage.

2. Salvation by grace which is the New Covenant, a religion of freedom, a religion of joy, peace, and hope.

Then, finally, in verses 28 to 31, Paul makes a personal application to his readers, in this case the Galatians and, of course, this applies to us today since the Bible is God's Word to all men at all times. Judaism is a religion of bondage, says Paul, since the law condemns sinners. But true Christianity is a religion of freedom since Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law. We have covered this as we dealt with chapter 3 of Galatians.

Let's read Galatians 4:21-31. We will look at the three steps that Paul discusses.

Tell me, you who want to be under the law, are you not aware of what the law says? For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by the

slave woman and the other by the free woman. His son by the slave woman was born according to the flesh, but his son by the free woman was born as the result of a divine promise. These things are being taken figuratively: The women represent two covenants. One covenant is from Mount Sinai and bears children who are to be slaves: This is Hagar [that is, the mother of Ishmael]. Now Hagar stands for Mount Sinai in Arabia and corresponds to the present city of Jerusalem, because she is in slavery with her children. But the Jerusalem that is above is free, and she is our mother. For it is written: “Be glad, barren woman, you who never bore a child; shout for joy and cry aloud, you who were never in labor; because more are the children of the desolate woman than of her who has a husband.” Now you, brothers and sisters, like Isaac, are children of promise. At that time the son born according to the flesh persecuted the son born by the power of the Spirit. It is the same now. But what does Scripture say? “Get rid of the slave woman and her son, for the slave woman’s son will never share in the inheritance with the free woman’s son.” Therefore, brothers and sisters, we

are not children of the slave woman, but of the free woman.

This passage is full of significance even for us today. Let's now look at it in detail. First, let us examine the statement Paul makes in verse 21:

Tell me, you who want to be under the law, are you not aware of what the law says?

What does that term “under the law” mean? First of all, it does not mean “under curse.” Yes, if you are a sinner under the law, the result is under curse, but “under law” simply means to be ruled by the law, to live under the dominion of the law. When that happens, you have to justify yourself before God on the basis of your performance, on the basis of your righteousness. Therefore, Paul is saying to the Galatians, “Tell me, you who desire to be saved, you who desire to earn your salvation through the keeping of the law, don't you hear what the law says?”

The word “law” here refers to the Torah, the

first five books of the Old Testament, the books of Moses often referred to as the Pentateuch. What does this book of the law tell us? Paul takes out of the book of the law, a history of Abraham and his two sons. If we read the book of Genesis, we will find the history or the story of Abraham. Abraham had two sons. The first one was Ishmael, which he produced through Hagar, and the second one was Isaac, which God gave him through a special miracle.

Galatians 4:23 tells us:

His son by the slave woman was born according to the flesh, but his son by the free woman was born as the result of a divine promise.

To understand the application of this historical truth, we need to understand what Paul is saying. If we are not familiar with this Old Testament history, then the application becomes meaningless. We will spend a few moments to explain what Paul is describing here, because Paul assumes the believer understands and is familiar with the

history of Abraham. Remember, in Paul's day, the Bible was only the Old Testament. Today the Bible is both the Old and New Testament. Too many Christians ignore the Old Testament, which is unfortunate, because the Old and the New Testament are a unit. The Old is the promise, the New is the reality.

But now, we will review what Paul is referring to. God came to Abraham when he was about 75 years old. (Genesis 12) God said to Abraham, "I want you to leave your home, neighbors, and your family (because, of course, they were all idol worshipers). I want you to go to the land that I will give you (which we know today is the land of Israel) and I will make you a great nation." Now, when God gave that promise, Abraham was 75 years old, his wife was 10 years younger. They had no children. So, God promised him a son and Abraham believed God and was counted righteous.

One year went by. Two years went by. Three years went by. In fact, eight years went by and there was no child! Abraham began to doubt

God's promise. So God came to him and said to Abraham, "Why are you fearful? Why have you begun to doubt My promise?" Abraham's response was, "God, it takes nine months for human beings to produce a child. How long does it take You? This is eight years now. Look at this boy in my home, the son of my slave Eleazer. Is this the promised son or am I to look for another son?" This is paraphrasing Genesis 15.

God said to Abraham, "Come, Abraham, let's go for a walk." Remember, Israel doesn't have much rain. The sky was clear. God said to Abraham, "Count the stars." Abraham responded, "Impossible. There are too many of them." And God said to Abraham, "This is how many children you will have. The son I have promised is not the son of a slave. The son that I have promised will come from your own loins. He will be your child, not somebody else's." In Genesis 15:6, we have those famous words that Paul loves to quote:

Abram believed the Lord, and he credited it to him as righteousness.

Abraham is now 83 years old, his faith is restored. Then God waited not one or two years but He waited 13 or 14 more years until Sarah, Abraham's wife had passed the age of child-bearing. She had reached the age when it was physically, scientifically, humanly impossible for Sarah to have a child. God said, "Now do you believe that I can give you a child?"

Before we find the answer, let's go to Genesis 16 where something else took place two years after Genesis 15. Two years after God restored Abraham's faith, Sarah comes to Abraham who is now about 85 and she is ten years younger. She says to him, "I don't think it is possible for God to give you a child through me. He said "your loins" but He mentioned nothing about me. And so Abraham, I feel you need to help God to keep His promise. Why don't you take my slave girl, Hagar, as your surrogate wife and produce a child and help God to keep His promise?" Abraham listened to Sarah, went to Hagar and produced Ishmael.

Now, 13 or 14 years later, Sarah had passed the age of child-bearing and God came to Abraham and said, “Do you believe I can give you a child?” In Romans 4:17, and onwards Paul tells us that against hope, against all scientific evidence, against human rationale, Abraham believed God. Abraham took God at His word. One year later, Sarah bore a little baby boy to Abraham and they named him Isaac, which is laughter, or rejoicing. Romans 4:16-25:

Therefore, the promise comes by faith, so that it may be by grace and may be guaranteed to all Abraham’s offspring — not only to those who are of the law but also to those who have the faith of Abraham. He is the father of us all. As it is written: “I have made you a father of many nations.” He is our father in the sight of God, in whom he believed — the God who gives life to the dead and calls into being things that were not. Against all hope, Abraham in hope believed and so became the father of many nations, just as it had been said to him, “So shall your offspring be.” Without weakening in his faith, he faced the fact

that his body was as good as dead — since he was about a hundred years old — and that Sarah’s womb was also dead. Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised. This is why “it was credited to him as righteousness.” The words “it was credited to him” were written not for him alone, but also for us, to whom God will credit righteousness — for us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead. He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification.

Remember, Ishmael was already approximately 13 years old when Isaac was born. One day, Sarah heard Ishmael scoffing at Isaac. She went to Abraham and said, “Abraham, I want you to get rid of this woman and her son because this son of hers will not share the inheritance that my son, Isaac, is going to have.”

Sarah, who was responsible for the birth of

Ishmael now turns against this boy. But Abraham is deeply concerned. Why? Because, while Ishmael was not Sarah's child, he was Abraham's child. Abraham is very disturbed at this request. But, as a good Christian, he goes to God for advice and this time God says to Abraham, "Abraham, you have to listen to Sarah. You have to get rid of this surrogate mother and her son, Ishmael, because the promise that I made to you, 'All peoples on earth will be blessed through you' [Genesis 12:3] will have to be through Isaac. And Ishmael will have no part of it." This is the Old Testament history. Genesis 21:8-13:

The child grew and was weaned, and on the day Isaac was weaned Abraham held a great feast. But Sarah saw that the son whom Hagar the Egyptian had borne to Abraham was mocking, and she said to Abraham, "Get rid of that slave woman and her son, for that woman's son will never share in the inheritance with my son Isaac." The matter distressed Abraham greatly because it concerned his son. But God said to him, "Do not be so distressed about the boy and your slave woman.

Listen to whatever Sarah tells you, because it is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned. I will make the son of the slave into a nation also, because he is your offspring.”

Paul uses this as a symbol of the two covenants, the symbol of the two methods of salvation: salvation by works (keeping of the law) and salvation by faith in Jesus Christ, God’s promise.

With this in mind, let us turn to our passage. Paul, after giving the story of the two sons, explains in Galatians 4:24:

These things are being taken figuratively: The women represent two covenants. One covenant is from Mount Sinai and bears children who are to be slaves: This is Hagar.

These two sons, Ishmael and Isaac, are symbolic. They represent the two covenants. One is from Mount Sinai, that is, the law which gives birth to bondage. The law doesn’t save us. It

simply brings the curse. It brings us into the bondage of the fear of death. This, the Old Covenant, is represented by Hagar.

Then, in verse 25, he tells us that Hagar, which is representing Mount Sinai, corresponds with Jerusalem, not the heavenly Jerusalem, but the literal Jerusalem, which is in Bondage even to this day:

Now Hagar stands for Mount Sinai in Arabia and corresponds to the present city of Jerusalem, because she is in slavery with her children.

The Jews were still under Roman bondage when Paul wrote this letter. The apostle Paul is telling the Galatians, the Judaism of his day was still in bondage to legalism, which is Jerusalem, that is, the capital city of Israel.

But, in verse 26, Paul explains, that the Jerusalem from above, that is, the heavenly Jerusalem, is free, which is the mother of us all:

But the Jerusalem that is above is free, and she is our mother.

The “us” implied in “our mother” refers to the believers, born-again Christians. Then, he makes the statement, quoting from Isaiah 54:1, in verse 27:

For it is written: “Be glad, barren woman, you who never bore a child; shout for joy and cry aloud, you who were never in labor; because more are the children of the desolate woman than of her who has a husband.”

We human beings are sinners. We are incapable of producing any righteousness. We are barren when it comes to salvation by works. But, he tells us, quoting Isaiah 54, “Let us rejoice because we who were desolate have now had more children than those who have a husband.” The gospel brings rejoicing and hope. Having said this, he applies this wonderful gift of salvation which is represented by Isaac, saying in verse 28:

Now you, brothers and sisters, like Isaac, are children of promise.

If we try to go to heaven by our own performance, we belong to Ishmael. If we go to heaven by faith in Jesus Christ, which is a gift which comes from God as a promise, then we are children of Isaac. Now let's go one step further. God gave Israel three fathers: Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The mistake the Jews made was, if we were the physical, literal descendants of these three men, then we belonged to God's covenant people and salvation was ours. This is a mistake. It is perverting what God intended when He gave Israel three fathers. Paul corrects this in Romans 9. He makes it clear that not every one who is a child of Abraham belongs to Israel. Not everyone who refers to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob is a true Jew.

These three fathers symbolize three basic, fundamental elements that make up genuine Christianity, genuine children of God:

1. Abraham stands for faith. To be a child of

God we must have the faith of Abraham. To be a seed of Abraham we must have the faith of our father, Abraham.

2. Like Isaac, we must be born of God. Jesus reminded Nicodemus, “Nicodemus, you are trying to go to heaven by your performance. You might as well give up. Only when you are born of God, then only, you become a child of God and heir of salvation.” So, Isaac represents those who are born from above.

3. Thirdly, Paul doesn't deal with Jacob in Galatians or in Romans 9. Based on a logical conclusion, Jacob represents those whose faith endures unto the end. The word Jacob means “schemer.” After we have accepted Christ, the devil may convince us, as he did the Galatian Christians, that salvation is partly by grace and partly by performance. Then we begin to try to earn our salvation after we accept Christ and we fall into the trap of the Galatians, a subtle form of legalism. But Paul is telling us, “No.” We must have the faith of Jacob that endured unto the end.

Yes, Jacob was a schemer. He tried to get the birthright back with all kinds of schemes but, at the end, when he wrestled with the Angel, he would not give up his hold on God. It was at that time Jacob's name was changed from Jacob, the "schemer," to Israel, "he who has prevailed with God."

Now, let us look at the application of these two symbols Paul has used in this passage that we have just studied. In verse 30a, he asks us:

But what does Scripture say?

This question is based on the statement he made in verses 28-29:

Now you, brothers and sisters, like Isaac, are children of promise. At that time the son born according to the flesh persecuted the son born by the power of the Spirit. It is the same now.

Paul is saying in verse 29, just as Ishmael made life miserable for Isaac, so also Satan will make

life miserable for we who are standing under the grace of God. To become a Christian, means to face persecution. Why? As already mentioned, a Christian belongs to the kingdom of Heaven, to the kingdom of God, but is still living in enemy territory. The enemy will make sure that life is miserable for us, hoping that we will give up our faith in Christ. But, in this case, the issue is legalism. Paul is advising his hearers in verses 30-31:

But what does Scripture say? “Get rid of the slave woman and her son, for the slave woman’s son will never share in the inheritance with the free woman’s son.” Therefore, brothers and sisters, we are not children of the slave woman, but of the free woman.

Salvation by works of the law and salvation by grace are mutually exclusive. We can’t join them together. We can’t marry them. There can be no synthesis. It’s either one or the other. And we who believe in Jesus Christ, we who are justified by faith, must cast out any legalism or legalistic

tendency that we may inherit or we may cling to because of our upbringing.

As Paul says in Philippians 3, we must take all our self-righteousness, count it but dung or garbage that we may win Christ and salvation through faith in Him alone. Philippians 3:7-9:

But whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith.

Let this become very clear. We cannot be justified by faith plus something else, for the moment we add anything to our salvation by grace, Paul tells us in Galatians 5:4, that we have fallen from grace and Christ has become of no effect to

us:

You who are trying to be justified by the law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace.

