



Galatians

A Verse-By-Verse Study

(Originally written one verse per day)

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CHAPTER 1

Paul, an apostle (not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father who raised Him from the dead), ... Galatians 1:1

The book of Galatians contains 149 verses of immensely important doctrine. It is a book which every Christian should read and take to heart, understanding that Paul's words are doctrine for this Gentile-led church age. He will point out what is heresy and thus what constitutes a false gospel. And yet, his words are almost entirely overlooked by a vast swath of misled and misguided people in the world today.

In particular, Paul will speak against "Judaizers". These are those people who come into Christian circles and demand that the Law of Moses is binding today and that it must be observed, in part or in whole. As a benchmark for this, Paul will use the practice of circumcision. He will argue that if a Christian allows himself to be circumcised (meaning implicitly as a means of obtaining God's favor) they have set aside the grace of God and are bound to the entire law; it is a self-condemning act.

Though circumcision is the benchmark, it can be equated to any precept in the law - dietary restrictions, Sabbath observances, etc. Let us pay special heed to his words, because they are the very words of God, revealed through His designated apostle.

To open this marvelous book, he begins by identifying himself and then giving his qualifications for writing the letter - "Paul, an apostle." However, the Greek contains no article. Instead, it says "Paul; apostle." It is an affirmative statement that he is uniquely qualified to write the words of doctrine which follow.

The term "apostle" is to be taken in its strictest sense. In other words, he meets the requirements of an apostle of Jesus, having been instructed by Him and having witnessed Him in His resurrected state.

In his claim as an apostle, he shows that he bears the authority to make doctrinal statements which are to be accepted and adhered to. He is the messenger of the Lord Jesus Christ, and his words are to be taken as such.

His next words are, "...not from men." This indicates that he was not sent by any particular body of people. Further his commission was not from a human origin. His

apostleship was higher than any such level. The meaning of "apostle" is "sent one" or "a messenger."

Paul was sent by Christ and his message is that of the Lord. His words then bear far more weight than those who had come to infect the church with their heretical doctrine. Paul will exactly define this in the coming verses.

He also says, "...nor through man." Not only was he not commissioned by any body of men, but he was not appointed by any man. Further, no man had any part in his calling. It was solely of God. He was selected entirely by the choice of Jesus Christ for this apostolic ministry. Acts 9 shows this clearly with words spoken by Jesus -

"Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel. ¹⁶ For I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name's sake." Acts 9:15, 16

Going on, he confirms exactly that appointment with the words, "but through Jesus Christ." It was the Lord who appeared to him on the road to Damascus and it was He who ordered Ananias to lay his hands on Paul for him to receive his sight once again. The commission is solely the choice of the Lord and therefore Paul's words in this epistle are to be taken as the very words of God for life, doctrine, and practice. Anything less is to ignore the One who commissioned him.

And to finish off the verse, he notes that his authority is also from "God the Father who raised Him from the dead." As God the Father raised Jesus from the dead, it then shows that His stamp of approval rests on the Son. This is confirmed numerous times in Scripture, but Romans 1:4 states it concisely. There Paul says that Christ Jesus is -

"...declared *to be* the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead."

It is upon Jesus Christ that God's stamp of approval rests. This defining act of God shows that Christ was approved in His earthly ministry and prevailed over the Law of Moses, God's standard for the people of the world. This is key to understanding Paul's authority to write this epistle. It is also key to see that his words concerning the law, and all of its precepts, are fulfilled in Christ on our behalf. Because of this, we are to rely not on works of the law, but on the grace of Jesus Christ alone.

God's approval is in the Son; we accept the work of the Son; and therefore, our approval will also be from God the Father who will then also raise us from the dead. Without trusting in Christ's sufficiency alone, God will not approve of us, and we will stand condemned. This is the message that Paul will explain in this marvelous epistle.

Life application: Paul's words are doctrine for the church. They are to be received as such and accepted at face value. By not showing faith in what Paul writes, we are also not showing faith in the surety of the word of God, or in Christ's commission of Paul which is clearly recorded in Acts 9. Be sure to pay close attention to the words which flow from Paul's pen as we evaluate them in the months ahead.

Heavenly Father, thank You for the grace of Jesus Christ who fulfilled the law on our behalf. Help us to never, never trust in our own works as a means of attempting to please You enough to save us. Instead, help us to trust that the work of Jesus Christ, which was accomplished on our behalf, is sufficient to save us. Please keep us from those false teachers that add in works of the law, saying we must accomplish those things in order to be saved. If this is true, then what on earth did Jesus accomplish? Rather, help us to trust in Him alone. And we shall! Thank You for our Lord Jesus. Amen.

**...and all the brethren who are with me,
To the churches of Galatia: Galatians 1:2**

Greek scholars very easily find a coldness in Paul's words here which show his immense disapproval of the situation that he must address regarding the churches of Galatia. First, he notes "all the brethren who are with me."

The way this is structured - "and the with me all brothers," or as the Pulpit Commentary translates it, "and the brethren which are with me, one and all" gives an emphasis on the word "all." As they say it, "...there is not one of those about him who does not feel the like grief and indignation as himself in reference to the news just now received."

Further, it is to be noted that none of the brothers are highlighted as he so often names them in his other letters. He gives a general, blanket greeting without any additional note of personal greeting. It is as if there was a cumulative hush from the individuals because of their thorough disgust at what had transpired in the churches being addressed.

The severity of this tone should be a wake-up call to every Christian concerning the issue to be discussed. Every rational thinking person who reads Galatians should say, "I will

hold to the gospel of grace alone, and I will reject anyone who attempts to reinsert even one precept from the law." This epistle contains the epitome of disregard for the Judaizers of the world and their corrupt attitude towards what Jesus Christ has done for us.

Whoever these "brethren" are is unknown and actually unimportant to the issue at hand. The lack of mentioning them is sufficient as a rebuke to the Galatians. All that matters to Paul is that there is a unified voice among them concerning what must be addressed. If we are to speculate, possibly those in Acts 20:4 are there with him. The record of Acts in regard to the placement of where Paul is now cannot be determined with precision.

Along with not naming the brothers with him, another note of censure can be inferred. Paul normally opens his letters with a note of commendation and thanks for the faith of the believers. Even the dysfunctional church at Corinth was given such a hearty note of approval. In 1 Corinthians 1:2, he notes those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus. Two verses later, he gives thanks "concerning you for the grace of God which was given to you by Christ Jesus."

There is no such note to the Galatians. His coming comments in verses 3 & 4 don't carry nearly the same noteworthy tone. They are simply a hopeful blessing towards them.

In Corinth, there was transgression which needed to be dealt with, it is true. But what has happened in Galatia is far worse and deals with heresy which can only lead to an apostate church. As Charles Ellicott notes, "The Corinthians had failed in the practical application of Christian principles; the Galatians (so far as they listened to their Judaizing teachers) could hardly be said to have Christian principles at all. The Apostle is angry with them with a righteous indignation, and his anger is seen in the naked severity of this address."

Where these Judaizers came from isn't known, all that is known is that they have come and they have infected more than just a single church; hence, the letter being addressed to all of the churches in Galatia.

It seems that someone or some group intentionally followed behind Paul's ministry and purposely infected each church with their same sour doctrine. He has a special curse coming for such people. His pen will hold nothing back as he condemns them and anyone else who would so twist and abuse the truth of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Life application: Context is king when it comes to biblical interpretation. If something is taken out of its intended context and inserted where it does not belong, then only bad doctrine, or even heresy, will result. One must always identify the points related to proper context before solidifying one's doctrine.

Heavenly Father, there are a world of heretics out there who would attempt to change the truth of the Gospel of Jesus Christ into a works-based path to You. But Your word is clear concerning this heresy. Just as Abraham was declared righteous by faith alone apart from any work, we too are counted as sons of Abraham by faith alone. Help us to never be infected by those who would introduce a false gospel. Keep them far from us. Help us to trust the work of Christ alone. What more could we ever add to what He has done! Amen.

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

Paul here makes his usual apostolic greeting, which is found, for example, in Romans 1:7. "Grace" is the blessing poured out from God on those who are undeserving of His favor. Grace is "getting what you don't deserve." Instead of judgment and wrath, we are lavished with His goodness and abundance. This is the standard Greek greeting one might expect at the time of Paul.

"Peace" is a fullness of everything that is needed to be satisfied in all ways. It is a request for health, filling of every need, and even abundance. It would be the standard greeting of the Jews that one would expect at this or at any time. The Hebrew word which Paul would have on his mind would be *shalom*. In Greek, it is *eiréné*.

The term "from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ" means that these blessings come from both. God is the Source of all things; Christ is our Mediator. If one thinks of a stream of water, it doesn't matter if the water comes right from the well which bubbles from the ground or from some point down the river. In both, the same water is drunk. If the well is by itself inaccessible, the stream is there bringing it to us. This is how it is for us spiritually. Christ is the One who makes the abundance and blessings of God possible for us to enjoy.

It is of note that despite the upbraiding that Paul is going to give to the Galatians because of their straying from the truth, he still takes the time to pronounce this blessing upon them. It is certain that his pronouncement is actually intended as a way of preparing the way for them to receive and accept the truth of his coming words.

Life application: Even if we have to hand out discipline, we can still pronounce a blessing as well. Paul's example is one we should take to heart in such delicate and difficult times.

Heavenly Father, help us to step back from the pronouncement of angry words and bitter thoughts. Instead, help us to be kind and gentle in how we use our tongues. May they be instruments of edification and encouragement. And yet, help us not to withhold correction as well when it is needed. Give us the ability to properly balance our words so that we never encourage wrongdoing, while at the same time, we never speak harmfully to those we correct. Amen.

...who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, Galatians 1:4

The opening clause of this verse lays out the tone for the rest of the epistle. It is the very thing which those in Galatia had forgotten or had intentionally set aside. They were given the gospel and then along came Judaizers who were intent on watering it down through a works-based religion.

This is contrary to what God has set forth as being pleasing to Him. It was Christ "who gave Himself for our sins." As this is so, then what could be added to that? If Christ has given Himself for our sins, then that is how our sins are atoned for. Adding in works of our own, of any kind, in an attempt to cover our sins is thus contrary to the gospel of Christ.

This is repeated numerous times in the New Testament, but several examples of note are:

"...just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many." Matthew 20:28

"He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" Romans 8:32

"For *there is* one God and one Mediator between God and men, *the* Man Christ Jesus, ⁶ who gave Himself a ransom for all..." 1 Timothy 2:5, 6

"...who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself *His* own special people, zealous for good works." Titus 2:14

Christ is the only atoning sacrifice for our sins; He is the only One who could ransom us from the world of sin; and He is the only One who has redeemed us to God. When we fall back on the law, which was given to show us our sinful state and to show us how utterly sinful sin is, then we reject the very sacrifice which has redeemed us from that law. It is a self-condemning act.

When Jesus said on the cross, "It is finished," He wasn't saying, "It is partially fulfilled and so keep working hard... you might make it to heaven someday." Rather, He indicated that all was complete, and all sin-debt was satisfied through His work.

Everything He did was so "that He might deliver us from this present evil age." Further, it was a voluntary act. He "gave Himself." Therefore, if it was insufficient to save, then it was a horrific waste. When a person jumps on a grenade in order to save his friends, the intent is to fully save them. If he and those he tried to save died, then the death was futile indeed. But if the friends are saved, then the purpose for his death was met.

If Christ died on the cross of Calvary to save His people but failed to save them, then what a waste! However, if He did accomplish this as intended, then for us to say, "I still need to do something," is to reject the very thing He did.

The reason for His death was to save us from our sins, and the object of that salvation was "that He might deliver us from this present evil age." If we are in this present evil age even now, then His death must have an effect of saving us *through* the entire age. If not, then He would save us and pull us right out as soon as He saved us.

However, we are still here and thus we are to trust that His salvation has accomplished what it was intended to do. If we continue adding works into our life in order to be pleasing to God enough to be saved, then we do not believe that what Christ did was really sufficient to save us in the first place.

Finally, Paul says that this work of the Lord was "according to the will of our God and Father." The Bible's goal, from the very beginning, is to show God's plan of salvation for man. Just after the fall, the Messiah was promised. The coming of Messiah then is a pre-planned course of action to redeem man from his fallen state.

If the work of Christ wasn't sufficient to do that, then not only was He a failure, but the God from whom He came was also a failure. If this is so, then He isn't the true God. Further, man is still in his sin and there is no hope of ever being reconciled to God.

Rather, the work of Christ is wholly sufficient to save, in and of itself. Anything added to it as an attempt to reconcile ourselves back to God is to reject the entire plan of God. Either the law is fulfilled, or it is not. If it is, then it is set aside. If it is set aside, then Christ's work on our behalf is solely of grace and grace alone.

Life application: Trust in the grace of Christ alone.

Heavenly Father, may we never fall back on deeds of the law to be pleasing to You. Either what Christ did was wholly sufficient to save us, or it was the greatest blunder in all of history. Should a man fall on a grenade to save his fellow soldiers, and should they die in the process, then his sacrifice was in vain. How much more then would the voluntary death of Christ on the cross be a failure if it was insufficient to save us from the very law He came to fulfill? Cosmic blunder! Utter failure! - But NO! Christ accomplished Your will, and His work is all-sufficient to save and keep on saving. May we stand on the grace of Jesus Christ alone, never reinserting any precept of the law and thus offending You. Thank You for the work of Jesus - the Messiah of the Jews and the Christ of the nations. Amen.

...to whom *be* glory forever and ever. Amen. Galatians 1:5

This doxology, which is affixed to his greeting and blessing, is unique to Paul's epistles and it shows us what is on his mind. He is affixing it here for a specific reason. It is a continued rebuke to the Galatians for their having departed from the truth of the gospel. In Romans 1, he uses a similar line of thought in connection with the negative comments on those who pervert the natural order of things from the truth of God's revelation -

"Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves, who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen." Romans 1:24, 25

The words which precede this thought were, "Grace to you and peace from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father." This is the revelation of God to us in all spiritual matters; that Jesus Christ came to give Himself for our sins. Because of this, Paul says, "...to whom *be* glory."

There is an article in the Greek before "glory." Therefore, some scholars say it should read, "...to whom *be the* glory." However, the Pulpit Commentary takes it a step further

and says, "When the article is added it marks the noun as expressing its notion viewed absolutely, in its entirety or universality: q.d. 'Whatever glory is to be ascribed anywhere, be it ascribed to him.' Thus, ἡ δόξα is equivalent to 'all glory.'"

This then is a refutation of the Judaizers who have come in and attempted to reintroduce the law as a requirement for salvation. If this is so, then Christ's fulfilling of the law on our behalf was insufficient to save. Thus, He is not to be ascribed "all glory." Instead, some of the glory belongs to us because we must participate in our salvation. This is refuted by Paul. To God, and to Him alone, belongs the glory.

David understood this when he wrote these words -

"Blessed are You, LORD God of Israel, our Father, forever and ever.
Yours, O LORD, is the greatness,
The power and the glory,
The victory and the majesty;
For all *that is* in heaven and in earth *is Yours*;
Yours *is* the kingdom, O LORD,
And You are exalted as head over all." 1 Chronicles 29:10, 11

And this glory, which belongs to God alone, is forever and ever. The Greek is literally, "unto the ages of ages." It is a Hebraism which denotes an infinite amount of time, and which is indefinitely multiplied. There is no end to the glory of God. To solidify this, he ends with "Amen," or "so be it." Paul is adamant that there is no participation by us in our salvation. It is a work of God alone and we can only ascribe to Him that glory... forever.

Life application: If you believe that you must adhere to any point in the law in order to be saved, or to keep being saved, you have been misled. If you teach this point to another, you become a heretic. Don't be a heretic. Teach the truth of God in Christ. He is the fulfillment of the law and only through His work can we be saved.

Lord God, You have shown in Your word that it is heresy to believe that the work of Jesus Christ is somehow deficient and that we must adhere to works of the law, annulled by Christ, in order to be saved. Help us to understand and then apply to our lives the truth that Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes. In Him, it is finished. Amen.

I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, Galatians 1:6

After his opening blessing, Paul jumps immediately into the meat of the matter. There is no delay or beating around the bush. Rather, his words are direct and are intended to show the immense dissatisfaction that he has with the Galatians. According to Vincent's Word Studies, the words "I marvel" are often used "by Greek orators of surprise as something reprehensible." They are used by Jesus in this same way -

"And He marveled because of their unbelief." Mark 6:6

Next, he says, "...that you are turning away." The word for "turning" implies a transfer in the middle of something and carries the specific idea of going over to another party as a deserter. The Galatians had begun to apostatize from the true faith. The tense of the verb shows that it is in the process of occurring. The KJV says "that ye are so soon removed." Thus, it misses the sense of the verb which indicates the on-going nature of what is occurring; they are in the process of being deluded.

Continuing with his words, the NKJV says that they are turning away "so soon." The word means "quickly" rather than "after a short time." The Galatians made a sudden change in direction from where they were heading to where they are now heading. This explains the astonishment of Paul. He had probably heard that things were going along well at some point in the past, and then all of a sudden, he hears that they have started down another completely new avenue.

The certain explanation for this is that they have been misled by a new and unsound doctrine. This will be confirmed as the chapter continues, but it is the same thing that happens constantly in churches around the world. Some person comes in with a false message, and because the people don't know the word, they are easily misdirected from the truth of "Him who called you in the grace of Christ."

This is speaking of "God the Father" who is mentioned in verse 4. Therefore, the word "in" should be translated "by." In other words, Christ is the mediate agency by which God's grace is bestowed upon sinners. As Charles Ellicott notes -

"The 'grace of Christ' is His voluntary self-surrender to humiliation and death, from no other prompting than His own love for sinful men."

It is by this work of Christ that the Gospel is brought into the world of fallen man. It is from this precious gospel, which is the pure and undefiled gift of God, that the Galatians had begun to turn to "a different gospel." However, as will be seen in the next verse, this

"different gospel" is no gospel at all. There is only one truth in this matter and the Galatians had turned from it.

The work of the Judaizers, who have as yet not been introduced into the epistle, has had a damaging effect on the Galatians. And their false message continues to have the same damaging effect on countless souls today. Galatians is a vital epistle for understanding what the pure and undefiled gospel message is.

Life application: Grace indicates "unmerited favor." If you must do something to receive grace, then it ain't grace.

Heavenly Father, I pray that people will take the time to understand what the word "grace" means. So many folks who claim the title of "Christian" feel that they need to do something before receiving Your grace which came through the work of Christ. With this approach, they have rejected the unmerited favor which You offer and have set about to establish their own works as a means of appeasing You. Grace plus is not grace. Help us to understand this and to be willing to simply say, "I receive Jesus and I stand on His work alone." Amen.

...which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. Galatians 1:7

The NKJV wisely departs from the older KJV in their translation of verses 6 and 7. Notice the difference between the two -

I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a **different** gospel,⁷ which is not **another**; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. NKJV

I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. KJV

Two entirely different words are translated as "another" by the KJV. The first is *héteros* – *another* (of a *different* kind). This stands in contrast to *állos* ("*another* of the *same* kind"). The KJV confuses this. Should verse 6 be cited alone, which is not an uncommon thing for people to do, there could be a misunderstanding of what Paul is saying. Thankfully, there are other versions one can refer to in order to get a fuller meaning of the intent of what is being said.

His words show us that what was presented to the Galatians by the Judaizers was a "different" gospel which was no gospel at all. He is so adamant against these people who are bringing in their false message that he calls them *hoi tarassontes* - "the troublers." They are especially troublesome and are to be utterly rejected. There is one message of the good news found in Jesus Christ, and that is His fulfilling the law and then annulling it through His sacrifice on Calvary.

Paul notes in Romans 7:2, "For the woman who has a husband is bound by the law to *her* husband as long as he lives. But if the husband dies, she is released from the law of *her* husband." In this, he was using a real-life example to make a spiritual point about the law. In his continued explanation he then says in verse 7:6, "But now we have been delivered from the law, having died to what we were held by, so that we should serve in the newness of the Spirit and not *in* the oldness of the letter."

In other words, the gospel is that of grace. Christ fulfilled the law on our behalf and then He died, thus annulling the law (Hebrews 7:18) for all who believe in the sufficiency of His work. This is the gospel message. The Judaizers had come to the Galatians and were proposing a "different gospel" which was based on works of the law. This will be seen as we continue. It is these wicked people who Paul speaks of with the words, "but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ."

The word Paul uses for "pervert" is *metastrephó*. It indicates a complete turning from one thing to another. To understand its sense, read the words of Acts 2:20 which use the same word -

"The sun shall be **turned** into darkness,
And the moon into blood,
Before the coming of the great and awesome day of the LORD."

The change in the sun is complete, from light to darkness. This is what happens when works of the law are reintroduced into the grace of Christ: something entirely different results; something which can only bring condemnation to those who pursue it.

Life application: Paul lays out, in advance of directly making his charges against the Judaizers, the enormity of the error which has come to Galatia. It is an error which continues on today when any precept of the Law of Moses is reintroduced into the Gospel of grace of Jesus Christ. Paul will use circumcision as the benchmark of what he means concerning reintroducing the law.

But the precept stands true for any other precept of the law: "You cannot eat pork." - heresy! "You must tithe" - heresy! "You must observe the Saturday Sabbath" - heresy! We cannot pick and choose what constitutes grace. We can only trust in the grace that is given through the work of Christ.

Trust in Christ and in Him alone for your salvation. After that, if you don't want to eat pork, that is fine. If you want to give 10, 20, or 90% of your money to the church, that is fine. If you want to lay around all day on Saturday and do nothing, that is fine too. But if you are doing these things expecting to earn God's favor and bring you salvation, you have fallen from grace.

Heavenly Father, how marvelous is the grace of Jesus Christ. He did all the work, fulfilling the law on our behalf. Now, You simply ask us to believe. How can we continuously muddy these pure and precious waters with all kinds of crazy additions to what He has done. "Yes, He fulfilled the law, but..." Rather, "I trust that what He did is fully sufficient to save me and keep on saving me. No ifs, ands, or buts!" Thank You for this absolute surety I possess. Amen.

But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. Galatians 1:8

Paul now makes a most direct statement, asking his audience to think the words through carefully and with all of the weight of what they imply bearing over them. "But" is set against the words of the previous verses which said -

"I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, ⁷ which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ."

What Paul will write concerning delivering a "different gospel" is exactly what the Judaizers had done. However, their actions will now be placed in comparison to other categories which bear even more weight and authority than they supposedly possessed. This comparison will draw out the enormity of the sin which they bear for their false gospel.

"But even if we" is Paul's way of saying, "If I or any other true apostle." Those who were commissioned by Christ Jesus personally were the ones entrusted with the gospel message. They were the highest authorities in humanity concerning this precious trust which had been delivered to them.

This is the first comparison, and it is something that would seem unimaginable to occur. And yet, in verse 2:11, something will arise which could almost be considered in line with this impossible-to-imagine scenario. When it does, Paul will note his actions to correct the situation.

From this human level of authority, Paul next raises the bar by saying, "or an angel from heaven." We might be able to conceive that a man would presume to preach "another gospel," but surely not so awesome an authority as an angel from heaven! And yet, Paul's words echo down through the ages, even to our modern times, as a warning against the tricks of the devil as he sends his demons, masquerading as heavenly angels, in order to pervert the gospel.

The religion of Islam was supposedly given to Muhammad by the angel Gabriel. It is a religion which is contrary to Christianity and is a "different gospel" for sure. Mormonism began by a supposed visit to Joseph Smith by the angel Moroni. Mormonism is likewise contrary to the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Other false teachers such as Ellen G. White of the 7th Day Adventists have claimed heavenly visions and have, in turn, perverted the truth of the true gospel. The list is not a short one and it is to be warred against by those who hold to the truth of the gospel.

And what is it that Paul warns against concerning these false apostles and false heavenly visitors? It is that they will "preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you." There is one gospel message. Jesus Christ has come in the flesh; He was born under the law; He lived out that law perfectly; and He died in fulfillment of that same law. In His death, the Law of Moses was annulled and in its place, came a New Covenant. The proof of this gospel is that Christ rose from the dead, prevailing over death.

Paul clearly defines the gospel he preaches in 1 Corinthians 15 -

"Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, ² by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you—unless you believed in vain.

³ For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, ⁴ and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures, ⁵ and that He was seen by Cephas, then by the twelve. ⁶ After that He was seen by over five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain to the present, but some have fallen asleep. ⁷ After

that He was seen by James, then by all the apostles. ⁸ Then last of all He was seen by me also, as by one born out of due time." 1 Corinthians 15:1-8

Christ is the fulfillment of the law, and a New Covenant has been established through His shed blood. It is a covenant of grace. No works of any kind are to be added into the gift which He offers. To pervert this gospel is to say that what He did was insufficient for salvation. In essence, it is to say, "I don't trust Christ to fully save me." It is a slap in God's face, and it is the greatest of heresy. For such a false message, Paul says to "let him be accursed."

Whether it is an apostle or even an angel from heaven who proclaims any different gospel, the pronouncement is the same. The word "accursed" or *anathema* in Greek means to be "devoted to God." In this case, it is to be taken in a negative way. Such a person is to be devoted to the curse of God as set apart for destruction.

Life application: Today, many people are following the "Hebrew Roots Movement." Although this sounds great because Jesus was a Jew and it's always good to know the background of any issue, they have taken it to dangerous extremes - reinserting the law and mandating that followers of Christ live as He lived - as a Jew under the Law of Moses. This is heresy and it is exactly what Paul argues against.

Why would anyone want to go back under the bondage of the law instead of trusting in the grace of Christ? The reason is that they do not trust in the finished work of Christ. This, and any other perversion of the true gospel, is exactly what Paul condemns. Don't get swallowed up in such heresies. The law is fulfilled; we are under grace.

Heavenly Father, thank You for the finished work of Jesus. What could we add to what He has done? Help us to trust that when He said, "It is finished," it means that this is so. May we never reintroduce precepts from the law, which is now annulled through His work, and thus set aside the grace You offer through Him. Help us to trust the pure and undefiled gospel. Thank You for the finished work of Jesus. Amen.

As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed. Galatians 1:9

There is a great divide between scholars concerning the words, "As we have said before." Because of Paul's seemingly great surprise at what has transpired in Galatia (read verse 6 to see this), it seems to some scholars that it is unlikely he had any idea that this turning away from the truth so quickly would have been possible.

Therefore, the "before" appears to be speaking about the preceding sentence (read verse 8 to see this). In other words, "before" indicates the substance of verse 8 and what he says in verse 9 is a repetition for stress.

However, other scholars look to the structure of this verse and adamantly suppose that he is speaking of a previous warning which is not recorded elsewhere. Vincent's Word Studies, for example, state -

"Not to be referred to the preceding verse, since the compound verb would be too strong, and now in the following clause points to an earlier time, a previous visit."

What seems the most likely is that the first case is correct. The incredulity of Paul in the opening verses of his letter appears to indicate that he was taken completely by surprise by what has transpired. The repetition for stress is a common means of expression found throughout the Bible.

In Exodus 25, the Lord describes the construction of the ark of the testimony. In verse 16, He then says, "And you shall put into the ark the Testimony which I will give you." Then, just a few verses later, after describing the mercy seat, He repeats the thought with, "You shall put the mercy seat on top of the ark, and in the ark you shall put the Testimony that I will give you." This is seen again and again in Scripture. It is a grammatical device called parallelism. It is a repetition for emphasis.

The Lord used this type of repetition as well -

"Assuredly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.

¹⁹ 'Again I say to you that if two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven. ²⁰ For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them.'"

Matthew 18:18-20

The substance of the words changes a bit, as it does now from Paul's pen, but the intent of the words, with their accompanying emphasis, remains the same. The changes in Paul's words are of *substance*, but not of *intent* -

8 - But even if we, or an angel from heaven, (the absolute negation of anyone after the original)

9 - As we have said before (speaking of the original)

9 - so now I say again (emphasis)

8 - preach any other gospel to you (from the absolute negation of anyone else)

9 - if anyone preaches any other gospel (who would dare!)

8 - than what we have preached to you, (what Paul originally preached)

9 - to you than what you have received, (what they received from Paul)

8 - let him be accursed. (stated penalty)

9 - let him be accursed. (stated penalty)

Life application: If you come across difficult passages in Scripture, there is a whole host of sound resources that you can refer to for an explanation of them. If these scholars are at polar opposites concerning a conclusion, then you must refer to your own knowledge of Scripture in order to make the best possible conclusion concerning the issue. The more familiar you are with the rest of Scripture, the better chance you will have of coming to the correct conclusion. Also, making diagrams and comparisons of what is being analyzed may help in the decision-making process.

How marvelous, O Lord, is Your name in all the earth! You have set our earthly home in the most wonderful spot. It turns around each day, lighting one side and then the other. The sun rises and it also sets. The moon waxes full and it wanes to a beautiful crescent of sliver. Tides rise, and the fish are abundant. Tides ebb, and crabs are there to do what crabs do. There is harmony and there is wisdom on display, and everything is as it should be. How marvelous, O Lord, is Your name in all the earth. Amen.

For do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I still pleased men, I would not be a bondservant of Christ. Galatians 1:10

Paul begins this verse with the Greek *arti gar* - "For now." The use of the adverb *arti*, rather than the more common word for now, *nun*, is used to indicate "*here-and-now; exactly now, in the immediate present*" (HELPS Word Studies). James Strong says that it indicates to "draw close together." For this reason, these words of Paul are probably not speaking of his former life in Judaism which is just now being contrasted with his conduct in Christ. He has been converted for almost a quarter of a century at this point.

Rather, he is making an immediate connection with the words he just expressed -

"As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed."

The "right now" attitude which he is expressing gives the thought of, "It is necessary to leave off with my usual way of greeting a church in my letter and to be stern and direct. If the matter weren't so urgent, I would give a happy and friendly greeting. However, at this time, the matter is so urgent that it is just not possible."

The urgency has prompted him to simply open the letter and move directly into a curse upon those who would attempt to "persuade men." The word "persuade" is not the intent here, though. It is better translated as "seek approval of." Paul is concerned about the Galatians looking for the approval of the false apostles; something he was completely unwilling to do. In contrast, he would rather seek God's approval than that of any man.

In addition to seeking approval, he next asks, "Or do I seek to please men?" The false apostles were doing just that. If they were seeking to please God, they would hold fast to the true gospel of Jesus Christ - salvation by grace through faith. Instead, they were seeking to please men through the observance of matters of the law; a law which was set aside by the work of Christ. This leads directly to his final proclamation of this verse -

"For if I still pleased men, I would not be a bondservant of Christ."

Paul had come out of the Old Testament system, the Law of Moses. This was certainly displeasing to those who were still under it. But that law was fulfilled. It was annulled, it was set aside, and it was nailed to the cross. If he were a men-pleaser, he would still be pursuing works of the law, and he would still be teaching others to do those works - "Don't eat!" "Don't touch!" "Observe the Sabbath!" "Get circumcised!"

But because Christ had fulfilled those and established a New Covenant of grace, Paul determined that he would "be a bondservant of Christ" rather than under the bondage of the law. He had a new Master, and his face was set on pleasing Him. There is only one choice that is set before man - either please men through some type of work and thus reject Christ, or follow Christ and willingly receive what He has done, putting aside the works of the flesh.

Life application: Galatians is given to show us the utter severity of not receiving and adhering to the finished work of Christ. It is only through a complete submission to Him that we can be saved. We must realize that there is NO WORK which we can do in order

to please God except to receive the completed work of His Son. This is why Jesus said, "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent." John 6:29

Heavenly Father, help us to get our thinking straight. If Jesus died in fulfillment of the law, then the law is fulfilled. If we return to deeds of the law in an attempt to be acceptable to You, then we have rejected what You have already done and have set out to seek our own righteousness. Was the cross that meaningless to us? No! Help us to understand that we stand justified by faith in Christ alone. I put my hope in His work alone! Amen.

But I make known to you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. Galatians 1:11

Paul is now going to defend the message he relayed to the Galatians. In doing so, he calls them "brethren." The word is not without significance. They had departed from the true gospel and instead started following a false one. And yet, he still acknowledges that they are saved. The term "brethren" shows this. The correction then is for those who follow. If they receive a false gospel, they will never be saved. But the salvation of those who first received the true gospel is not in question.

After Paul pronounced his curse on anyone who would present a false gospel, one contrary to the one he first proclaimed to them, he then followed up with, "For do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I still pleased men, I would not be a bondservant of Christ" (verse 10).

Verse 11 logically follows after that. He has shown that his intent was not to seek the approval of men, but rather God. As he was so motivated, he truly was "a bondservant of Christ." If so, then what he preaches is logically what was preached to him, and it was the message of Christ. It was "not according to man." This corresponds to what he said in verse 1, and this is the first in a list of arguments that he will make concerning the gospel he preaches. As Charles Ellicott notes -

"The Apostle now enters at length upon his personal defence against his opponents. He does this by means of an historical retrospect of his career, proving by an exhaustive process the thesis with which he starts that the doctrine taught by him comes from a divine source, and possesses the divine sanction. My doctrine is not human, but divine; it could not be otherwise."

Where his doctrine came from will be discussed throughout the rest of this chapter and also chapter 2. It will not be from his earlier years (studying as a Pharisee). It won't be from those who were there at his conversion.

Instead, it will come by revelation while alone in Arabia. It also won't come from the other apostles, as he will defend in his words. In fact, they were unaware of the scope of Paul's ministry for quite some time. Eventually though, they will acknowledge him as a true apostle and they will confirm his ministry to the Gentiles.

These points, and many others, will be seen in the verses ahead. As the other apostles confirmed his ministry and his apostleship, then it had to have been a gospel which came directly from the Lord. No other source had been a factor in what he preached, and yet he was fully accepted by the church leaders and also by proofs of the Holy Spirit.

Life application: It needs to be asserted and reasserted that if the letters of Paul are dismissed by the church, then there is no Gentile church. Only he carries the message of our being brought into the commonwealth of Israel. Further, if Paul is dismissed, then Luke must be dismissed because Luke testifies of Paul in Acts.

If Luke is dismissed, then the Gospel of Luke must be tossed out, and thus the other two synoptic gospels are also in question. Further, Peter speaks of Paul in one of his epistles, confirming Paul's letters as Scripture. Therefore, Peter must be tossed out.

If Peter is tossed out, then John and Jude must also be tossed out as their writings are dependent on the truth of Peter's apostleship. Therefore, there is no New Testament at all. Either Paul is who he claimed he is, or we have no hope at all. Shun anyone who rejects the gospel which Paul proclaims.

Heavenly Father, there is nothing more wonderful than having the surety that You are right here with us because of the work of Christ. Through Him, we have an eternal hope which transcends the difficulties of this world. Though we may have pains, troubles, trials, and afflictions, we have a greater hope than any of these things. Thank You! Thank You for the surety we possess because of our hope in the resurrection unto eternal life! Amen.

For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through the revelation of Jesus Christ. Galatians 1:12

This verse further bolsters Paul's statement of verse 1 concerning his apostleship which was "...not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father who raised Him from the dead." The words he gives now are to show the contrast between his teachings and those of the false apostles who had come into the churches in Galatia and infected them with the doctrines of mere men.

They had first received their false teachings from man, or they had made them up. Either way, the message that those in Galatia had received was of human origin. Paul stood in contrast to this. The "neither" and the "nor" of this verse both independently stem back to the preceding verse. If we tie them independently to that verse, the fuller meaning of what Paul is saying can be seen –

"But I make known to you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. For I neither received it from man..."