It is my prayer that this study, based on Galatians 4:21-31, will convince you beyond every shadow of a doubt that you must cling to your salvation by faith alone in Jesus Christ. It is my prayer that you will reject anything in you that leans towards legalism, that you will remind yourself daily that you are one hundred percent sinner saved by faith in Jesus Christ and His righteousness.

May you know this truth, may you cling to this truth, may you endure unto the end, upholding this truth.

Chapter 11

Freedom in Christ

Galatians 5:1-12

It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.

Mark my words! I, Paul, tell you that if you let yourselves be circumcised, Christ will be of no value to you at all. Again I declare to every man who lets himself be circumcised that he is obligated to obey the whole law. You who are trying to be justified by the law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace. For through the Spirit we eagerly await by faith the righteousness for which we hope. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love.

You were running a good race. Who cut in on

you to keep you from obeying the truth? That kind of persuasion does not come from the one who calls you. “A little yeast works through the whole batch of dough.” I am confident in the Lord that you will take no other view. The one who is throwing you into confusion, whoever that may be, will have to pay the penalty. Brothers and sisters, if I am still preaching circumcision, why am I still being persecuted? In that case the offense of the cross has been abolished. As for those agitators, I wish they would go the whole way and emasculate themselves!

Paul’s whole purpose in writing to the Galatian Christians was to restore them to the freedom and peace they had in Christ. The Judaizers, as we have seen in our previous studies, had deceived and trapped these Galatian Christians into a subtle form of legalism and thereby robbed them of the joy of salvation.

Having shown them their error from every conceivable angle, Paul now gives these Galatian Christians some practical counsel. In Galatians

5:1-12, Paul contrasts the two methods of salvation, the gospel versus legalism, or, in other words, salvation by grace alone versus salvation by works of the law. To Paul, the way of grace and the way of the law were mutually exclusive. The way of law makes salvation dependent on human achievement. The person who takes the way of grace simply casts himself and his sins upon the mercy of God. The two ways cannot be mixed. Clearly, in our previous study we have seen they are diametrically opposed to each other. In the passage we are going to cover in this chapter, Paul draws the contrast twice: first, in verses 1-6, from the standpoint of those who practice these two methods, and secondly, verses 7-12, from the standpoint of those who preach them.

With this foundation, we will read Galatians 5:1-12. We will analyze what Paul is saying.

It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.

Mark my words! I, Paul, tell you that if you let yourselves be circumcised, Christ will be of no value to you at all. Again I declare to every man who lets himself be circumcised that he is obligated to obey the whole law. You who are trying to be justified by the law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace. For through the Spirit we eagerly await by faith the righteousness for which we hope. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love.

You were running a good race. Who cut in on you to keep you from obeying the truth? That kind of persuasion does not come from the one who calls you. “A little yeast works through the whole batch of dough.” I am confident in the Lord that you will take no other view. The one who is throwing you into confusion, whoever that may be, will have to pay the penalty. Brothers and sisters, if I am still preaching circumcision, why am I still being persecuted? In that case the offense of the cross has been abolished. As for those agitators, I

wish they would go the whole way and emasculate themselves!

First, let's look at verse 1 and we will see that Paul gives two commands to the Galatian Christians. He has explained, he has convinced them from every conceivable angle, that man's only hope is salvation by grace through faith in Jesus Christ. These two commands are first, positive, and second, negative. In Galatians 5:1, Paul says:

It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.

Stand firm in your freedom. Freedom from what? Liberty from what? From under the law.

We read in Galatians 4:4-5 that, when the fullness of time came, Christ was sent by the Father, made of a woman, made under the law. Why?

But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship.

“To redeem us from under the law that we may be adopted as sons.”

In Galatians 3:10, Paul tells us that anyone who is under the law is under curse because the law curses everyone whose performance is not perfect:

For all who rely on the works of the law are under a curse, as it is written: “Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law.”

Having expounded the wonderful gospel to the Galatians, defended it from every angle, Paul says, in Galatians 5:1b, to stand fast in the liberty which they first accepted in Jesus Christ, the freedom they had in Christ:

Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be

burdened again by a yoke of slavery.

Paul pleads with them not to go back to legalism which he defines as the yoke of slavery or bondage. This was one of the major and original controversies that took place in the early Christian church. In Acts 15, we have a description of the first Jerusalem Council, the first church council which had to deal with this issue of legalism. Apparently the same Judaizers were there. They came from Judia and insisted that the Galatian Christians be circumcised. We read what they said in Acts 15:1:

Certain people came down from Judea to Antioch and were teaching the believers: “Unless you are circumcised, according to the custom taught by Moses, you cannot be saved.”

Then, in verse 5, they also added:

Then some of the believers who belonged to the party of the Pharisees stood up and said, “The Gentiles must be circumcised and required to keep

the law of Moses.”

In other words, “You have to keep all the rules, all the ‘dos’ and ‘don’ts’ described in the first five books of Moses in the Old Testament, the Pentateuch, the Torah, if you want to be saved. It is not enough just to believe, but you have to keep the law besides believing in order to be saved.” This was the teaching of the Judaizers.

This produced a tremendous controversy, for we read in Acts 15:2:

This brought Paul and Barnabas into sharp dispute and debate with them [the Judaizers]. So Paul and Barnabas were appointed, along with some other believers, to go up to Jerusalem to see the apostles and elders about this question.

As a result of this, we had the first Jerusalem Council.

Peter, talking to the brethren, gives the conclusion of this council. Acts 15:10:

Now then, why do you try to test God by putting on the necks of Gentiles a yoke that neither we nor our ancestors have been able to bear?

Peter, addressing the Judaizers, says, “Are you taking the Gentiles into legalism which our fathers could not uphold and which we could not? Why are you going back to this yoke of bondage?”

In verse 11:

No! We [the apostles, the leaders of the early Christian church] believe it is through the grace of our Lord Jesus that we are saved, just as they are.

There is only one way we can be saved and that is through the grace of our Lord, Jesus Christ. Oh, what a wonderful thing this was! Imagine what would have happened to the Christian church if Peter and the other apostles had disagreed with Paul and Barnabas? But the apostles were absolutely united in how mankind is saved. That is, man is saved by grace alone by the doing and

the dying of Jesus Christ.

Paul now tells the Galatians, in chapter 5, verse 1:

...Do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.

The yoke of bondage is the yoke of slavery and a slave is a person who is living in constant fear because his master is very strict. In contrast to this yoke of slavery, there is another yoke that was brought to the people, introduced by Jesus Himself. This is found in Matthew 11:28-29. Jesus, speaking to the Jews who were living in insecurity because of Judaism which had taught them that salvation is by the works of the law, brings them good news:

Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.

“Come to me, all you who labor, who are weary — all you who are striving to earn salvation

— and are heavy laden, burdened — who have no peace, are living under fear, under guilt, full of distress — and I will give you rest.”

Verse 29:

Take my yoke upon you and learn from me...

This is not the yoke of legalism. This is the yoke of Christ. To continue through verse 30:

...for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.

What is this yoke of Christ? If we study the gospel, the first four books of the New Testament, it becomes very obvious. Jesus made it clear. John 8:28:

So Jesus said, “When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am he and that I do nothing on my own but speak just what the Father has taught me.”

“I do nothing of Myself. I live by the father. The works that I do, it is not I, but the Father who dwells in Me. He is the One who does the works.”

The yoke of Christ is living a life totally dependent on God. In contrast, the yoke of bondage is a yoke that is depending totally on our performance. That is the distinction between salvation by grace and salvation by the law.

Paul is telling the Galatians, “You took the yoke of Christ, which is the yoke of total God-dependence which brings peace, hope, joy, and assurance for the simple reason that God actually redeemed us in Jesus Christ. But, you have gone back to the yoke of bondage. Please, don’t be fools. Hold on to your yoke of Christ which has set you free — free from guilt, free from condemnation, free from the curse of the law.” There is a beautiful statement found in Hebrews 10:19-23, dealing with the same thing. The book of Hebrews was written to Jewish Christians who were in danger of reverting back to Judaism or to

legalism. Read what the book of Hebrews says to these Jewish Christians. It is very much in line with what Paul tells the Galatian Christians:

Therefore, brothers and sisters, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way [unlike the legalism they were raised up with] opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near to God with a sincere heart and with the full assurance that faith brings, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful.

In the Old Testament, there was a veil between the holy place and the most holy place because the priest who functioned daily in the holy place was himself a sinner.

The writer of Hebrews says, “Let us draw near with a true heart with a full assurance of faith

having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering for He who promised is faithful.” Paul says this to the Galatians, also, in Galatians 5:1a:

It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then...

Then, in Galatians 5:1b, Paul gives us the negative command:

...Do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.

The yoke of slavery, as we have seen, is legalism.

Now, verse 2:

Mark my words! I, Paul, tell you that if you let yourselves be circumcised, Christ will be of no value to you at all.

What is he saying here? Salvation by grace and salvation by law-keeping are two diametrically opposite systems of salvation. Paul is not against circumcision. He circumcised Timothy. But he is against circumcision when it is used as a method of salvation. He says, if we are circumcised in order to be saved, we have placed ourselves under the law. And since the law, the Torah, is a unit, we are under obligation to keep every single requirement of the law in order to be saved. That is what it means if we insist on being circumcised in order to be saved.

Verse 4:

You who are trying to be justified by the law have been alienated from Christ [you have turned your back to Christ]; you have fallen away from grace.

It is not enough to know the law. It is not enough to keep part of the law. It is not even enough to keep most of the law. If we fail to keep the law on one point and we are depending on that

law-keeping for our salvation, there is no hope for us because the law is a unit and, if we want to use the law as a method of salvation, then we are obligated to keep all the law or we have failed.

There is something else we need to keep in mind. The moment we add law-keeping towards our salvation, we have fallen from grace. We have turned our backs from salvation through Jesus Christ alone. As mentioned several times in this study of Galatians, the two methods of salvation, legalism versus grace, are diametrically opposed to each other. They cannot be mixed. They are mutually exclusive. To turn to the law as a means of salvation is to say good-bye to salvation by grace. Keep in mind, Paul says in 1 Timothy 1:15, that Christ came to save sinners, we cannot keep the law as a means of salvation and say, “I want to be saved by grace,” because the moment we accept grace, we are admitting we are one hundred percent sinners:

Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to

save sinners — of whom I am the worst.

The moment we turn to law-keeping as a means of salvation, we are denying the Biblical truth of our total depravity. So there is no way we can mix these two systems of salvation.

In verse 5 we read:

For through the Spirit we eagerly await by faith the righteousness for which we hope.

When we accept Christ, the Holy Spirit comes and dwells in us. We have now become born-again Christians. Paul says, in Romans 8:16-17, the first thing the Holy Spirit does is convince us that we are God's children:

The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs — heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.

He brings with Him peace that comes from Jesus Christ and Him crucified. But, even though we stand justified before God in Christ as believers, we still have a sinful nature. We are still living in a sinful world. Therefore, salvation as an ultimate reality is future. Yes, we are saved by hope, Paul says in Romans 8, but hope is not hope if we already had it in reality. Because we are saved by hope, we patiently wait for the ultimate salvation of righteousness by faith. Through Jesus Christ, we have three basic elements of salvation.

1. First, we have justification, which simply means we stand perfect, we stand complete, we stand absolutely righteous before God and His law, in Christ Jesus so that the moment we believe, the law no longer condemns us to death. We have passed from death to life. These are the words of Jesus in John 5:24.

“Very truly I tell you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be judged but has crossed over from death to life.”

However, that is not all the salvation God has brought us in Jesus Christ. Our standing is perfect, but we still have a sinful nature.

2. The second element of salvation, which is an ongoing process, daily to be experienced by the Christian, is sanctification. Through the Spirit, as we walk in the Spirit, the flesh is conquered. In Galatians 5:16, Paul says:

So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.

This is sanctification. But the progress of Christian growth, of holy living, does not change our nature.

3. We now come to the third element, the ultimate element of salvation, which is glorification. This will take place at the Second Coming of Christ when “this mortal puts on immortality.” 1 Corinthians 15:51-54:

Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed — in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality. When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: “Death has been swallowed up in victory.”

Then, and then only, will we experience the total salvation that we have accepted in Jesus Christ by faith. Paul is saying that a true Christian has peace with God through justification by faith but he is patiently waiting for the ultimate salvation which is the redemption of our bodies.

In Galatians 5:6, Paul says, in Christ Jesus, neither circumcision nor uncircumcision gets you anything:

For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor

uncircumcision has any value. The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love.

Salvation is entirely a free gift. What we do, whether it is the act of circumcision or the act of baptism, doesn't save us. Any performance that we do in the name of Christ doesn't save us, whether it is casting out devils, performing miracles, or anything that we do as Christians. These make no contribution towards our salvation. Yes, sanctification is the evidence of justification. It is the fruits of salvation, but makes no contribution to it. Anything we do, or God does in us, has no merit. We are saved entirely by Jesus Christ and Him crucified.

Paul is saying, "If you Galatian Christians are trying to become a Jew through the circumcision, you are deceiving yourselves. The only true Jew in God's eyes is a Jew who has no confidence in himself and is resting in Christ." There is only one way we can be saved, there is only one way the Jews and the Gentiles will be saved. It is through Jesus Christ, His life, death, and resurrection.

The only result of genuine justification by faith, the only thing we look forward to and live for, is faith which works through love. The moment we accept Christ and the Holy Spirit comes and dwells in us, not only does He remind us that we are a child of God, not only does He bring peace into our hearts, but He also brings into our hearts a vital ingredient called agape love. Paul describes agape in detail in 1 Corinthians 13 and designates it as the supreme gift of the Holy Spirit to the believer. 1 Corinthians 13:4-8a:

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails.

This agape love is a love that was revealed in the life of Christ. It is a love that will love our neighbors more than ourselves. It is a love that

will reflect the character of Christ. The only thing that the Christian must look forward to while waiting for the ultimate salvation, which is glorification, is reflecting the life of Christ.

In the Sermon on the Mount, in Matthew 5:14a, Jesus said to the disciples:

“You are the light of the world.”

The “you” is plural in the original and the word “light” is singular because that light represents only one Person, Jesus Christ. But as Christians who have now become indwelt by the Spirit of Christ, we have become the means by which Christ is reflected through us. Jesus says in Matthew 5:16:

In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.

“Let this light, let Christ, shine out of you by your good works.”

When Jesus was on this earth, He went about doing good.

In John 13:34-35, Jesus made it clear that, if we love one another as Christ loved us, which is the fruits of salvation, all the world, all people, will realize that we are His disciples because we have this agape love one for another:

“A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”

This is Christianity.

In Galatians 5:7, Paul says:

You were running a good race. Who cut in on you to keep you from obeying the truth?

This is a very important statement, “You were running a good race.” Salvation is a gift. It is free but Christian living is compared to a race. It

requires much effort. It requires walking in the Spirit by faith and this faith must endure to the end. Jesus said in Matthew 10:17-22:

Be on your guard; you will be handed over to the local councils and be flogged in the synagogues. On my account you will be brought before governors and kings as witnesses to them and to the Gentiles. But when they arrest you, do not worry about what to say or how to say it. At that time you will be given what to say, for it will not be you speaking, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you. Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child; children will rebel against their parents and have them put to death. You will be hated by everyone because of me, but the one who stands firm to the end will be saved.

“The one who stands firm to the end will be saved.”

In Hebrews 10:35-39, the writer of Hebrews tells the Jewish Christians:

So do not throw away your confidence; it will be richly rewarded. You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised. For, “In just a little while, he who is coming will come and will not delay.” And, “But my righteous one will live by faith. And I take no pleasure in the one who shrinks back.” But we do not belong to those who shrink back and are destroyed, but to those who have faith and are saved.

“He who draws back from justification by faith will end up destroyed, but he whose faith endures unto the end will rejoice when Christ comes.”

Let us run the race. We have entered under the umbrella of justification by faith; now let us remain there by our Christian race, our battle against unbelief.

In verse 9 of Galatians 5, he says:

“A little yeast works through the whole batch of dough.”

What did Paul mean by this? In Matthew 16:5-12, we have a very important incident in the life of Christ to help us:

When they went across the lake, the disciples forgot to take bread. “Be careful,” Jesus said to them. “Be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees.”

They discussed this among themselves and said, “It is because we didn’t bring any bread.”

Aware of their discussion, Jesus asked, “You of little faith, why are you talking among yourselves about having no bread? Do you still not understand? Don’t you remember the five loaves for the five thousand, and how many basketfuls you gathered? Or the seven loaves for the four thousand, and how many basketfuls you gathered? How is it you don’t understand that I was not talking to you about bread? But be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees.” Then they understood that he was not telling them

to guard against the yeast used in bread, but against the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees.

Jesus had gone across to the other side of the Sea of Galilee. The disciples had not taken any bread. There were no shops and the disciples began to say, “We have no bread.” And Jesus said, “Beware of the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees.” The disciples said “He was talking about the bread that we forgot to bring.” Jesus, realizing their thoughts, said, “No, I am not referring to bread. Don’t you remember how I took three loaves and five fishes and fed five thousand? Why are you of so little faith?” Then the disciples realized that He was not talking of physical bread. He was talking of the teaching of the Pharisees, which was legalism. He was saying, “Legalism is contagious.” The moment we allow a little legalism to creep into the church, into the body of Christ, eventually it will affect the whole body. Therefore, we should fight legalism with everything we have.

Paul says in Galatians 5:10:

I am confident in the Lord that you will take no other view. The one who is throwing you into confusion, whoever that may be, will have to pay the penalty.

He is appealing to them. He says, “I believe that you are not fools. I believe that you will not be deceived by this false teaching. I believe that you will realize your mistake and return back to Christ.” He continues, “But he who troubled you [these Judaizers who came to Galatia, or Satan, who is behind all this] shall bear his judgment for whoever he is.” Remember what Paul said in the introduction to this letter in Galatians 1:8-9?

But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let them be under God’s curse! As we have already said, so now I say again: If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let them be under God’s curse!

Finally, in Galatians 5:11-12, Paul says:

Brothers and sisters, if I am still preaching circumcision, why am I still being persecuted? In that case the offense of the cross has been abolished. As for those agitators, I wish they would go the whole way and emasculate [mutilate or castrate] themselves!

Paul is very strong here because he realizes that legalism is one of the greatest enemies of the gospel. Do not allow anyone to sidetrack you from the pure truth of the gospel.

Chapter 12

True Christian Freedom

Galatians 5:13-15

You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love. For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: “Love your neighbor as yourself.” If you bite and devour each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other.

While working as a missionary in Uganda, a young Ugandan once approached me with a question. “Are you saved?” Obviously he did not realize who I was and, bless his heart, he wanted to witness Jesus Christ to me. So, I responded to his question with, “Saved from what?” And he said, “Are you saved from sin?” My response was, “Can you be more specific? Are you talking of the guilt and punishment of sin, the slavery and power of sin, or the nature and the presence of sin?”

Which one?”

After looking at me for a long time, he said, “You sound like a pastor.” I said, “Yes, I am a Pastor. In fact, I am a missionary to your country. Can I ask you the same question. Are you saved?” With great enthusiasm, with his arms lifted up in the air, he shouted, “Yes, I’m saved. I was saved three months ago.” I nearly responded with, “Then what on earth are you doing here if you are already saved?” As mentioned in our last study, it is threefold so that the Christian can say, “I am saved” but should never stop there. “I am saved, I am being saved, and I will be saved.” But the question I posed to this young man was, “If you are saved, why do I smell beer on your breath?” He turned to me and said, “Pastor, you know we are saved by grace and not by what we do.”

“Oh,” I said, “you mean to say that Christ lived a perfect life for us?” He said, “Yes.” “And He died instead of us?” The young man in excitement said, “Now you have it.” I said, “No, one more step.” He said, “What’s that?” I said, “He also

went to heaven instead of you.” Oh, he didn’t like that. He had a New Testament in his pocket and I said to him, “Would you please read 2 Timothy 2:11?” I gave him this passage because Timothy was a young man like this young man. I could have given him many other passages but this one said it very clearly. This text says:

Here is a trustworthy saying: If we died with him, we will also live with him....

This young man had turned freedom in Christ into license. In church history, wherever the true gospel has been proclaimed, there were always some who abused their freedom in Christ. This is the danger of the gospel. A famous German martyr called this “cheap grace.” Legalism is the enemy of the gospel but the danger of the gospel is antinomianism or cheap grace. Paul is fully aware of this problem. He spends all of Romans 6 dealing with this very issue. Romans 6:15:

What then? Shall we sin because we are not under the law but under grace? By no means!

Shall we keep on sinning because we are under grace, because grace abounds? The answer is, “God forbid.” Shall we keep on sinning because we are not under the law but under grace? And the response also is, “It is unthinkable. God forbid.”

Here, in our study, Galatians 5:13-15, Paul shares this very concern with the Galatian Christians. He does it for two reasons.

1. Because of the danger these Galatians faced in moving from legalism to antinomianism.

2. The other reason is because the Judaizers accused Paul of this very thing. The Judaizers said to Paul, “If you tell the world, if you tell Christians, that they already stand justified in Christ, that they are perfect in Christ, they are complete in Him, they have already passed from death to life, you have removed all incentives to live a holy life.” The Judaizers said this because they really did not understand true justification by faith.

As we turn to Galatians 5:13-15, we will look at true Christian freedom.

How are we to define true Christian freedom? First we need to understand from what the good news of the gospel has set us free. Then, we can understand what Christian freedom is not. In our last study, which was Galatians 5:1-12, Paul reminds the Galatian Christians and us that Christ has set us free and we must not allow anyone to rob us of this freedom. What is the freedom we have in Christ? Basically there are four areas.

1. Christ has set us free from all condemnation. In Romans 8:1, we have a wonderful statement, made in the context of the Christian's struggle to live a holy life. Paul says:

Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus....

Do you know why? It is because, in Christ Jesus, we have been set free from the law and its curse. Christ has set us free from the

condemnation of the law.

2. Christ has set us free from the fear of death. This death is the wages of sin, good-bye to life forever. Let us read a beautiful statement concerning this in Hebrews 2:14-15:

Since the children have flesh and blood, he too [referring to Christ] shared in their humanity so that by his death he might break the power of him who holds the power of death — that is, the devil — and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.

Every human being is born a slave to the fear of the wages of sin, the grim reaper, death. The saying is correct that there are in a war, no atheists in foxholes. Jesus came to set us free from this fear of death. That was accomplished by His life, death, and resurrection. All of this was based on His love. Man was redeemed because of God's unconditional love.

In 1 John 4:16-18, the apostle John tells us that

perfect knowledge of God's love and His redeeming activity in Christ, sets us free from the fear of the judgment:

And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them. This is how love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment: In this world we are like Jesus. There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love.

This is what made it possible for the Christians in the early church, for the Christians in Communist countries, to be willing to die for their faith. Why? Because they knew in whom they believed.

3. Christ set us free from our slavery to sin. Sin is not only an act. Sin is also a force. It is a power that dwells within our very nature. Paul brings this out clearly in Romans 7. He says the law is

spiritual in verse 14 but we are carnal, sold as slaves to sin:

We know that the law is spiritual; but I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin.

Christ also made this very clear to the Jews. Read the words of Christ recorded in John 8:32-36. Jesus, talking to the Jews, says:

“...Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”

They answered him, “We are Abraham’s descendants and have never been slaves of anyone. How can you say that we shall be set free?”

Jesus replied, “Very truly I tell you, everyone who sins is a slave to sin. Now a slave has no permanent place in the family, but a son belongs to it forever. So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.

We don’t know how the Jews could say they’d

never been slaves, because right then, when they were speaking those very words, they were under the bondage of Rome. But Jesus was not talking to the Jews about political freedom. He was talking about mankind's slavery to sin.

Now read verse 36, for here Jesus defines what He meant by the word truth:

So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.

Christ has set us free from the slavery to sin. In Romans 6:18 and 22, Paul tells us that, because we Christians, we justified believers, have been set free from sin, we have a way of holy living and the end result, eternal life:

You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness. ...But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the benefit you reap leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life.

4. Finally, Christ has set us free from under the jurisdiction of the law. In Romans 6:14, Paul tells the believers:

For sin shall no longer be your master, because you are not under the law, but under grace.

In Romans 3:19, Paul tells us the whole world stands condemned, guilty under the law:

Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God.

But in Romans 6:14, talking to believers, he tells them they are no longer under law but under grace:

For sin shall no longer be your master, because you are not under the law, but under grace.

This means that one of the freedoms a Christian has received is “from under law” to “under grace.”

No longer can the law come to us and say, “Obey and live; if you disobey, you will die,” for a Christian is no longer under law. He doesn’t live under that system. He is under grace and grace brings salvation on the basis of the doing and the dying of our Lord Jesus Christ.

These are the four areas that constitute true Christian freedom: freedom from the condemnation of sin, fear of death, our slavery to sin, and the jurisdiction of the rulership of the law.

But the gospel does not set us free to sin or even to live a life that is in harmony with the desires of our sinful nature. In the heart of every human being is an inborn desire for freedom — political freedom, economic freedom, social freedom, and spiritual freedom. Most of the world that we see today displayed on our TV sets is a result of this desire for freedom. Man cannot save himself spiritually; he is bankrupt, but, too often, when we receive our freedom in Christ, this freedom is often misused and misunderstood.

An example of this happened one day while taking my wife to the African market in Kenya, in the Highlands. I saw a group of old men, handcuffed and guarded by a policeman. While my wife was shopping, I decided to comfort these prisoners. I didn't know what crime they had committed, so I said to them in Swahili, "Why are you in handcuffs? What is your problem?" One of the older men said to me, "When is independence coming to an end?" He meant independence from the British rule. I said, "Coming to an end? No, your freedom now is permanent. You have obtained independence."

Now this old man was concerned that when Kenya was a British colony, the British government was not so strict about these national Africans paying tax. If they failed to pay the tax, they were required to fix the road in front of their houses so that it would not cost the government so much to fix their roads. But, when they fought for freedom, many of the Africans of Kenya thought that freedom meant no more tax to pay. So, I had to explain to these poor Africans who were being

handcuffed for failing to pay their tax, that when you have independence it means responsibility. I asked these men, “How on earth do you expect the king and government to run the country without money and how are they to get the money if they don’t charge you tax?”