"But I make known to you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man; nor was I taught *it*,"

In the first instance, he is saying that the gospel he preached was not received from man. There was no human origin involved in what he presented to the Galatians. If not human, then it was of divine Source. "The gospel is not from any human as it had come to you."

In the second instance, he was not actually taught this gospel that he preached as if it were of human origin. "The gospel is not from any human as it came to me."

Rather, its Source was "through the revelation of Jesus Christ." Paul had been converted on the road to Damascus. At that time, and then for the next three days as he waited to be healed of his blindness, he was able to process what had happened, coming to the realization that all of the Scripture he had been trained in and knew so well pointed to Christ. After this, Ananias came as directed and we read this -

"Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you came, has sent me that you may receive your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit."

Ananias did not give him any instruction; instead, he simply obeyed the Lord and proved the Lord's message by restoring Paul's eyesight. Even after this, there is no note of human instruction for Paul. Instead, the account simply states the following -

"Immediately there fell from his eyes *something* like scales, and he received his sight at once; and he arose and was baptized.

¹⁹ So when he had received food, he was strengthened. Then Saul spent some days with the disciples at Damascus.

²⁰ Immediately he preached the Christ in the synagogues, that He is the Son of God." Acts 9:18-20

When Paul was strengthened, he immediately went out preaching the Christ; the gospel message. There was no need for him to be taught by a human because the revelation, working through the knowledge he already possessed, and through the proofs of the encounter with the risen Christ, were sufficient to make the gospel known from that point on. Other instances of visions from the Lord are noted as well, but this first divine revelation was enough for Paul to understand and proclaim the gospel to others.

Before going any further, we must ask ourselves, "If Paul's words are through the revelation of Jesus Christ, then shouldn't we look for our doctrine in Paul's letters and not from the misguided teachings of others?" His commission is clearly laid out in Acts. If it is an untruthful account, then the entire book of Acts is suspect and is to be disregarded. However, if Paul's revelation (and thus his calling as an apostle) is true, then his words must be what the Bible portrays them as, which is the very word of God.

Life application: Paul is the apostle to the Gentiles. This is noted several times in Scripture. This is now the Gentile-led church age. Therefore, Paul's writings are doctrine for this dispensation of time. They are prescriptive and they are to be accepted as such. Should we fail to accept them as he intends, then we also disregard the One who speaks through him.

Lord God, there is nothing in this life that I desire more than to be right with You. I desire to dwell in Your presence in righteousness and in a manner which will find favor in Your eyes and approval from Your lips. And how can I obtain such a favorable nod of approval? I can only receive it by applying Your instructions to my life in the proper way. Help me in this Lord. Help me to accept Your word, apply it to my life, and to be in a good and happy standing with You at all times. This I pray. Be glorified in me, O God! Amen.

For you have heard of my former conduct in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God beyond measure and *tried to destroy it*. Galatians 1:13

This is a transitional verse between the thought of the Source of Paul's reception of the gospel and that of a description concerning his conversion and subsequent learning and

evangelistic efforts. In order to make that transition, he describes his life just prior to his conversion.

This description is a reiteration of what those in Galatia already knew. This is evident from the words, "For you have heard." He is recalling his testimony to them in order to give them a standard of comparison between himself and the false apostles who had come in and infected their churches with the heresy of reinserting Judaism into the church.

In this case, the term "Judaism" is referring to the religious aspects of life among the Jewish people. He fell into that category, and in that capacity, he says, "I persecuted the church of God beyond measure and tried to destroy it." The term "church" in the Greek is in the singular. Thus it shows a set distinction between the practice of Judaism without Christ, and that of unity within the many churches who are "in Christ" and under His sole authority.

Again, these words are given to show the contrast between life under the old system and that under the new. Paul was under the old and felt he was acting in accord with the will of God at that time. However, the term "I persecuted" is in the imperfect tense and should more appropriately be translated as "I was persecuting."

Paul was acting in a particular manner towards the church when his conduct was suddenly ended and a great change in his actions took place. But just before that change, it was his intent and passion to utterly destroy the church.

The reason for his words is to refute the Judaizers who were reinserting the law. The break had been made between the two. Christ and His church are on a new and separate path from that of the law, which was set aside through His completed work.

Life application: Many people have amazing conversion experiences. They are heading down one path and suddenly their life makes a sudden turn towards Christ. The zeal and passion with which they follow this new path is one of the surest signs of the power of Christ to change the hardened heart.

From time to time, go back and evaluate your own conversion. Return to the roots of that time and look to reenergize the zeal you felt. Rekindle the fire once again, and then press on in His power.

Lord God, what a change was wrought in me when I met the risen Christ. I was heading down one path and suddenly my life was on a new and marvelous one. The sky was bluer, the grass was greener, and the sun shined more brightly. The darkness of life took on a new and wonderful tone. Help me to remember that moment and to continue on in it all the days of my life. Help me to be the one who honors You through my devotion to Christ all my days. Amen.

And I advanced in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries in my own nation, being more exceedingly zealous for the traditions of my fathers. Galatians 1:14

Paul continues here with his qualifications as a true "Jew" to be fawned over, if that was appropriate to occur. Again, the reason for this line of thought is to show those in Galatia that just because someone possessed all of the qualifications of a true "Jew," it had no bearing on whether they were teaching the true gospel message or not. He will continue to show himself as the "standard" by which all other such Jews would be more than willing to gauge themselves if these were the things which mattered.

First, he says, "And I advanced in Judaism." This means the teachings of Judaism. It included more than the cultural aspects of that life, which any Jew would be aware of. Instead, it included the fullest knowledge of those things. Any Jew would know to observe the Passover, but Paul knew the reasons behind the observance in the most detailed manner. Any Jew would know to wear particular clothing, but Paul would understand "why" they did so. These, and countless other precepts, were the things he faithfully studied.

Going on, he said that such knowledge was "beyond many of my contemporaries in my own nation." He, along with many other students, was trained at the feet of Gamaliel, a great Jewish rabbi. And yet, he excelled beyond them. He had a greater knowledge, and a greater application of the knowledge, than many who were his contemporaries. This means those of his age and generation who set about to advance in Judaism.

In his advancement, he was "more exceedingly zealous for the traditions of my fathers." The word for "zealous" is *zélótés*. This word gives the idea of boiling over with fervency. It comes from *zéloó*, which refers to the sound of boiling. Paul's fervency for his life as a strict and adherent Jew was the epitome of such fervency, exceeding those around him as he strived to be the very best adherent possible. This included "the traditions of my fathers."

These "traditions" are the things which Jesus rebuked the leaders of Israel for. They were those things which Jewish life and culture adhered to, but which were beyond that of Scripture. Whatever laws were set down by the religious elite, Paul was the first to agree to them and to strictly adhere to them. He wanted, in all ways, to be thought of as the cream of this legalistic society.

If those at Galatia wanted someone from Jewish circles to emulate, Paul would be the cat's meow of the one to follow after. But Paul turned from all such things and pursued Christ and His gospel of grace. These notes of his past life are intended to get those in Galatia to see the futility of doing anything but that as well.

Life application: Let us fix our eyes on Jesus.

Heavenly Father, how easy it is to get star struck by a fancy preacher, an eloquent orator, or a noted figure within Christian circles. In doing so, we inevitably will take our eyes off of Jesus in our pursuit of this notable person. And how unwise that is! All are fallible; all are prone to fall; all are filled with a constant stream of error. Let us never take our eyes from that which is infinitely glorious in order to set them on something which is anything but! Help us in this, O God. Amen.

But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb and called me through His grace, Galatians 1:15

This verse falls into the biblical doctrine of "predestination." God has a set plan which will come about, and which cannot be thwarted. In the case of the calling of Paul, it is one which God knew would be the most effective calling, both in the individual selected and in the time-period in which his selection was made.

Paul begins with, "But when it pleased God." This actually ties together with the words of the next verse which say, "...to reveal His Son in me." There was a specific time in Paul's life for his calling. However, though his calling came at a later point in life, the preparation for that call came at a much earlier time. Paul says that God "separated me from my mother's womb."

This is a common theme for those selected by God for His redemptive purposes. Samson's calling was made even before his conception, as was Samuel (which is implied in the account), and John the Baptist as well. Isaiah's words concerning the coming Messiah show the same -

"Listen, O coastlands, to Me,
And take heed, you peoples from afar!
The LORD has called Me from the womb;
From the matrix of My mother He has made mention of My name." Isaiah 49:1

Further, Jeremiah shows this was the case with him. The Lord said to him -

"Before I formed you in the womb I knew you;
Before you were born I sanctified you;
I ordained you a prophet to the nations." Jeremiah 1:5

In the case of Jeremiah and Paul, they didn't actually receive their commission until much later, and yet their designated paths were set from the womb. In Paul's specific case, it was after years of learning under Gamaliel and after countless persecutions of Christians, among many other things. In other words, these things, which seem contrary to being a servant of the gospel message, were actually being used as a part of his ability to convey that message.

He could not well refute the Judaizers to those in Galatia without having the credentials that he possessed. And so even what we would consider as evil can be used for a good purpose by God. This same idea also permeates the Bible. What happened to Joseph was evil, and yet God used it for good. Thus, we can see that God has a plan which is far greater than any temporary woe or misstep on our part.

Paul was separated from the womb and at the perfect moment he was called "through His grace." Every part of Paul's life was leading up to that magnificent moment on the road to Damascus where he was shown grace. And that moment led to each subsequent moment of his life. The marvelous plan of God was working out exactly as intended in order to bring the world to a fuller understanding of the work of Christ.

The reason for Paul's use of this verse is to show that it was by grace alone that he was saved. If this is so, then the pattern follows through with each other person who is saved. There are no works involved in the salvation of any person, except the finished work of Christ; a work which is of grace alone through faith alone.

However, this then asks us to consider, if Paul has to tell them this because they were falling back under works of the law, then free-will must be a part of the process, even if God is fully aware of it. There would be no need for Paul to even write these words unless there was the possibility that a different outcome would result if a different

choice were made. This will become perfectly evident when a situation concerning Peter is introduced into Paul's words in chapter 2.

It is clearly and perfectly evident that even though God knows all things that will occur in all people forever, He does not make our choices for us. Thus, predestination has a dual nature - God knows the choices man will make, but the free-will of man is a part of the equation. It is a complicated issue, but it is both reasonable and self-evident in the pages of the Bible.

Life application: Everything that occurs is known to God before it happens. Though that doesn't take away any pain we may feel, it should give us great comfort to know that if we are in Christ, all things are heading to a very good end. Living through the present may be difficult, but it is only a weigh-station on the highway to glory.

Lord God, Your word shows that You are aware of all things and that You have predestined them according to Your foreknowledge. And yet, Your word shows that we have free will in the decisions we make. Help us then to yield ourselves to You and to make decisions which will be pleasing to You. And above all, hear our prayer for those who have not yet received the gift of eternal life through Christ the Lord. Open their eyes and prompt their hearts according to Your wisdom and love. Amen.

...to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately confer with flesh and blood, Galatians 1:16

The words "to reveal His Son in me" refer to the calling of Paul through God's grace. It was this calling that was intended to accomplish exactly that. Paul had fought against Christ by fighting against His church, but God intended to reveal Him to Paul in an act of grace and with the intent that he "might preach among the Gentiles."

He was uniquely qualified to accomplish this. His attitude, demeanor, learning of Scripture, language abilities, and so much more made him the logical (and even perfect) choice to become the Apostle to the Gentiles. The other apostles could not grasp that this message would go out to the Gentile world.

Passages such as Acts 11:18, and the general idea which brought about the Council in Jerusalem in Acts 15, show that there was continued resistance to the truth of the gospel as it was understood by Paul. Peter will also show this resistance in chapter 2 of Galatians.

But Paul, well trained in the Hebrew Scriptures, was able to pull out the pertinent verses and passages from those same Scriptures to see that how God would work in the Gentiles was how He had actually worked all along. All of his writings methodically show the doctrine of salvation by grace through faith, and they meticulously rely on the very Hebrew Scriptures which he had been so well-trained in.

For this reason, he says, "I did not immediately confer with flesh and blood." Rather than relying on the doctrines of man, he determined to immediately turn away from such fallible resources and devote himself further to comprehending the great body of Scripture which he was already well-trained in. He would do it without presupposition or the weakened, fallible interpretation of man. Instead, he would do it with the leading of the Holy Spirit who gave the Scriptures to man in the first place.

The term "flesh and blood" is used four times in the New Testament, and each time it is connected to a hint of either human weakness or ignorance. In contrast to this is the power and wisdom of the Holy Spirit. A good example is found in Matthew 16:17 -

"Jesus answered and said to him, 'Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed *this* to you, but My Father who is in heaven.'"

As he has been doing thus far, he is showing the supremacy of the gospel he preached over the fallible and misguided path those in Galatia had chosen to follow by listening to the false apostles. Scripture can be twisted by any fallible human to produce the most wretched of heresies. But the Holy Spirit will reveal the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ to those who are willing to put aside biases, presuppositions, and lies in order to hold fast to what is properly revealed concerning Christ Jesus.

Life application: Paul's words are clear and concise, but they are often twisted by those who have a perverse agenda. Peter mentions exactly this in 2 Peter 3:14-16. Never trust the interpretation of man without checking and rechecking what you have been taught.

Heavenly Father, learning the Bible isn't easy. So many commentaries disagree in their interpretation of verses and passages. So many pastors and preachers claim that others are preaching heresy, implying that they are preaching the truth. But what if they are the heretics? The world is full of trolls, antagonists, and deceitful liars concerning Your word. And so Lord, I must come to You and ask that You lead me to proper teachers. And help me to be discerning over the doctrine I assimilate. My heart is set on You, but my level of knowledge is limited. Guide me and protect me from that which is false. Amen.

...nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those *who were* apostles before me; but I went to Arabia, and returned again to Damascus. Galatians 1:17

Paul continues to reveal his qualifications as an apostle who is to be trusted in the message he brought to Galatia. In the previous verse, he said that he did not "confer with flesh and blood." This was to show that what he received was superior to anything taught by fallen, fallible man. Instead, he received his instructions from a divine Source.

He continues with this thought now saying, "...nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those *who were* apostles before me." As they were flesh and blood men, it would seem superfluous to say this. But it is not. Their training had come from the Lord. They were personally selected and commissioned by Him. Therefore, had he gone to them in Jerusalem, it would not be contradictory to his previous words.

And yet, it would also mean that he felt it necessary to have his commission testified to by them; he did not. Instead, his words "*who were* apostles before me" clearly imply that he was to be considered an apostle, having been selected by the same divine Source as they had, and having received his full apostolic commission from Him. He did not require men to confirm what the Lord had established. Instead of going to them, he "went to Arabia."

This clause, consisting of just a few words, is one of the most highly debated set of words to be found in Paul's life and travels. At this point, the conversion and early ministry of Paul needs to be cited from Acts 9 -

And Ananias went his way and entered the house; and laying his hands on him he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you came, has sent me that you may receive your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit."

¹⁸ Immediately there fell from his eyes *something* like scales, and he received his sight at once; and he arose and was baptized.

¹⁹ So when he had received food, he was strengthened. Then Saul spent some days with the disciples at Damascus.

²⁰ Immediately he preached the Christ in the synagogues, that He is the Son of God.

²¹ Then all who heard were amazed, and said, "Is this not he who destroyed those who called on this name in Jerusalem, and has come here for that purpose, so that he might bring them bound to the chief priests?"

²² But Saul increased all the more in strength, and confounded the Jews who dwelt in Damascus, proving that this *Jesus* is the Christ.

There seems to be no room in Luke's record for Paul's words here in Galatians. However, Luke was concerned with Paul's ministry in a particular way. Recording this trip to Arabia was not a necessary part of his account. The trip to Arabia would fit logically in the middle of verse 19 of Acts 9. As Paul did not "confer with flesh and blood," it is probable that he immediately felt his calling to go to Arabia and then return after that.

And so, this brings in the next fundamental question, "Where in Arabia?" Arabia of Paul's day was considerably different than that of Saudi Arabia today. As it is only referred to one other time in the New Testament, Galatians 4:25, all we have is that one verse to give us a clue as to where Paul went.

In that verse, Paul says that Mount Sinai is in Arabia. For this reason, we can logically (although not dogmatically) suppose that Paul went to the very spot where Moses received the law, and where Elijah was drawn to after his great ordeal with the false prophets of Baal (see 1 Kings 19), in order to receive the instruction for his ministry after having received the commission of his apostleship. There is no reason to dismiss this, and a valid reason to accept it.

Regardless of this though, after his time in Arabia, it says he "returned again to Damascus." This then would be in line with the words in Acts 9:19 that he "spent some days with the disciples at Damascus." The time of his divine instruction is hidden in part, and yet it is revealed here in his few words to the wayward churches in Galatia.

For those who were willing to understand and accept his words, they would see that the same God who had given the law to Moses had also given the instructions to Paul for his apostolic ministry to the Gentiles. Thus, the gospel of Grace stands on the same level of authority as the Law of Moses, but it also stands in replacement of it.

Life application: Bible study is hard work, but it is greatly rewarding. Study your Bible. *Heavenly Father, the more we peer into Your wonderful word, the more amazing it gets! It is a delight to our eyes, a marvel to our minds, a wonder to our taste buds, and a source of health to our souls. Help us to put the study of it into its proper place - high among the things we do each day. Grant us the willing desire to not neglect this most precious gift which comes directly from Your mind and heart to us. Grant us this desire even now! Amen.*

Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and remained with him fifteen days. Galatians 1:18

Paul is being exceptionally methodical in his words here for a reason. He has already established that the gospel he preached was neither received from man, nor was he taught it. He further gave the timeline of what occurred after his conversion, including his trip to Arabia. Now he says that "after three years I went up to Jerusalem." This "three years" is probably from his original conversion and not from the later events which included his return from Damascus.

The purpose of the visit was "to see Peter." This seems innocuous enough, but there is exacting purpose in why he says this. First, the word rendered "to see" is an uncommon one, being found only here in the New Testament. It is *historeó*. One can see the germ of our modern word "history" in it. It is what one does in order to ascertain information by a personal examination and inquiry.

For example, it is the word one would use when visiting a great city to find out all about it. Scholars puzzle over why Peter is singled out, but understanding what Paul writes about Peter in chapter 2 clears up the reason.

Peter is noted as one of the "pillars" of the church in Galatians 2:9. It may seem peculiar that his words are directed only at Peter, but this directed line of wording is given as a build-up to the events of Galatians 2:11-13. In other words, Paul is continuing to establish his apostleship and the truth of the gospel message he preaches, showing that it is on the same level of authority as that of any other apostles, including the noted Peter.

In this visit to Peter, he notes that he was there with him for "fifteen days." Again, this is important to understand because it established the fact that this extremely short time was insufficient in length for Paul to have somehow obtained his apostleship by Peter or anyone else. There would not have been time to evaluate him, test his sincerity, place the needed trust in him, and commission him. Paul himself, while speaking to Timothy, shows that granting a commission after such a short time is imprudent –

"Do not lay hands on anyone hastily, nor share in other people's sins; keep yourself pure." 1 Timothy 5:22

Finally, during this fifteen-day period, Paul stayed with Peter, but he did not spend all of his time with him. This is evidenced by the account found in Acts 9 -

"So he was with them at Jerusalem, coming in and going out.²⁹ And he spoke boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus and disputed against the Hellenists, but they

attempted to kill him. ³⁰ When the brethren found out, they brought him down to Caesarea and sent him out to Tarsus." Acts 9:28-30

Paul has methodically given the record of his conversion to demonstrate that what he preaches is both sound and on an equal footing with that of even the most noted of apostles. When a challenge is made to the true gospel, he was willing to go to almost unimaginable efforts to protect its purity. This will be seen as the epistle unfolds.

Life application: We are being given a continuous stream of verses which clearly establish Paul as the apostle to the Gentiles, and one whose message is to be adhered to as doctrine for the church age. Of course, this is why Paul's letters are attacked continuously by legalistic Judaizers such as the Hebrew Roots Movement and other "messianic" groups.

He is also diminished by countless other churches as well. By weakening the authority of Paul's letters, one is left with nothing but a convoluted religion that will inevitably fall back on works-based salvation. Hold fast to the gospel of Jesus Christ which says that we are saved by grace alone through faith alone.

Heavenly Father, a new week of work lies ahead of us. While we are busy with that, help us to keep our hearts and thoughts directed to You. Keep us from idle hands and wandering minds and help us to be productive and honorable people who will be an example to others and a light back to You. Let us not do anything that would bring a stain upon Your name. Help us in this as the week unfolds before us. Amen.

But I saw none of the other apostles except James, the Lord's brother. Galatians 1:19

The wording of this verse is rather difficult to be dogmatic about. At the same time, there are logical conclusions we can make as we evaluate its words. The first problem is the standing of James. Paul says that he "saw none of the other apostles except James." This can be taken in one of two ways.

- 1) "I saw none of the other apostles with one exception, James." (James is the only other apostle that Paul saw).
- 2) "I saw none of the other apostles, but I saw James." (Of the apostles, Paul only saw only Peter. He also saw James.)

The second makes less sense because there would be no reason to mention seeing James if he were of no direct importance to the narrative in an apostolic capacity. Paul is

refuting the "false apostles" in this letter, and therefore any mentioning of true apostles is what is considered bearing on his words to the Galatians.

Therefore, it can be inferred that "James" is an apostle. However, it does not logically follow that he was one of the Twelve. If he were, then it would be probable that he would be noted as such. Rather, it is possible that he is an apostle in the wider sense of the word, just as Barnabas is noted in Acts 14:14.

The reason why this is so complicated is because of the final words of the verse which designate him as "James, the Lord's brother." If one believes in the perpetual virginity of Mary, a wholly unscriptural tenet, then this cannot be a literal brother of the Lord, unless he is a son of Joseph from a previous marriage. But there is nothing in Scripture to indicate this and it needs to be read into the Bible.

Other views are 1) that the word "brother" means a cousin; 2) that this is James, the son of Alphaeus who is one of the Twelve noted in Matthew 10:3; or 3) that it is James, the son of Zebedee (who had not yet been killed with the sword).

If this is not one of the Twelve, then this would exclude the two apostles, James, the son of Alphaeus, and James, the son of Zebedee. If it is one of the Twelve, then the term "the Lord's brother" seems to be an unusual term of designation. It would imply that one was considered a "brother" of the Lord, while the other wasn't.

What seems the most logical, and without inserting anything into the Bible in order to come to a conclusion which the Bible cannot fully support, is that the answer is that this is a literal brother of Jesus - born of Joseph and Mary after the virgin birth of Christ. This is why in Acts 12:17, James is noted separately from the "brothers" by Peter. He is named James, but is not one of the Twelve. That he is an actual brother of the Lord would follow naturally from the words of Matthew 1 -

"Then Joseph, being aroused from sleep, did as the angel of the Lord commanded him and took to him his wife, ²⁵ and did not know her till she had brought forth her firstborn Son. And he called His name JESUS." Matthew 1:24, 25

The Bible says that Joseph "did not know her till she had brought forth her firstborn Son." The meaning is evident on the surface. Joseph "knew," or had relations with, Mary after Jesus' miraculous birth. Any other view is entirely forced and is only given to elevate Mary in an unhealthy way. This has led down a very sad path for those who have taken their eyes off of Jesus and fixed them on her.

It is this James, the Lord's brother, who later was to be the leader of the council in Jerusalem in Acts 15 and also the author of the book of James which is the 59th book of the Bible.

Life application: There are passages which are very confusing in the Bible. Further, there are things that people intentionally want to believe because of a presupposition they hold to. However, with a thorough study of what is related to a confusing subject, a logical conclusion can normally be made which is supportable by the rest of the Bible.

Be diligent and be sure to carefully evaluate the Bible without getting caught up in unscriptural tenets simply because someone says something is so. Check, verify, and be ready to accept what is written when all of the evidence is in.

Heavenly Father, You have asked us to fix our eyes on Jesus. Help us to follow through with that. Help us not to get caught up in crazy things which have no biblical support, like praying to the saints or to Mary for protection and help. There is one Mediator between God and man; our Lord Jesus. As Your word says this is so, then help us to remember this truth and to be obedient to what You have established. Keep us from the false teachings of man, and help us to be faithful adherents to Your word alone. Amen.

(Now concerning the things which I write to you, indeed, before God, I do not lie.)

Galatians 1:20

The verb Paul uses is in the present tense. In essence, "...the things I am writing to you." This then covers all of those things which he has relayed of which those in Galatia would have no way of easily verifying. It covers from verse 13 through the end of the chapter and then on through more events recorded in Chapter 2. However, it more especially starts with the thought beginning at verse 15. This begins the focus on his calling as an apostle and the fact that the gospel he preached was derived not from men, but from God.

The reason for this oath is that he is building a case against the false apostles. In doing so, he must verify for them the truth of his own calling and the divine Source from which it came. This oath is quite similar to that of Romans 9:1 -

"I tell the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit."

And so in as solemn a manner as he can possibly present himself, he says, "...indeed, before God, I do not lie." The words he has been writing, and those he will continue with, are either truthful or they are a lie. If a lie, then nothing else he has said can be held as reliable either.

In other words, his words here are either an anchor which holds fast for the entire epistle, and as a refutation of the false apostles, or they are the cunning deception of a man who was willing to even pronounce a curse upon himself in order to deceive (see verse 1:8 & 9).

Paul has put himself out in a spiritually exposed manner for the Galatians to evaluate him and the truthfulness of his message. Though it would be difficult to determine the truth of some of his claims, many could be validated by the testimony of those who had walked with him in the past. Only a fool would make such claims if they weren't true. This is especially so because they are in writing and could be referred to at any time. Because of this, it adds weight to the fact that they are, in fact, true.

Life application: On several occasions, the Bible tells us to let our yes be yes and our no be no. In other words, let our words be of such weight that when we speak those around us will know they are the truth. At times, however, a matter may be of such importance that we must invoke God in our words. Invoking anything less than God is idolatry. Let us never flippantly invoke God's name, and let us never invoke any thing in creation when making a vow or an oath.

Lord God, just being still in Your presence and thinking on Your greatness is the most wonderful place to be. I can ponder the work of Your hands in creation and all the beauty it presents to our senses. I can meditate on Your word and all its lessons. And I can think on what You have given me in the life of Your Son. At times like these, I am filled with the joy of Your presence. Thank You for each precious moment where I can contemplate You and Your greatness. Amen.

Afterward I went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia. Galatians 1:21

Paul's last words of explanation were found in the narrative of verses 18 & 19 -

"Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and remained with him fifteen days. ¹⁹ But I saw none of the other apostles except James, the Lord's brother."

After that came the parenthetical oath claiming that his words were truthful. Now he continues on with the narrative saying, "Afterward I went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia." This is recorded in Acts 9:30 -

"When the brethren found out, they brought him down to Caesarea and sent him out to Tarsus."

However, this seems to be at odds with his words now. Acts says he went to Tarsus (which is in Cilicia), but he says here that he went to the regions of Syria and Cilicia. There is really no difficulty in this. The word Paul uses for "regions" is *klima*. It is also found in Romans 15:23 and 2 Corinthians 11:10. Vincent's Word Studies explains the meaning of this infrequently used word -

"Κλίμα, originally an inclination or slope of ground: the supposed slope of the earth from the equator to the pole. The ancient geographers ran imaginary parallel lines from the equator toward the pole, and the spaces or zones or regions between these lines, viewed in their slope or inclination toward the pole, were κλίματα. The word came to signify the temperature of these zones, hence our climate. In Chaucer's treatise on the Astrolabe, chapter 39 is headed "Description of the Meridional Lyne, of Longitudes and Latitudes of Cities and Towns from one to another of Clymatz." He says: "The longitude of a clymat is a lyne imagined fro est to west, y-lyke distant by-twene them alle. The latitude of a clymat is a lyne imagined fro north to south the space of the erthe, fro the byginning of the firste clymat unto the verrey ende of the same clymat, even directe agayns the pole artik." In poetical language, "climes" is used for regions of the earth, as Milton: "Whatever clime the sun's bright circle warms."

The "regions" of Syria and Cilicia is a correct description of the place to which Paul went. He is giving a general area which covers the specific places that he afterwards went to. Again, Vincent's Word Studies gives the explanation -

"Syria, in the narrower sense, of the district of which Antioch was the capital: not the whole Roman province of Syria, including Galilee and Judaea. ... This district was the scene of Paul's first apostolic work among the Gentiles. Cilicia was the southeasterly province of Asia Minor, directly adjoining Syria, from which it was separated by Mt. Pierius and the range of Amanus. It was bordered by the Mediterranean on the south. It was Paul's native province, and its capital was Tarsus, Paul's birthplace."

Life application: Taking time to refer to maps, or descriptions of ancient borders, while reading the Bible can be a helpful tool in understanding the biblical narrative.

Lord God Almighty, we who know what You have done through Christ the Lord stand in awe of Your majestic splendor. You, who created the universe and breathed life into man, were willing to come and dwell among us in order to redeem us to Yourself. How can such love be possible? What value do You see in us that You would do this thing? Though we cannot comprehend it, we can accept it at face value and marvel at what You have done. How great You are, O God. Amen.

And I was unknown by face to the churches of Judea which were in Christ.

Galatians 1:22

Paul continues with the surety that the gospel he preached was not of any human origin. After his brief trip to Jerusalem, he had gone to the "regions of Syria and Cilicia." During, and even after this, he was "unknown by face to the churches of Judea." The verb is in the imperfect tense, showing that he continued unknown in those churches.

Singling out the "churches of Judea" shows that the message, even by this early time, had gone out to the areas beyond Jerusalem. This was probably within just ten years of the ascension of Christ. Paul's face was unknown to those outside of the area of Jerusalem, and probably within Jerusalem itself with the exception of those he met during his visit there.

His final words concerning the churches in Judea are that they "were in Christ." The Greek word for "church" here is *ekklésia*. It means "an assembly." The term can be used when speaking of non-Christian elements as well. It can refer to the Israelites as a nation, or individual synagogues.

For this reason, Paul designates who he is speaking about specifically, saying that they are "in Christ." Though there may have been other assemblies in and around Jerusalem, Paul's only concern is those who were true followers of Christ.

The reason for his specificity is, again, to show that his doctrine had not come from any of these sources. His doctrine was also unknown to these people, with the exception of those in Jerusalem whom he had conferred with. All of this is building up his case for those in Galatia to consider. They had received a false gospel, and they therefore needed this detail to be assured that what they had heard from him was truly of the Lord and was both proper and untainted.

Life application: Following along the account of the book of Acts, and then comparing it to the epistles, shows a precise timeline of events. Even if all of the events are not

recorded in one place or another, they can be seamlessly combined into a clear and non-contradictory testimony to the reliability of Paul's ministry. Be assured that his words are exactly what they claim to be. They are divinely inspired and proper for doctrine.

How wonderful it is, O God, to live out the years, seeing the seasons come and go. You give us such wonderful variety and change, and yet You do it in a predictable sequence so that we can eagerly anticipate what is coming. And with the return of the seasons comes familiarity, fond memories, and the expectation of more good times ahead. Everything You have ordained for the span of our lives is just perfect. Thank You for how You treat the sons of men. Amen.

But they were hearing only, “He who formerly persecuted us now preaches the faith which he once *tried to destroy.*” Galatians 1:23

The words "they were hearing" are tied directly to the words "I was unknown" in verse 22. Though they never met Paul personally, they were continuously receiving reports about him. It was probably an amazing thing to have someone show up at the door of the church and start talking about the guy "who formerly persecuted us now preaches the faith he once *tried to destroy.*" The obvious reason is that they expected a different kind of knock on the door from that very same person!

Paul was known as one to persecute the church. And so, with each new report of him out preaching the faith, it must have marveled the people immensely. The words, "the faith" does not refer to the faith that we have in Jesus as individuals. Rather, it speaks of the doctrine about Jesus which is to be believed.

In other words, "the faith" is that Jesus is in fact the Messiah. The word is used in the objective sense, something that continues on in the Christian world today. The faith of our fathers is the faith passed down to us.

Paul's conversion must have had an immense strengthening effect on those scattered churches. Surely they would be willing to speak out more openly knowing that God could change even the hardest heart.

Life application: If you have had a great conversion in your life, don't hide it from others. Be willing to share how God has changed you into a new person. Your testimony may be the very thing which will lead others to speak out boldly for the sake of the gospel.

Lord God, You took a hard and contrary soul and You made him soft and pliable when You touched my heart. And this is how it has been for so many over the ages. You do a marvelous work in and through some really obstinate souls, thus showing Your greatness in lives changed and in redirected attitudes. Now Lord, continue to mold us for our good and for Your glory. Be with us and direct our every step according to Your wisdom, not ours. This we pray for Your glory. Amen.

And they glorified God in me. Galatians 1:24

"They" is referring to "the churches of Judea that are in Christ" referred to in verse 22. They heard the word about Paul's conversion and there was a distinct reaction to it. Instead of denial or suspicion, "they glorified God in me." This is where such praise belongs. Unfortunately, as pastors or teachers grow in prominence, they become the object of the praise of people rather than our great God who placed them in that position.

The almost idol worship of great orators or noted figures has gone on since the beginning. It finds its true peak in people like the pope of the RCC or in other such large denominations. Followers make a point of attending a gathering held by one of these people, not to worship God, but to say they were in the presence of such a person.

This continues on today with pastors of mega-churches, TV evangelists, and those who are specialists in a particular field, such as Bible prophecy. Instead of praising God for what they hear, people laud praises on the one giving the message. But Paul would redirect us in such an attitude, as any sound follower of Christ should.

Life application: Let us praise God for the gifts that others possess, for the changes in the lives of those He has called, for the great mysteries that are discovered in His word, or for any other like matter. Let us keep ourselves from making idols of anything less than God, and let us ensure that He alone gets the true praise and adoration for His marvelous greatness.

Heavenly Father, grant us wisdom to fix our eyes on You alone. Keep us from fawning over any person who has a particular gift, a notable presence, or who is famous, wealthy, or powerful. You have created all things and only You are worthy of our heartfelt devotion and praise. Keep us on this path for the sake of Your name and Your glory. May You alone be exalted, O God. Amen.

CHAPTER 2

Then after fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and also took Titus with *me*. Galatians 2:1

Paul now mentions a period of "fourteen years" until he again "went up to Jerusalem." There is great debate as to which starting period he is speaking of, his conversion, or since his previous trip to Jerusalem. If from his conversion, he is stating that the period covers everything since verse 1:15. If from his last trip to Jerusalem, it is speaking of the details of verse 1:18.

Either way, Paul says that he "again" went up to Jerusalem. This indicates that something important transpired during this visit which occurred around 14-20 years after his conversion (the timing depends on how this verse and verse 1:18 are considered). In the interim, Paul had gone to Jerusalem (see Acts 11:29, 30 & Acts 12:25) on a mission trip for relief of the saints there during a famine. And yet, he doesn't mention this. This is passed over then because it does not bear on what he is speaking of in this letter to the Galatians.

However, the trip to Jerusalem which he now refers to goes directly to the heart of the matter concerning the apostasy of those in Galatia. For this reason, he "went up" again to Jerusalem. As always, the noting of a trip to Jerusalem includes the idea of ascending. Regardless of the point on the compass, or the elevation from which one goes there, it is always considered a trip "up." It is as if a throne in a court is being approached for a decision on a matter. Such is certainly the case here.