Likewise, Christianity, while it sets us free — free from this whole area that we have mentioned — does not set us free to do what we please. Some years ago this country, the United States, decided to give its people freedom. We called this “new morality” or moral freedom. But, since man is a slave to sin, this moral freedom, this new morality, has produced endless problems to this country. Premarital sex has increased, abortions have increased, all kinds of problems have increased so that we have reached the point where crime and sin have so multiplied in this country that many theologians are desperate to solve the problem. They have come up with an idea that is basically legalistic. It is called reconstruction theology. These theologians want the leadership of this country to fall into the hands of Christians who will

then legislate morality. This is legalism, because morality cannot be legislated. It doesn't work. Countries that have tried it have ended in corruption. The only way that man can be set free from his slavery to sin is the gospel of the Lord, Jesus Christ, the cross of Christ.

Paul is aware of the Galatians' problem of moving from legalism to antinomianism. In this passage of Galatians 5:13-15, he is talking of what Christian freedom is not. Before we look at the passage in detail, let's read it. It is a very short passage but full of significance:

You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love. For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: "Love your neighbor as yourself." If you bite and devour each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other.

1. Christian freedom is not freedom to indulge in the flesh. This is in the first part of verse 13:

You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love.

2.Christian freedom is not to exploit our fellow believers. This is the second part of verse 13:

...But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love.

The gospel does not give us the license to live as we please. The gospel does not give us license to exploit our fellow man as some were doing. Let us look at a passage that gave tremendous help in the mission field when beggars who could work, who could earn their living, found it easier to beg than to work. The passage is 2 Thessalonians 3, especially verses 6-10. Read the counsel that Paul gives these Christians at Thessalonica. Keep in mind that many of the Christians in Thessalonica believed that Christ was coming soon. They stopped working in their gardens and were taking advantage of their fellow believers. Paul says to

them:

In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, we command you, brothers and sisters, to keep away from every believer who is idle and disruptive and does not live according to the teaching you received from us. For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example. We were not idle when we were with you, nor did we eat anyone's food without paying for it. On the contrary, we worked night and day, laboring and toiling so that we would not be a burden to any of you. We did this, not because we do not have the right to such help, but in order to offer ourselves as a model for you to imitate. For even when we were with you, we gave you this rule: "The one who is unwilling to work shall not eat."

Here is the command, "The one who is unwilling to work shall not eat." Too many people take advantage of Christian love and hospitality. Paul says don't allow that to happen. Christians must serve one another, but anyone who takes advantage of this charity, then we must apply what

Paul tells us here.

Christian freedom is not freedom to exploit our fellow believers because they happen to be people of wealth.

3. Thirdly, Christian freedom is not freedom to disregard God's law. There are many people who think that Paul is against the law. No, Paul is not against the law, but he is against the law being used as a method or as a means of salvation. When it comes to the law as a standard of Christian living, Paul always upholds the law. The law, especially the spirit of the law which is love, must be upheld as a standard of Christian living but condemned as a means of salvation. Read Galatians 5:14:

For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: "Love your neighbor as yourself."

Because of our sinful nature, we are born egocentric. We are born with unchangeable love towards self. We love ourselves when we are good; we love ourselves when we are bad. The

love that God instilled in Adam at the creation made a U-turn at the Fall so that it became self-centered.

Christ said also in Matthew 19 to the young man who asked, “What good thing must I do to get eternal life?” that just as we love ourselves unconditionally, we must likewise now project unconditional love towards our fellow man. This is impossible through human effort. This is the result of the power of the gospel in our lives. Paul says that when we stand under the umbrella of justification by faith, not only do we have peace with God, but we also have a transformation of life. We have a life which, in terms of our human relationships, is a life of love. When we love one another, then all the law is fulfilled because now we are reflecting, producing, and experiencing the fruits of the Spirit which is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, temperance, and so on, against which the law has nothing.

Finally, Paul ends in Galatians 5:15:

If you bite and devour each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other.

But “if you bite and devour one another” — this is what legalism produces. The moment we go under the umbrella of legalism, we no longer look at Christ for our salvation, we look at ourselves. Under grace, all of us are one hundred percent sinners, saved by grace. Therefore, there is nothing for us to compare ourselves with each other. We are all in the same position, totally depraved, saved by grace. Our hearts are full with joy and gratitude but legalism looks at our performance. Our performances are not the same. We discover that when a person is a legalist, he tends to judge himself or compare himself with those who are less successful than he is. We have a lot of controversy, a lot of devouring each other, a lot of judging. Paul says, if we go back to legalism, our church will cease to be a loving church. It will be a church full of jealousy, backbiting, gossip, and judging each other. This is the fruit of legalism.

What is our conclusion regarding this passage?

The Christian life is neither the life of legalism, works of the law as a means of salvation, nor a life of license (do as we please). It is a life of liberty, but true Christian liberty has certain responsibilities motivated by love. These responsibilities are twofold.

1. Do nothing that affects your relationship to God. When we look at Paul's counsel to Christians from Romans 12 onwards, especially chapter 14:7-8, we will realize that we, as Christians, should do nothing that affects our relationship to God:

For none of us lives for ourselves alone, and none of us dies for ourselves alone. If we live, we live for the Lord; and if we die, we die for the Lord. So, whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord.

2. Christian responsibility means doing nothing that will cause a fellow believer to stumble. On the one hand, we live a life that is pleasing to God. On the other hand, we do nothing that will cause our fellow believers to go in the wrong direction. True

Christian freedom means now we are free to live a life of loving service and a life of self-control. Let us avoid these two traps that Satan has set. He doesn't care which trap we fall into. He doesn't care which ditch we have slipped into: legalism on one side and antinomianism, or cheap grace, on the other. Neither of these represent the gospel. Yes, they may, in certain aspects, resemble the gospel, but they are counterfeits.

It is my prayer that you will keep on that narrow road that leads you to heaven, that narrow road which is Christ and Him crucified. On the one hand, you will be on guard against any form of legalism that sidetracks you from this gospel. On the other hand, you must avoid the danger of cheap grace. Christianity has received a bad name because too many Christians have failed to live the Christian life: love for God and love for their fellow men.

May it never be said of you as a Christian living today that Christianity opens the door to live a life of license. May God bless you that you may

keep on that narrow way and it is my prayer that you will reflect the life of Christ while you rejoice in the peace that you have through Him.

Chapter 13

Spirit Versus Flesh

Galatians 5:16-26

In Luke's gospel, we have an account of Christ's visit to his home town, Nazareth. He goes to the synagogue on Sabbath and the priest hands him the scroll of Isaiah to read. He opens it to what we know as chapter 61 and reads verses 1 and 2, "The Year of the Lord's Favor":

The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me, because the Lord has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn....

As our introduction to our study, we will read what Jesus read and how he responded to it. Luke

4:18-21:

“The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”

Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him. He began by saying to them, “Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.”

Christ came to set us free. But free from what? The apostle Paul, whom God chose to expound the good news of salvation, proclaimed — in his epistles and, especially, in Romans and Galatians 5:1-15 — that this freedom was freedom from the guilt and condemnation of the law, freedom from legalism, that is, using the law or good works as a method of salvation and freedom from the power and our slavery to sin.

This freedom, as we saw in our last study examining Galatians 5:13-15, does not give us license to sin but sets us free to live a life of self-control and loving service. But, how can we live such a life? This is the question that many sincere Christians ask. “We appreciate the assurance of salvation that the gospel brings to us,” they say, “but how do we live the Christian life, a life of self-control, a life of loving service? We are still struggling in our Christian experience.”

This study, Galatians 5:16-26, answers that question. But before we examine this passage, it is important for us, as Christians, to understand what takes place in us, at our conversion, when we believe and accept Jesus Christ as our Savior. This change in us takes place in our minds. Our English Bible calls this repentance. The Greek word means a change of mind, a making of a U-turn of the mind. But no change takes place to our flesh or to our sinful nature. In Ephesians 2:3, Paul tells us that the unbeliever follows a life of sin with his flesh, or, sinful nature and also with his mind:

All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath.

But, in Romans 7:15-25 (see text below), where he discusses the experience of the believer who has not yet learned and understood to walk in the Spirit or who is still trying to live under the law, the apostle Paul tells us that there is a total contradiction between the flesh, which is unchangeable, and the mind, which has made a U-turn.

The second thing that we need to realize at conversion is that we experience what is known as regeneration or the new birth. 2 Peter 1:2-4 tells us that we become partakers of the divine nature:

Grace and peace be yours in abundance through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord. His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who

called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature, having escaped the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.

In the dialogue Jesus had with Nicodemus in John 3:5-8, Jesus said to Nicodemus, “Nicodemus, you need to be born again. You need to be born from above. You need to be born of the Spirit.”

Jesus answered, “Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. You should not be surprised at my saying, ‘You must be born again.’ The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit.”

These twofold experiences every true, genuine believer has gone through — a change of mind and the new birth — brings about a great tension

between the converted mind and the Spirit, and the unconverted flesh which still is part of our being. Paul graphically describes this struggle between the converted mind and the unconverted and unconvertible flesh in Romans 7:15-24:

I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. For I know that good itself does not dwell in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do — this I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it.

So I find this law at work: Although I want to do good, evil is right there with me. For in my inner being I delight in God's law; but I see another law at work in me, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the

law of sin at work within me. What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death?

But our question is, “Can we, as Christians, overcome the flesh?” Do we have to live with this frustrating tension between the converted mind that desires to do good, to obey the law of God, to fulfill the will of God, and the unconvertible flesh that desires and loves to sin?

Because of this frustrating experience, there are many Christians who question their conversion when they face such turmoil. But the fact is, the believer has two natures. These two natures are at war with each other. This will continue until our dying day. A believer still has a sinful nature with which he was born. But because of the new birth experience, regeneration, the believer also becomes partaker of the divine nature. These two natures, the flesh and the Spirit are at constant war with each other. Hence the tension between flesh and Spirit is in reality a good sign. It is evidence of our conversion. If we don't have this tension then we

need to question whether we are a born again Christian.

But that still doesn't answer the question, "Can this sinful flesh, which contradicts the desires of the converted mind, be subdued and conquered?" Romans 7 proves, clearly, without any shadow of a doubt, that our converted minds, no matter how sincere they are or how strong-willed we are, cannot, and I repeat, cannot in and of themselves conquer the flesh. Yes, it is possible, by using our willpower, to subdue the flesh for a season, but to overcome it, to conquer it, the answer is, "No." Paul's conclusion in Romans 7:24-25a is:

What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death? Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord!

How does Jesus do it? The answer is found in Galatians 5:16-26. Paul makes it absolutely clear that, through the indwelling Spirit, we can mortify the deeds of the flesh.

With this background, we are now ready to examine this passage. He is talking to believers whom he has convinced to stand free in the freedom they have in Jesus Christ. Galatians 5:16-26:

So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever you want. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.

The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace,

forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other.

This is a tremendous passage in terms of Christian living.

Remember that Christian living is the fruits of the gospel. It makes no contribution to our acceptance before God. We are accepted by God and before God on the basis of the doing and dying of Jesus Christ and nothing else. The only way you and I can be accepted before God is through the grace of our Lord, Jesus Christ. The Galatians had sidetracked from this wonderful truth because they had submitted to the false teaching of the Judaizers, that, besides believing in Christ, you must be circumcised and you must keep the law of Moses and so on. Keep in mind that Christian living, wonderful as it may be, does not contribute one

iota towards our salvation. It carries no merit with it. Christian living is the fruits of the gospel. It is the evidence that we are already justified. We are already perfect in Christ through faith in His life and death, through His shed blood.

Paul says to Christians, “I say then, walk in the Spirit and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.” Then, in verse 17, he describes the tremendous tension and the struggle between the flesh and the Spirit:

For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever you want.

Verse 17 is an explanation of verse 16. If we read verse 17 by itself, it sounds as though Christians are incapable of living a life of godliness, loving service, a life that is pleasing to God. But, in verse 16, Paul tells us that as we, as Christians, walk in the Spirit, then, we will not fulfill the lusts of the flesh. He is not talking about

walking by building up our willpower. The will cannot conquer the flesh but, if we walk in the Spirit, we shall not fulfill the lusts of the flesh. We have sinful natures that are constantly bombarding us with sinful desires. We don't have to be convinced of this because we are all familiar with it.

Can we say, "No" to our flesh? The mind may be able to say "No" to the flesh for a season but, sooner or later, especially when we are tired or under pressure, the mind gives in and the flesh takes over. It takes the mind into captivity and makes us do what our converted minds hate to do. This is the Romans 7 experience. But Paul is telling us, in Galatians 5:16 and in Romans 8:5 onwards, that, if we walk in the Spirit, if we allow the Holy Spirit to control our minds, then, the flesh will actually be subdued and conquered so that the flesh will not be able to do what it wants to do. Galatians 5:16:

So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.

Romans 8:5-8:

Those who live according to the flesh have their minds set on what the flesh desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. The mind governed by the flesh is death, but the mind governed by the Spirit is life and peace. The mind governed by the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. Those who are in the realm of the flesh cannot please God.

Galatians 5:19-21 is helpful:

The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.

Notice that, when the sinful acts are produced

in the believer, these are referred to as works of the flesh. But, Paul tells us in Romans 8:9 onwards, that we Christians are not of the flesh because we have accepted Jesus Christ as our Savior. Romans 8:9-13:

You, however, are not in the realm of the flesh but are in the realm of the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, they do not belong to Christ. But if Christ is in you, then even though your body is subject to death because of sin, the Spirit gives life because of righteousness. And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies because of his Spirit who lives in you.