The record of this trip is found in Acts 15, and it is known as the Council in Jerusalem. A matter of great importance was to be settled there. Unfortunately, despite the obvious nature of the ruling, its edicts were ignored by those in Galatia, and they have continued to be ignored by the foolish since then. On this trip, Paul notes that he went with Barnabas. As a fellow apostle and a central figure in the earlier workings of the church, it was a logical choice.

Barnabas was a Jew, and his presence filled an important point for those at the council to consider. He had participated in Paul's evangelistic efforts, and he was able to confirm the message which Paul preached among the Gentiles. But to ensure that the message was perfectly understood, Paul next notes that he "also took Titus" with him.

The reason for bringing Titus along is to confirm the gospel message which Paul preached elsewhere. It will be explained precisely in the coming verses. Titus is not specifically mentioned as having gone with Paul in Acts 15, but the account does say "that Paul and Barnabas and certain others of them" went up to Jerusalem. Titus would be among the "certain others" and his importance in having gone will now be seen in this epistle to the Galatians.

Life application: Bible study is hard work. Sometimes, piecing together a timeline of the events of what occurs seems like a lot of hard work with no set gain to be realized. However, this is not the case. The Bible rewards those who diligently seek the Lord through it.

Our doctrine is only as good as our willingness to pursue what is sound. Picking and choosing what we will believe based on random verses will inevitably lead to faulty doctrine, but it is so much easier than diligently studying the word. However, easy is only rewarding in the short term. In the long run, having right doctrine will receive eternal rewards.

Lord God, it sure is nice to go to church on Sunday, hear an easy message about how to run our lives, and then have the rest of the week to use for "more important" things. And deep studies of Your word can wear us out mentally and take up limited time. But this is where wisdom is to be found! And so, help us to be willing to devote our time and energy to a deeper understanding of Your word, and in a right application of it. Help our doctrine to be pure and our hearts undefiled towards You. Forget easy! Help us to stretch ourselves as we draw near to You with right doctrine. Amen.

And I went up by revelation, and communicated to them that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but privately to those who were of reputation, lest by any means I might run, or had run, in vain. Galatians 2:2

This is referring to Paul's trip to Jerusalem with Barnabas and Titus. Paul received revelation that there was trouble coming and eventually, according to Acts 15:2, it turned into a great dissension within the church -

"Therefore, when Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and dispute with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas and certain others of them should go up to Jerusalem, to the apostles and elders, about this question." Acts 15:2

Having received revelation of this kind was certainly to quiet him and give him the confidence he needed to know that he was on the right path. His words in this verse show us this. Upon his arrival in Jerusalem, he "communicated to them."

The communication was to those who would soon render a decision at the Council in Jerusalem. Paul first spoke in private with them in order to ensure they knew, in advance, that a dissension had arisen. Thus, they would be prepared for the challenge that lay ahead in the deliberations.

What he specifically communicated was "the gospel which I preach to the Gentiles." This is written in the present-tense for a good reason. The gospel he had preached; the gospel he had presented to the leaders and the council at Jerusalem; the gospel he continued to preach after that; and the gospel he still preached, even to the Galatians at the present time, was a consistent message. It had not changed.

It was this same gospel that he communicated "privately to those who were of reputation." These words are also in the present tense in the Greek. Therefore, they are more appropriately rendered "to them of repute." Again, the present tense is necessary to understand that those who approved of his gospel message to the Gentiles were the same people who were still the ones who continued to approve of it.

Paul is showing that the false apostles' claim that they had the true gospel was, in fact, what was false. They may have pretended to come under the authority of the leaders in Jerusalem, but this was not so. The same people who were authorities in Jerusalem at that time were still the authorities in Jerusalem, and it was Paul and his gospel message that they backed.

If they had any doubt of this, all they would need to do is send a message to inquire whether this was true or not. However, Paul's continued words of the letter will even make that unnecessary. By the time he is done, they will see that his message was the very intent of God for the Gentile people.

To finish this verse, he notes that his meeting with these leaders was to find out if "by any means I might run, or had run, in vain." The intent of Paul's visit, and the calling of a council by the leaders, was to settle the matter of Paul's gospel as he conveyed it to the Gentiles.

Therefore, his words here are not questioning the possibility that his labors were in vain, as if he was the one who was misguided all along. Instead, his words are directed as to

whether or not they understood and supported his work, as if they were not yet satisfied in their understanding of the message he preached. Vincent's Word Studies paraphrases the verse and then explains it thus -

"I laid before them that gospel which I preach to the Gentiles, that they might examine and settle for themselves the question whether I am not possibly running or had run in vain.' The investigation was to be for their satisfaction, not for Paul's."

Life application: Paul's message was presented to the leaders in Jerusalem for evaluation. The Bible shows that what he preached to the Gentiles was proper. He was given their full support and approval. Therefore, to understand proper church-age doctrine, we are to turn to the letters of Paul.

If this is not so, then we have no sure word at all. Be sure to stand fast on what Paul teaches. It is the message approved by the Lord Jesus for the proper conduct of our Christian walk.

Lord God, Your word teaches us that we are saved by grace through faith. It goes on to say that it is not of works lest anyone should boast. I receive that. Thank You for the grace You have bestowed upon undeserving me. Thank You that I stand justified by faith alone. All credit goes to You. My destiny is set, and my future is sure. Hallelujah to Christ who has freely offered all I need in order to be restored to the paradise that was lost so long ago! Amen.

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

Though verses 3 through 5 are parenthetical, the very core of the message of Galatians is found in this verse now. Paul had gone up to Jerusalem in order to meet with the leaders there. When he went, he took Titus along with him. Titus was a Greek and a saved believer in Jesus Christ. He was with Paul at the meeting and yet he was not "compelled to be circumcised."

From this verse, Paul will carefully and methodically detail his argument concerning the bondage of the Law of Moses; the truth that circumcision is not required for salvation; and the fact that this truth is even seen in Abraham, the father of the faith of the Hebrew people. Paul will use circumcision as a benchmark in his argument against any deed of the Law of Moses being required for salvation.

If this most important aspect of being brought into the covenant people was not considered necessary for salvation through Jesus Christ, then nothing else would be as well. Circumcision first goes back to Genesis 17 -

"And God said to Abraham: 'As for you, you shall keep My covenant, you and your descendants after you throughout their generations. ¹⁰ This *is* My covenant which you shall keep, between Me and you and your descendants after you: Every male child among you shall be circumcised; ¹¹ and you shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between Me and you. ¹² He who is eight days old among you shall be circumcised, every male child in your generations, he who is born in your house or bought with money from any foreigner who is not your descendant. ¹³ He who is born in your house and he who is bought with your money must be circumcised, and My covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant. ¹⁴ And the uncircumcised male child, who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin, that person shall be cut off from his people; he has broken My covenant.'" Genesis 17 :9-14

Later, it is noted that for a foreigner to come into the fold, they were required to be circumcised -

"This *is* the ordinance of the Passover: No foreigner shall eat it. ⁴⁴ But every man's servant who is bought for money, when you have circumcised him, then he may eat it. ⁴⁵ A sojourner and a hired servant shall not eat it. ⁴⁶ In one house it shall be eaten; you shall not carry any of the flesh outside the house, nor shall you break one of its bones. ⁴⁷ All the congregation of Israel shall keep it. ⁴⁸ And when a stranger dwells with you *and wants* to keep the Passover to the LORD, let all his males be circumcised, and then let him come near and keep it; and he shall be as a native of the land." Exodus 12:43-48

Without meeting this most important requirement, there was to be no inclusion of that person among the covenant people. And yet, Titus was already saved, and he was there among the leaders of the church. If those same leaders determined that circumcision for Titus was required, the entire message of grace through faith would crumble and the church would be brought back into legalism and bondage.

However, he was not compelled to be circumcised and the truth that Christ is the fulfillment of this requirement, and all of the Law of Moses, was realized and solidified for all time.

Understanding this precept concerning this most important aspect of Jewish covenant life, we can look at any lesser aspect and know that it is also set aside because of the work of Christ. Church doctrine then is established from this point on. As this occurred in Acts 15 where the decision was published for all the Gentile churches to read and accept, then we can know that Paul's epistles set the parameters for church doctrine and conduct as they are rendered after that point in time, and they follow immediately after the book of Acts.

Life application: If someone tells you that you need to be circumcised in order to be saved, tell them, "Take a hike, heretic." Stand fast on your faith in the grace of Jesus Christ alone.

Heavenly Father, a New Covenant came through the shed blood of Christ my Lord. In that Your word says it is, "A new covenant," we know that You have made the first obsolete. What is obsolete is done away with in the better and surer promises of the New. Should someone demand that we fall back on the Old in order to be pleasing to You, we will stand on the grace of Christ and tell them, "Get lost heretic!" Thank You for the grace of Christ which comes by faith in His accomplished work. Amen.

And *this occurred* because of false brethren secretly brought in (who came in by stealth to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage), Galatians 2:4

This verse is referring to the previous one where Paul said that not even Titus, who was a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised. His words now build upon that. Paul would not budge on this issue because it would lead not to freedom, but to bondage. This attempt to have Titus circumcised was "because of false brethren."

The term Paul uses to describe them is found only here and in 2 Corinthians 11:26. It is those who were "brethren" in name only, but false in their Christian life. Paul uses an article (the false brethren) to show that they were by this time a well-known group of miscreants. They were anti-grace Judaizers who wanted control over the body, not freedom for it.

These false brethren were "secretly brought in." The word used for this is *pareisaktos*. It is found only here in the New Testament, and it means, "brought in by the side, and so insidiously and illegally." Vincent's Word Studies says that they were, "Brought in, not from Jerusalem into the church at Antioch, nor into the Pauline churches generally, but into the Christian brotherhood to which they did not rightfully belong."

Paul continues his words by saying that these worthless false brethren, are those "who came in by stealth to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus." Charles Ellicott notes that the terms "came in by stealth" and "secretly brought in" are words which "correspond to each other in the Greek, and bring out in a graphic and forcible way the insidious and designing character of the party most violently opposed to St. Paul. Professing to be Christians, they were really Jews of the narrowest sort, who only entered into the Church to spy into and restrict its liberties."

In other words, not only were they false brethren, but they were those who actively worked against the truth of the gospel. Some false brethren may come in and want to leech off the fellowship. Others might just want something to do or someone to fellowship with, even if they don't believe what is being discussed by the brothers. But these people had a set and perverse agenda to destroy the truth of the grace of Christ. It is an agenda with a specific purpose which was "that they might bring us into bondage."

If the grace of Christ is that which brings freedom and liberty, then something opposed to it can only bring bondage. Paul will very clearly explain in his words to come that the Law of Moses is bondage. It can only show us what is sinful, but it can in no way free us from our sin.

Only Christ can do that. The false brethren knew that if they could diminish the grace of Christ, those who believed their message would be brought into bondage. And anyone in bondage has someone over them to enforce that state. Thus, their intent was a power-grab, and their desire was to be the ones in power over the Galatians.

Life application: If you believe that You should be observing any or all of the Law of Moses, you have been deceived. If you teach that to others, you are a heretic. Don't be deceived and don't be a heretic. Receive the freedom which truly sets you free. Receive Christ Jesus.

Heavenly Father, why would anyone trade the grace of Jesus Christ for the heresy of falling back under the Law of Moses? It is so hard to understand, but so many would rather carry around the heavy yoke of bondage than to stand in the liberty by which Christ has made us free. Help us to understand that He is the fulfillment and embodiment of everything which stood against us. Help us to put our trust in Him alone. We can only please You when we honor the Son who fulfilled all things on our behalf. Thank You for our Lord Jesus. Amen.

...to whom we did not yield submission even for an hour, that the truth of the gospel might continue with you. Galatians 2:5

"To whom" is speaking of the false brethren of the previous verse. It was to these miscreants that Paul says, "...we did not yield submission."

They had come in and tried to pervert the gospel of grace which says that there is no thing that man can do in order to be pleasing to God except exercise faith in what He has already done through Christ. They had tried to introduce a system of works for righteousness, but Paul and Barnabas refused to submit "even for an hour."

This term, "even for an hour" is his way of saying that they simply didn't budge. They rejected outright their false gospel and refused to even listen to what they proposed. It was a dilution of the truth, and any dilution means it is not the truth; it has become a perversion of it. Their stubborn refusal was so "that the truth of the gospel might continue with you." According to Charles Ellicott, "The words used in the Greek are expressive of undiminished continuance: 'Might reach to you and persist among you in its full extent.'"

In other words, they were to see the truth, take it in, and continue to act on it forever. As this letter to the Galatians has become a part of the Bible, the words of Paul continue to speak to all nations and at all times. It is God's Word which says that we are not to add in any demand as if a requirement to be pleasing to God. We are not to be intimidated into being circumcised, observing a Sabbath day, holding a feast of the Lord observance, or giving up on eating some non-kosher food.

We may do any of these things in our freedom, but if we do them in an attempt to be pleasing to God, then we have fallen from grace. We are under no such restrictions and to proclaim otherwise is to be considered heresy and worthy of condemnation.

Life application: Again and again Paul shows his adamancy concerning the purity of the gospel of grace. To proclaim anything else is heresy. Don't be a heretic; be freed from such things and be willing to proclaim, "What Christ Jesus did for me is sufficient! And it is sufficient for you too!"

Lord God, thank You for the hope found in Jesus. What would life be like without a victory over the grave? Our only hope would be "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die!" May the praises of Your people resound forever and ever because of the wonderful things You have done for us through Jesus our Lord! Amen.

But from those who seemed to be something—whatever they were, it makes no difference to me; God shows personal favoritism to no man—for those who seemed to be something added nothing to me. Galatians 2:6

Paul's words in this verse appear to be a little harsher than they are in the original Greek. It seems as if he is unnecessarily dismissive of the apostles, but he is simply being logical about his calling and their relation to it.

He is now tying his words back to verse 2 after his parenthetical thought concerning Titus which comprised verses 3-5. He begins with "But from those who seemed to be something." This is speaking of "those who were of reputation" in verse 2. However, the verb should be present tense, "those who are of reputation." They not only had authority in the past at the Council in Jerusalem, but they also continued to have authority at the present, even over those in Galatia.

Paul continues though. Despite this authority, "...whatever they were, it makes no difference to me." This is not intended as a statement of diminishing their authority. Rather, it is a statement concerning the Source of his. They had nothing to do with where Paul received his commission. Instead, it came apart from them and directly from Christ. The words, "...it makes no difference to me" are intended to show this. Whether they approved of his message or not, the matter had been settled by the same One who commissioned them.

This is supported by his next thought, "God shows personal favoritism to no man." This is a Hebraism. The words "personal favoritism" literally means, "to accept the face." In the Old Testament, it could be taken in a positive or a negative way. In the New Testament, it is only used in a negative way (the other such use is in Luke 20:21).

What it means is that God doesn't look at a person and accept him based on externals; He is completely impartial in how He judges a person. In this case, God had selected Paul for His own sovereign reasons and that was the end of the matter. Because of this he says, "...for those who seemed to be something added nothing to me."

There was nothing the other apostles could add to Paul's actual authority with their approval, and there was nothing that they could diminish from it with their disapproval. Instead, he stood approved by God through his selection as an apostle.

Life application: God doesn't look at externals when judging us. So why should we? How often we get caught up in following a teacher or preacher because he is famous,

handsome, eloquent, a great orator, on TV, or for whatever reason! We get star-struck too easily. This is not a proper way of evaluating doctrine.

Instead, we should evaluate doctrine based on how the presenter's words match with Scripture. Let us keep this valuable lesson near to us and always test what we hear based on the word of God alone.

Lord God, Your word sure is marvelous. It comforts us in our times of sadness. It inspires us when we are lacking motivation, it corrects us when we do wrong, it edifies us when we have done what is right, it restores our souls when we are empty, and it fills us to overflowing as we continue to read it. Thank You for Your marvelous word which fills our hungry souls with delight! Help us to pick it up daily and peruse its marvelous pages. Amen.

But on the contrary, when they saw that the gospel for the uncircumcised had been committed to me, as *the gospel* for the circumcised was to Peter... Galatians 2:7

The words, "But on the contrary" are given to contrast his previous words of verse 6 which said, "...for those who seemed *to be something* added nothing to me." There was nothing deficient in Paul's gospel message, nor was there anything unsound or inappropriate. Instead, just as he noted, those in Jerusalem "added nothing to me." His message was complete, sound, and in line with the truth of Jesus Christ. His commission was valid and there was no need to add anything to it for it to be complete.

Because of this he says, "...they (meaning the leaders in Jerusalem) saw that the gospel for the uncircumcised has been committed to me." The light of what Christ was doing through Paul truly dawned on them at this time. It was already known that the Gentiles could be a part of the church. This was seen in the account of Cornelius' conversion in Acts 10 & 11. And even more than this, it came through Peter's evangelism rather than Paul's.

There could be no disputing that what Paul was doing was both correct and in line with the purposes of God because of this occurrence between Peter and Cornelius. And yet, the focus of the evangelism of "the uncircumcision" belonged not to Peter, but to Paul. He was uniquely qualified to carry out this ministry and it had been committed to him.

The fact that Paul is specifically noted as the Apostle to the Gentiles is recorded both implicitly and explicitly numerous times in the New Testament, but three specific

references are found in Romans 11:13, 1 Timothy 2:7, and 2 Timothy 1:11. These, along with this note in Galatians 2:7 are sufficient evidence of the specificity of Paul's ministry.

Continuing on, he next notes, "...as *the gospel* for the circumcised was to Peter." What this means is that Peter was not only an apostle to the circumcised (meaning the Jews), but he is the main apostle to the Jews.

The singling out of Peter in this way is used to show this, and it is well attested to in the structure and layout of the book of Acts. Acts 1-12 highlight Peter and his ministry to an exceptional degree. However, chapters 13-28 highlight Paul and his ministry in the same way. Everything that Peter accomplishes in his section of Acts is repeated in a marvelous way by Paul in his section.

Having said this, it does not mean that Peter's ministry was solely one of evangelizing Jews (as was noted concerning Cornelius above), nor was Paul's ministry solely one of evangelizing Gentiles. There was also not a different gospel transmitted by Peter than that of Paul. Rather, there is, as the Bible scholar Lightfoot notes, "...a distinction of sphere, and not a difference of type." This is absolutely certain by Paul's comments in Galatians as well as Peter's comments in his second epistle -

"...and consider *that* the longsuffering of our Lord *is* salvation—as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you, ¹⁶ as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable *people* twist to their own destruction, as *they do* also the rest of the Scriptures." 2 Peter 3:15, 16

Because of the sphere of influence which the Bible marks out between Peter and Paul, it cannot go without notice or mentioning that the Roman Catholic Church's doctrine of Peter being the first Pope is simply nuts.

The Bible clearly shows that Peter was the Apostle to the Jews. Paul is the Apostle to the Gentiles. As Peter's message was to the Jews, then it would make as much sense as a baseball hoop for the Roman Catholic Church to claim its roots in the message of Peter.

There are many logical arguments for denying their claim concerning Peter, this being just one of them, but it is a convincing one. The structure of the book of Acts, the layout of the epistles in the New Testament, and the dispensational model of redemptive history, all show the truth that Peter's message was intended for the early church,

followed by a time when Paul's letters would be church doctrine, and then Peter's letters would again take on added significance after the rapture of the church.

Life application: Paul's words are doctrine for the Gentile-led church age. All Scripture is God-breathed and all of it is useful for doctrine, reproof, learning about God, etc. However, not all of it applies in the same way at all times. Context is king in biblical interpretation and Paul's letters are specifically designed for this dispensation of time.

Marvelous, O God! You are marvelous. You give us rain in its season. You provide us the day and the night so that we can work according to the seasons. You bring out the right weather at the right time so that the flowers bloom, the crops grow, and the animals know when to move and where to move. You give us our own seasons of life where our eyes can behold all things a bit differently as we change. Everything is so wonderfully perfect because of Your wisdom. Marvelous, O God! You are marvelous. Amen.

... (for He who worked effectively in Peter for the apostleship to the circumcised also worked effectively in me toward the Gentiles), Galatians 2:8

This verse is parenthetical, and it is rightly placed that way by the NKJV. It is an explanation of the preceding verse which said, "...when they saw that the gospel for the uncircumcised had been committed to me, as *the gospel* for the circumcised was to Peter."

What Peter had done through the power of the Holy Spirit was also accomplished by Paul, demonstrating and proving his apostolic commission. Further, Paul's words place himself on the same level, in all ways, as that of Peter.

Again, he is doing this for a reason. He is demonstrating to those in Galatia that his ministry is valid, and therefore the gospel message that he preached to them is valid. The purpose of his words is to refute the false brethren who had crept in and proclaimed a gospel of works, which is no gospel at all.

Peter's name is being brought in for two separate reasons. First, because he was well known as an apostle with great authority; and secondly, because of what Paul will show about him in the verses ahead.

Taken together, these points will verify that Paul's message is sound and is to be listened to and adhered to. To demonstrate that what Paul did is comparable to everything that

Peter did, the book of Acts meticulously records their workings. Following them and placing them side by side shows the truth of Paul's words -

Act/Chapter

1. Peter's work began by the Holy Spirit (2)
1. Paul's work began by the Holy Spirit (13)

2. Peter was thought to be drunk and & then explains himself (2)
2. Paul was thought to be mad and then explains himself (26)

3. Peter's first sermon begins new section of book (2)
3. Paul's first sermon begins new section of book (13)

4. Peter has a time of work, preaching, and then persecution (2-11)
4. Paul has a time of work, preaching, and then persecution (13-19)

5. Peter has trouble after healing a man lame from birth (3)
5. Paul has trouble after healing a man lame from birth (14)

6. Peter says, "Silver and gold have I none" (3)
6. Paul says, "I have coveted no one's silver or gold" (20)

7. Peter's shadow heals (5)
7. Paul's handkerchief heals (19)

8. Peter is arrested in the temple and taken to Sanhedrin (4, 5)
8. Paul is arrested in the temple and taken to Sanhedrin (21-23)

9. Peter confronts Simon the sorcerer (8)
9. Paul confronts Elymas the sorcerer (13)

10. Peter performs an exorcism (5)
10. Paul performs an exorcism (16)

11. Peter raises Tabitha from the dead (9)
11. Paul raises Eutychus from the dead (20)

12. Peter lays hands for reception of Spirit (8)

- 12. Paul lays hands for reception of Spirit (19)
- 13. Peter worshipped (10)
- 13. Paul worshipped (14)
- 14. Peter imprisoned with miraculous escape (12)
- 14. Paul imprisoned with miraculous escape (16)
- 15. Angel stood by Peter (12)
- 15. Angel stood by Paul (27)
- 16. Peter called by vision to preach in Caesarea (10)
- 16. Paul called by vision to preach in Macedonia (16)
- 17. Peter's success brings Jewish jealousy (5)
- 17. Paul's success brings Jewish jealousy (13)
- 18. Peter heals the bedridden Aeneas (9)
- 18. Paul heals the bedridden father of Publius (28)
- 19. Peter ordains deacons (6)
- 19. Paul ordains elders (14)
- 20. Peter is "filled with the Spirit" (4)
- 20. Paul is "filled with the Spirit" (13)

Peter (twice) the Apostle to the Jews

Paul (four times) the Apostle to the Gentiles

1-12 - Peter mentioned 57 times (Simon 4) // Paul mentioned 0 (Saul 21)

13-28 - Peter is mentioned once (Simon once) // Paul mentioned 132 (Saul twice)

Life application: If you know someone who is caught up in the legalism of "returning to the law" such as in an aberrant sect or a Judaizing messianic church/synagogue, your greatest weapon in correcting their error is to show them, directly from the word, the movement of the focus of Acts from Peter to Paul. Then take them to Galatians for correction.

If they still won't pay heed, show them in Hebrews where it explicitly says that the law is obsolete, annulled, and set aside. If they still won't listen, then you have done your job. They are brainwashed and would rather listen to men than God's word. Drop them from your fellowship, but not from your prayers.

Thank You Lord God for being there for us every step of this difficult life we live. The days may be marvelous at times, but there is always a challenge or a frustration that creeps in and takes over the moments of joy. In those times, we still have Your word ready to fill us with that joy once again. Knowing that everything is already settled, and that the last page restores Paradise lost, makes every difficult time seem manageable! Thank You for this wonderful assurance. Amen.

...and when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that had been given to me, they gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, that we *should go* to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised. Galatians 2:9

These words follow naturally after the parenthetical insert of verse 8. To show the logical sequence of thought, follow the verses without the parenthesis -

"But on the contrary, when they saw that the gospel for the uncircumcised had been committed to me, as *the gospel* for the circumcised *was* to Peter ... and when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that had been given to me, they gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, that we *should go* to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised."

Paul's words show the elevation of his apostolic ministry to the same level as that of Peter; recognized as such by "James, Cephas, and John." James is named first as the leader of the church at this time. It was he who rendered the final decision at the Council in Jerusalem in Acts 15.

Next "Cephas" is mentioned. This is Peter's other name. He, along with John, was a special part of Jesus' earthly ministry. Together, they were considered as leaders in their own right.

James is mentioned first when a particular act of the church is referred to. However, Peter or "Cephas" is mentioned first by Paul when speaking of the missionary function of the church. Concerning these three, Paul notes that they "seemed to be pillars."

Vincent's Word Studies says that this is better translated as, "who are in repute as pillars." The term "seemed to be" gives the impression that such really wasn't the case. However, they were the pillars, and their reputation noted this.

The word "pillars" gives the obvious mental picture of those who support a body or an organization. They would be those who kept the organization strong and properly structured. In other words, Paul's naming of these three is intended to show that these great representatives were in full approval of his ministry.

They "perceived the grace that had been given to" him. Christ had set His seal of approval on Paul and his ministry, and they therefore gave both him "and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship."

In the Bible, the right hand is the prominent one. It signifies approval, power, and authority. In their eyes, Paul's apostolic ministry was fully qualified to receive this status. Barnabas is mentioned here because it was he who traveled with Paul and who helped establish the church at Galatia.

Therefore, the message these two carried to them was fully sanctioned by the leaders of the church. They were to go "to the Gentiles" while James, Cephas, and John would continue to evangelize "the circumcised."

Paul has carefully and methodically shown that his ministry was fully approved of by the very leaders of the church. If this is true, then anyone who showed up afterwards with a different message could not claim that Paul's message was invalid. He is building his case against the false apostles and their false message which had come to infect the church at Galatia.

This is important for us to understand because this letter is included in the Bible. It is a portion of the record and witness concerning the ministry of Paul to the Gentile-led church. To dismiss Paul is to stand opposed to the doctrines of Christ Himself.

Life application: Don't believe the false teachers of today who dismiss the words of Paul as having been "corrupted" by some later body (such as the RCC) who had an agenda to pervert the word of God. This is not an uncommon teaching among Judaizers, but it is without any biblical or historical support at all.

Paul's words have been accurately maintained and stand as the necessary instruction for the church age. To state otherwise is to call into question the competence of the Lord who has given these words to 2000 years of church history.

O Lord God, help us to reject those who call into question the truth of Your word. Too many people want to tear apart this beautiful gift You have given to us. It is so easy to fall into such a trap if we are unwilling to do the hard work and to study to see if the words are true or not. And so, help us to set our priorities, and to be willing to study in order to show ourselves approved concerning the truth and reliability of the Holy Bible. Yes, help us in this, O God. Amen.

They desired only that we should remember the poor, the very thing which I also was eager to do. Galatians 2:10

News Flash: This verse must be kept in its proper context.

Paul has just acknowledged that he was the designated Apostle to the Gentiles. In this acknowledgment, he shows that he and Barnabas were given "the right hand of fellowship" from James, Cephas, and John - the pillars of the church in Jerusalem. In this capacity, he was ordained as the one to go forth, evangelizing the Gentiles. However, they asked that he not forget one important thing which is "that we should remember the poor."

The "we" in this verse means Paul and Barnabas. The context shows this is not a general "we" meaning the whole church. Additionally, the "we" was to extend to those who they evangelized, meaning the Gentiles. Further, there was intent behind this. The "poor" is not speaking of the poor in general, but the poor among the Jewish believers. Paul was being asked to make an effort to bind these categories of Christians together through this remembrance of the poor.

The admonition was given by these pillars of the church for a couple of reasons. The first is that there may be charges that Paul had such a disposition towards the Gentiles that he would forget his own Jewish roots altogether. And secondly, that even if he never forgot his roots, they desired that he would be willing to actively bless those from whom the Gentiles received their spiritual heritage.

The record shows that Paul was careful to take this to heart. His later dealings in Acts, Romans, and 1 & 2 Corinthians show that he was faithful to this charge. His words in Romans perfectly reflect this attitude -

"But now I am going to Jerusalem to minister to the saints. ²⁶ For it pleased those from Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor among the saints who are in Jerusalem. ²⁷ It pleased them indeed, and they are their debtors. For if the Gentiles have been partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister to them in material things." Romans 15:25-27

Concerning our News Flash above, the context here does not concern assisting the poor elsewhere. This does not mean that it is wrong to help them, and other admonitions in the Bible show that helping the poor is a notable thing to do. But this verse is especially dealing with the poor who are Christians, and in particular those from whom our spiritual heritage is derived. At this time, it was Jews; later in church history, it applies to those who have carried the message on to other people groups.

Paul finishes his thought on this by saying that it was "the very thing which I also was eager to do." Vincent's Word Studies notes, "Lit. which, this very thing. The expression is peculiarly emphatic, and brings out the contrast between Judaizing hostility and Paul's spirit of loving zeal."

As always, Paul's words have intent. What he relays in this verse is directed towards the Galatians in particular. They had turned their allegiances towards the false apostles and away from Paul and his true gospel message.

One of the points which Paul uses to show that the Judaizers were concerned with power and control rather than true evangelism is that they failed to follow through with this one admonition of the leaders of the church. Paul, however, never failed to adhere to it.

Life application: Context is king. When someone cites a verse such as this one, it must be carefully evaluated in order to ensure that its actual purpose is understood and adhered to. Too many churches will use a verse like this as an appeal to a social gospel for helping the poor. Although helping the poor is certainly a wonderful thing, we are not to tear verses out of context in order to justify our personal agendas.

Lord, it is a great thing to do good deeds and to help others, but it often becomes a means of feeling good about the things we have done and less about bringing glory to You. Churches with a social gospel, or a social agenda, are often the most self-serving churches of all. Help us to have a heart for You first and foremost. After that, we will be the type to faithfully let others know that what we do is for the sake of the name of Jesus

and for bringing many to salvation through His name. Help us to have our good deeds properly directed. Amen.

Now when Peter had come to Antioch, I withstood him to his face, because he was to be blamed; Galatians 2:11

In verse 1:18, Paul introduced Peter into the epistle. He brought him in again in 2:7, 2:8, and 2:9 (calling him Cephas in verse 9). The naming of Peter and the words used to describe him were not without specific intent. Instead, that intent now begins to be realized. Paul will show that his gospel message is correct by showing how Peter, one of the great pillars of the church, actually departed from it. Thus, the correction was to be made in him, not in Paul.

There is a dispute between some texts as to whether the name "Peter" or "Cephas" was originally used in verse 11. Both refer to the same individual, and so it doesn't change the overall intent, but Paul probably used "Cephas" here. This would be to tie him back to his Jewish name and identity, which then is a connection to the entire intent of the passage.

Either way though, he begins with, "Now when Peter had come to Antioch." This was probably shortly after Paul's visit to Jerusalem and the council's decision, which was rendered in Acts 15. Antioch was in a Gentile area and counted many Gentiles among the roles of the church.

While there at Antioch, Peter's actions (which will be explained) necessitated Paul to withstand "him to his face." In other words, there would be a dispute which required an open admonishment because of a failure to adhere to the gospel. As Paul says, "...because he was to be blamed."

The word for "blamed" here is *kataginóskó*, and it is more appropriately translated as "condemned." The actions of Peter brought about their own condemnation. The explanation of the thought is actually clearly given by Paul in Galatians 5 -

"Indeed I, Paul, say to you that if you become circumcised, Christ will profit you nothing. ³ And I testify again to every man who becomes circumcised that he is a debtor to keep the whole law. ⁴ You have become estranged from Christ, you who *attempt to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace.*" Galatians 5:2-4

Like being circumcised in order to obtain God's favor, what Peter will be described as doing in this account is actually the setting aside of the grace of Christ. It is a self-condemning act. Paul will have to correct him on this.

As a side note, there have been numerous bizarre attempts by scholars to change the severity of what occurs in this account into one of a less serious nature. This is certainly because of the status of Peter. Some say that it is not the same Peter, but rather a lesser disciple. The fact that Paul repeatedly brought Peter into the account, giving both names at one time or another, shows this to be ludicrous.

Some have tried to assign Paul as the wrongdoer by showing open hostility to Peter and asserting that he was to be "condemned" for his actions. In essence, he was actually pointing the finger at God who selected Peter as an apostle and who revealed Christ through him. Others have tried to turn this account into a metaphorical battle between Judaism and Christianity. And others have blamed both apostles by saying that one was in error by his actions and the other was in error for his open rebuke of those actions.

All of these (and any other such nutty commentary) are entirely unfounded. The account of what occurs is clear, it is precise, and it is to be taken at face value. Paul was in the right, he will correct Peter because of his failures, and the account is being relayed to the Galatians to show them that their actions are just as worthy of condemnation as the great pillar Peter.

Life application: Keep away from nutty commentaries and nutty teachers who attempt to justify the great sin of setting aside the grace of Christ. Instead, hold fast to it as it is your very life and your connection to God through Him.

Heavenly Father, help us to stand on the grace of Jesus Christ alone. What more could we add to what He has done? Let us not be so perverse that we would ever assume that Your favor could rest in any type of thing that is more precious to You than the life and death of Jesus Christ our Lord and Your Son. Amen.

...for before certain men came from James, he would eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing those who were of the circumcision. Galatians 2:12

Verse 12 now begins to explain the comment of verse 11 where Paul said he withstood Peter to his face. The reason why is because "before certain men came from James, he would eat with the Gentiles." Why these men came from James isn't stated. They may

have been visitors, or they may have been appointed to go and check on doctrine, or for some other reason. The fact that they came from James, not why they came from James, is what Paul focuses on.

Before their arrival, Peter did what would otherwise ceremonially defile him according to the Jewish customs; he would eat with the Gentiles. He knew from a previous encounter with Gentiles that God had accepted them as they were and that he could not be defiled by them. This is found in the account of Acts 10 & 11. However, Peter failed to take the lesson to heart and to apply it in all circumstances.

Instead, "when they came, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing those who were of the circumcision." Charles Ellicott notes that, "The Greek expression brings out the timid and gradual withdrawal, ending in complete separation." Peter didn't have the intestinal fortitude to stand firmly on the doctrine of salvation by grace alone. Instead, he was more worried about the perception of him in the eyes of the Jews who came from James, and so he slowly withdrew himself from them.

The Greek word for "withdrew" comes from the idea of drawing in something like a sail, or in the contracting of fingers. He closed himself off and backed away from the Gentiles he had been so cozy with before these Jewish believers came. He feared that they would find fault in him. He may have further feared that they would report it back to the church in Jerusalem.

Paul gives this account of Peter now to show those in Galatia that there is a proper adherence to the gospel, and then there is pursuing a false path as well. Peter had chosen the latter and he became an object lesson for Paul to teach them (and thus us!) the truth of the gospel of grace.

Life application: Are we really willing to stand on the gospel of grace and to never waiver in our convictions concerning it? Let us never shrink back from the truth of this wonderful gift which came at such a high price. Christ fulfilled the law and died in fulfillment of it. What more could we add to that?

Lord God Almighty, thank You for the hope of a new day ahead. Each day brings with it both trials and joys. Yesterday is over. And so help us to forget what was difficult, remember what was comforting, and to press on with You leading us in each step that we take. And as we go, help us to bring a little joy to those around us as well. Let us be light in the dark places, and a source of comfort to those who are struggling. And Lord,

help us to ensure that we give You the credit for all good things that come about on this day which lies ahead of us. Amen.

And the rest of the Jews also played the hypocrite with him, so that even Barnabas was carried away with their hypocrisy. Galatians 2:13

In the previous verse, it was seen that Peter began to withdraw from fellowship with the Gentiles because of the presence of some Jews who came from James. As Peter withdrew, "the rest of the Jews also played the hypocrite with him."

Peter was considered a pillar and a leader. In his move to apostasy, the other Jews followed ranks as well. They feared that they would lose the approval of other Jews, caring more about what man thought than what Christ offered to them. This became such a strong movement among the Jews "that even Barnabas was carried away with their hypocrisy."

Barnabas had traveled with Paul on a missionary journey, evangelizing Jew and Gentile. He had received the commission for this while at Antioch. The commission and the missionary journey fill all of Acts 13 & 14 and their work comprised countless miles and encompassed a host of areas. Both Jew and Gentile were preached to and there was intimate fellowship with all who received the gospel. Through all of this, Barnabas had seen the power of the Holy Spirit and had been a close participant in all that occurred.

In verse 2:5, Paul noted that Barnabas had held fast through previous challenges by the false apostles. He stood strong and defended the gospel of Christ. If anyone should have had the conviction to stand against Peter's hypocrisy, one would think it would be him. But such was not the case. He weakened in his devotion to the truth of the gospel and fell back on the law.

Life application: No person is above waffling on his convictions. We may think we are an unyielding iron wall, but the Bible bears out that even the heartiest soul can falter. Paul's words of 1 Corinthians 10 should be heeded by all –

"Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall. ¹³ No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God *is* faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear *it*."

-1 Corinthians 10:12, 13

Heavenly Father, there are times when we are weakened in our convictions and in our principles. And the truth is that none of us is above this. And so help us to follow the avenue of escape which You have promised to always provide for us. Help us to be strong and morally grounded, but when we are weak, help us to flee from the temptations which arise. Surely it is better to run from trouble like Joseph than to let temptation overtake like David. Be with us in this, O God. Amen.

But when I saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel, I said to Peter before *them* all, "If you, being a Jew, live in the manner of Gentiles and not as the Jews, why do you compel Gentiles to live as Jews? Galatians 2:14

This verse is perfectly clear on its surface, and yet there are those who can read it - and indeed the rest of the book of Galatians - close their eyes to what is being said, and continue to insist that we are somehow bound to observe the Law of Moses or other Jewish traditions. It is a most curious thing to behold.

Paul has noted that Peter had fellowshiped with the Gentiles, but when Jews from James came to Antioch, he started separating himself from those same Gentiles and causing the other Jews to separate from them. Even Barnabas was found to be "carried away with their hypocrisy."

And so, Paul, the only one left with any intestinal fortitude to stand up for the truth of the gospel, upon seeing "that they were not straight forward about it," took a stand. The word for "they were [not] straightforward" is *orthopodeó*. It is found only here in the New Testament and just looking at it gives one a sense of the Greek meaning. It comes from *ortho*, meaning "upright," and *puos*, meaning "foot." Thus, it means "to be straight-footed" and "not shuffling." The idea is that Peter and the other Jews walked in a manner contrary to the true gospel. They wavered one way and then another.

Because of this, he spoke "to Peter before *them* all." In other words, he openly stated his words in front of everyone. The matter was so severe and the consequences so harmful that he directly challenged this great "pillar" of the church concerning his aberrant conduct. His words to him were, "If you, being a Jew, live in the manner of Gentiles and not as the Jews, why do you compel Gentiles to live as Jews?"

This is exactly the hypocrisy that he mentioned in the previous verse. The word "being" is set in the emphatic position. It means that Peter was and continued to be a Jew. Because of this, his actions as a Jew and yet a follower of Jesus are what are being challenged.

He was and continued to be a Jew and yet he found it acceptable to live as a Gentile. Why? Because he was freed from the bondage of the law by Christ. In living as a Gentile, he was not living as "Jews." In other words, he had departed from the walk of being a Jew under the law. He was still a Jew, but now freed from what the unconverted Jews were bound by.

And yet, by his actions of removing himself from the Gentiles, he thus compelled the "Gentiles to live as Jews." What this means is that he is the apostle; he carried the authority, and he set the example. Through his faulty example, he was sure to cause the Gentiles who had come to Christ to start living as Jews. This would bring them under the law that they never before had, and it would set aside the grace of Christ.

Life application: Just because someone is a Jew; just because someone speaks Hebrew; just because someone was born and raised in Israel; or for any other "just because," we are not to follow them and take up their practices. Instead, we are to follow the word of God which is given for us to follow Christ.

The word of God clearly shows that we are free from the law. Peter lived that way until he faltered. In his faltering he had to be corrected; not for failing to observe the law, but for the exact opposite! Stand fast on the grace of Christ.

Precious Lord! How I wish to follow You with all my heart and soul. Grant me this as my life's goal. Instill in me the desire and the ability to search out Your word for what will make that walk a pleasing one in Your sight. Keep me from folks who would share a false message about what You would intend for me. And further, direct me to those who would speak only what is correct and honoring of You. Hear my prayer, O God, and respond according to the riches of Your wisdom. Amen.

We who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles, Galatians 2:15

It is debated where Paul's spoken words to Peter, which began in the previous verse, actually end. Are his words through verse 21 included in this address, or does he now speak directly to the Galatians, having shown his disapproval of Peter's actions and his efforts to call him out? Chapter 3 will begin with a direct address to the Galatians, and so his words at that point are purely for doctrine. However, the words from 2:15 - 2:21 are actually doctrinal in nature as well.

This does not mean that they were not spoken to Peter though, but he changes to the plural in this verse with "we." Peter was called out for his error openly, in front of all who

were there. Therefore, though Paul's words are doctrinal in nature, they were certainly spoken to Peter and to all who were with him.

Paul is, in essence, recounting his words of correction to those who had failed to hold to the truth of the gospel. In essence, it is a mini-sermon for the edification of those wayward Jews which he is restating now in his letter to the Galatians.

The term "Jews by nature" is given for a specific purpose. In Romans 2, Paul says, "For he is not a Jew who *is one* outwardly, nor *is* circumcision that which *is* outward in the flesh; ²⁹ but *he is* a Jew who *is one* inwardly; and circumcision *is that* of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter; whose praise *is* not from men but from God." Romans 2:28, 29

There is the natural Jew who is born of the covenant people, and then there is the true Jew who lives according to the precepts which made him a Jew in the first place. Circumcision of the flesh identifies their lineage, but circumcision of the heart identifies their standing with God.

Paul is speaking of the latter when addressing Peter and the other saved Jews. They had given up on works of the law, understanding that Christ was the fulfillment of it. Thus, they stood in contrast to "sinners of the Gentiles."

All Gentiles were outside of the promises of Christ. There was nothing that could bring them into a right relationship with God. However, in Christ, that could happen. Paul will explain to Peter how the same process saves both Jew and Gentile, and thus it will demonstrate that their circumcision of the flesh meant nothing in the eyes of God in relation to their right-standing with Him. All that matters is faith in the work of Christ.

Life application: Later in Galatians, Paul will say that "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus." This does not mean that there are now no Jews. It means that there is no distinction between any of these categories in regard to salvation and incorporation into the body of Christ.

The fact that Paul says "neither male nor female" shows this to be true. Men do not stop being men when they come to Christ. Paul's words need to be carefully evaluated lest we follow unintended paths in our understanding of right doctrine. Regardless of our genealogy, gender, or status in society, we all have access to the One true God through Jesus Christ.

Most marvelous God! How wonderful it is to be in Your presence, saved by the blood of the Lamb. The future, no matter how bleak from this world's perspective, is bright and wonderful from our heavenly perspective. We have a hope which transcends all grief, all sorrow, and all pain of the heart. You have shown us that these are temporary, but joy in Christ is eternal. Thank You for Jesus Christ - our hope of everlasting delight! Amen.

...knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified. Galatians 2:16

Paul's words here, probably spoken to Peter as correction, are also as direct and obvious on the surface as they could be. Even though they are spoken to Peter, they are to be used as doctrine and for correction. They develop the very basis of justification by faith, and they clearly show that deeds of the law can do nothing to either bring about salvation or keep one saved. And yet, these words are completely ignored by legalists, heretics, and false Christians. It is as if Paul's words have no meaning at all to them.

And this is exactly why Paul is so often maligned. Theories about the corruption of his letters at an early point in history are spoken of as fact in order to negate the authoritative nature of what he says. In calling into question the reliability of the letters of Paul which we now possess, the only choice one then has is to throw them out of one's theology and to fall back on a reliance of the law.

But this approach demonstrates a rather incompetent "god" who cannot even secure his word enough to bring it to us in a manner which shows us what is expected of us. If Paul's words are suspect, then all of the other books of the Bible are too. Such conspiracies are destructive and are put forth by legalists and nut jobs. Ignore such perverse people entirely!

In this verse, Paul begins with "...knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law." These words are based on his introductory thought that said, "We *who are* Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles."

In other words, he is speaking to Peter, in the presence of the other Jews who had removed themselves from the Gentiles. They (meaning these believing Jews) already knew this point. They had received Christ's justification by grace, when they believed in Him and what He had done.

They had grown up under the law and yet Christ had come. If they could be justified under the law, then there would have been no need for Christ at all! However, He did come. Because He did, then there must have been a reason for it. And the reason is perfectly obvious - no man is (or ever could be) justified by the works of the law because no man can meet the expectations of the law.

The law only brings a consciousness of sin, and the law only brings condemnation because of that sin which it reveals. Christ needed to come and fulfill the law for us. In so doing, we are justified "by faith in Jesus Christ."

It is faith in what Christ did, and faith alone, which justifies a man in God's sight. The Jews Paul is speaking to found this out. They placed their faith in Christ, and they received the Spirit of promise. Those who did not place their faith in Him did not receive the Spirit. The obvious truth then is that only those who trust in Christ, and in Him alone, will be saved. They had done nothing to deserve this state of justification except to believe in Him.

As Paul says, this applies to "even we have believed in Christ Jesus." Those who hadn't believed did not receive. Nothing could be clearer. Not only are Paul's words here not corrupted by a later source, but they are also merely an obvious explanation of what occurred in the book of Acts. Rather than being corrupted words of a Gentile-led conspiracy, they simply reveal what the historical record of Acts clearly and poignantly shows.

The account in Acts (which Paul is recalling to the mind of Peter and the other Jews now) shows that when they "believed in Christ Jesus," it was so that they "might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law." All of the Jews in Acts fall into one of two categories:

Those who had trusted in Christ, believing that He was the fulfillment of the prophetic utterances of their people, or

Those who had rejected Christ.

For the first category, they received the Spirit without having done anything according to the law during the process. In fact, the Spirit came at Pentecost, many months before the annual Day of Atonement. And yet, despite not having that year's sins atoned for, they were granted the Holy Spirit. Those in the second category had rejected Christ,

continued to pursue the law, and did not receive the Spirit. They were not justified in God's sight.

And the reason for both of these categories is that "by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified." Anyone who is shown this logical and obvious verse given by Paul and then rejects what it shows is self-deluded. It reveals exactly what Acts reveals and it was spoken to the very person who in Acts 2 was a participant in the reception of the Spirit.

He then spoke under the influence of the Spirit to the rest of the Jews who had not yet believed. Those who then did received the Spirit. Those who did not did not receive Him. Paul is calling this incident to mind for Peter to remember and to rely on. And he is doing so in order that they wouldn't become a stumbling block to the Gentiles who never had the law in the first place.

There is one truth in Christ - we are saved by grace through faith and not through any works of the law. They are entirely excluded. Why can't people see this and simply accept it at face value?

Life application: Why is it so important to be able to refute people who say we cannot eat pork or that we must observe a Sabbath Day in order to be pleasing to God? The reason is that if we do those things in order to be pleasing to Him, then we can never be pleasing to Him. Only by faith in what He has done through Christ can we ever hope to please our heavenly Father.

Lord God, I place my trust in Christ alone. Amen.

"But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, is Christ therefore a minister of sin? Certainly not! Galatians 2:17

The words in this verse are difficult and various scholars have proposed several suggestions as to what Paul's intent is. The key to which interpretation is correct is dependent on whether he is still referencing his conversation with Peter, or is he now directing a theological commentary to the Galatians.

There appears to be no reason to assume the latter. It is not until verse 3:1 that he actually addresses the Galatians by name. Therefore, it is probable that he is still recalling his rebuke to Peter. And so what he is saying is based on Peter's withdrawing himself from the Gentiles when the other Jews from James showed up. Previously, he

had sought to be justified by Christ. He believed in his Lord and he received the Holy Spirit.

In this capacity, he lived in freedom from the law which was fulfilled by Christ. He had fellowshiped with the household of Cornelius, and he had fellowshiped with the Gentiles in Antioch as well. However, in this freedom which was brought about by his relationship with Christ, did he and the other Jews with him (who also fellowshiped with the Gentiles) find themselves to be sinners?

In other words, if Christ's work is what allowed the Jews to unite with the Gentiles, but it was actually sinful in relation to the law (which presupposes that the law would still be in effect), then it would mean that they were sinning against the law by fellowshiping with the Gentiles (which was because of the work of Christ) and it would then make Christ "a minister of sin."

The repercussions of this would be obvious - the entire Christian message would be one of sin and all people would have to abandon it and return to an entire obedience to the Law of Moses. If this were the case, then Christ would have died for absolutely no reason at all and there would actually be no "New Covenant" in His blood.

Charles Ellicott explains this dilemma quite well -

"Is therefore Christ the minister of sin?—Our English version is probably right in making this a question. It is put ironically, and as a sort of *reductio ad absurdum* of the Judaising position. The Judaisers maintained the necessity of a strict fulfilment of the Mosaic law. They, however, still called themselves Christians; and here St. Paul had a hold upon them. 'You call yourselves Christians,' he says, 'and yet you insist upon the Mosaic law. You say that a man cannot be justified without it: it follows that we, who have exchanged the service of the Law for the service of Christ, are not justified. In other words, our relation to Christ has made us, not better, but worse—a thought which no Christian can entertain.'"

The rhetorical question of Paul stands, "...is Christ therefore a minister of sin?" The answer from Peter's lips must be, "Certainly not." If otherwise, then it would mean that Christ's death, and the introduction of this new faith, was opposed to holiness. The horror of this is too much to contemplate.

If there is no justification through faith in Christ, then there is no justification for any person ever. The law can save no one. If Christ's death only adds to the condemnation of the law, what a pitiful death it would have been indeed.

Life application: Christ's death must be (and it is) the end of the law for righteousness for all who believe.

What a most marvelous thing You have done for us, O God! We may stand before You, counted as sinless, because of the life of Another. We can trade our garments, soiled by a life of sin, for the pure and unstained garments of Your righteousness - all because of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. Help us to never take this for granted, but instead give us the desire to pursue righteousness and holiness all our days. May we show gratitude to You for this marvelous life we now live in Christ. Amen.

For if I build again those things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor.

Galatians 2:18

Here we come upon a logical conclusion of the words of the previous verse. Paul had just asked, "But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, is Christ therefore a minister of sin?"

By allowing Jews and Gentiles to eat together under the new faith which is found in Christ (which Peter clearly did, both in the household of Cornelius and in Antioch), then Christ would be a minister of sin if the law were still in force. This is because it was a practice forbidden within Judaism. However, Paul says this was certainly not the case.

Now to explain this to the dulled ears of Peter, he begins with "For." If Christ were a minister of sin, then the following proposition that he will relate to him would be a certainty. "If I build again those things which I destroyed" is speaking of things mandated under the law. They are those things which are now destroyed through Christ's finished work. To the Christian, they have been nailed to His cross.

However, if we reinsert those same precepts from under the law as binding, a significant issue arises. He says that if this is the case, then "I make myself a transgressor." If we have left the law which is actually still binding, then we have transgressed the law. If this is so, then we are guilty before the law. If we are guilty before the law because of faith in Christ, then Christ would, in fact, be a minister of sin. Charles Ellicott beautifully explains the dilemma for those in Christ "IF" the law were still binding -

"But Christ is not a minister of sin. The thought is not to be tolerated. For, on the contrary, the sin is seen, not in leaving the Law for Christ, but in going back from Christ to the Law. The sin is seen doubly: for on one theory—the theory that the Law is valid—it was wrong to give it up; while on the other theory, that Christianity has taken its place, it is still more wrong to restore the fabric that has once been broken down."

Either way, there is sin involved unless Christ is the fulfillment of the law and if our hope is in Him and not in the law. As He is the fulfillment of it, then we have actually not given it up at all. Rather, our hope is in the law, but only so far as in Christ's fulfillment of it. As He has done so, then we have the responsibility to trust that fact and to never reinsert the precepts of the law as a means of obtaining justification before God.

The law remains God's standard for all people, but there is a distinction between believers and unbelievers. For those not in Christ, it will be the standard by which they are judged - apart from Christ's work. For those in Christ, the law will be the standard by which they are judged, inclusive of His work. None shall stand justified apart from Him; all will be justified who are in Him.

In this verse, Paul speaks in the first person. However, it should be taken as a general proposition for all people. His words were certainly speaking to Peter and the Jews who had departed from the truth, but they apply to anyone else who would do so as well. Having said that, in the next verse (19), the first person continues to be used, but it is Paul speaking of himself. This is evident by his choice of the emphatic word for "I" which will begin that verse.

Life application: Trust in Christ alone for your salvation. Anything else is a self-condemning act.

Oh God, I often feel the weight of sin pressing down on me. It is as if the consciousness of the things I have done is simply overwhelming. How can I ever stand before You? I need this reminder so that I don't return to sin yet more. However, I also need to remind myself that my past is gone, and my misdeeds have been forgiven through the shed blood of Christ. Thank You for both reminders. One will keep me pursuing righteousness; the other will fill me with confidence for the day when I stand before You. Thank You for Christ my Lord who has made that possible! Amen.

“For I through the law died to the law that I might live to God. Galatians 2:19

"For" is given as Paul's continued thought on verse 17. He gave a hypothetical for the consideration of Peter and the other Jews who were falling back on the observance of the law in verse 18. Now he gives a true-life example of what should be the reality of the situation for a true Christian. In his words, "I" is emphatic. In other words, after the hypothetical, he speaks of himself in the matter.

"I through the law died to the law." There is much debate over the meaning of these words. Some scholars suppose that he is speaking of the new faith in Christ, and so in essence, "By the new law (or faith), I have died to the other." In other words, "My adherence to Christianity has caused me to cast away my adherence to the law."

Other scholars see this as a consideration of the true nature of the Law of Moses. In contemplating its true nature and design, he had become dead to it. He had cast away any hope of being justified by it, knowing that by the law, no man could be justified in God's sight.

However, the next verse actually explains what Paul is thinking about. One cannot arbitrarily cast away a law which is in effect. The covenant was made; the conditions were set; and there was no chance of bargaining one's way out of that law. As a Jew, he was obligated to it; every precept of it.

However, within the writings under the law, there was the promise of a Redeemer who would come. This is now what Paul is referring to. Christ fulfilled the law and died in fulfillment of it. Thus, all who call on Christ for their justification have "died to the law." This is so that such a person "might live to God."

Further, within the law itself, there is a provision which removes one from the law through the penalty of death. He will allude to this in the next verse, and he will expand on it in Galatians 3:10-13. This act then is what Paul is speaking of.

Paul, and any other who is represented in the same case, has died to the law through the death of Christ. In that death, the law is annulled. It no longer has power over him. Instead, Christ has dominion over that soul from that point on. For this reason, through Christ, we might live to God. Paul's words of the coming verse explain this exactly.

Life application: Sometimes folks try so hard to analyze the meaning of a single verse that they simply fail to look at the surrounding context. Context is king when interpreting what a verse is trying to tell us. We need to know who is being spoken to, under what dispensation it is being spoken, and what the words around the verse(s) that

we are looking at are directed to. Keep things in context and make all evaluations of this precious word with careful, thoughtful, and proper consideration.

Heavenly Father! I am overwhelmed by Your goodness to us. How can we not look at the magnificent world which You have created and not see wisdom, care, and love? Puppies give us love when we are down; squirrels give us a smile as they twirl around the trees; birds flitter about and delight our minds with their skillful ability. We can see wisdom in the spider's web, and we can find enjoyment in how the kitty cat musingly ponders the world around it. Thank You for the wonderful delight and variety of life around us! Your wisdom is on display; Your care is evident; and Your love surrounds us! Thank You, O God, Amen.

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

Paul just said, "For through the law I died to the law so that I might live for God." What the law could never accomplish, that of bestowing righteousness upon a sinful person, was accomplished through union with Christ who died under that same law. He writes in the same general manner to those in Rome as well -

"Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? ⁴Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

⁵ For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be *in the likeness* of His resurrection, ⁶ knowing this, that our old man was crucified with *Him*, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin." Romans 6:3-6

From showing what the law could not do in the previous verse, he now shows what Christ's death can do for us. Paul saying, "I have been crucified with Christ" does not mean that he has somehow imitated Christ's death in a spiritual way such as, "I have crucified my flesh just as Christ was crucified on the cross."

Rather, this is referring to what happens to us in God's eyes when we receive Jesus. It is an ethical bond because of our faith in Jesus' death. Christ was crucified on a real cross, and He really died. When we accept that He died on that cross and rose again, we too are counted as "crucified with Christ."

Why is this important? It is because what happened to Paul also happens to us. For Paul "...owing to his connection with the crucified, he was like him, legally impure, and was thus an outcast from the Jewish church. He became dead to the law by the law's own act" (Vincent's Word Studies). In verse 3:10 Paul will say -

"Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, 'Cursed *is* everyone who hangs on a tree')."

There, he reached back to the words of the law itself to explain what occurs in the life of one who receives Jesus. According to Deuteronomy 21:23, anyone who hangs on a tree is cursed. Therefore, in our acceptance of Jesus in fulfillment of the law, we become dead to the law through the death of Christ.

Of course, the argument might then be that if Christ's crucifixion was just, then by my act of uniting with Him, I would become accursed of the law just as Christ was. Thus, He and I are both transgressors. But this is not so. Christ was not justly crucified for His own sins. He had none. Instead, He died for the sins of another. Paul explains this in 2 Corinthians 5:21 -

"For He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."

Death could not hold Him because He had no sin of His own. Therefore, when a believer dies with Him, they can say, "...it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me." Christ was raised by the power of God and therefore we are raised by that same power. The life of Christ is what God sees in us. Our earthly bodies count as nothing in the greater scope of things. Therefore, Paul says, "...and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me."

In our current walk, a walk which remains in the flesh, we "live by faith in the Son of God." We received Him, we died with Him, and we have a sure and grounded hope that we are His. As He arose, so shall we. And this is because He loved us and gave Himself for us.

In short: His perfect life died in fulfillment of the law. Having been hung on a tree in His death, He became a curse so that we could die to that law through faith in Him. When we place our faith in Him, the law is annulled in us. It no longer has power over us. Therefore, because we are dead to the law, but still alive in the flesh, we must be (and we are) living by faith in the Son of God.

Life application: You who want to be under the law, don't you know what the law says? If you are under the law, you cannot be under Christ. Being under Christ means that you are accursed to the law. If you are still seeking justification through deeds of the law, then you cannot be under Christ. Thus, you are self-condemned.

You are rejecting the only way of ever being justified before God. Cling to Christ and Christ alone. Reject any and all who would reinsert the law as a necessary requirement for standing justified before God.

Lord God, there are many things in Your word which are hard to understand and which are easily twisted around by folks with some type of agenda. But there is one thing that I know - Christ is the end of the law for righteousness for all who believe. And so, I stand on His finished work as my one and only hope of standing approved before You. Thank You for the Son of God who loves me and gave Himself for me! Hallelujah and Amen.

"I do not set aside the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died in vain." Galatians 2:21

There are several exceedingly important truths which are seen in this verse, and which must be taken to heart. Paul says, "I do not set aside the grace of God." Grace is getting what one does not deserve. The giving of Jesus Christ is the ultimate act of grace. No one on earth "deserves" what God has done through Him. All have sinned and all deserve death, condemnation, and hell. But God sent Christ to redeem us from that sorrowful end.

Paul exclaims here that he does not "set aside" this gift which is from God; the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. The word here is *atheteó* and it means "to make of no effect," "to set aside," or "to break faith with." In the epistle to the Hebrews when speaking of the Law of Moses the author uses the word *athetésis*, which is derived from *atheteó*. He uses this word to make a specific point concerning the law -

"For on the one hand there is an **annulling** of the former commandment because of its weakness and unprofitableness, ¹⁹ for the law made nothing perfect; on the other hand, *there is the* bringing in of a better hope, through which we draw near to God." Hebrews 7:18, 19

This word, *athetésis*, speaks of annulment, nullification, or abrogation. Paul understood that one cannot be under grace and under the law at the same time. The two are contradictory ideas and either one or the other can be held to. If one chooses to be

justified before God based on the law, then it is impossible to be justified before God based on the grace found in Christ.

Likewise, the reciprocal is true. If one finds his righteousness in Christ who fulfilled the law, then one cannot find their righteousness in the law, except as it has been granted through the work of Christ.

If one claims to receive the grace of Christ and then attempts to obtain righteousness through the law (such as giving up on pork, which is according to the law), then they proclaim that Christ's fulfillment of the law, and His death which occurred for that fulfillment, was both pointless and unnecessary. This is found in Paul's next words which say, "...for if righteousness *comes* through the law, then Christ died in vain."

For those who believe in God, and who want to be pleasing to God, their deeds are done in an attempt to be righteous before Him. A provision within the law allows for the law to grant this -

"You shall therefore keep My statutes and My judgments, which if a man does, he shall live by them: I *am* the LORD." Leviticus 18:5

However, there is the truth, which is borne out in the rest of the Old Testament, which is that no person can perfectly keep the law. This is clearly and precisely explained in the book of Romans. In Romans 3, Paul says this concerning the law -

"Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. ²⁰ Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law *is* the knowledge of sin." Romans 3:19, 20

His words are clear that "by deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight." As this is a truth found in God's word, then the only way to be justified in His sight is through the grace of Christ. The same testament which proclaims one also proclaims the other. One cannot dismiss Romans without dismissing any other portion of the New Testament, including the record of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Because of this, if one fails to accept this premise and instead goes about seeking righteousness through deeds of the law, then for them "Christ died for nothing." There can be no grace for the one who seeks justification before God based on their deeds

under the law. There can only be the expectation of judgment based on their deeds. And in this, there can only be condemnation and an eternal swim in the Lake of Fire.

Life application: One may attempt to be justified by their good deeds, done under the law, or they may be justified by the grace of God in Christ Jesus. There is no other option given for man to stand sinless and in righteousness before God. Choose wisely.

I was found a sinner from birth, even from my mother's womb. What good deeds could I do that would wash such stain away? No matter what I do, I have already offended an infinitely holy God. But then I found grace. God sent His Son into the world to take away my guilt, declare me righteous, and allow me to stand justified in His presence... all because of the work of Another. I do not set aside the grace of Christ my Lord. In fact, I place my soul in His hands, knowing that any other choice is condemnation and eternal separation. Thank You, O God, for Christ my Lord! Amen.

CHAPTER 3

O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed among you as crucified?

Galatians 3:1

To begin the new chapter, Paul now directly addresses the Galatians. He had been referring to the account with Peter to explicitly show them that they had fallen into the same error and deserved the same rebuke as Peter received. And this is exactly what he does. He directly challenges their thinking process with the words, "O foolish Galatians!"

Here he uses the word *anoétos*. This gives the idea of "not 'reasoning through' a matter (with proper logic)" (HELPS Word Studies). It is used by Jesus in this memorable passage from Luke -

"Then He said to them, 'O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! ²⁶ Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?' ²⁷ And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself."
Luke 24:25-27

The people Jesus spoke to had heard the Scriptures their entire lives and yet they failed to make the connection concerning what had to occur. The information was right there in front of them, and yet they couldn't see what it was telling them. Paul will convey the same idea to those in Galatia.

It should be noted that he is referring to the moral judgment of the believing Galatians concerning Christ. He is not making a judgment call on the characteristics of the Galatian people in general. This rebuke is directed solely at those in the church.

He next questions them concerning their state with, "Who has bewitched you...?" The word he uses is unique to the NT, *baskainó*. It means to "give the evil eye to, fascinate, bewitch, overpower." They had been pursuing one course and they were stolen away from it by a bewitching power. Where they had pursued Christ, they now pursued a false path so that they would "not obey the truth."

In other words, if they have been bewitched to not obey the truth, then they were pursuing a lie. Whatever the false brethren had introduced was a counterfeit and could

only lead to a sad end. Their message stood against the truth that Paul had presented to the Galatians which was that before their "eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed among you as crucified."

The term "before whose eyes" gives the sense of something which is openly and publicly displayed. It is as if a masterpiece were hung on an open street for any and all who passed by to see. Paul's description of the crucifixion of Christ was just as noted and prominent. It was the central tenet of his gospel proclamation, and it is what all of true Christian theology is dependent upon.

The reason for noting the crucifixion will be clearly seen in Paul's continued words of the epistle, but his motive for introducing it now is tied directly back to his exchange with Peter in the previous chapter -

"For I through the law died to the law that I might live to God. ²⁰ I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me. ²¹ I do not set aside the grace of God; for if righteousness *comes* through the law, then Christ died in vain." Galatians 2:19-21

If Christ's death was in fulfillment of the law, then the law is fulfilled, and a new path has been set in redemptive history. The Galatians had been bewitched into believing that they were obligated to that very same obsolete law. If they were, then for them Christ's death was truly in vain. They had set aside His work in order to establish their own righteousness.

Life application: Stay far away from Judaizers, Hebrew Roots Movement teachers, and anyone else who would attempt to sway you to fall back under the Law of Moses. Should you pursue that path, it will demonstrate that Christ's death meant absolutely nothing to you. Don't follow this perverse, ungodly, and unholy path to destruction.

Heavenly Father, my heart is boiling over with love for You, with zeal for Your word, and with a desire to know Christ in the most intimate and personal way. Help each of us to come closer to You with each breath that we breathe and with each step that we take. Grant us the desire to cling to the cross which restored fellowship with You. Through His death, we have true life; pardon of sin; and the hope of eternal joy! Help us to spread this marvelous story, even to the ends of the earth. Amen.

This only I want to learn from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Galatians 3:2

Paul, questioning the utterly ridiculous nature of the Galatians turning to the law in order to please God, asks a simple question, beginning with the words, "This only I want to learn from you: ..." In using the word "only" (in Greek *monon*), Paul is showing that nothing else is needed to determine the truth of the matter and to settle the question. Upon completion of his thought, there would be no more need for proofs of any kind to show how absurd their new path truly was.

And the question is, "Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?" First, it is evident that they received the Holy Spirit in an outward, demonstrable way, just as other early believers did. They were given gifts which they used in accordance with the reception of the Spirit. Paul now confronts them directly by asking if those gifts (which were proofs of the Spirit) came "by works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?"

Paul knew the answer because it was he who was there, leading them to Christ. All he had done was to tell them the gospel. When they believed, they received. This is exactly what happened with Cornelius in the account in Acts 10 -

"While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who heard the word. ⁴⁵ And those of the circumcision who believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also. ⁴⁶ For they heard them speak with tongues and magnify God." Acts 10:44-46

Like those with Cornelius, the Galatians had simply heard the word, had faith, and then received the Spirit. They had whatever food they ate that day in their belly - food which was unclean according to the Law of Moses. In fact, it may still have been on their breath at that time. They were uncircumcised in the flesh, something which excluded them from entry into the covenant community under the Law of Moses.

Further, they had never observed a Sabbath day and they had never made a sacrifice down in Jerusalem. Their clothes didn't meet the requirements of the law. On and on, through 613 commands within the Law of Moses, they failed to meet those standards. And yet, by mere faith in the work of Christ, they received the promise and were sealed with the Spirit.

The word for "hearing" here is *akoé*. It is "used of *inner (spiritual)* hearing that goes with receiving faith from God" (HELPS Word Studies). This is exactly what Paul wrote about in Romans –

"So then faith *comes* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." Romans 10:17

The Galatians had heard the word, they had believed what they heard, and they had received the Spirit. This "only" that Paul submitted for their consideration should be enough to get them (and thus us!) to think clearly and to realize that they were headed down the wrong path by now inserting the Law of Moses into their lives.

What is truly sad is that many today are presented with exactly this evidence as is recorded in the Bible (for example, the account of Cornelius), and yet they reject the simple, obvious nature of what is provided there for our understanding. In so doing, they continue down the road of apostasy and stand self-condemned because they fail to trust in Christ, and in Him alone, for their salvation.

What a waste! What a twisting of the mind by wolves who creep in and refuse to be obedient to the Lord who reaches His hands out to them, asking for a simple act of faith.

Life application: Have faith in Christ and in Him alone to save you and to keep on saving you.

Lord God, the nail-scarred hands of Christ are all I need to think about in order to come to the conclusion that what He did is all-sufficient for me to be reconciled to You. If this isn't true, then those marks were truly wasted effort. And more, I could never know what I needed to add to that marvelous, but insufficient act. My life would be a hopeless wreck of futile works. But no! I am fully confident that His cross is all-sufficient for me to stand in Your glorious presence once again. Hallelujah to the work of Christ Jesus! Amen.

Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh? Galatians 3:3

Paul uses the same word here as in verse 3:1 - foolish. The Galatians, without thinking through or even considering the stupidity of their actions, were willing to follow these heretical Judaizers onto Apostasy Avenue as they headed for Heretic Highway. His words are intended to cut them off and redirect them to Right Doctrine Drive. They needed clarity of thought, and they needed to rationally consider what their actions meant.

And so, he questions them in an attempt to get them to think through what they were doing. "Having begun in the Spirit" shows that these Gentiles had NEVER been under the Law of Moses. They started out completely separate from the people of Israel and the covenant promises and expectations that were outlined for them. But then came the message of Christ.

When the gospel was preached to them, they didn't suddenly get a crash course on how to observe the law, they were never circumcised, and they didn't give up on their afternoon pork roast. Instead, they believed the message of Christ and they received the Spirit. If the Spirit was given by the Lord, then how could the Galatians think that by adding in the law (which Christ fulfilled) they could now be "made perfect by the flesh?" Adding in the law was not a step forward, but a step back.

Paul's use of the word for "being made perfect" shows the stupidity of this choice. It is in the middle or passive voice and so it is more literally rendered, "...having begun in the spirit are ye coming to completion in the flesh?" (Vincent's Word Studies). The words are filled with irony, and they are intended to show the Galatians (and thus us!) the utterly absurd nature of expecting to be perfected based on the Law of Moses when it could never perfect anyone. Instead of arriving on Pleasing Parkway, they had been misdirected to Senseless Circle.

Not a single person in Israel's history was able to meet its expectations. Because of this, Christ needed to come and fulfill it on our behalf. For a person to reinsert the law then means that Christ's work means nothing to them. It is the ultimate slap in God's face. Those who would do this have attempted to reverse the order of what God intended. This is seen from Paul's hand in 1 Corinthians 15:46 -

"However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural, and afterward the spiritual."