Therefore, brothers and sisters, we have an obligation — but it is not to the flesh, to live according to it. For if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live.

We are now born again Christians. We are to be walking in newness of life which is the Spirit. And if we walk in the Spirit, if we are led by the Spirit then we are not under the law. Paul is saying in verse 18 of Galatians 5:

But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.

What does it mean by this? To be under the law, as we saw earlier, means that we are living under the jurisdiction of the law. To live under the jurisdiction of the law means that we must obey the law in and of ourselves in order to be saved. To be under law means that the law requires us, as individuals, through our own self effort, to obey it perfectly. If we disobey, we shall die.

It is only under grace, only when we accept Jesus Christ as our Savior, only under the umbrella of righteousness or justification by faith alone, that the Holy Spirit is given to us. The questions Paul asked in Galatians 3:1-5 were:

You foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? Before your very eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed as crucified. I would like to learn just one thing from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by believing what you heard? Are you so foolish? After beginning by means of the Spirit, are you now trying to finish by means of the flesh? Have you experienced so much in vain — if it really was in vain? So again I ask, does God give you his Spirit and work miracles among you by the works of the law, or by your believing what you heard?

God gives us His Spirit only when we recognize that we are total sinners, one hundred percent sinners, incapable of saving ourselves. Therefore, we have, by faith, accepted the gift of God, Jesus Christ, as our righteousness and our redemption and our security and as our obedience to salvation.

The work of the Holy Spirit is not to produce righteousness in us in order to save us. We are saved by the doing and dying of Christ and nothing

else. The work of the Holy Spirit is to make real in our experience this salvation because, in the salvation that God obtained for all men in Jesus Christ which Christians have accepted by faith, we have salvation full and complete in the holy history of our Lord, Jesus Christ. This includes salvation from the guilt and punishment of sin, salvation from the power and slavery to sin, and salvation from the presence and nature of sin — all three are ours by faith in Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit is sent into our lives to make this real in our experience.

The moment we accept Jesus Christ by faith the Holy Spirit comes and dwells in us. We experience the new birth, or regeneration. The first thing that the Holy Spirit does is to convince us that we are children of God. We are no longer slaves to sin but free people, children of God. We have been set free by the Lord, Jesus Christ.

Secondly, the Holy Spirit works in us with His power to subdue and conquer the flesh so that the will of God, which we could not keep before our

conversion, will now become a reality as we walk in the Spirit. Finally, at the Second Coming of Christ, “the perishable will be clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality” [1 Corinthians 15:54].

But here in Galatians 5, Paul is dealing with what we call sanctification, Christian living. From beginning to end, the walk of the Christian is a walk of faith alone. We are justified by faith alone. We are sanctified by faith alone. This is not sitting back and doing nothing because faith is always a struggle. Faith is saying, “Not I, but Christ.” For us to say, “Not I, but Christ” always involves a struggle because, by nature, we are self-dependent. By nature, we are egocentric; therefore, there is a struggle. Paul calls it a fight of faith.

When we accept Jesus Christ as our Savior, faith is not simply a mental assent to truth; faith is saying that I am crucified with Christ. In other words, “I was executed” or, as Paul says in Romans 6:6, the old self life died with Christ on the cross so that my Adamic, egocentric, sinful life

that I was born with, was submitted to my death on the cross, through faith. In exchange, I accept the life of Christ which Jesus gave me at the cross. Romans 6:6-7:

For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body ruled by sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin — because anyone who has died has been set free from sin.

At the cross, the corporate life of the human race, that stands condemned under God's law, died. Paul tells us in Romans 6:7, "He that is dead to sin is freed [or justified] from sin." Or he says in Romans 7:1, the law has dominion over us as long as we are living:

Do you not know, brothers and sisters — for I am speaking to those who know the law — that the law has authority over someone only as long as that person lives?

The moment we die, we are freed from under

the jurisdiction of the law. The law was not done away with at the cross; we were done away with. The old life was done away with. In exchange, we receive a new life.

We read these wonderful, sublime statements in Galatians 2:20:

I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

It is not I but Christ who lives in me. This is the fundamental principle of genuine Christianity. From beginning to end, the formula of the gospel is the same, “Not I, but Christ.”

Here Paul is telling us we need to put into practice this truth that we accepted and which led to our conversion. When Paul says, “I have been crucified with Christ” in Galatians 2:20, he uses the perfect tense, which in Greek means something that took place in the past but is still going on.

When we accept Christ, we are submitting to something that took place at the cross. But the effect of that submission must go on throughout our lives. It is the same as making the marriage vow. When a man and woman are married, they make vows to each other. This takes place once, but now they have to put those vows into practice as they live the marriage life. So, also, the Christian must put into practice what he has submitted to by faith when he first came to Christ. In view of this, we walk in the Spirit.

Paul explains “walking in the Spirit” in Romans 8:5 onwards [text above]. The minds of those who are walking in the Spirit are preoccupied with the things of the Spirit. The minds of those who are walking in the flesh are preoccupied with the things of the flesh. This can be explained very simply. As already mentioned, a converted, born again Christian has two natures. He has the old nature which is dead by faith but in reality is still there, and he has a new, born again nature. He is a partaker of the divine nature. Therefore, we have

two natures. Both these natures have desires. The flesh wants to sin. The Spirit wants to live a life pleasing to God. Both these natures put these desires into the converted mind. The flesh cannot do what it wants without the consent of the mind. Also, the Spirit cannot do what it wants without the consent of the mind. The Battleground in Christian living is the mind.

When a Christian is walking in the Spirit, preoccupied with spiritual things, praying without ceasing — which means keeping our minds totally connected with the Spirit — then the Spirit will give the mind the power to say “No” to the flesh. Since the Spirit of Christ is stronger than the law of sin and death in us, the Spirit will gain victory every time.

But the Spirit does more than gain victory in our lives. It also produces fruit. Notice in Galatians 5:22-23a, Christian living is not works but it is fruit bearing:

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace,

forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

The flesh does works because it originates from us but what the Holy Spirit produces in us does not originate in us or through us but through the Holy Spirit. Yes, it is produced in us, but the source of that holy righteous living, that life of self-control and loving service is produced in us through the Holy Spirit. Therefore, Paul calls it fruit bearing. The fruit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering and so on. Verse 23b:

Against such things there is no law.

Therefore, what we fail to do under law we can now do under grace.

Paul ends this wonderful chapter 5 of Galatians by saying that those who belong to Christ have crucified the flesh with all its desires and passions. We must live by the Spirit because Christianity is not simply accepting Christ as our Savior mentally, but Christianity is participating in Christ. To

participate in Christ we must constantly say, “Not I, but Christ.” This is the truth that sets us free, not only free from condemnation of the law but free to live a life that is pleasing to God. Galatians 5:24-26:

Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other.

We will end with 2 Corinthians 3:17-18:

Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.

Paul tells us that we who are set free in Christ, looking at Christ with open face, are transformed from glory to glory, even by the Spirit of the Lord.

Chapter 14

Christian Relationships

Galatians 6:1-10

With this study, we turn to the last chapter in Galatians, chapter 6. The custom of Paul, always, is to end his epistles, or letters, with counsel or exhortation on Christian living. This is because the gospel is not some wonderful theory but the power of God unto salvation, salvation from sin, its guilt, its power, its punishment. It is a power that transforms our lives.

In our last study, which was Galatians 5:16-26, the apostle Paul describes the Christians in a struggle between the flesh and the Spirit and the way of victory as we submit the flesh to the cross of Christ and walk in the Spirit, who is able to bear fruit in our lives. In Galatians 6:1-10, which will be our present study, Paul describes some of the practical results of that victory or of Christian living which involves:

1. Our relationship with one another, Galatians 6:1-5.
2. Doing good to others, Galatians 6:6-10.

Let us begin our study by looking, first, at Galatians 6:1-5 and then we will go to the second half of our study, verses 6-10, doing good to others.

Galatians 6:1-5:

Brothers and sisters, if someone is caught in a sin, you who live by the Spirit should restore that person gently. But watch yourselves, or you also may be tempted. Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ. If anyone thinks they are something when they are not, they deceive themselves. Each one should test their own actions. Then they can take pride in themselves alone, without comparing themselves to someone else, for each one should carry their own load.

What is Paul saying here? First, when he uses the word “brother” or “brethren” [as some translations read], he says, “fellow believers.” He is now dealing with the relationship between Christians. This is the relationship that should be seen within the church, if one of your fellow believers is caught in sin. The words Paul uses here mean a slip or mishap. It’s like a man walking on a slippery road who slips and falls because the road is icy. This is in contrast to willfully, deliberately choosing a life of sin.

The apostle John brings out the same idea in 1 John 2:1:

My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have an advocate with the Father — Jesus Christ, the Righteous One.

He says, “My little children, I am not telling you the good news of salvation so that you may condone sin.” He uses the present continuous tense for the verb “sin.” In other words, if anyone makes

a slip and falls, not because he wants to but because he has not yet learned to walk fully in the Spirit, how should we treat such a person? How should we treat a believer who has slipped? The answer is found in Galatians 6:1:

Brothers and sisters, if someone is caught in a sin, you who live by the Spirit should restore that person gently. But watch yourselves, or you also may be tempted.

Now, what does he mean by “You who live by the Spirit”? In the first three verses of 1 Corinthians 3, we will discover that Paul divides all born again Christians into two camps:

1. “carnal,” or worldly, and
2. “spiritual.”

Let us review this passage. 1 Corinthians 3:1-3:

Brothers and sisters, I could not address you as people who live by the Spirit but as people who are

still worldly — mere infants in Christ. I gave you milk, not solid food, for you were not yet ready for it. Indeed, you are still not ready. You are still worldly. For since there is jealousy and quarreling among you, are you not worldly? Are you not acting like mere humans?

Paul says that when we first come to Christ, we are babes in Christ. Yes, we have become partakers of the divine nature. We are born again Christians. We have experienced the new birth but just as any human baby who is born with two legs has to learn how to walk and, while learning, falls many times, so also, a babe in Christ, who has to learn to walk in the Spirit, is often carnal or controlled by the flesh. Therefore, the behavior of a carnal Christian, even though that person is accepted before God in Christ, has the Holy Spirit dwelling in him (see 1 Corinthians 3:16), the behavior of a carnal Christian is no different, to a large degree, from the behavior of an unconverted man. In Corinthians, Paul is rebuking the Christians for remaining babes in Christ approximately 10 years after their conversion.

It is wonderful to have a baby in the home. Parents, especially the mother, are happy to change diapers for one, two, or maybe three years. But after 10 years, if the mother still has to change diapers, there is something drastically wrong with that child. If a Christian, having experienced the new birth, is still walking in the flesh 10 years later, there is something wrong. In Galatians 6, Paul is saying that mature Christians will always help the immature Christian when he falls just like a mother or the parents will lift up a child that has fallen who is learning how to walk.

What are the signs, the evidence of maturity? What does it mean to be a mature Christian? A mature Christian is one who has lost all confidence in himself, who says:

For I know that good itself does not dwell in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out.

This is a quotation from Romans 7:18.

Therefore, a mature Christian does not look down upon the person who has fallen but says to himself, “There go I, but for the grace of God.” This is the difference between a mature Christian and a legalist.

A legalist is always comparing himself with those who have less success. An example of this is found in John 8:2-11:

At dawn he appeared again in the temple courts, where all the people gathered around him, and he sat down to teach them. The teachers of the law and the Pharisees brought in a woman caught in adultery. They made her stand before the group and said to Jesus, “Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of adultery. In the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?” They were using this question as a trap, in order to have a basis for accusing him.

But Jesus bent down and started to write on the ground with his finger. When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to

them, “Let any one of you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her.” Again he stooped down and wrote on the ground.

At this, those who heard began to go away one at a time, the older ones first, until only Jesus was left, with the woman still standing there. Jesus straightened up and asked her, “Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?”

“No one, sir,” she said.

“Then neither do I condemn you,” Jesus declared. “Go now and leave your life of sin.”

One day, Jesus was preaching to the people. There was a large crowd encircling Him. He was giving them a message when suddenly they heard a commotion at the back. They saw some men. Everybody knew who these men were because there were large boxes tied on top of their heads. They were Pharisees. They looked like unicorns. Those boxes contained scriptural texts. They were pushing the crowd aside and they were dragging in

a woman. They dropped her in front of Jesus. This was all planned. The purpose was to trap Jesus. They said, “Master (not Messiah, but teacher), Moses says that when anyone is caught in the act of adultery, they should be stoned and we have caught her in the very act. What is your verdict of this woman?” Jesus, instead of replying, bent down and began writing in the sand. The Pharisees thought that they had trapped Him at last. They said to themselves that this was a successful plan to trap Jesus. If Jesus said, “Don’t stone her,” He would have been breaking the law of Moses. On the other hand, if He said, “Stone her,” He would be going against the law of Rome. Either decision would get Him into trouble. They thought they had Him trapped. They said, tell us, what is your verdict? Jesus, looking up at them made a very interesting statement. He said, “He that has no sin, let him throw the first stone.” This is how our English Bible translates it. But in the text in the original Greek language, the word “sin” is preceded by the definite article. Jesus really said, “He that is without the sin.” Jesus was not referring to any kind of sin. He was referring to

the sin of which these Pharisees were accusing Mary. It is very interesting that if they caught her in the very act, what about the man? He was one of them! Suddenly, the Pharisees realized that Jesus could see through the facade. He could see through their mask and they realized that He knew that they were just as guilty as she was. One by one they walked away.