Life application: It is the epitome of arrogance to assume that we can make ourselves more pleasing to God by observing aspects of the Law of Moses. Christ fulfilled it and so placing our faith in His work is the only thing that we can do in order to be pleasing to Him in this regard.

Trust Christ, keep the observances and exhortations that you follow from the New Testament, and reject anyone who would tell you that it is right and proper to reinsert the Law of Moses, in part or in whole, in order to be in right standing with God.

Heavenly Father, by Your spoken word alone all things came forth. And by the power of Your word, all things continue to exist and are held together. In Your wisdom You created man and breathed life into him. As these things are so, then why should we not think that You are completely capable of keeping Your promises to us? Give us the fortitude to believe Your word and to stand on the truth that You are mighty to save and to keep on saving. How great You are, O God. Amen.

Have you suffered so many things in vain—if indeed *it was* in vain? Galatians 3:4

There is no record in the book of Acts concerning the suffering that is mentioned here, but Paul's words in this epistle form their own record and witness to it. He could not have written to the Galatians about their having suffered if they didn't, in fact, suffer. And so, it is obvious that some sort of ills had befallen them after their Christian conversion. The nature of this suffering can only be speculated upon, but several obvious possibilities are:

- 1) A loss of fellowship with family or friends;
- 2) A loss of employment;
- 3) Persecution by those who still held to whatever religion they had left behind;
- 4) Persecution from the Jews who detested the truth of the gospel found in Christ.

In these, or in any other ways, the Galatians had suffered directly from having received the gospel and then having turned away from their old ways of life. It should be noted that Paul ties his thought in with suffering and not in with their accomplishments.

Their suffering was because of their faith in Christ, not because of their works. It is a connection to the constant theme of Paul in all of his writings; salvation by grace through faith. It is this by which they were granted the Spirit (as is noted in the previous two verses).

In a way of getting them to think this issue through, he asks them concerning this suffering, "Have you suffered so many things in vain?" He is asking them to think about the high cost they had already paid for calling on Christ. Was it simply a pointless moment in their existence? However, in hopes that they hadn't completely turned away, he qualifies his thought with, "...if indeed *it was* in vain."

In other words, maybe their faith was still there but simply misdirected. The purpose of his letter is to determine the truth of the matter and then to redirect them if possible.

Life application: What have you given up for Christ? For some, the answer might be, "Not very much." But for others, a great deal was given up in order to pursue this new life. By turning to the Law of Moses for a right standing with God, everything that was lost or which resulted in suffering for Christ was in vain. Does Christ's cross have so little meaning to us that we would turn from it and to something that can never save?

There is never such a sweet moment as those which I spend close to You, O God. Many wonderful things come my way, but they are temporary and only satisfy me for a moment. But when I consider You, the excitement never ends, the anticipation of joy for all the ages to come, and the prospect of eternal life in Your presence is like a spring of cool water to my soul. I am so grateful to You for Christ in me, the hope of glory. Amen.

Therefore He who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you, does He do it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?— Galatians 3:5

Paul, speaking to the Galatians directly, asks a question which is tied to the same logic as his words spoken to Peter in verse 2:16. He then continued with the same thought to the Galatians starting in verse 3:2.

And so, he begins with, "Therefore..." In essence, "Based on these things, it is time to make a logical deduction from what we already know." In order to get them to think it through, he forms his words into a question, beginning with a known occurrence by saying, "He who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you..." These words are a general repeat of what is stated in verse 3:2, in order that the answer to the question will be as plain and obvious as possible.

It was God who supplied the Spirit, and it is He who worked miracles among those in Galatia. To this, there should be no doubt in their mind. As this is so, Paul's following words, framed as a question, demand an answer. "...does He do it by works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?"

Just as Peter was called out in the previous chapter for not thinking this issue through, the Galatians are now being called out as well. An answer is expected, and it can only be the latter, "...by the hearing of faith." The Galatians were Gentiles. They never had the law. They went directly from being pagans without God, to being saved believers who had received the Spirit and who had witnessed the miracles without having done a single deed according to the law.

As a side note, the word for "miracles" is *dunamis*. It can mean either miracles, such as healings, tongues, or other demonstrations of power; or it can mean a miraculous working within an individual, changing their life through the power of the Spirit. The latter is probably what Paul is thinking of.

Though they may have demonstrated outward gifts of the Spirit as other early believers did, there was a greater change in the Galatians, wrought by the Spirit, and this had come about entirely apart from any works of the law. Their lives had been changed so much that they were willing to suffer for the name of Christ (as seen in verse 3:4).

Life application: With the Bible recorded, we have its words which tell us that we are saved by grace through faith; we have its words which tell us that by deeds of the law, no flesh will be justified; and we have its words which tells us explicitly (and numerous times) that the law is finished, annulled, and set aside.

Based on this, it must be that we are saved apart from the law. Further, reinserting the law, which was fulfilled in Christ, is to say to God, "I know better than You." Don't be that crazy! Stand on the finished work of Christ alone.

Heavenly Father, with each new sunrise comes the chance to realign my life and direct my steps according to Your wishes. Yesterday is gone and it is a new day with a new chance to be an obedient child of Yours. Instill in me now the desire to start this day rightly, and to continue walking in a proper manner with each step that I take. I pray this that You will be pleased with my conduct as I trust in You all along this path of Today. Amen.

...just as Abraham "believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness."
Galatians 3:6

In the previous verse, Paul asked a question of the Galatians. Now in verse 6, and because of the obvious nature of a proper response, he skips the answer entirely. Instead, he simply moves into an illustration of the answer. The illustration is not from the time of the law, but rather from before the giving of the law. Further, it involves the great man of faith to the Hebrew people, Father Abraham.

And so, in his illustration, he begins with "...just as Abraham." If one were to pull out any example of faith in God and in His promises, Abraham is the logical person to choose. The record of his life demonstrates a reliance on the Lord at a time when such reliance was unknown to the ancient world.

Because of this, the example Paul gives will show that a precedent had been set which preempts righteousness coming through the law. Instead, "Abraham 'believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.'"

As the law was still hundreds of years later in history, then this demonstrates that righteousness is not something granted by the law. If he was granted righteousness apart from the law, then it shows that this is the standard and proper way for people to be saved in this manner at any and all points in history.

Paul's quoting of this passage from Genesis is that of the Greek translation of it. It is the same quote that he made, and with the same intent, as in Romans 4:3; that of the timing of God's declaration of righteousness. Not only was Genesis 15:6 prior to the giving of the law, but it also came several chapters and many years before the sign of circumcision.

Circumcision was mandated in Genesis 17 when Abraham was 99 years old and when Ishmael was 13. However, Genesis 15 was prior to the conception and birth of Ishmael. Therefore, the declaration of righteousness was at least 14 years earlier, possibly more. Further, Abraham's offering of Isaac in Genesis 22, and which is noted in James 2, came many long years after that.

Because Abraham's faith was credited as righteousness prior to either of these acts, as well as prior to the giving of the law, then none of these could have had any bearing at all upon his declaration of righteousness.

As a side note, this verse completely and entirely demonstrates that the doctrine of regeneration held to by Calvinists is wrong. Faith, which comes from within the man, results in justification. A man is not "regenerated" first in order to believe, as if God were injecting him with something externally in order for the act to occur. Further, to demonstrate that "faith" is not a "work," we can contemplate the following argument -

1) Deeds of the law, or works, do not lead to justification (as noted in Romans 3:28).

2a) "Faith" is not something required within the context of the law. The law is of works and demands perfect obedience (Romans 3:19, 20 & Galatians 3:11).

2b) But by faith a person is justified and declared righteous (Romans 3:28, Galatians 3:24).

3) Therefore, because the law demands works, and faith is not a requirement under the law, then faith cannot be a work; it is something entirely different.

It is completely evident, fully supportable, and biblically correct to note from this one verse that,

- 1) belief is an act of the free will of man;
- 2) it is not placed in man through a nebulous process of being "regenerated to believe" by which he then believes; and that
- 3) this faith is in no way considered a work.

Therefore, the truth of Scripture indicates, from the first pages of Genesis, that man has been granted free will and that He must exercise that gift in faith. Further this faith must be properly directed and in line with the revealed light which God has provided.

Life application: Doctrine matters.

Heavenly Father, thank You for the great examples of people of faith which permeate the pages of the Bible. It seems that there is an example for every one of my failings. Whatever I face, which is a challenge to my faith, there is some person who has faced the same thing and who prevailed over their struggle. You carefully, lovingly, and meticulously recorded their lives so that we can turn to such an account and be strengthened. Thank You for this marvelous and tender attention to our needs! Amen.

Therefore know that *only* those who are of faith are sons of Abraham. Galatians 3:7

What a knock-out punch for heretics who say that we have to observe the Law of Moses! The Galatians had fallen victim to the Hebrew Roots Movement 2000 years ago and Paul shows them the folly of this. The words here clearly indicate that whether Jew or Gentile, one cannot trace his ancestry back to Abraham unless he lives by faith, not deeds of the law.

Paul will continue to explain this and defend it, but his words here alone show the stupidity of reinserting the law as a means of being justified before God. Abraham preceded the law. Abraham's faith was accounted to him for righteousness. Therefore, the law had no bearing on his justification. God was pleased with him because he trusted the word of the Lord.

Because of this example, Paul says, "Therefore." In theology as in mathematics, one plus one equals two. By diverting from the logic which Paul presents, the math is faulty. But when taken in the proper biblical context we can "know that *only* those who are of faith are sons of Abraham." If Abraham is Scripture's example for this doctrine, and if the law came after this example, then the law cannot be a part of it. In fact, it is opposed to it.

Paul will rigorously describe and defend what he means here, and he will also exactly detail what the purpose of the law is. When he is done with his epistle, it will be shown that the faith of Abraham is to be the faith of the follower of Christ. It is one which says, "I trust God's word with all my heart, and I don't need anything else added to it for me to stand justified in His presence."

Life application: Both in Jesus' time and in ours, the very people who claim their ancestry descends from Abraham are the same people who have failed to see what Scripture teaches about him. They are indeed impressed with their own attempts at earning righteousness, but they ignore the righteousness of God in Christ. Let us not follow such a perverse path. Have faith in Christ and in Him alone.

Lord God, You were pleased with Abraham long before he was circumcised. You declared him righteous by mere faith in Your promises. He believed Your word and he was accepted by You. Now, we who believe Your word concerning Christ are those who are pleasing to You. Grant us the faith of Abraham, not relying on the flesh, but on the Spirit who gave us Your word and who tells us of Jesus. He did the work; help us to accept that. In this, You will be pleased. Amen.

And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel to Abraham beforehand, saying, "In you all the nations shall be blessed."
Galatians 3:8

As a reminder, Paul is writing to the Galatians who had been caught up in an ancient version of the Hebrew Roots Movement. They had been duped into believing that they would be more pleasing to God, and could only stand justified before Him, by observing the law and all of the practices of the Jewish culture. Paul has been demonstrating what a bunch of malarkey that actually is. In the previous verse he said -

"Therefore know that *only* those who are of faith are sons of Abraham."

Now, building upon that, he turns to Scripture. In doing so, he does something extraordinary by personifying it. "And the Scripture, foreseeing..." He has made a

connection to Scripture and its power to reveal the future. As only God can do that, Paul has definitely identified Scripture as God's infallible word. What it proclaims is the same as what God foresaw and then recorded for us.

In this, he says that what Scripture foresaw was "that God would justify the Gentiles by faith." However, the word "justify" is in the present tense. Therefore, it should say, "...justifies the Gentiles by faith." In other words, at any point in all of history, the means of justification is the same. Enoch was not a Jew and yet he is recorded in a favorable light as having pleased God. Ruth was brought into the fold of the covenant people by faith. And any person, from any nation today, is justified by that same means - faith.

In what Scripture foresaw concerning this, it "preached the gospel to Abraham beforehand." The "gospel" is the "good news" and so this is what Scripture foresaw. The good news would be proclaimed. The hint of this is found in the words to Abraham which said, "In you all the nations shall be blessed." This is actually a mixing of two verses, Genesis 12:3 and Genesis 18:18. Taken together, they give the sum of what Paul is now citing.

What he is saying is that all nations shall be blessed in the same way that Abraham was blessed, which is by faith in the promises of God. In other words, it is not saying that the nations will be blessed through his posterity, meaning Christ, but rather that the way in which Abraham was blessed is the same as the way the Gentiles would be blessed. It would be through faith, meaning faith in Christ, which would justify them. This is certain based on the next verse to be analyzed.

It is true that this faith was only made possible because of the coming of Christ, but faith is the object of what Paul is speaking of. Faith in Christ is the explanation of the type of faith necessary to have proper faith.

Life application: If we stand justified by faith in Christ, then we are not justified by works of the law. Therefore, reinserting the law is a rejection of Christ. Don't reinsert the law. Instead, trust in Christ alone for your right standing with God.

Yes! I have a sure and grounded hope. It is not in government; what a lousy place to put one's trust! It is not in doing good deeds; how many would I need to do? Why, I could never know! Rather than anything of this world, I have a sure anchor for my soul. I have the hope of God in Christ. It is the surest place of trust, the sweetest place of rest, and the most wonderful place of hope. Thank You, O God, for the life of Christ my Lord. In Him I have found a blessed place of trust. Amen.

So then those who *are* of faith are blessed with believing Abraham. Galatians 3:9

This is a modification of verse 7 which said, "Therefore know that *only* those who are of faith are sons of Abraham." In the near repetition, Paul is emphatically stressing the connection between those who believe apart from works with Abraham, the great hero of Hebrew faith.

This is because the Jews traced their lineage back to him. He was the first person noted as a Hebrew and he is who the Jews look to for the beginning of what constitutes their cultural life. Paul shows that not all who are from Abraham are actually of Abraham and do not possess the blessing he did. And those who possess the same faith as he did (which predated the Law of Moses) are counted as being blessed with him.

Taking verses 7 and 9 together, the truth is revealed that those who possess his same faith are blessed in him and they are also blessed with him. Because of faith in the promises of Christ we become a part of the same family, stemming back to Abraham.

Concerning the two words "with" and "believing," Vincent's Word Studies gives a reasonable analysis of what they are referring to -

With - "Not equals like or as, but in fellowship with. Believers are regarded as homogeneous with Abraham, and as thus sharing the blessing which began in him."

Believing - "Those who are of the faith are one in blessing with him whose characteristic was faith."

Life application: If one is relying on works of the law to be pleasing to God, then he is not in fellowship with Abraham, the great father of the faith. He does not bear the same characteristics which he bore. Instead, his circumcision is merely an outward sign without any true connection to what made Abraham righteous in the first place.

The reason for this is that Christ is the end of the law for all who believe. As the law is ended in Christ, the faith which he possesses in Him is the same faith that Abraham possessed which predated that same law. The promise was made; Abraham believed. The promise was fulfilled; we are expected to believe.

O God! Today lies ahead of me like an open sea. I don't know if the sailing will be smooth or if storms will come and toss me about. All I know is that my future is in Your hands. And so, I commit this day to You. I will hold fast to my faith that whatever happens, it

was ordained by You and that because of Christ my Lord, it will all turn out as it should. I thank You for this certainty which I possess. Now, to unfurl the sails and to set out into those uncharted waters... Thank You for this day which lies ahead of me! Amen.

For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them." Galatians 3:10

The words of this verse seem harsh against the law itself, but this is not the case. One might ask, "Why would God give a law which then brought a curse?" Paul will, in time, answer this. But what is obvious is that this is so. If one is under the law, there are certain requirements which must be met. However, it is obvious that none could meet them as is to be directly inferred from the law itself.

Leviticus 23:26-32 prescribes a Day of Atonement for the people of Israel. It was a day which was given for the atoning of the sins of the people. If the people did not sin, then such a day would be unnecessary. However, this day was not just for those who sinned and not for those who "didn't sin." In verses 29 & 30, it says this -

"For any person who is not afflicted *in soul* on that same day shall be cut off from his people. ³⁰ And any person who does any work on that same day, that person I will destroy from among his people."

Further, the fact that tablets of the testimony were placed within the Ark of the Covenant, and then covered with the mercy seat, implies that mercy was required for what was contained within the ark. If it were not so, there would be no need for a mercy seat.

Therefore, it was the assumption of the law itself that every person would require atonement each year. None were exempt from observing the Day of Atonement because all had broken the very same law which prescribed the giving of this day. This is why Paul then cites the law itself by saying, "Cursed *is* everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them."

He cites the substance (not a direct quotation) of Deuteronomy 27:26. Deuteronomy 27 goes through a long list of curses for those who violate the law. It then sums up all of those curses with verse 26. However, the listed curses of chapter 27 are merely a portion of all of the other precepts of the law. In other words, the curse of verse 26 is not limited

to the list found in chapter 27; those curses are one part of the whole law. And this law includes the Day of Atonement rites.

Therefore, if a Day of Atonement is mandated, then one was required to observe it in acknowledgement of the guilt they bore before God. If they didn't observe the day (maybe because of trusting in their own righteousness, or for whatever reason), then they were cursed for not fulfilling the words of the law. However, if they did observe it, there was the acknowledgment that they needed the atonement for having not observed the law.

Therefore, the law itself was based on grace. The precepts of the law could only bring condemnation, but the law understood this and thus it offered this annual grace. If one relied on "works of the law," they stood condemned before God and were under a curse. This doesn't mean that they weren't expected to adhere to the law, but that they were not to trust in their adherence to the law in order to be justified. They were to trust in the continued grace of God.

In the verses ahead, Paul will continue to explain the purpose of the law and then detail the reason for Christ's coming in relation to that law.

Life application: Paul has noted that any who attempt to be justified by works of the law (meaning the Law of Moses) are under a curse. If this is where you have placed your hope, then your condemnation is just. Put away your self-idolatry and place your faith in Christ's fulfillment of the law.

Heavenly Father, being in Your presence is the sweetest spot of all. Here we are, a race of people doing everything possible to run from You, and yet You sent us grace... You sent us Jesus. Now because of Him, we can again be in Your presence and have the eternal guarantee of fellowship with You. Thank You for having given us the covering for our sins and rebellion through His shed blood! What a great God You are. Amen.

But that no one is justified by the law in the sight of God is evident, for “the just shall live by faith.” Galatians 3:11

Paul has just shown that the law brings a curse, meaning. In order for the Galatians to understand this, he says, "But that no one is justified by the law in the sight of God is evident." The words, "...in the sight of God" are given as if we are already standing before God in judgment. In our trial, our life is being evaluated. What deeds of the law can justify us? The answer is, "None."

But how can this be? The law was given by God. So how can it be that we cannot stand justified before Him by observing the law? The answer comes from the words of Habakkuk who lived under the law and wrote his words under divine inspiration. In his words he said, "...the just shall live by faith."

Within the law itself, was a requirement which necessitated faith in order to have one's sins atoned for, the Day of Atonement. If faith was required for this to occur, then it showed that observance of the law had failed to justify anyone over the previous year. This went on, year after year, for the entire time of the law.

What Habakkuk (and later Paul) explains is that it is impossible for the law to justify anyone because there was already a way of being justified by God, which is through faith. This was seen in Abraham, and it was seen each year on the Day of Atonement. As there cannot be two means of obtaining justification, and the law is not that means, then it must be faith alone which justifies. No other means can come in and replace what has been established by precedent.

In this verse, stress is placed on the word "faith." Because of this, it needs to be determined if this is active or passive faith. If passive, then it is speaking of trusting God; taking Him at His word. If it is active faith, then it would mean "living faithfully." What Paul is speaking of is the passive faith of trust.

This is what Abraham was credited for. This is what atoned for the sins of the people on the Day of Atonement, and it is what justifies us now. We believe God's word and He imputes to us His righteousness. After this, we can then demonstrate active faith through living faithfully, but our failure to do so will not negate His imputation of righteousness to us.

David found this out several times. His failure to live faithfully did not negate his standing before God because of his simple trust in God's mercy and grace.

Life application: All things come from God. The only thing that we can give Him which can be credited to our account for righteousness is to believe. When we do this simple thing, taking Him at His word, we stand justified before Him. From that point on, we can then add in praise, worship, and faithful conduct as a means of pleasing Him, but we must first demonstrate that we believe His word before those other things can find their proper place.

Heavenly Father, You have shown that what pleases You is faith in Your word. What else could we give to please You if we don't first trust Your word? Help us to be faithful and pleasing to You by standing on what You have already shown us about Yourself and what You have done in human history through Christ our Lord. After that, we will surely be acceptable to You in other ways as well. Give us a burning desire to know and to accept Your word for what it truly is - life and light to guide us all our days. Amen.

Yet the law is not of faith, but “the man who does them shall live by them.”

Galatians 3:12

Paul's last words were that "no one is justified by the law in the sight of God." The obvious question then would be, "How can one be justified in God's sight?" The answer is that "the just shall live by faith." In order to show that this is true, he reached into the writings under the law itself and cited Habakkuk 2:4. Now, building on that, he begins with "Yet..."

This is a contrast to what is proper then, and that contrast is that "the law is not of faith." In order to demonstrate that this is also true, he returns again to the law and cites Leviticus 18:5. If a person needs to "do" something under the law in order to live by that law, then faith is excluded. Doing a deed demonstrates an attempt to be justified by that deed. Thus, faith is excluded. Faith implies that one is not trusting in one's own deeds.

Further, in order to be justified by the law then, as long as the man lives, he would need to continue to do the things of the law. At no time could he stop doing those things and be considered just. As Albert Barnes notes, the law "requires unwavering and perpetual obedience." Faith is entirely excluded from this type of life.

In the previous verse, the stress was upon the word "faith." Now it rests upon the word "does." The two are mutually exclusive. One can either have faith in Christ's work in order to please God, or one can do deeds of the law in order to please Him. Paul's words are a petition for the Galatians to think through the avenue they have taken.

Will they now introduce the Law of Moses when they had already exercised faith? If so, then Christ's work in fulfillment of the law is set aside. In doing this, then they would have to fulfill the law perfectly with that "unwavering and perpetual obedience" mentioned above. It is a self-condemning act.

Life application: Ephesians 1:13 & 14 says that you receive the Holy Spirit when you believe in the gospel message of Christ. Paul has now shown that continuing in that faith

is how the just person shall live. He has also now shown that pursuing the law is not of faith.

Stand fast on the grace of Christ and do not be suckered into believing that you must observe some or all of the tenets of the law in order to be pleasing to God. In so doing, you actually become displeasing to Him. You have forsaken the work of His Son and gone about seeking your own righteousness.

Heavenly Father, it is most wonderful to start each day knowing that You are there! In You there is hope; in You there is contentment; and in You I find rest. Even when the world beats me up and tries to rob my joy, I have a place of peace for my weary soul. Should I need it in the day ahead, I know that it is there - because You are ever with me. Thank You for Your presence in my life. Amen.

Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree”), Galatians 3:13

In verse 10, Paul said that "as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse." He then went on to explain to us that if the precepts of the law are not met by anyone under the law (and which no one can meet) then they are under a curse. Now to show the marvel of Christ, he says, "Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law."

If the law brought a curse, and if Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, then it must mean that the law is annulled through Christ's work (as it is explicitly said to be in numerous NT passages).

Paul is obviously speaking of the Jews who were under the law, but his words are given to include the Gentiles in Galatia (and thus us!) who would stupidly presume to insert the law into our lives when it is fulfilled in Christ. Ellicott notes that, "The opening of this verse without any connecting particle lends sharpness and emphasis to the contrast. The Law brought a curse. There it stopped short. That was all it could do. The first thing that Christianity does is to undo this result of the Law by deliverance from the curse."

Where the law failed, Christ prevailed over it and "redeemed us from the curse." The word redeemed here means "to purchase, to buy up." From that it gives the sense of "to purchase anyone, to redeem, to set free." Paul is saying that it is through the work of Christ that we have been "purchased" and thus "set free" from the law (which brings a curse). So why would anyone attempt to reinsert (or to insert in the case of the Gentiles)

that from which a purchase of redemption has been made, and which could only bring a curse?

Next, to show us how Christ did this thing on our behalf, he says that it is through Christ "having become a curse for us." This was explained in Galatians 2:20. Christ became a curse under the law by becoming legally impure because, as Paul now cites from Deuteronomy 21:23, "Cursed *is* everyone who hangs on a tree."

Here Paul cites the substance of the Greek translation of the OT passage, but he notably leaves off the words "by God" after "cursed." Paul knew that Christ was not cursed by God when He was crucified. The law deemed Christ, as it were, as accursed by having subjected Him to the type of death that a scoundrel would die. He died in fulfillment of the law, and in His death the law then cast Him out of its legal constraints by the type of death He died. Thus, when we join to Him, we also are also cast out of the legal constraints of the law. The law has no power over us because of this.

The word for tree here, *xulon*, means "anything made of wood, a piece of wood, a club, staff; the trunk of a tree, used to support the cross-bar of a cross in crucifixion" (Strong's). If a tree is that which gives life, and this is certainly what was on Paul's mind, then as Ignatius notes, "Christ was nailed up for our sakes - of which fruit are we. That is, the cross is regarded as a tree, and Christians as its fruit" (Vincent's Word Studies).

The symbolism is extremely rich, and it points back to the very fall of man where this was written in Genesis 3 -

"So He drove out the man; and He placed cherubim at the east of the garden of Eden, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to guard the way to the tree of life." Genesis 3:24

It is Christ who is the life, and it is Christ who restores to us access to eternal life through His cross. It is the most amazing thing for us to consider. That hope in life which was lost is now again available through the death of Christ.

Life application: All who attempt to be justified by works of the law are under a curse. Those who claim to be "in Christ" and yet mandate works of the law are both heretics and under a curse. Keep far away from such depraved people.

Lord God Almighty, it is beyond imagination for me to grasp all that occurred in the death of Christ. We lost access to the Tree of Life, but through His death it is restored

once again. We were bound under the harsh precepts of the law, and yet He became a curse for us so that we might be freed from the curse of the law. We were unrighteous and yet through Him we are made righteous. How can such marvelous things be! How great are You, O God. Thank You for the life, work, death, and resurrection of Christ my Lord. Amen!

...that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith. Galatians 3:14

In this verse, Paul uses the word "that," or *ina*, twice. The first speaks in response to verse 13 -

"Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us."

As this is so, then the law is fulfilled and annulled through Him. He has done away with all the precepts which it held, and He has broken down its limitations, meaning its exclusive nature as belonging to the nation of Israel alone. In so doing, "the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus."

The exclusivity of Israel's inheritance is gone. The door has been opened for the promises to Abraham to be lavished upon all nations through mere faith in the finished work of Christ. However, there is still an exclusive nature to this blessing. It is not granted automatically to all people. Rather, it is only for those who are "in Christ Jesus." One must demonstrate faith in what God has done through Christ in order to be included in the blessings of Abraham.

After stating this, Paul then uses the word "that," or *ina*, again. This is used next in sequence after the first instance. Not only has there been redemption from the curse of the law through Christ, but because of that there is the allowance that "we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith."

Note the pronoun: "We." Paul is a Jew, but he is writing to the Gentiles about a matter which concerns them. In his words, he shows that the same promise is given to both Jew and Gentile in exactly the same way. Release from the mandates of the law, and the granting of the Spirit, both come through Christ's work. Further, they come upon all who simply believe!

The "promise of the Spirit" was prophesied in the Old Testament in passages such as Joel 2:28, 29. In fact, that passage was cited by Peter in Acts 2:16-31 to show that the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost was a fulfillment of that passage.

It should be noted that with the promise being fulfilled now in both Jew and Gentile in a demonstrable way, and which is then recorded in the Bible, an outward demonstration of the Spirit is no longer necessary. Paul shows in Ephesians 1:13, 14 that when a person believes in Christ, he is sealed with the Spirit as a guarantee of his salvation.

Instead of an outward demonstration - "sight," we are now to believe that the Spirit has been given - "faith." The modern charismatic movement which claims one must have an outward demonstration of tongues is not only nonsense, but also contrary to the idea of living by faith.

Life application: The law is ended; the time of the giving of the Spirit has come; and this is offered to any and all who will receive the work of Christ by mere faith.

How marvelous! How wonderful! Christ came, Christ lived perfectly under the law, and Christ died in fulfillment of the law - thus annulling it. And then my Lord died on the Cross of Calvary to pay the sin debt of every person who will simply say "I believe." And to prove it, my Lord rose from the grave, victorious over death. The law which condemned is gone; the Spirit which gives life is now available. I am reconciled to God once again! Christ arose. Hallelujah, Christ arose! Amen.

Brethren, I speak in the manner of men: Though *it is* only a man's covenant, yet *if it is* confirmed, no one annuls or adds to it. Galatians 3:15

Paul now wisely proclaims a truth which was understood among humanity in general. When a covenant was made, it became a binding agreement between parties. One party could not arbitrarily add to it, detract portions of it, or call it void. Once it was in effect, it stood as a permanent and unchangeable agreement concerning what had transpired.

In the case of the covenant that was made with Abraham, the Lord's words implied that they were speaking of the coming Messiah. The terminology could mean nothing else. Four hundred and thirty years later, the Law of Moses was brought into the picture as Israel agreed to its terms at the foot of Sinai.

However, what came about in that law could in no way be added to, or annul, what transpired between the Lord and Abraham. In fact, the law was based on works whereas

the promise granted righteousness by faith. Works and faith are mutually exclusive principles. Therefore, both in the fact that the covenant with Abraham preceded the law, and the fact that these agreements were based on conflicting tenets, the law could in no way be an avenue to a declaration of righteousness.

Understanding this, he says, "Brethren." The word is given to highlight the fact that they, Gentiles in the flesh, were brethren to him, a Jew who was born and raised under the law. "I speak in the manner of men" is given in accordance with the example mentioned above which was the universally understood nature of covenants.

Concerning such a covenant, he says, "Though *it is* only a man's covenant, yet *if it is* confirmed, no one annuls or adds to it." If this is true with a covenant between men, how much more certain is such a covenant when made by the Lord! Further, after declaring Abraham righteous by faith alone, the covenant which was made with him was one-sided.

Only the Lord passed through the divided animals. The entire passage shows that what was promised and the covenant that was cut was based solely on the faith of Abraham and the unchangeable nature of God, who cannot lie.

Life application: The law cannot nullify what was already in effect concerning the promise to Abraham. Therefore, the law was given for a different purpose. When it had served its usefulness, it was set aside in the giving of the New Covenant, a covenant based on grace. If you are under grace, then you cannot be under the law. The two are mutually exclusive.

I was under bondage to a harsh taskmaster, one who controlled my very soul. There was no hope of me ever finding a way of escape. But Lord, You stepped into my life and broke away the chains which bound me. You led me out of Egypt and through the sea of death and into new life. For the grace and mercy You have shown, I commit myself to You. Use me according to Your wisdom, O God. Thank You for the freedom I have in Christ. Amen.

Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. He does not say, "And to seeds," as of many, but as of one, "And to your Seed," who is Christ. Galatians 3:16

The words of Paul in this verse are the subject of an almost countless number of pages of analysis, speculation, and frustration. If one is truly concerned about the complete meaning of what is being discussed, referring to many of those commentaries is a must.

First, Paul begins with "Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made." It is already known that the promise was made to Abraham; however, this says "promises." The Bible reveals that the promise was reiterated to him on several occasions. Therefore, the plural is used. Further, it says that the promises were made to "his Seed."

Therefore, the promises were made to more than just Abraham. The word in the NKJV is capitalized as "Seed" because they believe Paul is explaining the Seed as Christ the Person. But this becomes problematic.

Paul next states that "He does not say, 'And to seeds,' as of many, but as of one." This becomes rather difficult because though it is true that the word for "seed" is singular, it always involves a multitude within the singular. In other words, when speaking of the "seed of Abraham" it is referring to many people.

The singular is used for the whole. Whether in Hebrew or Greek the same truth is seen. In Greek, Paul says *sperma* (seed) instead of *spermata* (seeds), but *sperma* still includes a corporate whole who issue from one.

What is often inferred is that Paul is saying that this word is referring to Christ the Person and that this was justifiable when speaking to non-Jewish Galatians, or it was acceptable based on rabbinical ways of analyzing Scripture. A third option is that this is speaking of Christ the singular Person as spiritually representing a collective whole.

For example, in Matthew 2:15, Christ is used as a fulfilled "type" of the collective body of Israel. But these are just simple ways of dismissing what is not at all obvious. If the word "seed" consistently means a corporate whole when speaking of offspring, then that is how it should be taken. Does this mean Paul is wrong? Of course not!

It must be understood that Abraham had two sons, Isaac and Ishmael. Therefore, the "seed" is speaking of a certain section of his offspring. The "promises" were repeated to only one of them - for example Isaac received the promise. After this, Jacob received the promise, etc. Thus, the use of "seed" and "promises" is speaking of a corporate whole, not of the Person of Christ.

However, this corporate whole is one in Christ; it is not speaking of Christ the individual, but of Christ the body of believers. This is made explicit later in this same chapter.

To give the whole thought, the NKJV says, "He does not say, 'And to seeds,' as of many, but as of one, 'And to your Seed,' who is Christ." In this, they have made the supposition

that the "seed" is Christ. They capitalize "Seed" and they use the pronoun "who" to translate the Greek word *hos*. This supposition, however, is incorrect. The word *hos* can have various meanings, such as who, which, what, that, etc. Translations which read something like, "'And to thy seed,' which is Christ" (YLT) convey the proper meaning.

It is the corporate body, in Christ, to whom the promises were made. The promise does not include Ishmael, for example, even though he was a descendant of Abraham. The promise does not include Esau, although the same is true with him. However, it does include any and all who have called on Christ and who are now adopted into the family of Abraham by faith, being now "in Christ."

The Geneva Bible rightly comments that "Paul does not speak of Christ's person, but of two peoples, who grew together in one, in Christ." Both Jew and Gentile alike are the seed of Abraham to whom the promises were made. This conveys the whole point of Paul's letter to the Galatians. It is not those who are dependent on the law (meaning observant Jews) to whom the promises were made, but to any and all who - like Abraham - take God at His word and demonstrate simple faith in Him.

Life application: It is a shame that people get caught up in a single translation of the Bible. In so doing, there is always the chance that the rendering is incorrect. In the case of this verse, a simple capitalization and the use of one incorrect pronoun can bring out an entirely different meaning than that which is intended.

This misunderstanding will not necessarily lead to some type of heresy, but it may lead to confusion when someone is approached with the original meaning of the word translated as "seed." In this inability to properly explain what is being said, a perceived inaccuracy is found in the Bible. Thus, it can give ammo to deniers of the Bible to further challenge its inspiration. Doctrine does matter. Detailed study of the word is important.

Heavenly Father, how often people challenge Your word and attempt to tear it apart! Without our having a sound knowledge of what it says, or at least the ability to know where to go to defend difficult passages, how much easier is it for them to continue to malign it. And so, Lord, help us to challenge ourselves by studying this precious gift and in searching out those difficult areas. Grant us that we may be able to defend it as we would defend our own families and even our own lives! Amen.

And this I say, *that* the law, which was four hundred and thirty years later, cannot annul the covenant that was confirmed before by God in Christ, that it should make the promise of no effect. Galatians 3:17

Paul now gives a further explanation of the logical thought process which he has already described, that of the promise preceding the law and which stands apart from, and superior to, the law. He has shown that those who attempt to be justified by works of the law are under a curse (v. 10); that no one is justified by the law in the sight of God (v. 11) because the law is not of faith (v.12); that Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law (v. 13) so that the blessings of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles (v.14).

As the Gentiles had no law, just as Abraham had no law, then how could the law somehow add to their righteousness? Christ had come and so any who received him by faith would be just as Abraham because the promises were made to Abraham and those who issued from him; those who are in Christ (v.16). Understanding all of this, Paul now says that "the law, which was four hundred and thirty years later..."

The law came long, long after Abraham's death. It was never a part of his life, and it had no bearing at all on his declaration of righteousness. In fact, the law came after a full 215 years of him and his descendants living in Canaan, and then another 215 years of his descendants living in Egypt. It was his grandson Jacob who went down to Egypt, and it was Jacob's great-great grandson Moses who led the people out of Egypt and to Sinai where the law was received.

During all of that intervening time, there was no law and yet the people were considered righteous as they lived by faith in the promises of God. Their standing before God was a part of the promise made to Abraham, and the law had no bearing on it at all. Further, the law "cannot annul the covenant that was confirmed before by God in Christ, that it should make the promise of no effect." Bible scholar Bengel notes that, "The greatness of the interval increases the authority of the promise."

This is what Paul alluded to in verse 15 when using the example of a covenant between mere men. As this is applicable in such a covenant, how much more so is it when dealing with the promises of God! Paul is trying to wake the Galatians up to the fact that they are as Abraham was, living by promise and not by law. The purpose of the law has nothing to do with a declaration of righteousness. In fact, as Paul will continue to show, the law stands contrary to such a declaration.

As a final note, the duration of time that Paul speaks of here, that of 430 years, is an exact figure of time. It was precisely 430 years from the promise to the exodus from Egypt. It is too much information to include in this commentary, but it is exactly as described above - 215 years' time in Canaan and 215 years in Egypt. The biblical account shows this exactly and there is no contradiction in it.

Life application: The law came after the promise. Gentiles were never considered under the law, and for the Jews, the law was fulfilled in Christ. Therefore, to insert (or reinsert) the law is to set aside the promises of God. Don't pursue such a path. Have faith in God and what He has done in Christ for your justification.

Lord God, how marvelous it is to see the sunrise each day and to know that everything is timed so perfectly. And looking at the entire year, we can know just what will occur at set times, year by year. And by looking to the Bible, we can see the precision of how You have laid out all the years of the ages. Each step of the way shows intricacy and design. It shows that You have a good plan for us. Help us to trust this and to not get bogged down in Today. Instead, help us to live for You in all days! Thank You for the sure promises You have made. Amen.

For if the inheritance *is* of the law, *it is* no longer of promise; but God gave *it* to Abraham by promise. Galatians 3:18

Paul sums up this paragraph with an obvious conclusion of the thoughts he has thus far presented. How can one read these words and deny the evident nature of what they state? And yet, for 2000 years, people have been caught up in the legalistic practice of reinserting (or if Gentile, inserting) the law into their practicing theology. Taken at face value, it is clear that this approach is utter folly.

He begins with, "For if the inheritance *is* of the law, *it is* no longer of promise." The promise was given to Abraham without any strings attached to it. A promise was made; Abraham believed; and Abraham was declared righteous. In the covenant made at Mount Sinai, however, there was an agreement between both parties before the covenant was made.

It was, in essence, a contract requiring performance. If either party failed to keep the contract, then there would be penalties associated with it. Such was not the case with Abraham. There was nothing to fulfill; there was simply a declaration of righteousness.

If the Lord later added the law into what was promised, then "*it is* no longer of promise." The promise would not actually be a promise and the words of God to Abraham would have been deceitful, and the addition of the law would then have been manipulative. However, neither is the case. Instead, "God gave it to Abraham by promise."

Abraham was given a promise which could in no way be affected by the later coming of the law. In this verse, the nouns "law" and "promise" have no article. They are being

considered in their "characteristic principles, which were not only diverse, but contrary" (Pulpit Commentary). Further, the verb for "gave" in the Greek is in the perfect tense. Paul is showing that it was, and it forever is, an enduring promise.

The matter is settled. Along with that, the placing of "God" is in the emphatic position, "...but to Abraham through a promise has granted (it) God." The stress would be like saying, "...but no less than God Himself has given the promise to Abraham."

As it is no less than God who gave the promise, and as it is a "forever and enduring promise," then the contradictory idea of having the law later become a part of what is needed to receive the Messianic blessings is utterly ridiculous. Rather, the Galatians received the promise by faith and only by faith. For them to insert the law would nullify the words of promise.

Life application: Understanding right theology is hard work, but to shun it will inevitably lead one down a highway to heresy. Meditate on Scripture; contemplate the grace of Christ; and don't let the next passing fad or smooth-talking preacher lead you away from what is sound.

O God, it is such a challenge each day to get up and read a hundred different positions on something that seems so simple. We are told that one is saved by grace through faith and that works are excluded. And then some Johnny-come-lately says, "No, you must do this or that in order to please God." If Johnny is right, then the Bible is wrong! And more, Christ died for nothing. If His death wasn't sufficient to restore me to You, then what is? How could I add to what He did? Instead, I will press on in Your grace, receiving Christ as my Savior. This alone is where I place my trust! Amen.

What purpose then *does* the law serve? It was added because of transgressions, till the Seed should come to whom the promise was made; *and it was appointed through angels by the hand of a mediator.* Galatians 3:19

Throughout his writings, Paul states several reasons why the law was given by God. One of them is included in this verse now. Here he first asks, "What purpose *does* the law serve?" The reason for explaining this now is because he has just shown that the law has no bearing on the promise. It cannot change or annul what has already been confirmed.

Therefore, unless there is a reason for the giving of the law, it seems like a long and pointless part of the redemptive story. However, it is a logical part of it, fulfilling great purposes until it had served those purposes. After that, it was set aside.

To explain one exact reason for the giving of it, he begins with, "It was added because of transgressions." This statement can mean one of two things: 1) It was added in order to keep people from committing transgressions, or 2) it was given to cause transgression to increase in number (as is stated in Romans 5:20). As he says there, "...the law entered that the offense might abound. But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more."

Paul was probably thinking of both possibilities concerning the law. It was to keep people in check, but it was also intended to multiply transgressions. Thus, it would show how utterly sinful sin really is (see Romans 7:13). The promise would stand, but man was being shown the extremely gracious nature of the promise through the giving of the law. This aspect of redemptive history, however, had a set point of termination. It was only in effect until "the Seed should come to whom the promise was made."

As was noted in the commentary on 3:16, the seed there was speaking of the body of believers in Christ. Now it is speaking of the One who would bring in the fulfillment of those promises for that body, Christ. Christ is the fulfillment of all of the messianic promises. Therefore, when He came, fulfilled the law, and died in fulfillment of that law, the promises would then be made available to all who would call on Him.

Thus, during the interim time, from promise until the coming of Christ, the law was introduced for instruction and learning. Paul will continue to clarify this as he progresses through the chapter and through the rest of the epistle.

To complete his thought, he says that the law "was appointed through angels by the hand of a mediator." There is abundant speculation concerning this statement. Nothing in the Old Testament confirms that angelic beings gave the law. In fact, it is clear that the law was given by the Lord directly to Moses.

The Greek translation of the OT in Deuteronomy 33:2 seems to refer to this though. Also, some Jewish traditions, such as that of Flavius Josephus (see Antiquities of the Jews. xv. 5. 3), claim the presence of angels during the giving of the law. Even a few NT passages in Acts and Hebrews seem to say this as well.

However, there is a reasonable explanation for this without adding to what Scripture says. In three New Testament passages which refer to this, it speaks of the law being given through "angels," plural. There are two things to consider on this.

First, in Acts 7:38, Stephen says that the Angel spoke to them on Mount Sinai and the word is singular. Thus, it refers to the Lord alone (the second member of the Godhead).

Secondly, the word for "angel," which is *aggelos*, does not necessarily mean a heavenly being. It simply means "messenger" or a "delegate."

In Acts 7:53, here in Galatians, and later in Hebrews where this is noted, the word is plural and is therefore speaking of both Moses and Aaron who are considered *messengers* of God for the giving of the law to Israel, even if Aaron wasn't with Moses at all times. And finally, Moses is the mediator of the same law as is noted in Exodus 24:3-8. Hence, the term "mediator" is in the singular.

Life application: The law had a purpose, and it is not to save us from sin. Instead, it was to show us the great grace of God in Christ by highlighting our sin. Let us thank God that the curse of the law is removed through the shed blood of Christ!

How marvelous it is to know that Christ has come! Thank You, O God, for the marvel of Jesus and the life that He lived for us. We have strayed away from You like little lost sheep, but You have gathered us together again through this great Shepherd who cares for even the most wayward of us. Help us to listen carefully to the words He speaks and to follow closely to Him all our days. In this, we know that You will certainly be pleased. Amen.

Now a mediator does not *mediate* for one *only*, but God is one. Galatians 3:20

We arrive at one of the most widely interpreted verses in the entire Bible. At the time of Charles Ellicott, the 19th century Bible scholar, there were at least 430 different interpretations of what is thought to have been on Paul's mind. Therefore, it is without a doubt a verse which has a great deal of meaning contained within itself.

However, context needs to be ascertained for any verse. This one comes during a discussion about the covenant with Abraham which is followed by the giving of the Law of Moses. Vincent's Word Studies notes that the Greek term translated here as "now" is explanatory, not antithetic. Therefore, what has been previously said is now further explained.

Abraham was given a promise; Abraham believed that promise; and Abraham was declared righteous. After this, the Lord made a covenant with him, and He alone passed through the divided animals. The covenant was made and settled.

However, because the covenant was made, and despite it only being made by One, meaning God, to change it would still require both party's approval (verse 15). As

Abraham was not alive 430 years later (verse 17), the institution of the Law of Moses could not have had any bearing on the promise.

Another note concerning the Greek is that there is an article attached to "mediator," and thus it is "the mediator." It is therefore marked as a class noun, thus "giving it the sense, 'a mediator as such'" (Pulpit Commentary).

Understanding this, we can then look at what has brought about the annulling of the Law of Moses, which is the New Covenant. This is made explicit based on the words of Hebrews which states with all certainty that it is 1) annulled; 2) set aside; and 3) obsolete.

The New Covenant came through Christ. He is called in both Hebrews 9:15 and Hebrews 12:24 "the Mediator of the New Covenant." If He is the Mediator, and the covenant is based on grace in accord with the promise made to Abraham, not on works of the law, then Christ is God.

The "fullness of the Godhead" bodily subsists in Him. It is certain that Paul is referring to Christ in this verse because He was mentioned in verse 3:19, He will be referred to throughout the rest of the chapter, and He will again be referred to in verse 4:4 - all in the context of this issue.

As we are counted in the "seed of Abraham" (verse 16) because of Christ, we become one with Christ - we are "in Christ," and we have "put on Christ," meaning we are clothed in Him (verse 3:27). This is why we are again called "Abraham's seed" in verse 3:29. Logically, this means that as God is One, and because we are "in Christ," we are fully reconciled to God through His work. This is made explicit in Colossians 1:20, 21 -

"For it pleased *the Father that* in Him all the fullness should dwell, ²⁰ and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross."

In anticipation of that marvelous position in which we stand by faith, Jesus made His intercessory prayer for His people just prior to the act that would make it possible –

"I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; ²¹ that they all may be one, as You, Father, *are* in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me. ²² And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We

are one: ²³ I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me." John 17:20-23

Life application: There is a ton of theology tied up in this verse. To fully explore it requires fully exploring the entire Bible. Suffice it to say that if you have accepted Jesus, you are fully reconciled to God and are clothed in Christ. We could no more lose our standing with God than Christ could. And as God is One, and yet Jesus is called our Mediator, then Jesus must be God.

The principle tenets of the faith are all wrapped up in understanding the marvel of what God did for us in Christ. However, being in Christ requires that we live by faith in Him and not by works of the law. This is the entire point of Paul's letter to the Galatians. The law is opposed to faith. To insert the law into one's attempt to be justified before God thus excludes one from being "in Christ."

Heavenly Father, everything is tied up in the question of whether Jesus Christ is fully God or not. If He is, then You have ordained that He is the focal point for all worship from all people. If He is not, then there is no hope of ever being reconciled to You. The faith of Abraham, coming before the law, shows us this. And so, I trust Christ, and Him alone, to bring me back to You. I bow my knee to the King of kings and the Lord of lords. I receive Jesus! Amen.

Is the law then against the promises of God? Certainly not! For if there had been a law given which could have given life, truly righteousness would have been by the law.
Galatians 3:21

Paul now enters into an obvious question for those who have misunderstood the purpose of the law. Well, if God gave us the law, and the law "was added because of transgressions, till the Seed should come to whom the promise was made," the question may be, "Is the law then against the promises of God?"

Paul has already shown that the law cannot annul "the covenant that was confirmed before by God in Christ, that it should make the promise of no effect" (verse 17). Therefore, Paul's use of the word "against" is not insinuating some type of negative action of the law against the promises of God. Instead, the word is being used in a contrary sense as if the purpose of the law was contrary to the promises. His answer is, "Certainly not!"

The law was given, but unlike the promises, it was not intended as a means of giving life (meaning declaring a person "righteous" or "justified" before God). The reason this is true is then clearly given in the words, "For if there had been a law which could have given life, truly righteousness would have been by the law."

If a sinful man could be justified by the law (supposing this were possible), then the law would, in fact, be contrary to the promise. There would then be two different means of obtaining righteousness. It would show fickleness in the plans of God.

But the law could not bring a sinful man to a state of righteousness. Therefore, "...the spirit and purpose of the Law were not contrary to the promises, inasmuch as the Law did not offer to interfere with the work which the promises were to do, but was designed, to be auxiliary to their function by preparing the way for its discharge" (Pulpit Commentary).

What again needs to be remembered is that Christ has come. The Galatians, who never had the law, had called on Christ and been declared righteous. The proof of this was the sealing of the Spirit. The same is true with the Jews who did have the law. None of them were granted the Spirit until they repented of trying to be justified by the law and instead believed in what Christ had done in fulfillment of the law.

This shows that righteousness was not of the law, and thus the law was not contrary to the promises of God. Instead, it was introduced as a means of leading sinful man to Christ who had no sin and thus was qualified and capable of fulfilling the law. If one is to trust in the law, it is only to be insofar as Christ fulfilled it for him. He is the embodiment of it. Therefore, He is the fulfillment of the promises.

Life application: If you encounter those who claim you must observe the law in order to be saved, you should be familiar with the arguments they will submit for their incorrect stand. Further, you should be able to come to Galatians and defend why their stand is both incorrect and nuts.

Paul's words are precise and lead to only one conclusion; the law (meaning attempting to be declared righteous by deeds of the law) cannot save sinful man. Only faith in Christ can do so.

Lord, even when I'm at my best, I find myself making the most horrendous mistakes in my life. The things I think, the secret actions which only You can see (and yes, I know that You can see them), show how desperately I need Your grace. Is it not true with all

people? Surely if You were to count our sins against us, there would be no hope. But in Christ, our sins are forgiven. Thank You for the grace and mercy that freely flows from Him. How good You are to us, O God. Amen.

But the Scripture has confined all under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe. Galatians 3:22

Paul just stated that "if there had been a law given which could have given life, truly righteousness would have been by the law." However, such is not the case. This is indicated by the word *alla*, or "but." The law cannot grant life (meaning righteousness) which is proved by "the Scripture."

Here Paul stands on the absolute authority of Scripture itself. He could not make his arguments concerning the reliability of Scripture, if it wasn't 100% reliable.

However, as if almost personifying it, because it is the expressed word of God, he notes that the Scripture itself "has confined all under sin." The word "confined" is appropriate. It comes from the Greek word *sugkleiό* which gives the sense of "shutting up" something. It is as if a sentence of guilt from the law is passed on to all, imprisoning them through the sin which proceeds from the issuing of the law. In other words, it is the same argument that he made in Romans 7:9-12. There he said -

"But sin, taking opportunity by the commandment, produced in me all *manner of evil* desire. For apart from the law sin *was* dead. ⁹ I was alive once without the law, but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died." Romans 7:8, 9

The law can only bring death, and the law can only bring a sentence of guilt. This is true for "all," meaning every person without exception. The word in Greek is in the neuter gender signifying that it is all-encompassing. Male and female, Jew and Gentile, young and old, etc. are included. The intent then is that "all humanity" is confined under sin.

Thus, another purpose for the law is revealed. It is so "that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe." This brings us back to the promise of the Seed mentioned in verse 19. Jesus Christ is that Seed. Now, by faith in Him, and in Him alone, the confining restraint of sin is removed.

The contrasts are clear - where there was confinement in the law, there is freedom in Christ. Where the law brought bondage, faith brings freedom. In the law there is death, but in Christ there is life. The two wholly contrast one another. Only in Christ are the

promises realized. In the law, there can never be relief from the chains of sin which bind our souls.

Life application: Even those who have received Christ can be duped into believing that doing the things of the law can make one "more pleasing" to God. "Yes, I trust in Christ, but I have given up pork because it will make God happy."

This is a trap. If one gives up pork because it makes them break out in hives, that makes sense; but if one gives up pork because it will "make God happy," then it is implying that God is "happier" with what you are doing than what His Son did. A little leaven leavens the whole lump. One cannot make God more pleased than to accept what Jesus did - in its entirety.

Lord God, now that I have received Christ - who is the end of the law for all who believe - will You be happier with me if I observe the Sabbath? Will You be happier with me if I give up pork? Will You be happier with me if I do anything from the law that only pointed to Christ? If so, then what I do makes You "happier" than what Jesus did. As I know that this isn't possible, then I will make You happiest of all by simply trusting what He did and resting in that! I place my complete faith in His finished work, plus nothing. Amen.

But before faith came, we were kept under guard by the law, kept for the faith which would afterward be revealed. Galatians 3:23

To ensure context, the previous verse needs to be included as a point of reference -

"But the Scripture has confined all under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe. ²³ But before faith came, we were kept under guard by the law, kept for the faith which would afterward be revealed."

Paul's beginning word of verse 23, translated as "but" is not the same as verse 22. It is probably better to say something like "and," "now," or "moreover" in order to show the original is a continuation and expansion on the thought, not merely another contrast. The word "faith" here relates to the dispensation of grace through faith. In other words, it is speaking of the new aspect of God's progressive revelation of how He deals with, and reveals Himself to, mankind.

The law was given, and it "confined all under sin." Using another term to indicate this same idea, he now says that "we were kept under guard by the law." It is as if those under the law were continuously monitored in the prison of sin. The verb for "kept

under guard" is in the imperfect tense. The law held, and continuously held, those under its domain, just as a jailer would do for any prisoner under his control.

The law was given as a means of preventing escape, not as a means of protecting the people. As it says in 1 Corinthians 15:56 -

"The sting of death *is* sin, and the strength of sin *is* the law."

The law then is what bound those under its constraints, holding them fast. It was the guard "by whom those who belong to sin are kept under lock and key - under moral captivity, without possibility of liberation except through faith" (Vincent's Word Studies).

However, the law was not intended as a permanent dispensation, or outcropping, of how God would deal with man. It was intended to last only until a certain point and then end. It was meant that those under it would be "kept for the faith which would afterward be revealed."

Paul's words may seem distant to us now that we have been in the church age for 2000 years, but they are actually as relevant today as they were when written to the Galatians. Those in Galatia were being told they needed to adhere to the law in order to be pleasing to God.

People are still told this today, and the heresy continues on as if Paul's words have no meaning at all. And even if the entire law isn't demanded, people are told that if they simply followed certain precepts of the law they would be "more pleasing to God." This sounds appealing, but it is untrue. The way to be pleasing to the Father is to trust in the work of the Son.

Life application: Why would anyone want to go back to the bondage of the law when we have been freed from it by faith in Christ? Can we please God more than Jesus did? Stand fast on Christ's finished work and remember the words of the Bible - "Salvation is of the Lord." Trust in Him and Him alone for your righteousness.

Lord God, I am ever so grateful for each and every blessing that You send my way. And yet, I know I spend more time questioning why the difficult times come. Help me not to gauge Your love for me from the trials and difficulties that I temporarily face. Instead, help me to remember the long-term promises You have in store for us, and to be grateful for what they hold, despite any temporary setbacks. This I pray as I walk through this world of many woes. Amen.

Therefore the law was our tutor *to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith.* Galatians 3:24

Paul now gives us another explicit purpose for the law; it "was our tutor *to bring us to Christ.*" The word translated as "tutor" is *paidagógos*, a word meaning a "pedagogue." In the New Testament, it is only used in 1 Corinthians 4:15 and then again here and in the next verse. Some older translations use the word "schoolmaster." This is incorrect. The word was originally used when speaking of a slave that had been placed in charge of a child.

It was his responsibility to take the child to school. He was responsible for the care and moral discipline of the child, not as one who provides the intellectual discipline which school provides. Albert Barnes notes that, "It is true, that when the "paedagogus" was properly qualified, he assisted the children committed to his care in preparing their lessons. But still his main duty was not instruction, but it was to watch over the boys; to restrain them from evil and temptation; and to conduct them to the schools, where they might receive instruction."

For this reason, the word "tutor" is preferable simply because of its etymology. It comes from the word *tueri*, which means "to look upon, to guard." Some translations use the word "guardian," and Young's ingeniously translates this as "child conductor." This "child conductor" then is used metaphorically for the law which was given to lead us to Christ.

The moral upbringing of the law showed that no one is justified by the law. Its demands were too heavy, and it led to bondage, not to freedom. The giving of the law was intended to show this. Abraham was justified by faith, but man is inwardly inclined to want to "do" something in order to be pleasing to God.

And so, the law was given to show what man must "do" in order to be found perfect in His sight. Only in perfectly fulfilling every precept of the law could one be considered fully pleasing to Him in regard to "doing."

In the giving of the law, and its high expectations, the history of the Jews showed a continuous failure to meet the law's demands. We were being given our moral instruction by our pedagogue.

When enough time under the law had been spent to show how utterly impossible it was for fallen man to meet its demands, Christ came. He was able to fulfill its demands, and He did fulfill them - on our behalf. Now by faith in His work, we are "justified by faith."

The law had met its purpose; it had led us to understand that it is not by our works, but by the work of the Lord, that we can be saved.

Life application: We can only have it one way. Either we will work our way to heaven by deeds of the law - an impossible mountain to climb; or we will trust in Christ to reconcile us to God through His finished work - a difficult path because it is contrary to our nature to set self aside and trust in another's "doing" for us. In the end, we must come to the end of ourselves and simply trust Christ alone for our salvation.

Heavenly Father, were I to work my way back to You through deeds of the law, it would be an infinitely high hill to climb. The record of Israel shows that no person was able to meet its demands, and so in the fullness of time, Christ came and fulfilled them for me. Now, You ask us to set aside our futile attempts at meriting Your favor and to simply trust that what You have done through Him is sufficient. Me... I'm all in for faith in Christ! He did the work; I receive Your favor. It is the sweetest deal of all. Hallelujah to Christ my Lord. Amen.

But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor. Galatians 3:25

In the previous verse, Paul explained the purpose of the pedagogue, or "child conductor." That individual's duties did not carry on forever. Instead, they were set up with a particular timeframe in mind, after which he would no longer be needed. The person's duties would end, and a new part of the individual's life would come about.

So it is true with the Law of Moses. It was never intended to be a permanent part of God's plans in redemptive history. Instead, it would serve its purpose and then be set aside. That predetermined point was after the work of Jesus Christ. In His death, the law was fulfilled, and in His resurrection comes a new covenant. It also initiated a new dispensation - that of faith. The promised Seed has come and through Him we are granted full rights as sons of God.

In other words, the Law of Moses was the pedagogue for the people of God. It has shown us our need for Christ, and led us directly to Him. How people can't see this is simply amazing. Even after being shown the explicit words of the New Testament concerning the fulfillment and ending of the law, people perversely turn from Christ's work and back to the law!

They would rather be under the strict, and even harsh, hand of a pedagogue than be considered sons of God with the full rights that come along with that honorable position.

The law was a tutor; faith has come; therefore, "we are no longer under a tutor." In other words, "we are no longer under the law." Be done with it in its entirety. Now, live by faith in Christ Jesus, remembering Paul's words from Chapter 2 -

"For I through the law died to the law that I might live to God. ²⁰ I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me. ²¹ I do not set aside the grace of God; for if righteousness *comes* through the law, then Christ died in vain." Galatians 2:19-21

Life application: Do you consider yourself a child of God with full rights as a son? If you are still attempting to please Him through works of the law, then you are mistaken. Trust in Christ's fulfillment of the law, and live by faith in the Son of God.

Day unto day as the world turns on its axis, there is wisdom on display. Everything is so perfectly balanced, there is precision in the workings of the universe, and all is as it should be. The cycle of life, though painful at times, carries on as it should. Only in the heart which is contrary to God is there true error. Help us to align ourselves to Your will, O God. Help us to live for You through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. Galatians 3:26

Paul now changes his terminology from "we" in the previous verses to "you" in this verse. The word "you" is plural and is speaking to the Galatians as a gentile group who are now included in the promises of God. The "you" includes all, both Jew and Gentile, but it must be remembered that the main substance of the letter is concerning the Gentiles being duped into believing that they have to adhere to the Law of Moses in order to be pleasing to God. Paul shows here what malarkey that is!

In these words, his emphasis is on "sons of God" rather than "all." The intent is to show that by mere faith in Christ Jesus, we are brought into the family of God as sons of God. What is important to understand is that Paul uses the term *huios* for "sons." According to HELPS Word Studies, the word means "properly, a *son* (by birth or adoption); (figuratively) anyone sharing the *same nature* as their Father. For the believer, becoming a son of God begins with being reborn (*adopted*) by the heavenly Father – through Christ

(the work of the *eternal Son*). In the NT, *huiós* ("son") equally refers to female believers (Gal 3:28)."

Paul could have used another word, *teknon*, or "children," to describe us (which he uses in Romans 8 & 9 and in Philippians 2 under a different context), but he instead chose *huios*. The reason for this is that when one was under the law, they were as an immature child being led by the pedagogue.

However, when one comes to God by faith, they are no longer under the care of that guardian. Instead, they have come to maturity and have the full rights which being a son within the family grants. Although the distinction between these words is slight and should not be pressed too far, the use of "children" by some translations confuses the distinction that Paul is making.

It is through faith, and not deeds of the law, that one comes to this mature position. To insert precepts of the law into one's life in order to stand justified before God demonstrates immaturity and a need to go back to school, study proper theology, and hopefully grow into faith which saves. Anything else disqualifies a person from the right to be called a true son of God.

Life application: Doctrine matters. We should never stop growing in our doctrine and we need to learn to put aside childish things. Let us be fully developed and mature Christians who live by faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ.

Lord God, it is normal for us to get up and look forward to a good day ahead, hoping that the path will be smooth and flowers will adorn the way. This isn't always the case though, and quite often, the way is bumpy, and thorns catch us as we go. Help us to be thankful for the good days, accept the difficult ones with grace, and give us the sense to praise You for both. We couldn't really appreciate the good days unless we also had the bad ones. Thank You for each day in Your presence. Amen.

For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. Galatians 3:27

Paul just stated, "For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus." This verse now further explains that. He begins with, "For as many of you as were baptized into Christ..." Paul is not speaking of water baptism. This is understood from the next words, "...have put on Christ."

If water baptism is what Paul was speaking of, then anyone who got water baptized would be "in Christ" and would have "put on Christ." This is not the case as only those who believe in the work of Christ "put on Christ." It is by an act of faith, not a work, that one unites with Him. The term "put on" gives the idea of being clothed by another. It is what happened to Adam after he exercised faith in the word of the Lord and named his wife Eve. God covered him.

The baptism Paul speaks of is that of a close and intimate relationship which has been established between Christ and the believer. It is what we would call the "baptism of the Holy Spirit." John the Baptist first alluded to it early in the book of Luke -

"John answered, saying to all, 'I indeed baptize you with water; but One mightier than I is coming, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to loose. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.'" Luke 3:16

What faith in Christ would provide was far more than mere externals. Paul writes about it in 1 Corinthians 12 –

"For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and have all been made to drink into one Spirit."
1 Corinthians 12:13

And in a very similar statement, Paul says this in Romans 6:3 -

"Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death?"

Paul was speaking not of water baptism, but of the uniting with Christ in His death through faith in His work. In death, our sins are wiped away, and in this act, we are sealed with the Holy Spirit which is our baptism of the Holy Spirit. Paul explains this in Ephesians 1 –

"In Him you also *trusted*, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, ¹⁴ who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory." Ephesians 1:13, 14

There is no such thing as a second baptism of the Holy Spirit. It is a one-time deal which occurs by faith in the accomplished work of Christ.

This is the glory of the death and resurrection of Jesus for us. What was dead is made alive by a mere act of faith. In 1 Corinthians 10:1-5 we are shown this was actually pictured in Israel's exodus through the Red Sea. It is quite evident that water baptism is not at all involved in the process. The faith is exercised, the righteousness is granted, the Spirit is given, and then - only then - is the sign received; that of water baptism. This is the exact same pattern as what occurred with Abraham.

Abraham believed God and it was accounted to him for righteousness. The relationship was restored, and only after that did he receive the sign of circumcision. Water baptism has nothing to do with salvation. Instead, it has to do with obedience. When a person is saved, they then make a public demonstration of their new life. They go to the water just as Jesus went to the cross.

They are fully submerged (the Greek word for baptism indicates full submersion and therefore the word was transliterated, not translated, in an attempt to avoid confusion) as a picture of going into the grave, just as Jesus' body was laid in the tomb. And finally, the person is raised out of the water as a picture of being raised to newness of life through the power of the Holy Spirit. This is the intent and purpose of water baptism.

Life application: If you have received Jesus, you are saved. Water baptism has nothing to do with your salvation. However, Jesus gave two ordinances to His followers. The first is the Lord's Supper and the second is water baptism. In obedience to His directives, don't you think it's time to be properly baptized as an open profession of your inward change?

Heavenly Father, give us a proper understanding of Your word and also the willingness to be obedient to it. Keep us from the stubbornness of heart which would cause us to turn away from bringing You the honor that You are due. Jesus was obedient to the point of death, even to death on the cross. Give us that same heart to demonstrate that same kind of obedience if called upon to do so. Amen.

There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. Galatians 3:28

These words are so simple and so clear that the obvious nature of them is often overlooked. Paul has just stated that "as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ." The words now only apply to those who are "in Christ Jesus." For those who have put on Christ and are called by His name, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female."

Paul uses the present tense to show that there are absolutely no exceptions. Further, he uses the most extreme categories imaginable to the minds of the people of his time to show this -

Jew nor Greek - this is where the greatest distinction of all lay in the mind of the Jews. They were on one side; the Gentiles were on the other. The term "Greek" here is being applied to any non-Jew. Because of the conquests of Alexander, the Greek culture, influence, and language had permeated the known world. Within that sphere, the Jews remained Jews though.

In order to then show that this distinction was now void, he states this first. To the Galatians, it was an admonishment that they were not to look to the Jews for their doctrine, but to God. They were not to insert the false teachings of the Judaizers, but to submerge themselves in the truth of the gospel.

Slave nor free - The free people of the Roman Empire were considered on a completely different level than the slaves. This distinction was so great that Paul's words here could hardly be imagined by either class when considering the other. But once in Christ, the distinctions were removed. The letter of Philemon gives important insights into this.

Male nor female - It is obvious what sex a person is from the moment he or she is born. This never changes and each person's gender remains an identifying part of who they are until the day of their death. The modern perversion of transgenderism doesn't change the fact that males are males and females are females. However, this most basic distinction between the two is no longer considered a limiting or dividing factor when in Christ.

Despite these markedly different categories within the world itself, in Christ they are not considered as affecting one's standing, for "all are one in Christ Jesus."

Having said this, Paul's words here actually imply that these distinctions still exist in the world in which we live. When naming categories, it shows that the categories are there to name. No one reading his words would look around at their fellow Christians and say, "Well, there are no males and females anymore."

The same is true with those who are slaves and those who are free. The differences exist in the world to this day. And yet, those who believe the church has replaced Israel ignore the categories that Paul mentions first - Jew and Gentile.

To state the names implies there is a difference. Though there is now no distinction between them "in Christ," there is a difference between them "in the world." The church is not comprised of only Jews. But this is the ludicrous claim of replacement theologians such as RC Sproul. In his monthly magazine, published by Ligonier Ministries, he stated this -

"We're not dispensationalists here... We believe that the church is essentially Israel. We believe that the answer to, "What about the Jews?" is, "Here we are." We deny that the church is God's "plan B." We deny that we are living in God's redemptive parenthesis."

It is absolute malarkey to think this way. He would never claim there are no women because "all are one in Christ," but the differences between Jews and Gentiles are brushed over, or the title of "Jew" is co-opted by those who are not Jews. Let us use common sense when we read passages such as this.

Life application: If you are a Jew in Christ, you remain a Jew. If you are a Gentile in Christ, you remain a Gentile. There is no distinction between the two, but the differences remain. Don't call yourself what you are not!

Thank You, Lord God, for the many differences that You have placed in Your creation for us to enjoy. There are men and there are women. There are apples, oranges, and pomegranates. We have cold days and then come hot days. And the days are ended by the coming of the nights. Each thing that You have given us serves a wonderful purpose and provides us with beautiful diversity which we can enjoy and revel in. Thank You for such kindness to us! Amen.

And if you *are* Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise. Galatians 3:29

As was noted in the commentary on verse 16, the "seed" mentioned in that verse is speaking of those who are in Christ. Verse 19 mentioned the "Seed" and it was speaking of Christ. Understanding what Paul has been communicating shows us that we are "in Christ" and "heirs according to the promise." This verse then sums up the entire discourse on the issue of Abraham, the promise, and the seed.

For those who have called on Christ, believing in His work and not attempting to be justified by deeds of the law, but by simple faith in what He has done, we are then reckoned as "Abraham's seed."

Though the word is singular, it speaks of all that issues from a single seed. One seed can bear a hundred-fold, and those hundred can then bear another hundred-fold, and so on. It is only those who are of the nature of Abraham, and who are contained within the issue of that one seed of promise, who are being spoken of. It is those who are "heirs according to the promise."

Paul speaks in the same manner in Romans 8 with these words -

"The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God,¹⁷ and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with *Him*, that we may also be glorified together." Romans 8:16, 17

Turning again to Romans, Paul says this in Chapter 4 -

"Therefore *it is* of faith that *it might be* according to grace, so that the promise might be sure to all the seed, not only to those who are of the law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all." Romans 4:16

Physical descent from Abraham has no bearing at all on whether one is saved or not. Rather, those who believe in God's word and promise, which is realized in Christ, are those who are reckoned as descendants of Abraham and thus adopted sons of God.

Life application: Where in the verses of Galatians 3 is there any hint that we are required to work deeds of the law in order to be pleasing to God? The answer is, "Nowhere." Rather, the law is contrary to the promise. It stands opposed to it. Don't be so foolish as to be duped into believing that you can be "more pleasing" to God by exercising your religious life through keeping precepts of the law. It is utterly contradictory to the very words of the Bible. Have faith in Christ; rest in Christ; be reconciled to God through Christ.

Lord God, Heavenly Father - Your tender care of Your people isn't always evident in how our lives turn out from day to day. We suffer, we have trials, and heaps of bad times come our way. But we will not become disheartened! Your tender care is evident in the surety of what lies ahead. You have broken open the bonds of death, You have released the captives, and You have promised us a heavenly home. This life is of little consequence when the realization of such great promises awaits us! Thank You for what You have done through Jesus to secure our eternal future. Amen.

CHAPTER 4

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, Galatians 4:1

In the previous chapter, and in particular verses 23-25, Paul had spoken about those under the law as being under a tutor (someone who would tend to the child as a guardian). He will now expand upon that thought, comparing the child, here term "the heir," who is under a tutor, to a person living under the law.