Spiritual Christians recognize that, even though they may not be committing acts of sin, they are potentially, by nature, even after their conversion, one hundred percent sinners, saved by grace. It is not our acts of sin that make us sinners. This is the mistake that the Jews made.

1. The Jews failed to understand the spirit of the law which is love. They were keeping the law only in the letter, the “dos” and “don’ts”, the rules that they had made up.

2. The Jews looked at sin only as an act. They forgot that the law demands not only perfect acts, but also perfect motives. Paul says, in Romans

7:7b:

Nevertheless, I would not have known what sin was had it not been for the law. For I would not have known what coveting really was if the law had not said, “You shall not covet.”

“I did not know sin until the law showed me that ‘You shall not covet.’” Why did he choose that specific command? It was because covetousness has nothing to do with an act but is a cherished desire that contradicts the will of God.

3. But there is a third definition of sin that the Jews failed to realize. Paul brings this out in Romans 7:20 onwards:

Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it.

So I find this law at work: Although I want to do good, evil is right there with me. For in my inner being I delight in God’s law; but I see

another law at work in me, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within me. What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death? Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord!

So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God's law, but in my sinful nature a slave to the law of sin.

He says that there is in him a force, a principle, that he calls sin. "It is not I but sin that lives in me." He calls it the law of sin and death. This makes us sinners. We are born with it and, therefore, we are born sinners. Our sinful acts are simply the outward evidence, the fruits of what we are, just as sanctification, Christian living, should be the fruits of what we are in Jesus Christ.

Paul says here that we should bear one another's burdens because we belong to one body, just as when the toe kicks a stone and is hurt, the whole body comes to its aid, so also we should

bear each other's burdens. We should not look at ourselves as superior to others because we are all one hundred percent sinners, saved by grace.

We find a simple illustration of this in the New Testament and especially Paul's writings. Paul compared the church with the human body. 1 Corinthians 12:27:

Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.

The body is many members but it is one body. These members are vitally linked to the head which, spiritually, in the church, is Christ. The body is totally controlled by the head. Here is an example. Let us say that my stomach is hungry. It's empty and wants food. It sends a message to the head. "Head, I'm starving." The head sends a message to the legs. "Take this body to the fridge." Now, the legs do not say to the head, "I am not hungry. If the stomach is hungry, why doesn't it go itself?" No, the legs are in total submission to the head. That is what we Christians

must be to Jesus Christ. The legs take the body to the fridge. Now, the head orders the hands, “Open the door and bring the food out and feed the stomach.” The hands don’t say to the head, “I am not hungry. I am tired. I want to rest. If the stomach wants to eat, it can feed itself.” No, the hands also are in total submission to the head. And so must we be.

As Christians, we are living under the dominance of Jesus Christ. If Christians are walking in the Spirit and are constantly applying the principle of the cross to their lives — “I am crucified with Christ; I am still living; It is not I, but Christ lives in me” — then we will have an attitude towards the believer as if their fault, their mishap, is ours. Then, in gentleness, in kindness, and in love, we will restore them because they are part of us. This is the power of the gospel.

Sin has not only alienated us from God, but sin has brought alienation between man and man. It has produced all kinds of divisions in this world — racial, class, tribal, caste, and color. It has

produced bamboo curtains and iron curtains. All of this is the result of sin.

In the New Testament times, the world was divided between Jews and Gentiles, between slaves and masters. Today, it is divided with all kinds of factions. The gospel removed every partition wall. It brought down every human barrier, and brought about the brotherhood of mankind in Jesus Christ. There is no male and no female. There is no Jew and no Gentile. There is no slave and no master. There is no rich and no poor, no educated, no uneducated. We are all one in Christ. This, is what the gospel does in the Christian church.

Talking to His disciples, Jesus says in John 13:34-35:

“A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”

“I want you to love each other just as I have

loved you” — unconditionally, without a cause, spontaneously. When the world sees this unconditional, self-emptying love reflected in the behavior of the believers, then it will know that they are His disciples. We are living in the scientific age which simply will not accept the theory of the gospel. The scientific age wants the gospel to be proven.

The reason so many countries in Eastern Europe turned Marxist is because Christianity failed to reveal the life of Christ and it is failing today in Bosnia and other countries. Do you know why Islam took over the Middle East? Those countries were once Christian countries. What happened? The church lost its saltiness. It became only an outward form of religion, denying the power thereof. As a result, Islam, in the Seventh Century, took over and today the prominent religion of the Middle East is Islam. Who is to blame? The Christian church has failed to demonstrate the power of the gospel.

Paul is saying, if the gospel is truly controlling

our lives, we are free, not just free from the guilt and condemnation of the law, but we are free from the power and the slavery of self which dominates the unconverted man. Then we can love each other unconditionally, as Jesus loves us.

There is a second result of the Christian walk, in Galatians 6:6-10:

Nevertheless, the one who receives instruction in the word should share all good things with their instructor. Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. Whoever sows to please their flesh, from the flesh will reap destruction; whoever sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life. Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.

The Christian not only carries the burden for one another, the Christian has not only a loving

relationship between brother and brother and restores those who are struggling, learning to walk in the Spirit, but the Christian goes about doing good. Most Christians have great difficulty reconciling grace with law or faith with works because outwardly, they seem to be opposing each other.

Because of this, many Christians who accept grace and faith, undermine or downplay law and works. And vice versa. This is a great error because — while it is true we are not saved by faith plus works or faith plus circumcision or faith plus keeping the law, we are saved by faith alone — the Bible most definitely teaches that we are saved by faith that works. The apostle James in chapter 2:14-24, brings this out clearly when he says:

What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save them? Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to them, “Go in peace; keep warm and well fed,” but does nothing about their physical

needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.

But someone will say, “You have faith; I have deeds.”

Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by my deeds. You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that — and shudder.

You foolish person, do you want evidence that faith without deeds is useless? Was not our father Abraham considered righteous for what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? You see that his faith and his actions were working together, and his faith was made complete by what he did. And the scripture was fulfilled that says, “Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness,” and he was called God’s friend. You see that a person is considered righteous by what they do and not by faith alone.

“Faith without works is dead.” Genuine

justification by faith does produce works.

A passage that puts this in a beautiful nutshell is Ephesians 2:8-10:

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith — and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God — not by works, so that no one can boast.

We are saved by grace alone, through faith and our works make no contribution towards our salvation. But we must not stop at verse 9. We must read verse 10:

For we [those who are justified by faith through grace] are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

The fruits of justification are good works.

Another passage that says the same thing is from the apostle Paul. This one is in Titus, a little

book after 2 Timothy. We will read two passages from Titus. The first one is Titus 2:14 which says:

...Who [referring to Christ] gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.

Now we turn to Titus 3:5 and 8, one dealing with our salvation, the other dealing with the fruits of salvation. First, verse 5:

...He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit....

That is how we are saved.

But now, in verse 8, he adds,

This is a trustworthy saying. And I want you to stress these things, so that those who have trusted in God [the born again Christian, the person who is

justified by faith in God's gift, Jesus Christ, those who believe in God] may be careful to devote themselves to doing what is good. These things are excellent and profitable for everyone [not to yourself but to others].

When Jesus was on this earth, He went about doing good. So also must a Christian reflect that life of Christ because Christianity is not simply a mental assent to the truth. But Christianity, in reality, is participating in Jesus Christ. Christianity is saying, "Not I, but Christ," or "For me to live is Christ." Colossians 1:27:

To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

The world no longer sees us but sees Christ living in us, the hope of glory.

Jesus tells us in Matthew 5:14a, talking to the disciples:

“You are the light of the world.”

The “you” is in the plural form in the original. The word “light” is in the singular. We are many but one light. That light is Jesus Christ who lightens every man today through us and in us.

Having said this, we will read what Paul says in Galatians 6:6-10. Verse 6:

Nevertheless, the one who receives instruction in the word should share all good things with their instructor.

God has chosen some to spend their full time in preaching the word, in evangelizing the unchurched. These people had to survive in this world and Paul is saying, “Those who feed you spiritually, who bless you spiritually by the proclamation of the word, you in turn must share your material blessing with them.”

Then, in verse 7, he lays down a fundamental principle:

Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows.

What is Paul saying here? That which man sows, he will reap. This is a fundamental principle, not only in agriculture, but in all things of life. This is one of the remarkable verses of Scripture. This is an immutable law that operates in every sphere of life, in agriculture, in physics, and in our daily living. A great evangelist was a drunkard before his conversion. One day someone asked him why he only drank carbonated water at church socials while others enjoyed banana splits and milkshakes. Do you know what his reply was? “When the Lord gave me a new heart at my conversion, He did not give me a new stomach.” That is a wonderful truth in the sense that He gave us a new heart. But the tragedy is we still have sinful natures. And because of this, we have a constant struggle with the flesh and, therefore, this inner struggle with the flesh and Spirit will continue to our dying day.

The question is, “How do we respond?” Some of the answers were given in our last study. Now we will look at Galatians 6:8:

Whoever sows to please their flesh, from the flesh will reap destruction; whoever sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life.

In our last study, we looked at Romans 8, especially verses 5-14 where Paul says that the mind of the person walking in the flesh, is preoccupied with fleshly things:

Those who live according to the flesh have their minds set on what the flesh desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. The mind governed by the flesh is death, but the mind governed by the Spirit is life and peace. The mind governed by the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God’s law, nor can it do so. Those who are in the realm of the flesh cannot please God.

You, however, are not in the realm of the flesh

but are in the realm of the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, they do not belong to Christ. But if Christ is in you, then even though your body is subject to death because of sin, the Spirit gives life because of righteousness. And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies because of his Spirit who lives in you.

Therefore, brothers and sisters, we have an obligation — but it is not to the flesh, to live according to it. For if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live.

For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God.

Friends, a Christian should not sow in the flesh. A farmer, for example, who plants corn expects corn in the harvest. He doesn't expect wheat. What we plant is what is produced. Let our minds

be totally dependent on the Spirit so our lives will be Spirit-controlled.

Paul says in verses 9 and 10 (of Galatians 5):

Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.

This is Christianity. It is the evidence of the power of the gospel in your life and mine.

Chapter 15

Legalism vs. Gospel

Galatians 6:11-18

We have now come to the very end of Paul's epistle to the Galatians. So far, he has been dictating this epistle to a scribe, what we would call today, a secretary. But now, as he approaches the end of this epistle, he takes the pen from the scribe's hand in order to add a personal postscript. Usually, this was just to add his signature or benediction as proof that this was a genuine letter and not a forgery.

Reading in 2 Thessalonians 3:17, Paul says:

I, Paul, write this greeting in my own hand, which is the distinguishing mark in all my letters. This is how I write.

Paul always signed his epistles with his own hand as proof that they were genuine Pauline

epistles.

However, when it comes to the Galatians, he writes several final sentences in his own personal handwriting. This is how deeply concerned he feels about the Galatians and their problem of legalism. His heart is running over with such love and anxiety for the Galatians that he writes this whole paragraph, Galatians 6:11-18. We will read this passage and then look at it in detail:

See what large letters I use as I write to you with my own hand!

Those who want to impress people by means of the flesh are trying to compel you to be circumcised. The only reason they do this is to avoid being persecuted for the cross of Christ. Not even those who are circumcised keep the law, yet they want you to be circumcised that they may boast about your circumcision in the flesh. May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. Neither circumcision nor

uncircumcision means anything; what counts is the new creation. Peace and mercy to all who follow this rule — to the Israel of God.

From now on, let no one cause me trouble, for I bear on my body the marks of Jesus.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brothers and sisters. Amen.

Notice how Paul begins this final section of his epistle to the Galatians. He says in verse 11:

See what large letters I use as I write to you with my own hand!

What is he trying to tell them? Why large letters? First, he is saying, “I am using large alphabet letters.” There are three basic reasons why he did this.

1. Because of his poor eyesight, as is already implied in Galatians 4:15:

Where, then, is your blessing of me now? I can testify that, if you could have done so, you would have torn out your eyes and given them to me.

2. He could be using large letters because he is distressed about their sidetracking from the gospel and having accepted a subtle form of legalism. His great burden is to make a strong point and so he uses large letters.

3. Finally, the reason he used large letters is because he wants to emphasize the importance of what he is saying.

If Paul wrote such an epistle today and used a computer, he would have bold-faced, italicized, and even underlined the line when typing these verses.

What is the thrust of this paragraph? It's over the issue of legalism versus the gospel. This is the thrust of the whole of this epistle. But here, Paul shows how they are opposite and, therefore, cannot be mixed, cannot be synthesized, cannot be

reconciled. They are mutually exclusive. Paul makes it clear in Galatians 5:4:

You who are trying to be justified by the law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace.

The moment you try to add lawkeeping or circumcision or good works towards your acceptance before God, you are falling from grace because it's either all of Christ as the basis of your salvation or none of Him.

With this in mind, let's now look at what Paul is saying in verses 12 onwards. But first let us examine three major differences between legalism and the gospel so, as we read verses 12 to 18, it will become clear why these two systems of salvation are mutually exclusive.