This "heir," as long as he is a child, does not have the right to run the estate. He doesn't have the maturity or understanding of what to do in order to keep the estate. And so, even though he is the heir to the estate, at that point he "does not differ at all from a slave."

The word here translated as "child" is the Greek word *népios*. It refers to an infant, and figuratively to a simple-minded or immature person. Thus, it is a minor who has the inability to properly handle the full rights that he may be entitled to.

A slave has no right to run an estate. Instead, he takes orders, performs whatever functions are required of him, and keeps out of those areas his master has forbidden him to participate in. The child of the master, though heir, is in exactly the same position. And so, he truly is no different than the slave in this regard. And this is despite the fact that "he is master of all."

The heir will someday assume the full rights of his position. But that time must wait until he is ready and capable of doing so. Until that point, he may have certain privileges, but he does not have the right to the estate itself.

Paul will continue to discuss this and explain what he means, but he is making a parallel to those under the law before coming to Christ. Their status as heirs was not in question, but their rights as heirs were not fully developed. Until they came to Christ by faith, they did not have the rights of the inheritance. Instead, they remained in a position of servitude to the law. This would only end in their coming to Christ through His accomplishment of the law.

Life application: For the nine-jillionth time, Paul has shown that being under the law is contrary to being "in Christ." The law keeps people in bondage; the gospel frees them. To mandate observances of the law to those who have already come to Christ can only

be harmful to the relationship that had been established. To mandate observances of the law to those who have not yet come to Christ can only keep such a person from ever being liberated and to entering into a right relationship with God.

Wonderful freedom! This is what we enjoy when we call on Christ. The chains are broken, hearts are set free, and adoption as sons of God takes place. The law which stood against these things is nailed to His cross, and the joy of the Lord comes in its fullest sense! How good You are, O God, to have reconciled us to You through the life, death, and resurrection of our Lord of glory! Amen.

...but is under guardians and stewards until the time appointed by the father.

Galatians 4:2

This verse is connected to verse 1 and it would be good to cite them together for context-

"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, ² but is under guardians and stewards until the time appointed by the father."

The child may be the inheritor of all of the estate, just as Israel was to be the inheritor of the New Covenant (see Jeremiah 31:31, 32), but like the heir, they were not ready for that to be revealed "until the time appointed by the [F]ather." Until that time, they were "under guardians and stewards." Paul is using a real-life example to show why the law was given to Israel and the purpose that law served.

The term "guardians" refers to a person to whom the care of a boy was committed during a particular time in their development. They trained them, took them to school, and even personally helped in educating them. This was what they did, and it is what occurred for Israel while they were being taught through the many long years of their need for something other than the law.

The term "stewards" indicates a manager of a house. He was the overseer of it. He had the authority over the entire household including slaves and servants. It is pretty much what Joseph did under Potiphar while in Egypt. Eliezer of Damascus served a similar function under Abraham. Even though slaves, they were given this responsibility because they were found trustworthy and competent.

In this, Paul is equating Israel to being under such a guardian and a steward. The right to the inheritance belonged to them, but they were guided under the guardian until they became of rightful age. They were kept under such care until they had been shown that the law was insufficient to save them. Until that point, the law was intended to keep them in check and to show them how sinful sin really is.

At the coming of Christ, these caretakers were no longer needed. Instead, by faith in Christ, they would become recipients of God's promises and they would have full rights within the house.

Life application: The law is shown time and time again to be a mere steppingstone in the process of redemptive history. It served its purpose, and it was fulfilled in Christ. At that time, its purpose had been served and it was set aside. Now, by faith alone in Christ alone, all become rightful heirs of the promise. Don't be duped into believing you must observe the law. It is a step back to bondage.

Heavenly Father, thank You for the wonderful life of blessing and joy that You have given us. Even those who haven't called on You still receive Your many gracious gifts of life, love, yummy food, and good times with family and friends. For those who know You as Father, we do so with an extra bonus... the greatest of all. We have been given the blessing of life-eternal through Christ our Lord. No matter what comes that gives us grief, nothing can truly steal our joy. Thank You for our sure and certain hope! Amen.

Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world. Galatians 4:3

Paul has been speaking of the heir of an estate who is, until a certain point, no different than a slave within the house as far as authority and needing instruction is concerned. He may be the master of all, but he needs to be instructed, just as a slave does, in every step of his life. Paul now shows that his words were a metaphor for those who have not yet come to Christ. And so, he says, "Even so we..."

The "we" is speaking of Jews under the law, but it is not limited to that. He is also speaking of the Gentiles who lived under their own systems of religion within the confines of the world. Each group was deficient in understanding what was needed to be right with God as Christians. In this state, "when we were children" is a time of being in bondage. Whether it is Jews under the law, or Gentiles without Christ, the bondage existed, and the bondage is sin.

The law didn't take care of the sin problem, it merely highlighted it. Were it not for the provision of mercy within the law, meaning the Day of Atonement, there would be no hope for those under the law. As the Day of Atonement was a day of faith, then their annual covering was not of works of the law, but of trust in God for mercy. Only in Christ is that realized. The same is true with Jew or Gentile.

And so, in that previous state, all "were in bondage under the elements of the world." The word for elements is *stoicheion*. It means "properly, *fundamentals*, like with the *basic components* of a philosophy, structure, etc.; (figuratively) '*first principles*,' like the basic fundamentals of Christianity" (HELPS Word Studies).

It further refers to "the *rudiments* with which mankind . . . were *indoctrinated* (before the time of Christ), i.e. the elements of religious training or the ceremonial precepts common alike to the worship of Jews and of Gentiles" (J. Thayer).

Both Jew and Gentile had worldly systems in that they did not transcend this world. Each participated in ritual sacrifices. Each had certain feast days. Each had systems which only pointed to spiritual and heavenly things. It doesn't matter that the law was given by God and that the other religions were of man, they both fell under the same worldly types of workings.

It is for this reason that Paul uses the same term, *stoicheion*, to speak of these systems in a negative light in Colossians 2:8 and 2:20. In those verses, it is referring to any such worldly system - whether law or Gentile religion. The only difference is that the law actually pointed to Christ. Other than that, it was still only a type and a shadow.

If these things, even those under the law, are "worldly" then they need to be put aside when the "heavenly" and "spiritual" truly comes. In Christ, they are realized.

Life application: The Bible is about the redemption of man. How sad it is that people try to convince others that they need to do something which is of this world in order to be redeemed! Christ, the heavenly Man, is the way for us to be reconciled to God. Put away works of the law and be reconciled to God through Christ Jesus. Call on Him today!

Heavenly Father, it is a marvelous day because it is a day in Your presence. When things happen around us that seem confusing or disheartening, we can still find joy and a sense of peace when we turn to You. Is our hope in a sound economy? That's temporary at best. Is our joy in an expensive house? That can go up in a blaze of fire. Is contentment to be found in another person? Their heart could stop in a ... in a heartbeat. No. Nothing of

this world can bring full contentment. Only from You is there joy everlasting. And so, every day is a marvelous day when it is in Your presence. Amen!

But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, Galatians 4:4

This is a verse filled with wonder and delight concerning the eternal councils of God and the marvelous plan of the ages which has been slowly realized in the stream of human history. It helps us to understand the concept of progressive revelation.

This is a doctrine which tells us that God slowly and methodically reveals His will to man concerning the process of redemption. He revealed the first explicit hints of it in Genesis 3:15. Since that time, He has revealed a bit more at key points in history - all pointing to the coming Christ.

Understanding this, Paul now says, "But..." This is in contrast to the words of the previous verse which said, "...when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world." Of this contrasting thought, Charles Ellicott states, "That which was predetermined in the counsels of God as the right and proper time when the whole course of previous preparation both for Jew and Gentile was complete."

It was at this exact moment in history, when the right time for the Dispensation of Grace was ready to be revealed, that Paul says, "...the fullness of the time had come." The law had served its purpose. Those under the law had been taught their lesson concerning their need for something else.

They would be properly directed to an understanding of their need for Christ. Those without the law would likewise be ready to understand what Christ had done within the law. The time had come for the world to learn this new part of God's unfolding plan of redemption.

And so "God sent forth His Son." The word for "sent forth" is *exapostelló*. God sent out from Himself His Son. This is described by the apostle John at the beginning of His gospel—

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." John 1:1

Jesus was with God, and God sent Himself forth in order to reveal Himself to the world. In both John 1:1, and in Paul's words now, the pre-existence of Christ is taken as an axiom. He always existed; He is not a created being. Paul further describes this remarkable event in Philippians 2 –

"Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, ⁶ who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, ⁷ but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, *and* coming in the likeness of men."
-Philippians 2:5-7

Christ came from God and entered into the stream of humanity, being "born of a woman." This same general terminology was used when speaking of John the Baptist in Matthew 11:11 –

"Assuredly, I say to you, among those born of women there has not risen one greater than John the Baptist; but he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he."

Because of this, Paul is referring in this clause not to His deity, but to His humanity. Though fully God, having come from God, He is also fully Man, having come through the stream of humanity. But to ensure that a full understanding of Christ's deity is not overlooked, it needs to be noted that the same word for "sent forth" is used again in Galatians 4:6 when speaking of the Holy Spirit –

"And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, 'Abba, Father!'"

Bible scholar Bengel notes that, "What that means is evident from the train of thought in this passage, for we have received first adoption, then the Spirit of adoption. Therefore Christ Himself is not the Son of God, merely because He was sent and anointed by the Father."

In other words, the deity of Christ cannot be called into question. Through Christ, we are adopted children of God. Because of this adoption, we are then granted the Spirit of adoption, thus sealing our new status in Christ. Jesus was sent from God; the Holy Spirit is sent from God. Each performs His role as determined by the Godhead. In other words, the concept of the Trinity is seen in what is being relayed to us.

And yet, though fully God, Christ's humanity is likewise not to be diminished in our theology. He was born of a woman, and he was also "born under the law." The very law that God gave to the people of Israel is the same law which Christ was born under. He was, in essence, born subservient to the law.

Israel demonstrated that the law could not save them, and that they needed something else. As Christ was born within the people of Israel and under that same law, then what would be the outcome? Paul will explain the situation in the next verse.

Life application: The deity of Christ, the humanity of Christ, and the nature of the Godhead - meaning the Trinity - are all tied up in the theology of the Bible. To dismiss any of these precepts leads directly down the heresy highway. Be sure to accept the record of the Bible as it stands. Jesus Christ is fully God, fully Man, and the second member of the Godhead.

How can I find my way back to You, O God? You dwell in eternity, and I am here in the stream of time. I can't go back and undo the things I have done, and so an infinite chasm exists between us. But then Jesus...! He came out from You and so time cannot contain or restrain Him. He can put His infinite hand out to You, and He can put His finite hand upon me. The bridge is realized; the expanse has been traversed; reconciliation is made! Thank You, O God, for Jesus who makes all things new. Amen.

...to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons. Galatians 4:5

Giving the full thought of this sentence will help provide context -

"But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, ⁵ to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons."

Paul has been speaking of the purpose of giving the law and how it is not some type of replacement to the promises made to Abraham and his seed. Instead, it was given as a tutor to lead us to Christ. At the right moment, Christ came "to redeem those who were under the law."

Redemption from the law was necessary because, as he has already shown, "...as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse" (verse 3:10). This is because one must fulfill the law perfectly; something no one is capable of doing.

Further, he showed "that no one is justified by the law in the sight of God is evident, for 'the just shall live by faith'" (verse 3:11). Because of this, Christ came in order to redeem us from the power of the law and from the curse it brings. He explained how this was accomplished in verses 3:13, 14. And the reason for accomplishing this is so "that we might receive the adoption as sons."

The logical order of what occurs is redemption from the law followed by adoption as sons into the messianic body; Christ being "the firstborn among many brethren" (Romans 8:29). The knowledge of sin, and the penalty for committing sin, came about through the law. Through adoption, release from the power of the law, and immunity from the penalty of sin is realized.

It should be noted that being received as adopted sons implies a first-time entrance into son-ship, not a receiving back as a son. In other words, the parable of Luke 15 concerning the prodigal son is not what Paul is referring to here. It is through faith in Christ that we are brought into the family of God. Adoption apart from faith in the promises of God is not possible. It is another indication that the law was unable to save.

Life application: If we had to be redeemed from the law in order to be adopted as sons, then why would we insert (or re-insert) deeds of the law after becoming sons? The two thoughts are contradictory. We, by faith in Christ's accomplished work (plus nothing), are saved unto eternal life.

Lord God, it is with gratitude and a feeling of complete unworthiness that I come to You with my daily needs and requests. And yet, it is with a sense of boldness that I can do so! This isn't because I merit a moment in Your presence, but because of the work of Christ. Through Him, I can come boldly to Your throne of grace and state my heart's desire to You. Thank You for access to Your great throne. Thank You for Jesus my Lord. Amen.

And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, "Abba, Father!" Galatians 4:6

As noted in 4:5, the logical order is redemption and then adoption. For those who have been redeemed, God includes them in His family. What would be the purpose of redeeming a person and then leaving them under the very law they were redeemed from? Instead, we are adopted as sons into a new economy. This is Paul's logical argument to the Galatians. And because we are adopted, something wonderful is the result.

He says, "...because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts." The word "because" indicates a result; one thing logically follows after another. As sons, the logical result is that we receive the Spirit of Christ into our hearts. Christ is the Son of God. He was able to lovingly call out to His Father as a Son. Now, because we are adopted as sons, we too are enabled to call out in this same filial manner.

Does this mean that we will be free from life's trials? Does this mean that we will be kept from harm, sadness, or pain? The answer to these questions is "No." What it does mean is that we can come to God in good times or bad with the same courage and hope as Christ did. No matter what we face, we know that the will of our heavenly Father is what is right and appropriate. The only time Jesus is recorded as having called out, "Abba, Father" was during the darkest moment of His life -

"And He said, 'Abba, Father, all things *are* possible for You. Take this cup away from Me; nevertheless, not what I will, but what You *will*.'" Mark 14:36

Like Christ, who shortly after His words to God was beaten and nailed to the cross, we too can have the same courage, resolve, and determination that no matter what occurs, our heavenly Father is with us in it. We too can cry out "Abba, Father!" In both times of joy and in times of great agony, we have a right, and the honor, to pour out our hearts to Him.

The word "crying" is *krázō*. It is "an onomatopoeic term for a raven's piercing cry ("caw"); (figuratively) cry out *loudly* with an *urgent scream* or shriek, using 'inarticulate shouts that express *deep* emotion.'" (HELPS Word Studies).

When we have emotion so deeply confined in our souls that no words can properly express them, it is the Spirit of Christ which calls out for us to His father on our behalf. He suffered the same (and worse) than we suffer. He has been exalted to levels higher than we can know.

In all ways, He is able to empathize with our situation and to call out on our behalf for us. This is the idea of what Paul is saying. Tying this together with Romans 8, we can see the full meaning of what is occurring –

"For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. ¹⁵ For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, 'Abba, Father.'" Romans 8:14, 15

It is we who cry actually, but it is the Spirit of Christ who carries our cry to our heavenly Father. He is the One who makes this wondrous display of son-ship to the God of the universe possible.

Life application: God no less hears our cries to Him than He heard the cries of Christ Jesus there in the Garden of Gethsemane. We are His sons through adoption and no petition of ours is unheard. Be comforted in this as you walk through this world of both joys and trials.

Heavenly Father, Your word tells us that through Christ, we are adopted sons into Your family. We can, even in our darkest moments, call out to You for help in our time of need. Jesus cried out to You "Abba, Father" in the Garden of Gethsemane and You heard. How comforting it is to know that we have the same divine ear listening to our own cries of both joy and anguish. Thank You for the surety we possess that our every prayer is heard by You. Amen.

Therefore you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ. Galatians 4:7

"Therefore" is based on the fact that "God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts." Because of this fact, a change has taken place in each one of us. This is made poignant now because Paul switches from the second person plural (you all) of the previous verse to the 2nd person singular in this verse (you as an individual). Thus, he is making this a personal statement to each recipient of this letter.

As you have received the Spirit of His Son, "you are no longer a slave but a son." A change has taken place. We go from a state of bondage (verse 4:3) to a state of freedom. We are no longer under the yoke of the law, but we have full rights within the house. This doesn't just mean that we can now participate in the family life God has prepared, but that it is an eternal inheritance. This is evidenced by the finishing words, "...and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ."

As God is eternal, and we are heirs of God, then we have been granted His same eternality (Hebrews 9:15). We have an inheritance "incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven" (1 Peter 1:4). Vincent's Word Studies notes the following concerning this inheritance -

"The figure is based upon Roman, not upon Jewish, law. According to Roman law, all the children, sons and daughters, inherited alike. According to Jewish law, the inheritance of

the sons was unequal, and the daughters were excluded, except where there were no male heirs. Thus the Roman law furnished a more truthful illustration of the privileges of Christians."

This is especially evident from Galatians 3:26-28 which says,

"For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. ²⁷ For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. ²⁸ There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus."

Life application: The overall intent of Paul's words should not be overlooked in the analysis of each clause. He is constantly making a contrast between the bondage of the law and the freedom of God which is found in Christ. For those who fail to trust Christ alone for their salvation, they remain in bondage. They have failed the test and remain bound as slaves. They have not become sons of God. Be sure to evaluate yourself. Are you still attempting to be justified by deeds of the law? If so, you are not a true son of God.

Heavenly Father, life is routine and dull at times, it is true. But at those times we can ignore the tedium and concentrate on our relationship with You. As You are the Source of all things, then every good thing we could ever desire lies ahead when we finally stand before You. In anticipation of that day, we can fill our routine moments with thoughts of eternal extravagance! But Lord, help us not to forget You when things are fun and life is full. Help us to always live our lives with You at the forefront of our thoughts. Amen.

But then, indeed, when you did not know God, you served those which by nature are not gods. Galatians 4:8

Paul, addressing the Galatians specifically (he says "you" rather than "we" and the verb is plural) gives them a contrast to what he just said concerning their being sons of God and heirs of God through Christ. Before that time, they "did not know God." At that time, there was no knowledge of the true God and how to serve Him properly.

Like people from any pagan culture, some may have known there was a God who created all things, but they only had the knowledge from general revelation. They had no specific knowledge of Him as the Jews did. For the most part, such people "served those which by nature are not gods." In an attempt to either be reconciled to the God

they were sure existed, or to appease the "gods" they thought controlled their lives and destiny, they "served" idols.

They became slaves to these false gods. They were under a type of bondage to them in that they felt obligated to them through sacrifices, rites, gifts, etc. When they heard and received the gospel of God's grace in Christ, they were freed from these things. They were no longer under bondage, but liberated to serve the true God as sons with the promise of a full inheritance.

From this thought of where they were, and where they had now come to in Christ, Paul will next show where they were heading because of the lies of the Judaizers. He is making a logical defense against the insertion of the Law of Moses into their lives by showing them where they had been in their own lives.

Life application: We all started somewhere in our walk towards true faith in Christ. Some of us were raised in Christian homes and our walk was short and direct to His throne of grace. Others of us traveled long roads of false worship, finally ending at that same marvelous spot.

However we came to Him, we were freed from the ineffective types of worship that permeate both the law and the misdirected worship of false religions. Only in Christ is the true and free expression of worshipping God realized. Why would we want to give up on that and return to something less than what Christ offers?

It sure is a marvelous thing to walk along the path of life and to see the beauty of Your creation, O God. The animals that pop out of the woods, the fish that jump up from the water, the birds which swoop down from the sky, and the little insects which drink up nectar from flowers... all of these things bring us a sense of delight. Thank You for the many wonderful creatures You have put in our path. Each reflects a small portion of Your great wisdom and Your wonderful love for us. Praises to You, O God. Amen.

But now after you have known God, or rather are known by God, how *is it that* you turn again to the weak and beggarly elements, to which you desire again to be in bondage? Galatians 4:9

In response to his previous statement, Paul now directly questions the Galatians. The word, "But" implies a contrast. They did not know God, and at that time they "served those which by nature are not gods." In contrast to this state, he says, "But now after

you have known God..." The word for "known" is not the same as in the previous verse. Instead of ignorance, they have now obtained knowledge concerning God.

And yet, to qualify the thought, he says, "...or rather are known by God." God has testified that He knows those who are His. This sentiment is exactly described by Paul later in his second letter to Timothy –

"Nevertheless the solid foundation of God stands, having this seal: 'The Lord knows those who are His,' and, 'Let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity.'" 2 Timothy 2:19

Paul's qualification of his first words is because it is God who "has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into" their hearts. God has known them and testified to the fact that they are His by the giving of the Spirit. Because of this, they have moved from bondage to freedom.

Now, to show the utterly absurd nature of what they are doing by accepting the premise of the Judaizers and inserting the law into their lives, he asks, "How *is it that* you turn again to the weak and beggarly elements...?"

Paul is incredulous that they would give up on the marvel of being reconciled to God through the grace of Jesus Christ and turn back to the law. The law couldn't save a single Jew in all of their history. It only showed them how sinful their sin was and that they needed something else. Paul spoke of the dilemma of being under the law in Romans 7 –

"For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man. ²³ But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. ²⁴ O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? ²⁵ I thank God—through Jesus Christ our Lord!"

It is this type of dilemma that caused Paul to call the law and its accompanying precepts "weak and beggarly elements." It was ineffective in bringing salvation. In fact, even if someone delighted in the law, all it could do was make them miserable. Further, the more they delighted in it, the more misery it would produce! But Paul notes to them that by turning to the law, it appeared that they "desire again to be in bondage?"

Wasn't freedom in Christ enough? Wasn't the reception of the Spirit sufficient? Did you find bondage that wonderful? Paul is stunned at the situation! If he were alive today, he would continue to be stunned. This pernicious infection is still seen in God's people in

one form or another 2000 years later. Countless souls have said, "Christ's work isn't enough!" In so doing, they disgrace that great and exalted Name.

Life application: The law is annulled; Christ has come and fulfilled it. Trust in Christ, and in Christ alone for your salvation.

Today is the day that You have ordained for us. Whatever happens, O God, help us to consider that You placed us here at this moment in time for Your own sovereign reasons. No matter what happens, help us to remember this and to accept everything that comes our way as a gift from You. Even if difficulty or sadness arises, help us to see Your hand of instruction in it. Nothing happens apart from Your will and so surely we can trust that the day will come out exactly as it should. Thank You for this wonderful assurance! Amen.

You observe days and months and seasons and years. Galatians 4:10

Paul now gets to the heart of what he means by his words of the previous verse concerning being again in bondage. The Judaizers had come in and confused the Galatians into believing that they were to be following Jewish practices. Their lies included the observance of certain appointed calendar events.

The word for "observe" is *paratéreo*. It is a stronger word than simple observance, as if someone were merely curious about how a Passover Seder was conducted. Rather it means, "To observe scrupulously." They were being duped into believing that they had to meticulously follow these calendar events and to follow the practices of them as the Bible details.

The "days" is specifically speaking of weekly Sabbath observances. The Galatians were told that this was the standard for a weekly rest, and they needed to follow it according to the precepts of the law. This heresy has been handed down in aberrant cults such as the 7th Day Adventists. The Hebrew Roots Movement has people observing this as well. Paul is rather clear about this in Romans 14:5, 6 -

"One person esteems *one* day above another; another esteems every day *alike*. Let each be fully convinced in his own mind. ⁶ He who observes the day, observes *it* to the Lord; and he who does not observe the day, to the Lord he does not observe *it*."

"Months" is speaking of the monthly New Moon celebrations mandated for Israel. These are detailed, for example, in Numbers 28:11-15. Again, the Galatians had been fed the crazy idea that they needed to follow this type of observance.

"Seasons" refers to the Feasts of the Lord in Leviticus 23. These included the Passover, the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the Feast of Firstfruits, the Feast of Weeks, the Day of Trumpets, the Day of Atonement, and the Feast of Tabernacles. These are all fulfilled in Christ's first advent, and they are now set aside with the rest of the law.

However, the Galatians (and those who fail to follow proper doctrine even today) are misdirected by the nutty belief that observing these will make us more pleasing to God than Christ's fulfillment of them!

"Years" would specifically be referring to the sabbatical years (every seventh year) and the years of jubilee (every fiftieth year) which are detailed in the law. Again though, Christ had fulfilled the law. In their attempt to appear more righteous than that granted by Christ, the Judaizers (and the heretics who have followed them) pass on their fanatical ideas about following these obsolete observances.

Paul addresses this again specifically in Colossians 2:16, 17 -

"So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths, ¹⁷ which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ."

As he notes there, these things were only a "shadow of things to come." They only pointed forward to Christ. Now we have the fullness of what they only pictured. It is utterly ludicrous to think that anyone could properly observe most of these anyway. There is no temple and thus there is no way they could be properly observed. Thus, it becomes a pick-and-choose type of salvation. The entire premise of following these things is to be rejected.

Life application: If Christ has fulfilled the law, then let us rest in the work of Christ!

I am at peace with my God! There is no fear, no state of apprehension, and no need for me to worry. I have been saved by the precious blood of Christ - a Lamb without spot or blemish. He fulfilled the law for me and now, by an act of faith in His work, I can rest in what He has done. I am free from its constraints, and I rest solely and peacefully in my

sure and grounded hope. The glory that lies ahead is waiting because of His deeds which lie behind me! Thank You, O God, for the life and work of Jesus my Lord. Amen.

I am afraid for you, lest I have labored for you in vain. Galatians 4:11

Paul's words of this verse are a pitiful cry from a disturbed heart, something which has been echoed countless times since by faithful pastors and teachers around the world. Martin Luther goes so far as to say, "These words of Paul breathe tears."

He had labored for the church at Galatia, bringing them to Christ and then instructing them about their new life in Christ. However, the Judaizers had crept in and stolen the hearts of the Galatians away from that simple, beautiful gospel message. This sad note from Paul says nothing about salvation; that is a done deal for those who have received Christ.

Rather, this letter speaks of right doctrine and holding steadfastly to the soundness of that doctrine. If one turns from the truth of the gospel, he will only find himself stuck in bondage. And those who follow after him will never come to a saving knowledge of Christ. Paul's very heart was tied up in what was occurring in Galatia, and he felt almost helpless concerning the situation.

If they didn't see reason, all of his efforts would have been "in vain." However, those in Galatia were not the only ones that Paul stressed over. Like a father tending to his children, he felt the same concern for his other churches. Two prominent examples are -

"Do all things without complaining and disputing, ¹⁵ that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, ¹⁶ holding fast the word of life, so that I may rejoice in the day of Christ that I have not run in vain or labored in vain." Philippians 2:14-16

"For this reason, when I could no longer endure it, I sent to know your faith, lest by some means the tempter had tempted you, and our labor might be in vain."
-1 Thessalonians 3:5

Any decent, caring pastor will agonize over the loss of any of his flock to bad doctrine. He will shake his head and ask, "How could this have happened." Even if much effort is placed in the training of his flock, the weakness in some individuals cries out for bondage and someone to control them. They would rather be in chains to the law and

under the harsh thumb of legalists than to live freely in the simplicity of the gospel of Christ.

Life application: If you have a pastor who truly cares about the doctrine you accept, you should be grateful for that, and also understand that he probably spends much time in anguish over you when you suffer through ills, trials, or even the self-inflicted wounds of bad doctrine.

Heavenly Father, You have placed people in our lives who give us instruction in Your word. For this, we are so grateful. The Bible is big, it is often complicated, and it speaks at times in styles and forms which can be hard to understand. And yet, You have enlightened our teachers to be able to grasp what is going on and to then put its truths into a simple form for us to understand. Thank You for these faithful teachers and preachers who help us with Your precious word. Amen.

Brethren, I urge you to become like me, for I *became* like you. You have not injured me at all. Galatians 4:12

There are a multitude of interpretations of what Paul is stating here, but it really shouldn't be that confusing. He is a Jew, and he has been telling the Galatians that the law cannot save anyone. Instead, he gave several logical reasons why the law was introduced.

He then went on to show that its purpose had been served and it was nullified through the work of Christ. He understood this and gave up on the law as a means of obtaining righteousness and being justified before God. He is now asking them to do the same.

"Brethren" means that they are, in fact, brethren. They have not lost their salvation if they were saved, but they sure will lose their joy as they live out their lives in bondage under the law. Further, those who come after them will never come to a saving knowledge of Christ because they will be trained in works and not in faith.

"I urge you to become like me." Paul is shouting out to them, "I gave up on the law. I counted my Jewish-ness as nothing. My life as a Pharisee seeking righteousness under the law is now behind me. I live for Christ and place my life and my fate in His capable hands alone."

"For I *became* like you." Paul had given up all of those things he once boasted in. Instead, he notes that "I took up life with Gentiles and have lived as one not under the

law. I showed you that through faith in what Jesus did, you are reconciled to God. As I was like you, then why would you try to change now? You received the Spirit in the condition that you were in as a Gentile. Be pleased to live your life as one now."

"You have not injured me at all." Of this clause, Vincent's Word Studies notes -

"This translation misses the force of the aorist, and conveys a wrong impression, that Paul, up to this time, had received no wrong at the hands of the Galatians. This was not true. The reference is to his earlier relations with the Galatians, and is explained by Galatians 4:13, Galatians 4:14. Rend. ye did not injure me at all. Ye did not injure me then, do not do so now."

Paul is telling them that by placing themselves under the law, it would become a source of true pain for them. He is asking them to not do this insane thing and take on the yoke of bondage which Christ had paid the price to remove.

Life application: If Christ fulfilled the law, paying its price in full, then our taking on the law now can only be a giant affront to Him. It is saying, "I don't trust that what You did was sufficient to save me. I will establish my own righteousness apart from Your work. I don't need what You offer." What a slap in the face of the Lord!

Lord God, Your word shows that Jesus fulfilled the law. At His death, He cried out, "It is finished." The work was complete; He embodied the law which was set against us. Now, should we say to You, "I don't trust that what Jesus did was sufficient to save me. I will establish my own righteousness apart from His work. I don't need what He offers."? What a slap in Your face! May we never be so perverse. Help us to trust in the work of Christ alone, apart from deeds of the law! Amen.

You know that because of physical infirmity I preached the gospel to you at the first.
Galatians 4:13

Paul now brings to memory the reason for his having "preached the gospel to" them "at the first." His first visit is recorded in Acts 16:6, and a second visit was made in Acts 18:23. His bringing up that first visit is his way of getting them to recall what it was like to have been brought into the body of Christ, and the surrounding circumstances which occurred at that time. In doing this, he is trying to get them to see the contrast in how he handled things in comparison to how the Judaizers were handling them now.

And so, he first reminds them that they were fully aware of the fact that his preaching the gospel to them was "because of physical infirmity." Scholars look to a host of possibilities as to what he means by this. Some find it referring to the contemptible nature of his presence. He was not a skilled orator and he was not flashy in the conduct of his life. In contrast, the Judaizers would be well-skilled in their presentation. Thus, they could compare themselves as superior to "that wretched Paul."

Others see this as referring to his sufferings for the gospel in general. He was beaten, persecuted, and maligned. This is what drove him into the area of Galatia and brought the gospel to them.

Another scholar sees the infirmity not in Paul, but in the Galatians. They knew nothing of the law or of Christ, and so Paul thus accommodated himself in preaching the gospel to them in a manner which they would understand. His approach concerning salvation by grace through faith came in a simple and understandable form. In contrast would be the Judaizers who were forcing the law back on them.

Another option is that Paul suffered an affliction in his body which necessitated his stopping at Galatia to recover from it or to be assisted through it. This final thought seems the most likely based on the coming verses. They continue in this same line of reasoning, and so there seems to be no reason to suggest it is one of the other possibilities.

Life application: Sometimes when we are helping a Christian who is struggling with turning to legalism, we may be able to take them back to their own beginnings with Christ. If we can get them to remember what their initial conversion was like, then they can begin to rightly process what it means to be saved. Too much head knowledge in one area (which may lead to legalism) can often overwhelm the truth of the basic doctrines of Christ (such as salvation by grace through faith).

Who is it that is most blessed of all? Surely it is found in those who have been forgiven of the stain of sin in their lives through the shed blood of Christ! Heavenly Father, it is nice to have good things, a comfortable life, and the hope of a fun retirement some day in the future. But those things are so temporary, and their coming about is tenuous at best. But the surety of an eternal hope because of Christ Jesus is as certain as the ground beneath our feet. We who have been redeemed by Him stand on the solid Rock! We cannot be moved from our eternal hope of glory! Amen.

And my trial which was in my flesh you did not despise or reject, but you received me as an angel of God, *even* as Christ Jesus. Galatians 4:14

There is a dispute between manuscripts as to whether Paul's words actually say, "my trial" or "your trial." Assuming that it is "my trial," then he is acknowledging that his weakness and his infirmity, which was in his physical body, were not to be considered by the Galatians as points of rejecting him. They overlooked this failing aspect of his humanity, and they responded in a completely different way than might otherwise be expected.

If it is correctly rendered "your trial," it doesn't change the overall outcome of the verse, but it would mean that Paul's weakness was actually a trial to the Galatians. He was probably even burdensome to them because of the care that he needed. And yet they responded favorably to him, assuming all of the burdens that the affliction brought about.

Either way, the Galatians "did not despise or reject" him because of his bodily afflictions. Instead, they received him "as an angel of God." An angel of God doesn't have such afflictions. Rather, they are heavenly beings and would bring a blessing rather than a trial. Instead of rejecting Paul, they accepted him in a grand manner, as if he were such a heavenly being.

But even more, he adds to the superlative nature of his treatment by next stating, "...*even* as Christ Jesus." Their care of Paul was so tender and affectionate that he looks back on it as worthy of the treatment someone would have afforded to even the Lord Himself. Although under a different dispensation, and under a different context, the words of Christ Jesus in Matthew 10:40 are reflected here -

"He who receives you receives Me, and he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me."

Finally, this verse shows us the superiority of Christ over the angels, a thought which is explicitly stated in Hebrews 1:4-

"having become so much better than the angels, as He has by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they."

Life application: How is it that we treat those who carry the message of Christ? Do we treat them like anyone else, overlooking their plight when they are in a state of

weakness or need? Paul said to his protégé Timothy that we are to, "Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and doctrine."

The Galatians treated Paul this way even before he was considered a spiritual authority. They received him in with gladness and then received his message with joy. As believing Christians, let us remember to treat our fellow Christians as worthy of all respect. Further, let us remember to doubly honor those who share their knowledge of Christ with us.

Lord God, how easy it is for us to tear down our fellow believers over minor points of doctrine! Give us a heart to treat them properly and overlook their minor failings. Where their doctrine is wrong, help us to gently correct them and lead them onto the right path in that area, but not to be demeaning of them when You have already accepted them. With this, You will surely be pleased because it is what Your word asks of us. Help us in this, O God. Amen.

What then was the blessing you *enjoyed*? For I bear you witness that, if possible, you would have plucked out your own eyes and given them to me. Galatians 4:15

Paul now asks a simple question based on the previous verse. He had just noted that he was received "as an angel of God, *even* as Christ Jesus." They were overjoyed at Paul's coming and the good news that he bore, telling them of the forgiveness of sin through the Person and work of Christ. But with the coming of the Judaizers, this had changed. These false teachers had twisted the gospel, and they had torn the Galatians' sense of joy towards Paul away.

And so he asks, "What then was the blessing you *enjoyed*?" The word "what" is translated by other texts as "where," and seems to convey the idea better. They had a sense of joy in Paul, which had now departed. In other words, it is not that joy itself had been taken from them, just joy in Paul.