1. Legalism is primarily concerned with outward acts. Jesus kept reminding the Pharisees of this. "Oh, yes, you wash the outside of the cup but inside you are dirty. You paint your tombs,

whitewash them, so that they look beautiful but inside they are full of dead men's bones.” Legalism is only concerned with outward performance. But God demands, not only perfect acts, but perfect motives. The gospel is concerned with the heart. The gospel does not begin by changing us outwardly. It begins by giving us a new heart, new motives, new ideals. This is the New Covenant; He writes the law in our hearts, whereas, in the Old Covenant, the law was written on tables of stone. They were rules. But in the New Covenant, the law becomes the basic drive of the Christian life.

2. Legalism satisfies our egocentric concern or nature. We are by nature, because of the Fall, controlled by human pride. Legalism gives a lot of satisfaction to our egocentric nature. But the gospel, says Paul, crucifies the flesh with all its pride. Galatians 5:24:

Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

3. Legalism is salvation by “my own good works.” The gospel is salvation by grace alone. It is true, this gospel of salvation by grace alone does produce good works in the believer, but these works make no contribution towards our acceptance before God or towards our justification. Paul clearly tells in Galatians 2:16:

...Know that a person is not justified by the works of the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law, because by the works of the law no one will be justified.

We are justified by faith alone in the perfect life and the death of Jesus Christ.

Keep in mind these major differences as we look at Galatians 6:12 onwards:

Those who want to impress people by means of the flesh are trying to compel you to be circumcised. The only reason they do this is to

avoid being persecuted for the cross of Christ.

Paul is saying here, “As many as would like to brag in what they have accomplished, they insist that you should be circumcised only so they won’t suffer persecution for the cross of Christ.” Paul says here that the flesh likes to brag in what it accomplishes. The flesh likes to glory in “me.” “Glory for me” is the very heart of the sinful nature’s problem. The cross, on the other hand, takes the glory of man and puts it in the dust so that the cross gives no credit to human nature.

The cross is God’s verdict on the flesh, on the sinful nature. Human pride does not like to take the glory of man and put it in the dust. So the cross becomes an offense. The cross becomes a hindrance to human pride. The person who is a legalist hates the cross of Christ because the cross, as mentioned earlier, is God’s verdict on the flesh. There is nothing in the flesh that is salvageable. God’s verdict on the flesh is the cross.

Paul says in verse 13:

Not even those who are circumcised keep the law, yet they want you to be circumcised that they may boast about your circumcision in the flesh.

Those who insist that we must keep the law, those who insist that we must be circumcised in order to be saved, are they themselves failing but they want to put us into bondage just as they are in bondage. Jesus said to His disciples that the Pharisees were heaping upon their people a burden that they themselves could not carry. Why do they do it? So they may brag in what they have accomplished through us. “See how many souls I have won.” Soul winning is not the work of man. It is the work of the Holy Spirit. All that we Christians can do is witness Jesus Christ. It is the Holy Spirit that convicts men and women. We get no credit and the flesh doesn’t like that.

In verse 14, Paul says:

May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has

been crucified to me, and I to the world.

This is a powerful statement. First, Paul is saying it is unthinkable that a genuine Christian glories in anything else but Jesus Christ and Him crucified. The word “boast” (or “glory,” in some translations) is not as strong here as it is in the original Greek. Paul says, to him, the cross of Christ is everything. This is what he boasts about. This is what he glories in.

What does the cross mean to Paul? To him, it means that he was crucified to the world and the world was crucified to him. When a person is crucified and he is executed on the cross, the world is saying good-bye to him. But in Paul’s case, he is saying, “When I accept the cross of Christ, it is not only the world that says good-bye to me but I say good-bye to the world.” What does he mean by the word “world”? Does he mean that having accepted Christ, he goes to live in a monastery away from the world? No. That was the mistake of the monastic system. What does he mean, “I am crucified to the world”? In 1 John 2:15-17

[below], we will discover the meaning of the word “world” as used by the New Testament writers.

There are many passages such as James 1:27 and James 4 which bring out the same idea. But 1 John 2 explains the word “world” in a very clear sense. Jesus made it clear to the disciples that we have a function in the world. We are the salt of the earth and we are the light of the world but here, when Paul uses the word “world,” it is in the same sense as 1 John 2:15-17:

Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in them. For everything in the world [now John describes what he means by the word “world”] — the lust of the flesh [the sinful desires of our human nature], the lust of the eyes [what I see, I want, which is the sin of covetousness], and the pride of life [which simply means, “I want to be the first one in everything”] — comes not from the Father but from the world. The world and its desires pass away, but whoever does the will of God lives forever.

So the word “world” here in this context, refers to the three basic drives that every unbeliever is controlled by: the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life.

Paul says, in Galatians 5:24:

Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

Genuine Christians, who have submitted to the cross of Christ, no longer allow these three basic human drives to be the dominating factor in their lives. A Christian is no longer to be controlled by the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. Yes, that is true of the unbeliever, but the Christian has crucified these three basic drives and now is controlled by the love of God. The love of God is demonstrated by going about doing good towards others.

Paul is saying that a Christian is one who glories in the cross because the cross has liberated

him from the very principle of sin, the love of self, which is expressed in the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. Paul continues [in Galatians 6:14]:

May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.

What is Paul adding here? When we accept Christ, obey the gospel and surrender to the cross of Christ, something very drastic takes place. It is like changing citizenship. When I became an American citizen, I had to relinquish my British citizenship. I had to give up all allegiance to foreign potentates and be loyal to the American government. So also, when we become Christians, we are changing our citizenship from this world, which is under Satan, to the citizenship of heaven, which is under Christ. A Christian is not simply a person who has been forgiven and has been justified and has peace with God. A Christian actually has changed citizenship. Jesus said to the disciples in John 15:18-19:

If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you.

“You are not of the world but I have chosen you out of the world.”

In 1 John 5:19, the apostle John divides the human race into two camps:

We know that we are children of God, and that the whole world is under the control of the evil one.

Referring to Christians he says, “We belong to God, we are children of God.” Referring to the unbelievers he says, “the whole world is under the control of the wicked one.” Christians are citizens of heaven but living in Satan’s territory. When we talk of ourselves on the spiritual plane, we are foreigners because we are citizens of heaven.

That is why we must remind ourselves that, between the world and the church which is the kingdom of God on earth, stands the cross of Christ. The cross of Christ will allow nothing of the world to creep into the church. It is a tragedy today how much of the world is creeping into the church. We borrow its ideas. We depend on its resources. When the world moves in a certain direction, the church follows it a few years later. Look at some of the things that are happening in this country: abortion, divorce. Sooner or later, these worldly ideas creep into the church. This should never be. The cross of Christ has excluded everything that is of the world from creeping into the church. This is one of the greatest tragedies that is taking place in the churches today, so much so that Paul predicted it in his letter to Timothy. In 2 Timothy 3:5, he says that the time will come before the end that the church will have a form of godliness but deny its power. 2 Timothy 3:1-5:

But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. People will be lovers of themselves,

lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God — having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with such people.

Have you allowed the cross of Christ to separate you totally from the world, not physically but spiritually?

In Galatians 6:15, Paul summarizes:

Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything; what counts is the new creation.

Whatever we do or what we don't do makes no contribution towards our salvation in Christ Jesus. Why? Because the salvation that Jesus obtained for us in His doing and in His dying was perfect and was complete. When Jesus cried on the cross, "It is finished," He meant that salvation, full and

complete, was finished. We cannot improve on it, we cannot add to it, all we can do is accept it by faith with a heart that is full of gratitude for the wonderful redemption that God has obtained for us in His Son, Jesus Christ.

We must not add anything towards the gospel. There are many Christians who have misunderstood the gospel because they have given the word “gospel” a very general meaning. When Jesus gave His disciples the great commission [Mark 16:15]...

He said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation.”

...what did He mean by that word “gospel”? What did the New Testament writers mean by the word “gospel”? Yes, we know the word means “good news.” But what does that good news imply? The good news of the gospel is the birth, the life, the death, and the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. We must add nothing to this. What God does in us, which we refer to as sanctification

or Christian living or holy living, is the fruits of the gospel. Christ, when He comes, changes our sinful nature and makes it into the glorious nature that He has prepared for us. This will take place at the Second Coming of Christ. We call this glorification or the consummation of the gospel plan of salvation. This is the hope of the gospel.

We have the gospel — the birth, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. We have the fruits of the gospel which is the evidence that we are already perfect in Christ. We already stand justified in Christ and we look forward to glorification, the hope of the gospel, when “the perishable will be clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality” [1 Corinthians 15:54]. Paul is saying here that nothing we do or nothing we don’t do avails anything towards our acceptance before God. We are accepted by God. We are declared righteous. We are looked upon, only in Christ, as if we had never sinned. In Christ, we are new creatures.

Paul told the Corinthians in 2 Corinthians 5:17:

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!

The old belonged to sin. The new belongs to righteousness. The old came under condemnation. The new comes under justification. The old tried to save itself but failed miserably. The new is resting totally in what Jesus did 2,000 years ago for our salvation.

Having made clear this summary of the gospel, Paul now concludes his letter by a blessing and a plea, in verses 16 to 18:

Peace and mercy to all who follow this rule [justification by faith alone, any who walk under the umbrella of grace alone] — to the Israel of God. From now on, let no one cause me trouble, for I bear on my body the marks of Jesus. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brothers and sisters. Amen.

It was not easy for one to be a Christian in the time of Paul. To be a Christian in Paul's day was to put your head on the block because Christians were persecuted. They were persecuted by the Romans, the Gentiles, and the Jews. Therefore, when Paul talks about himself he says, "Please don't disappoint me. Don't give me more trouble. Please remember that I gave up Judaism and accepted the gospel at a tremendous cost to me in the sense that I have suffered the results of becoming a Christian and being an apostle of Jesus Christ."

As we bring this study to a close, here is an example of what Paul is saying. There is a statement that is very interesting concerning this very thing that Paul mentions about him suffering for Christ's sake or having the marks of the suffering of the cross on his body. Acts 21:27-30:

When the seven days were nearly over, some Jews from the province of Asia saw Paul at the temple. They stirred up the whole crowd and seized him, shouting, "Fellow Israelites, help us!

This is the man who teaches everyone everywhere against our people and our law and this place. And besides, he has brought Greeks [Gentiles] into the temple and defiled this holy place.” (They had previously seen Trophimus the Ephesian in the city with Paul and assumed that Paul had brought him into the temple.) The whole city was aroused, and the people came running from all directions. Seizing Paul, they dragged him from the temple, and immediately the gates were shut.

When Paul came back from his last journey, he was advised by James to go through the purification process because the Jews from Jerusalem had accused him of being against the law and against his people. So the seven days were the seven days of purification.

This is one of the things that Paul suffered. In fact, in another passage, Paul summarizes in detail what he went through for Christ. We will find this in 2 Corinthians 11:23-27:

Are they servants of Christ? (I am out of my

mind to talk like this.) I am more. I have worked much harder, been in prison more frequently, been flogged more severely, and been exposed to death again and again. Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was pelted with stones, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea, I have been constantly on the move. I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my fellow Jews, in danger from Gentiles; in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false believers. I have labored and toiled and have often gone without sleep; I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked.

He tells how he was shipwrecked, put in prison, and went through many things for Christ. But he still gloried in Christ because he was willing to suffer for Christ.

Then in Galatians 6:18, Paul adds:

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brothers and sisters. Amen.

This is my prayer for you, that the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ will be upon you, that none of you will ever be sidetracked from this wonderful truth of salvation by grace alone.

Chapter 16

The Two Counterfeits

No one in this whole wide world hates the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ more than Satan. This is because it is the only thing that has defeated him and deprived him of his citizens, the human race that he took over at the Fall. Notice how Paul points out Satan's attempt to prevent many from accepting the gospel. This is recorded in 2 Corinthians 4:3-4:

And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. The god of this age [or of this world, which is Satan] has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel that displays the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

Then, in chapter 11, Paul expresses his deep concern for these believers in Corinth. In 2 Corinthians 11:2-4 we read:

I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy. I promised you to one husband, to Christ, so that I might present you as a pure virgin to him. But I am afraid that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent's cunning, your minds may somehow be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ. For if someone comes to you and preaches a Jesus other than the Jesus we preached, or if you receive a different spirit from the Spirit you received, or a different gospel from the one you accepted, you put up with it easily enough.

It is so easy for Satan to sidetrack human beings from the gospel.

The book of Galatians deals with a major problem that took place in Galatia. The members of the Galatian churches had sidetracked from the gospel to a subtle form of legalism. As we bring this series of studies to an end, we will conclude by showing the two major counterfeits that Satan has prepared for the Christian. In order to counteract the power of the gospel in the lives of believers, Satan has prepared two counterfeits. Both, to some

degree, resemble the gospel but, in actual fact, they are the enemies of the gospel. They are the greatest danger to the gospel and it is Satan's purpose to get Christians to fall into one of these two counterfeits. He will try everything to cause us to fall into those ditches.

The two counterfeits, the two ditches, are legalism and antinomianism. In order to recognize these two counterfeits, we will take each one of them separately and look at them in detail.

Legalism is an English term. The Greek language, which was used to write the New Testament, did not have a word equivalent to our English word, "Legalism." The expression we will find in the New Testament, synonymous with our English "legalism" is "works of the law" or "deeds of the law." This term means salvation by works or salvation by keeping the law. Legalism means that we use the law of God as a method or as a means of salvation. It is the foundation of all non-Christian religions. Every pagan religion is based on "dos" and "don'ts."

In its Christian form, salvation by works is disguised so that one easily confuses it with salvation by grace. The Galatians fell into this trap. So did the Jews who were given the gospel through the Old Testament Sanctuary service, but who sidetracked from it and were trapped into legalism. Paul, himself, was a legalist at one time. When we read Philippians 3, we will discover this. Paul tells us about his preconverted condition but, first, he makes a statement in verse 3 which is the basis of every genuine, Christian experience:

For it is we who are the circumcision [the “we” referring to believers], we who serve God by his Spirit, who boast in Christ Jesus, and who put no confidence in the flesh....

A true Christian stands on the platform of “Not I, but Christ.”

In Philippians 3:4b-6, Paul explains how, in his preconverted condition, he had obtained a human righteousness par excellence:

If someone else thinks they have reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more: circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee; as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for righteousness based on the law, faultless.

In other words, there was nobody in the Philippia church who could equal him. He was circumcised the eighth day. He was a Hebrew of the Hebrews, regarding the zeal for God, he persecuted the Christian church, regarding the righteousness of the law, he was blameless. In other words, he was the best. But, thank God, for what he says in verses 7-9:

But whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ and be found

in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ — the righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith.

Paul realized it is either all of Christ or all of him. When he realized that his righteousness, which he thought would take him to heaven, qualify him for heaven, make him accepted before God, was nothing but filthy rags, he was willing to give all of it up for the righteousness of Christ that becomes ours through faith alone.

Legalism is man trying to attain a ticket to heaven by his own performance.

Galatianism is a subtle form of legalism. In Galatianism, a person says, “I accept Jesus Christ as my Savior” and then adds something else to it. In the case of the Galatian Christians, they accepted the Judaizers teaching that we are saved by grace plus being circumcised and keeping the law of Moses.

It must become absolutely clear to each one of us that any subjective experience that we have as Christians, whether we talk of good works or holy living or law obedience, even though it may be produced in us through the working of the Holy Spirit, in no way contributes towards the righteousness that justifies us before God. It is of utmost importance that all Christians understand the difference between works of the law, which is legalism, and the fruits of the gospel or the fruits of faith, if we are to avoid falling into the trap, or ditch, of legalism.

Luther failed to understand the distinction between James and Paul because he did not clearly, in the beginning of his Reformation ministry, see the difference between works of the law and works of faith. James is upholding works of faith in James 2, especially verses 14 to the end of the chapter (verse 26):

What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save them? Suppose a brother or a

sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to them, “Go in peace; keep warm and well fed,” but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.

But someone will say, “You have faith; I have deeds.”

Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by my deeds. You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that — and shudder.

You foolish person, do you want evidence that faith without deeds is useless? Was not our father Abraham considered righteous for what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? You see that his faith and his actions were working together, and his faith was made complete by what he did. And the scripture was fulfilled that says, “Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness,” and he was called God’s friend. You see that a person is considered righteous by

what they do and not by faith alone.

In the same way, was not even Rahab the prostitute considered righteous for what she did when she gave lodging to the spies and sent them off in a different direction? As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead.

He says, genuine justification by faith always produces works. Not that those works contribute towards our justification, but the works are evidence of our justification. Whereas, Paul, in his epistles, primarily deals with works of the law. When we look at what Paul says about works of faith, we will discover that Paul upholds works of faith.

An example is found in Romans 9:30-32:

What then shall we say? That the Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, have obtained it, a righteousness that is by faith; but the people of Israel, who pursued the law as the way of righteousness, have not attained their goal. Why

not? Because they pursued it not by faith but as if it were by works. They stumbled over the stumbling stone.

This makes it clear that our works of the law do not contribute towards our salvation. He also says in Romans 12:13-14 that genuine justification by faith does transform our lives, does produce a people who go about doing good:

Share with the Lord's people who are in need. Practice hospitality. Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse.

Now what is the difference between works of the law which is legalism and works of faith? There are two major differences.

1. The origin. Works of law always originate from the flesh. The Bible refers to works of the law as self-righteousness or as Paul describes it in Philippians 3:9:

...And be found in him, not having a

righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ — the righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith.

“My own righteousness” is works of the law. The origin of works of the law is self. It is referred to as self-righteousness. We read in Isaiah 64:6 that God declares that all our righteousness is filthy rags, worthless:

All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags; we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away.

In contrast, the origin of works of faith is the Holy Spirit dwelling in us. It is not works but fruits that we bear. The fruit of the Spirit, is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, and so on, says Paul in Galatians 5:22-23:

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,

gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.

The major difference between works of the law, which is legalism, and works of faith is the origin. One originates from self, the other from the indwelling of Christ, the Holy Spirit.

2. The second distinction between works of the law and works of faith is **motivation**. Works of the law are always motivated by self. Works of the law, no matter how good it appears outwardly, is always the fair showing of the flesh. Everything that we do, everything that originates from the flesh, from our sinful nature, is polluted with self. Since the law of God demands, not only perfect acts but perfect motives, self-righteousness, legalism, can never qualify us for heaven. In Romans 3:20, Paul says:

Therefore no one will be declared righteous in God's sight by the works of the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of our sin.

All that the law can do for us is to show us that we are sinners. It is true, once we become Christians, God writes, in our hearts, the principle of that law which is love, and the fruits of the Spirit become the fulfillment of the law. In Galatians 5:23b, Paul says against such there is no law because the fruit of the Spirit is in harmony with the law:

Against such things there is no law.

The motivation of works of the law is always self, whereas works of faith are motivated by the agape love of God. For example, in 1 Thessalonians 1:2-3, Paul commends the Thessalonians for their gift of love to the believers in Jerusalem:

We always thank God for all of you and continually mention you in our prayers. We remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith, your labor prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.

He calls it their works of faith which are always motivated by love. When the Holy Spirit produces His fruit or His work in us which to us is fruit bearing, it is always motivated by the love of God. Paul says in Galatians 5:14:

For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: “Love your neighbor as yourself.”

Love is the fulfillment of the law. He tells us in Romans 13:10:

Love does no harm to a neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.

All the law is fulfilled when we love our neighbors in the same way that we love ourselves.

Paul is in full agreement with James. They are talking about two different things and we must not confuse works of the law with works of faith. Please remember, when we were unbelievers, the law was given to us not to save us but to show us

that we were sinners in need of grace. But when we become Christians, when we are justified by faith alone, the law becomes a standard of Christian living. That's the difference between works of the law and works of faith.

One certain way to prevent legalism and to recognize it, is for us to realize and to submit to the fact that we are totally sinful. Paul tells us in Romans 3:9-12:

What shall we conclude then? Do we have any advantage? Not at all! For we have already made the charge that Jews and Gentiles alike are all under the power of sin. As it is written: "There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands; there is no one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one."

There are none good, there are none righteous.

Jesus, speaking to Nicodemus, said, "That

which is born of the flesh, is flesh.” It is unchangeable. It is unredeemable. It is you and I who are redeemed in Jesus Christ. The flesh will not go to heaven. This corruption cannot inherit incorruption. For this reason we look forward to glorification which is the redemption of the body.

Having clearly defined the greatest enemy of the gospel, legalism, we will turn now to the second problem, the second counterfeit which is the greatest danger of the gospel, antinomianism. The word “antinomianism” comes from two Greek words put together. “Anti” means against. “Nomianism” comes from the Greek word “nomas,” the law. In trying to deliver the Galatians from legalism, Paul was fully aware that they could swing the pendulum from legalism, from one ditch, to antinomianism, the other ditch.

The devil doesn't care which ditch you fall into. Both of them are originated by Satan. They both resemble the gospel. This is why they are counterfeits. Antinomianism is saying “since I am saved by grace alone, since I am saved by the

doing and the dying of Christ, since my works make no contribution towards my salvation, then I can live as I please.”

Here is an example of what is meant by antinomianism. While a missionary in Uganda, a young Ugandan came up to me. Now, I am of Indian origin and he thought I was a Hindu. Bless his heart, he wanted to witness the gospel to me. So he came up to me and asked, “Are you saved?” My response was, “Saved from what?” He replied, “Are you saved from sin?” I said to him “Can you be more specific? Are you talking of the guilt and punishment of sin, the power and slavery to sin, or the nature and presence of sin? Which one are you referring to?” He looked at me and said, “You sound like a pastor.”

I said to him, “Yes, you are right. Can I ask you the same question? Are you saved?” He raised his arms and he almost shouted and with great enthusiasm said to me, “Praise the Lord. I was saved three months ago.” I said to him, “How come?” And he said, “I believed in Jesus Christ

three months ago.” I said, “Young man, can I correct you? You were not saved three months ago. You were saved two thousand years ago. You accepted salvation three months ago. We are not saved because of our faith. Nowhere in the Bible will you find that. We are saved through faith. Faith is only an instrument or a channel by which we receive Jesus Christ and His righteousness. In other words, it is the object of faith which is Jesus Christ, that saves us. Faith is only making Christ’s righteousness effective.”

But I added, “If you are justified by faith, if heaven is already yours, why do I smell beer on your breath?” And he said, “Pastor, you know we are saved by grace and not by what we do.” “Really,” I said. “Can you explain to me what you mean by salvation by grace alone?” His response was, “Very simple. Jesus did it all.” He was absolutely right. We are saved by what Jesus did. But he had taken this wonderful good news of salvation and perverted it into cheap grace. And so I had to correct him.

The way I did it was by asking him questions just as Jesus did. I said to him, “You mean to say that I am saved because Jesus obeyed the law perfectly for me?” He said, “That’s it.” I said, “And He died in my place instead of me?” And the young man said to me, “You’ve have it, now.” I said, “No. I would like to take you one step further.” He said, “What step?” I said, “According to your argument, He also went to heaven instead of you.” The young man didn’t like that. He said, “No, no. I’m going to heaven.” I said, “If you are going to heaven, then you need to know the full message of grace.”

He had a little New Testament in his pocket so I asked him to turn to 2 Timothy 2:11. I could have given many other texts but I chose that passage that Paul gave to a young man like this young man. This text says:

Here is a trustworthy saying: If we died with him, we will also live with him....

If we are to live with Christ, we must first die

with Christ.

There are too many Christians who want to live with Christ without first dying with Christ. But that is not how grace works.

You and I are sinners. Die we must. We have no choice here, otherwise the gospel becomes unethical. But the difference is, if we accept our death in Christ, there is a resurrection and, therefore, there is a hope. If we choose to die out of Christ, that is the end of us. The difference between being born in this world and born in the kingdom of God is this. When we were born in this world we were born sinners because of the Fall. We were born condemned to death. We came to this world with life. We began in this world with life and we end up with death. But when we enter the kingdom of God, it is the very reverse. We begin with death and we end up with life. Unless we realize this, we are perverting grace.

Paul made a wonderful statement in Romans

5:20. He said:

The law was brought in so that the trespass might increase. But where sin increased, grace increased all the more....

What did he mean? He meant it doesn't matter how deep in the pit sin has taken us, grace is able to save the worst of sinners. Grace is able to save Hitler who was responsible for the Holocaust. Grace is able to save Idi Amin, who was responsible for the greatest atrocities that took place in Uganda. But Paul realized that people could take this statement and pervert it. The Christian could take this statement and say to him, "Paul, you are saying that the more I sin, the more grace will cover my sins. Praise the Lord. Let us keep on sinning that grace may increase." Paul deals with this problem in Romans 6. Verse 1:

What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase?

"Can we keep on sinning that grace may

increase? Is this what I am teaching?” The answer is in verse 2:

By no means! We are those who have died to sin; how can we live in it any longer?

The phrase “dead to sin” occurs three times in Romans 6, twice it applies to the believer but once to Christ. In verse 2, it applies to the believer who has been baptized into Christ. Then in verse 10, Paul uses the same phrase referring to Christ:

The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God.

He got rid of sin by His death. And now that he lives, he lives to God.

In verse 11, Paul says to the believer:

In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus.

Salvation by grace is identifying ourselves with

the birth, life, death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, which is publicly confessed by baptism.

As mentioned before, Christianity is not simply a set of rules. Christianity is not simply joining a denomination. Christianity, at its very foundation, is participating in Jesus Christ. Therefore, we must be very careful that we do not take the gospel of grace and use it as an excuse to enjoy sin. Grace does not give any believer license to sin.

In Ephesians 2:8-10, we have in a nutshell, what grace is. Paul tells us in Ephesians 2:8:

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith — and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God — ...

In verse 9, he adds:

...not by works, so that no one can boast.

We are saved by grace alone and that grace is

entirely the gift of God. We have made no contribution towards our salvation.

In verse 10, Paul adds:

For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

In Colossians 2:10, Paul tells the believers in Collosae that they are perfect in Christ:

...And in Christ you have been brought to fullness. He is the head over every power and authority.

They are complete in Christ. But in verse 6, he says:

So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in him....

Genuine justification by faith, genuine salvation by grace, does not give us license to sin.

It transforms our lives. It puts new desires in our minds so that we want to walk a life that is pleasing to God.

Genuine justification is made clear in Galatians 2:20:

I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

This is justification by faith. This is salvation by grace.

As we conclude this series of studies, it is my sincere prayer that God, on the one hand, will protect you from legalism in all its forms and, on the other hand, from cheap grace or antinomianism, which also belongs to the camp of Satan. It is my prayer that you will learn to walk that narrow way called the gospel avoiding the ditch of legalism on the one side and antinomianism on the other side, so that you can say, “For me to live, is Christ and if

I have to die in the process, it is profit.” May this be your experience now and forevermore is my prayer in Jesus’ name. Amen.