He was the messenger of the gospel, and they were blessed when he was there. Now, it is as if he had become an enemy to them. This is seen in his next words, "For I bear you witness that, if possible, you would have plucked out your own eyes and given them to me."

Paul came to them first "because of physical infirmity." At that time, and upon reception of the good news, they would have done anything for him. They were simply overjoyed

to have him among them. In order to show the level of love that they felt for him, he reminds them of their willingness to care for him, saying, "...you would have plucked out your own eyes and given them to me."

These words can be taken in one of two ways. The first is that this is an idiom showing that they would have given to him even their most precious body parts as an offering. The eyes are used this way elsewhere in the Bible. The other possibility is that Paul's malady was an affliction of the eyes and so he was saying that they were so grateful to him that if they could, they would give him their good eyes in place of his failing eyes.

What is probable is that both are correct. It is true that the eyes are most precious. It is also true, from several other passages in the New Testament that Paul appears to have had an affliction of the eyes. While standing in the same room as the high priest, he claimed he didn't know who he was.

He is guided by others in the book of Acts, a sign that he probably had bad eyes. He signed his letters with unusually large handwriting, something someone with bad eyes would do. Such clues point to Paul's eyes as being a source of affliction.

Whether as an idiom, or as a statement of heartfelt intent, Paul reminds them of the joy they once had for him because of the message he carried. Now that message had been tainted and the joy they held for the messenger had been robbed away.

Life application: People get upset and leave churches over the pettiest of issues. They will throw away years of sound instruction and effort by the pastor over one little slip. They forget that he is merely a human doing his best, but still fallible. And they forget that they too are full of failings that he has had to deal with, usually at the expense of his own personal life. The lesson of the Galatians is one which is still being learned today, and it is a sad one.

Lord God, if we are to trust in those we have helped in the past, expecting them to be grateful for it, we would be wrong. People will use one another up until they are spent, and then they will depart for a new and fresh place to cling onto and suck dry. Even close friends are easily willing to call one another "enemy." People will leave their church over a petty issue, forgetting the many times they have been helped and supported in the past. How faithless we are! Thank You, O God that our hope is not in other people, but in Jesus Christ our Lord. He is ever faithful, His ear is ever attentive, and His promises are guaranteed. What a firm foundation! Thank You for our Jesus. Amen.

Have I therefore become your enemy because I tell you the truth? Galatians 4:16

When Paul had first visited them, they displayed amazing and wonderful affection on him. This was noted in his words of the previous two verses. Now however, it is as if he had become an enemy to them. Vincent's Word Studies notes that the word "enemy" is given "in an active sense, as is shown by the next clause. Not passive, an object of hatred, which would have the pronoun in the dative."

In other words, it wasn't as if they hated him, but that they looked at him as someone fighting against them. They had been duped by the Judaizers into believing that his gospel message was false, even a heresy. How sad it is to think that it is they, the ones who would so pervert the grace of Christ, who were teaching heresy.

Unfortunately, this is exactly how false teachers, and the leaders of aberrant cults, work. They divide and conquer; they find an enemy in every good teacher; and they twist the truth, stating that what is incorrect is what is necessary for right living. In Paul's case, they warned against him, not because he was a false teacher, but because he told the truth.

What is so immensely sad is that unlike the Galatians, we now have the truth of the gospel written down for us. If someone is confused about which teacher is telling the truth, all they need to do is pick up the Bible and read it. The answers are there. But even this approach is called into question. Paul's words are maligned. Sometimes, people claim that his words were manipulated by an ancient conspiracy and that they are not what he originally wrote.

By some, it is said that his words can only be properly understood when taken from a Jewish perspective. By others, it is said that the Greek translation has been corrupted. On and on the lies go, deceiving people into believing that the law must be adhered to in one form or another. But even Peter warned against this for those willing to listen –

"Therefore, beloved, looking forward to these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, without spot and blameless;¹⁵ and consider *that* the longsuffering of our Lord *is* salvation—as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you,¹⁶ as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable *people* twist to their own destruction, as *they do* also the rest of the Scriptures." 2 Peter 3:14-16

Life application: Pick up the Bible and read it for yourself. Accept the truth that God has not allowed His word to be so utterly corrupted that it can no longer be trusted. Stop listening to Judaizers who are filled with wickedness and lies concerning the grace of God in Christ. Trust Christ, not your own worthless attempt at pleasing God through an obsolete law.

Lord God Almighty, help us to reject the utterly shameful notion that we must adhere to precepts of the law which were already fulfilled in Christ in order to be pleasing to You. Help us to trust, with the simple faith of a child, that we stand justified apart from the law by receiving the honorable and completed work of Your Son on our behalf. May we never be so perverse as to think we must add to what He did. And thank You that what He did is all-sufficient. Hallelujah to Christ our Lord! Amen.

They zealously court you, but for no good; yes, they want to exclude you, that you may be zealous for them. Galatians 4:17

Paul has been speaking on the same subject throughout the entire epistle. A group of self-serving miscreants that we today call "Judaizers" had come in and perverted the pure gospel which Paul had presented to the Galatians. They had joyfully accepted Paul's words and were adopted into the family of God, having received His Spirit in the process. Now things had changed.

This group of self-serving people had arrived on the scene and affected the minds of the Galatians to the point where they were now inserting precepts of the law into their lives instead of relying on the grace that had saved them in the first place. And so Paul, referring once again to these false teachers says, "They zealously court you." The word is *zélóó* and it is rightly translated as "zealously." There was fervency in their efforts of courting the Galatians. However, their zeal was "for no good."

Instead, their goal was that "they want to exclude you." In order to bring them into bondage to their false teaching, they worked to draw them away from the true gospel. Thus, they would be excluded from fellowship with true believers, excluded from further proper doctrine and training by Paul and the other apostles, and excluded from rewards for faithful adherence to Christ. Only harm could result from this infection which was brought in by these false teachers.

Instead of building them up and making them zealous for the gospel, for right doctrine, and for the grace of Christ, they courted them that they "may be zealous for them." Paul uses the same word, *zélóó*, in order to show the misguided nature of what had occurred.

The false teachers had selfish motivations, just like any cult does. The intent was to get hearts and minds off of Christ and the gospel and towards their own twisted and perverted selves.

It is unfortunate that some translations use two different words to translate the one word *zéloó*. In doing so, they miss the contrasting stress of Paul's words of this verse. One such example is from the KJV –

"They zealously affect you, *but* not well; yea, they would exclude you, that ye might affect them."

As you can see, the full force of Paul's intent is diminished through such an unhappy translation.

Life application: It doesn't take long to recognize an aberrant cult if looked at from objective eyes. They have several common traits such as claiming exclusive knowledge of the truth. They twist and manipulate Scripture for their own agenda. They deride those who would dare question their authority, etc.

Unfortunately, when people lack sound doctrine, they wind up in cults because they had no firm footing on which to stand. Paul's letter is intended to correct the faulty thinking of the Galatians. We now have it as a part of the full counsel of God. Be sure to read the Bible, study it, and apply its precepts properly to your life.

It truly is wonderful to share in Your goodness from day to day, O God. Even when times bring nothing but frustration, You are still there to talk to and to open our hearts to. Countless souls have gone before us, and many of them have had very difficult lives. Some have even been martyred for their faith, but You were there with them. And we know You are here with us as well. Thank You for the assurance we have because of our faith in Christ Jesus. Amen.

But it is good to be zealous in a good thing always, and not only when I am present with you. Galatians 4:18

In the previous verse, it was noted that the Judaizers zealously courted the Galatians, but it was not for a good purpose. Rather, their intent was "to exclude you, that you may be zealous for them." Now Paul acknowledges that zeal "in a good thing" is always good. There is an emphasis on "always." He does not want to diminish what is good while correcting what is bad.

It should be noted that "zealous" is in the passive voice. This is then speaking of zealousness towards the Galatians, not their zeal. In other words, if someone is zealous for them in a good way, then that is always good; however, when someone is zealous for them as the Judaizers were, then it is not a good thing.

As an example, if someone is zealous to convert someone who believes in the deity of Christ into a person who believes that Christ is merely a created being, then their zeal is bad. However, if someone is zealous to have their students properly handle the doctrines of the Bible and to grow into sound Christian maturity, then their zeal is good.

Paul acknowledges that even if it wasn't him, in such a case it would still be good. This is indicated by the words, "...and not only when I am present with you."

He is not jealously guarding the Galatians only for himself. Instead, he is jealously guarding them for the sake of the truth. Any true teacher will receive his approval. The reason he is saying this to them is to show that he isn't just jealous because they have found a new group of people to follow, but because the group they have chosen to follow are a bunch of heretics. As a father to his children, he is heartbroken over this.

The Judaizers want them to fall under the Law of Moses; they want them in bondage, and they want to control their very lives. Paul wants them to be free in Christ, held captive by His grace, and filled with joy in the Holy Spirit. To him, it doesn't matter who leads them down that second path, as long as it is the correct path.

Life application: Never underestimate the love of a pastor for those he teaches. His zeal towards their souls may seem as if he is overly zealous of protecting them, but it is better to be in that position than to be led down Apostasy Avenue by those who would steal them away into bondage. Be patient with your pastor if he is exuberant about your doctrine. Understand that if he is sound in his theology, he is looking out for your best interest.

Thank You, O God, for the faithful pastors, preachers, and teachers that You send into our lives. It may be a chance turn of the dial on the radio, or it may be a regular Sunday trip to church, but when Your word is properly explained and carefully handled by faithful men of God, it is a blessing to our souls. Please heap an additional blessing of joy upon them today. Amen.

My little children, for whom I labor in birth again until Christ is formed in you,
Galatians 4:19

In the previous verse, Paul said, "...it is good to be zealous in a good thing always, and not only when I am present with you." As noted, the word "zealous" was in the passive voice. The Galatians allowed themselves to be the object of the zeal of others, but in the case of the Judaizers, it was not a good thing. Now Paul was in need of reworking everything he had already accomplished for them. He was directing his zeal for the gospel to them all over again.

In order to show them that this is of the highest importance to him, he begins this verse with the words *tekna mou*, or "my little children." This is the only time he uses this term in his writings, but it is something John wrote several times. It indicates the dearest of affections, as if speaking to one's own little children. Certainly, this is how Paul viewed the Galatians as he had "begotten" them in the gospel, just as he had the Corinthians (see 1 Corinthians 4:15).

Now, he was in the process of labor for them once again. He was forced to expend his energies in redirecting their wayward doctrine. And yet, he acknowledged in the previous chapter that they had already received the Spirit and were baptized into Christ. Therefore, his words are speaking of the birth of understanding and obedience to the gospel of grace. This is evident by the words, "...until Christ is formed in you."

To make a comparable worldly example, we could look at a child who is from one culture. He is adopted into a family and learns the ways of that family. After a certain amount of time, he goes to school back in the land he came from. While there, he takes up the same habits that he had when he was young, forgetting the culture and refinement of his adopted home. Upon returning home, the family has to re-educate him on his position within the family, and proper conduct in the land of his inheritance.

This child never stopped being the son of his adopted parents, but he did lose his understanding of what it means to be a child in that family. This is the case concerning the Galatians. They had not lost any of their inheritance, but they had failed to be formed into the image of Christ. Paul's job was now to labor, once again, in that process.

Life application: Pity the poor pastor who loves his flock so much that he agonizes over those who walk away from the congregation and get swept up into crummy doctrine! If anything can be done about it, he will labor intensively to restore them to that which is proper. If nothing can be done for them, he will carry the memory of what happened and spend his years rethinking what he could have done differently.

Precious Lord, You have a good plan and a purpose for each of Your creatures. If we will simply look to You for guidance and instruction, You will be there for us. But You have also given us free will to choose what is right or to follow whatever wayward avenue we desire. Grant us the wisdom to turn our eyes to You and to take the narrow path of pursuing Christ all the days of our lives. And for those who choose otherwise, hear our prayers for them. Reveal Yourself to them while You may be found by them. Amen.

I would like to be present with you now and to change my tone; for I have doubts about you. Galatians 4:20

The words of the previous verse help to explain what Paul is relaying here. Taken together they say –

"My little children, for whom I labor in birth again until Christ is formed in you,²⁰ I would like to be present with you now and to change my tone; for I have doubts about you."

He is addressing the Galatians as his own precious children, struggling with the notion that they had departed from the sound presentation and reception of Christ which occurred at their time of infancy. As mere babes, they responded to the gospel and were adopted into the family of God. Now, despite that exalted status, they needed to have the lessons of that infancy taught to them once again.

The letter has been written because of this sad state. But a letter is a one-way transmission of thought. Without actually being present, he would have no idea if his words were accepted or not. Instead of writing, he says, "I would like to be present with you now and to change my tone." By speaking to them and looking into their eyes, he could gauge if his words were having any effect. By hearing their questions and responses to his words, they could engage in calm dialogue, as a father with his children.

However, without such interaction, his tone needed to be direct and forceful. His letter contains words of doctrine and instruction, and there could be no room for a soft tone. And those same words carry the same sound doctrine and instruction down to us today. They do not waffle, nor are they ambiguous.

The law is set aside through the work of Christ. Any person who comes along and teaches that some or all of the law must be followed is to be rejected outright as a heretic. Without knowing if his words were getting through, he finishes with, "...for I have doubts about you."

Were the Galatians paying heed? Had they gone too far into the false teachings of the Judaizers to be rescued? He didn't know. Because of this, the doubts about them swirled around in his mind. Now, having told them this, he will go back to a direct and precise discourse concerning the law. He will use metaphors in this discourse, but they are metaphors which are clearly evident and easily understood.

Life application: Paul's concern for the Galatians has been seen ten thousand times since in faithful pastors and preachers who have watched those of his flock stray away from sound doctrine. It is a heartbreaking thing to have the meticulous effort of Bible studies and carefully prepared sermons get thrown away over a nutty fad or a crazy notion concerning Christianity.

If your pastor holds fast to the word of God, be grateful for that and follow his example. One cannot know God properly without knowing Jesus, and one cannot know Jesus without knowing the Bible. Stand fast on this precious gift, and honor the pastor who holds it in high esteem.

Heavenly Father, from time to time we need to return to the basics. And the most basic tenet of all is that we cannot know You apart from how You have revealed Yourself. As Jesus is the One who fully reveals You to us, and as the Bible is our testimony concerning Him, we can't know You without knowing our Bible. How often we try to do an end around the Bible though! It requires real effort to sit down and read it. It is so much easier to make things up or have our ears tickled by someone who makes things up. Forgive us of this, and give us the right reason to pursue You through Your superior word... that word which reveals Jesus to us. Amen.

Tell me, you who desire to be under the law, do you not hear the law? Galatians 4:21

Paul now breaks into a completely new line of thought without any sort of introduction. He has shown his exasperation at what has transpired between the false Judaizers and the believers in Galatia. Now, in order to get them to understand exactly where followers of the law stand in relation to believers in Christ, he will introduce an allegorical interpretation of life under the law in contrast to life in Christ.

In order to call their attention to what is coming; he cries out with his pen, "Tell me, you who desire to be under the law." The believers who had been duped into the lies of the false teachers concerning adherence to the Law of Moses are who he is referring to.

They had gone from the natural path of trusting in the work of Christ in fulfillment of the law to a desire "to be under the law." Most likely, they were observing certain days according to the law, they were regulating their diet according to the law, and they were contemplating being circumcised according to the law.

However, Paul has some instruction for them coming directly from the law which they had not thought through. And so, he says, "...do you not hear the law?" His thoughts will be taken directly from the Torah, the five books of Moses, and they will enlighten the Galatians to a spiritual truth contained in the law itself. During this instruction, he will then cite a later prophet who lived under the law, Isaiah, in order to properly interpret the spiritual message found in the law.

In following this pattern, Paul will show the supremacy of the New Covenant in Christ's blood. He will further show what the consequences of adhering to the law after the coming of Christ will result in.

Life application: When reading the Bible, Scripture should interpret Scripture. Paul shows us this many times in his writings. However, context must be maintained, or a false sense of what Scripture instructs may result. Be careful to always look at the context of passages.

Above all, be sure to evaluate everything in Scripture from the lens of Jesus Christ. He is the Subject of all of Scripture. Therefore, evaluating the Old Testament through what He has done will allow us to properly see the meaning of those often difficult to interpret passages.

Lord God, in our moments of trial and despair we come to You with our eyes filled with tears and our hearts longing for relief. But in the times when all is good, You are often not even a thought passing through the back of our mind. Help us to not be as unfaithful as this. Help us to consider You first at all times, talking to You, pursuing You, and cherishing Your presence in both the good times and in the times of distress. With this, You will certainly be pleased. This prayer is offered in Jesus' precious name. Amen.

For it is written that Abraham had two sons: the one by a bondwoman, the other by a freewoman. Galatians 4:22

"For it is written." Paul goes directly to Scripture to make his case concerning justification by faith instead of justification by works of the law. The word "For" shows that Scripture actually has an example that speaks out concerning this issue which has

brought such contention to the church at Galatia. Therefore, the word "For" is in response to the question of verse 21, "Do you not hear the law?"

In going to Scripture, he cites an example from a time long before the giving of the law; to the time of the great father of the Hebrew faith, Abraham. In Genesis it is recorded "that Abraham had two sons."

These two sons were Ishmael first and then Isaac. The fact that Abraham had other sons later is completely ignored because it is irrelevant to what he is going to say. The Bible focuses specifically on these two sons, both in Genesis and now, in order to demonstrate spiritual truths for us to consider and learn from.

Of these two sons, one was by "a bondwoman." This was Ishmael. He was born to Hagar, the Egyptian maidservant of Sarah, Abraham's wife. She was not free, but rather a slave. In contrast to this was Isaac who was born to "a freewoman." Isaac was born to Sarah, the wife of Abraham. She was not a slave, but the wife of the owner of the estate.

Life application: The Old Testament stories are often curious. We can ask ourselves, "Why does the Bible focus on this odd story? Is this all that God wants us to hear... stories about love affairs, intrigue, life and death, and the like?"

The answer is that these stories are always intended to point to other spiritual truths. This doesn't mean that we can just make up an allegorical meaning to them that suits our desires. Instead, we are to evaluate them through the lens of Jesus and His work. In so doing, the reason for their inclusion will become clear.

How wonderful it is, O God, to see Your marvelous story of redemptive history first given to us in types and shadows of what is to come. Each of them points to what You will do through Jesus. And then, the New Testament shows us the work of Jesus for the people of the world. Only in Him are those ancient stories made clear, and in Him they are marvelously opened up to show us Your immense love for us. Thank You for the lessons of the Old which point us to the truths of the New! Thank You for the revelation of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

But he *who was* of the bondwoman was born according to the flesh, and he of the freewoman through promise, Galatians 4:23

Paul is making his analogy between the law and grace by using Isaac and Ishmael as examples of the two. The word "But" is given to show that there is a notable difference

in the two sons. He had just said, "For it is written that Abraham had two sons: the one by a bondwoman, the other by a freewoman." From this sentence, one could not really discern any difference in the boys, just in who they were born to, "But..."

Now to show the contrast, he continues with "he *who was* of the bondwoman was born according to the flesh." This was Ishmael. He is the son of the union between Abraham and Hagar. Abraham went into her, she conceived, and then she bore the child. There was nothing unusual about this. It was how things have always been. Further, there was nothing in advance to suggest that there was anything special or important about the coming child.

On the contrary, Isaac came in a completely different manner. Paul says that "...he of the freewoman [came] through promise." Before Isaac was conceived, the Lord had made a promise to Abraham that he would have an heir. This is recorded in Genesis 15 –

"Lord GOD, what will You give me, seeing I go childless, and the heir of my house *is* Eliezer of Damascus?" ³ Then Abram said, "Look, You have given me no offspring; indeed one born in my house is my heir!"

⁴ And behold, the word of the LORD *came* to him, saying, "This one shall not be your heir, but one who will come from your own body shall be your heir."
Genesis 15:2-4

Eventually, Abraham had Ishmael. Abraham had no reason to assume that this wasn't the son of promise. A child had been born to him, and so he raised him thinking that this was the promised child. However, some years after Ishmael's birth, Abraham was told something new –

"As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her name Sarai, but Sarah *shall be* her name. ¹⁶ And I will bless her and also give you a son by her; then I will bless her, and she shall be *a mother of* nations; kings of peoples shall be from her."

-Genesis 17:15, 16

Some time after that, the promise was further refined. During a visit from the Lord, Abraham was given this specific promise –

"I will certainly return to you according to the time of life, and behold, Sarah your wife shall have a son." Genesis 18:10

From these verses, we can see that there is a difference between how Isaac and Ishmael came to be. Ishmael came according to the flesh; Isaac came according to a promise. In fact, the timing of Isaac's birth was specifically given. The Lord knew, in advance, what was to occur, and it demonstrates that He had a plan concerning the future of the two boys.

What will occur a short time later in their lives will be used as a comparison between what should occur between adherence to the law and trusting in the grace of Christ. Paul is making this as simple as possible for the Galatians (and thus us!) to understand. And yet, his words are not listened to by Judaizers and legalists to this day. How sad it is!

Life application: What good is adherence to the law if the law has been fulfilled in Christ? Think it through and give up on your legalism. It can only end badly for you when you stand before the Lord.

Lord God, You know the end from the beginning. Before Isaac was born, You told of his coming. And later, You even pinpointed the time that his birth would occur. The same is true with Your church. In the fullness of time, You sent forth Your Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons. The plan is marvelous, and it was foretold in advance. How could I put aside the grace of Christ in order to pursue my own righteousness? No way! I stand on the finished work of Jesus Christ. Period and end of story! Amen.

...which things are symbolic. For these are the two covenants: the one from Mount Sinai which gives birth to bondage, which is Hagar— Galatians 4:24

Paul now shows that his evaluation of the story of Abraham, his two children, and the status of the children's mothers, are given to us as for a specific reason. They are to be taken symbolically. In other words, God included this story for a specific reason that goes beyond a literal, historical account of what actually transpired in redemptive history. In that story, and in countless other such Old Testament stories, details which seemingly have no bearing on the main narrative are given.

As God doesn't waste words, there is a reason for these details. Further, in these same stories, information is often left out which seems necessary to understand the story. Again, this is done for several reasons, such as requiring us to refer to other accounts to fill in the missing information. Thus, a panorama of other points in redemptive history can be derived by properly combining the various accounts.

Some scholars see this as Paul being excessive in his evaluation of such passages and that we should not attempt to follow him in looking for the symbolic meaning of things God is presenting to us in His word. This is utter nonsense. Every story in the Old Testament can be, and should be, viewed with four separate categories in mind.

These categories are the literal/historical; the moral; the allegorical/symbolic; and the anagogical/prophetic. Having said this, extreme care needs to be taken in attempting to determine the symbolic and prophetic meaning. Scripture must be used to interpret Scripture and wild speculation is to be wholly disregarded.

Understanding these things, Paul now shows us the symbolic meaning of the story he has introduced. The birth of Ishmael to the slave Hagar, and the birth of Isaac to the freewoman Sarah, is symbolic of the two covenants. The birth of Ishmael is equated by Paul directly to the covenant which God made with Israel at Mount Sinai. It is a covenant which leads to bondage, not freedom. It captures all who are under it and binds them under sin. It shows how sinful sin is, but it cannot free anyone from bondage.

As Paul is under the influence of the Holy Spirit, his words are those specifically chosen by God to show us exactly what He intended for us to see concerning these two examples which have been provided. We need go no further with the symbolism. Paul will continue to explain the symbolic meaning of this ancient account through the rest of chapter 4.

Life application: When reading the Bible, we should continuously remind ourselves that the ancient passages which seem to have no relevance to anything at all - either in the Bible or to us specifically, do in fact have great significance. If we can continuously remind ourselves that everything points to Christ Jesus and His plan of redemption, these seemingly quaint passages will come alive to us in ways never imagined before.

Heavenly Father, Your word shows us that the account of Isaac and Ishmael has a deeper meaning than just two boys born to Abraham. Instead, they form a picture of the bondage of the law and the freedom of Your grace in Christ. The law is a form of bondage and a heavy yoke which highlights our sin, but the grace of Christ is born of a promise. It is a life of freedom and a life of blessing. Why would we trade the grace of Christ in order to turn back to the weak and miserable principles of the law which confined us under sin? No way! Let us stand fast on the grace of Jesus Christ alone. Amen.

...for this Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia, and corresponds to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children— Galatians 4:25

Paul continues with his use of Old Testament pictures to reveal New Testament truths. He just showed in the previous verse that the things he is speaking about are symbolic. He noted that Hagar and Ishmael stood in contrast to Sarah and Isaac. Continuing on with this allegorical interpretation, he said that "...these are the two covenants: the one from Mount Sinai which gives birth to bondage, which is Hagar."

Hagar, the bondswoman, represents the old covenant. Therefore, "...this Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia." Paul has already said that these things are symbolic. Therefore, he is making a picture for us to see. The reason why it is important to remember this is because far too many scholars try to convert the name "Hagar" into an Arabic word which means "stone." From there, they make the leap that Paul is literally equating her with Mount Sinai - a big pile of stones. This is nonsense. He has already said that these things are symbolic.

Hagar is simply being used to indicate the place of the giving of the law. That place then corresponds to the law itself, a law of bondage. This is fully explained in the next words which say that it "corresponds to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children." The law does not provide freedom. Instead, the law only highlights the bondage to sin that all men are confined under. Anyone who is under the law is in bondage.

"Jerusalem which is now" then continues to correspond to the law. It was given at Sinai, but the temple which continued in the service of the law was in Jerusalem. The sacrifices were there, the feasts were held there, and the high priest - who was only a type of Christ to come - ministered there. These things simply continued on with the bondage which was introduced at the giving of the law.

Paul's reason for following this line of thought is the exact same reason as every other point in this epistle. Judaizers had come into the church and turned the Galatians away from the freedom which is found in the grace of Christ. Instead, they had been brought into the bondage of the law. He is simply trying to get them to realize that they were not moving forward, but backward.

God's plan of redemption slowly unveils itself. Each step is intended to move us closer to Christ and ever-closer to the freedom of heaven's wide expanses. The Galatians had been on the right path, but by the lies of the false teachers, they were exchanging

freedom for confinement. His symbolic use of Hagar/Sinai/Jerusalem was intended to get them to see this.

As a technical point, the term, "Mount Sinai in Arabia" does not mean that Mount Sinai is actually in the land known as the modern Saudi Arabia. This is incorrect, but this interpretation has led to many fanciful claims by supposed Christian archeologists concerning the place where the Red Sea crossing occurred.

These claims both lack proper biblical scholarship and are untrue. Rather, the Sinai Peninsula was, at the time of Paul, known as Arabia Petraea. Thus, the words "Mount Sinai in Arabia" fully support the traditional location of Mount Sinai.

Life application: Paul's continued use of literal/historical accounts in the Old Testament, in order to show symbolic truths, explains why so many unusual passages are found in the Old Testament. They are literal and true, but they are included in order for us to search out how they point to Christ and His redemptive work in history.

Be sure to always look for Christ as you read these wonderful accounts which may seem disconnected to everything else. In the end, they are not only connected, but they are vital to the overall message of the Bible.

Glorious God Almighty! It is just so wonderful to wake up each day and know that my sins have been forgiven by Christ. I know that I will stumble and fall in thought, word, or deed at some point in the day ahead. I know that I will regret it when it happens, but I also have the sure knowledge that such slips are already covered by the shed blood of Christ. Thank You for the cleansing fount which continually and ceaselessly keeps me in Your favor! Thank You for Christ my Lord. Amen.

...but the Jerusalem above is free, which is the mother of us all. Galatians 4:26

Paul just showed how the law received at Mount Sinai (the Old Covenant) is a system of bondage. He did this by allegorically equating it to Hagar the slave. From there, he showed that the bondage carried on from Mount Sinai to Jerusalem where the temple stood, and which continued to administer that same law.

Hagar the slave / Mount Sinai / Jerusalem (earthly) / bondage / illegitimate children

He now notes that "the Jerusalem above is free." This is pictured allegorically by Sarah and the New Covenant which was established through Christ's shed blood. The

Jerusalem above is speaking of the heavenly Jerusalem where the true and eternal temple is. It is where Jesus is. This is seen in Hebrews 12 –

"But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, ²³ to the general assembly and church of the firstborn *who are* registered in heaven, to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect, ²⁴ to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than *that of* Abel."

-Hebrews 12:22-24

His next words pull in the comparison to Sarah more closely when he says, "...which is the mother of us all." Sarah's child, Isaac, was the son of promise. As Abraham's son, the line of those acceptable to God through faith continued. That same son-ship is found in any who now have faith in Jesus Christ, trusting in Him and not deeds for their salvation. The "all" only indicates those who have placed their trust in Christ. Paul shows this in Galatians 3:7 –

"Therefore know that *only* those who are of faith are sons of Abraham."

We are sons of Abraham by faith and are thus allegorically sons of Sarah.

Sarah the wife of Abraham / Christ's shed blood / Jerusalem above / freedom / sons of Abraham

The picture is seen even more fully in Revelation 21 –

"Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband." Revelation 21:2

Life application: We can again ask ourselves whether we are trusting in Christ alone for our salvation, or are we trying to please Him a little bit more by living out deeds of the law? If the former, you are in the sweet spot. If the latter, you might very well question if you were ever truly saved. God will not be mocked. Christ didn't die so that you could continue working your way to heaven. If you are trusting in the law, you are in a bitter spot, my friend.

Lord God, let me see... Do I want to trust in what Jesus did, fulfilling the law in my place; or do I want to help my salvation along by falling back on deeds of a law which couldn't save anyone? Help us to never be so perverse as to think that we can somehow merit

Your favor by doing something extra than what Jesus has done. Instead, help us to commit our very souls to You by trusting in Jesus alone for a right relationship with You. That is the sweetest spot of all! Thank You for sending Jesus. Amen.

For it is written:

“Rejoice, O barren, *You* who do not bear!

Break forth and shout, *You* who are not in labor!

For the desolate has many more children

Than she who has a husband.” Galatians 4:27

Paul, showing the superlative nature of the New Covenant over the Old, uses the words of the Greek translation of Isaiah 54:1 to continue his analogy between Hagar, the slave of Abraham, and Sarah, his wife. In doing so, he says, "For it is written..." He is claiming that the verse has a fulfillment in the subject he is writing about.

At the time, Isaiah was writing about the restoration of Jerusalem. He prophesied that she would go from desolation to abundance and from a state of barrenness to a state of health and the bearing of children. Her borders would expand, and the city would increase. Paul shows that this was only a picture of the true Jerusalem. The words of Isaiah are more perfectly fulfilled in the coming of Christ.

The world at large was barren. There were no spiritual descendants of Abraham outside of those who came into the covenant line of Israel, such as Rahab and Ruth. Only those who were under the law, and who were also circumcised in the heart, were counted as true descendants of Abraham.

However, in the coming of Christ, the gates were opened for any and all who would call out to God through Him to become children of God by faith. And so, Paul says, "Rejoice O barren." It is the barren Gentile world, without a husband, to whom he is addressing his words. He tells them to rejoice.

He then further explains exactly who he is talking to, "*You* who do not bear!" There were no children of God in the Gentile world. None were born, because none had been redeemed. But the time was coming when they would be. Isaiah's words point us forward to a time when the barren world would "Break forth and shout." There was to be rejoicing in the once barren land, and it would come from those "who are not in labor."

The Jews went through the labor of bondage to the law. Those of Israel who realized the law couldn't save them came to God through faith each year on the Day of Atonement, seeking His mercy. However, the Gentiles never had such labor. Instead, they would go from a state of barrenness to an immediate state of adoption; all because of the work of Christ. This is because the true atonement, which the Day of Atonement only pictured, is found in Him.

From the barren state of the Gentiles, here called "the desolate," will come an enormous amount of offspring. The comparison is made in the final words –

"For the desolate has many more children
Than she who has a husband."

There is an article in front of "husband" in the Greek. It says, "THE husband." This is speaking of those under the law who had been married to God at Sinai. Children of God were born through this arrangement, but the Gentiles would have many more through faith in Christ. The emphasis from the article would make it read, "She who has THE husband of which the other is destitute."

The comparison is made in a way as to show the superlative nature of what would occur through the work of Christ. It should be noted that although it is Sarah who actually had a husband, it is not speaking of her in this citation as "she who has a husband." The picture is that of Sarah being long barren, but now restored to the favor of Abraham by the bearing of Isaac, the son of promise.

The normal course of a woman with a husband was to have children. This did not occur in Sarah's case. Instead, Hagar is the one who had a child. It is she who is equated with the Old Covenant.

Through God's marriage to Israel, children were born. But through the marriage of the church to Christ, many more were born. This is the sense of what Paul is relating to the Galatians. As this is so, he is demonstrating the superabundant nature of the work of Christ in comparison to the law.

Life application: Why would anyone devolve from receiving the grace of Christ to adhering to works of the law? It is a step (a giant one) in the wrong direction. Let us never be so perverse as to think that we can do more to merit God's favor than Christ did!

Lord God, it is a perfect day today. Why? Because You have ordained it for us. Whatever happens was known to You in advance. And so, it must be a part of Your perfect plan. Help us to keep this perspective as we run into snags, trials, and difficulties. Each thing that happens will be a part of what You intended for us. Help us to look beyond the moment to the fact that You have an eternal plan of which we are a part. And surely that plan is perfect. Hallelujah for such knowledge! Amen.

Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are children of promise. Galatians 4:28

Paul's words here show the full force of what has occurred in us because of the work of Jesus. Ishmael was born to Abraham without a promise. Abraham simply went into Hagar, she conceived, and he was born. The process of his birth followed the normal order of things. However, Isaac was born of a promise.

The Lord said that Abraham would have a son, even when it seemed it would never occur. Later, He again told Abraham the time of the year that it would occur. This was after the birth of Ishmael, showing that Ishmael was not the son of promise. And just as the Lord promised, Isaac was born.

In the same way, those who were made sons through the law occurred in the way that the law indicated. A covenant was made, it was sealed in blood, and it came into effect. If one followed the precepts of the law, then son-ship was assured. However, the prophets spoke of a time when the Messiah would come.

He would be a King on His throne, He would have an eternal priesthood, and those who came to Him by faith would be considered children of God. This was all promised in advance. With the coming of Christ, the result of believing in His work is the reception of the Spirit and adoption into God's family.

Paul says here that "...we, brethren, as Isaac was, are children of promise." This is rather marvelous to consider. God said that this would occur; and here we are, the result of that marvelous promise! We are then likened to Isaac because of the way in which our son-ship came about.

As a side note, some manuscripts say "we," others say "you." If "we" is correct, then Paul is making a general statement about anyone who has been born of the Spirit through faith in Christ Jesus. If "you" is correct, then he is making a statement of emphasis that the Galatians are, in fact, children of promise.

They then would be in contradistinction to what the false Judaizers taught. Rather than children of promise, they were attempting to get them under the law. Either way, the Galatians are included in the concept of being "children of promise."

Life application: If we have been born of God, can we somehow become more fully "children of God" by observing the law? It is ridiculous to consider. Hold fast to the grace of Christ. Give up on deeds of the law.

Lord God, our hearts await You day after day. Yes, we are in this world, and we have to live out each day the best we can, but for those of us who have tasted the delight of heaven through having received Jesus, our true hope is in the day we receive our heavenly home and our eternal inheritance. Everything here is temporary, but what You have promised is forever. We wait in expectation for the joy that lies ahead! Thank You for Jesus who has made all things new. Amen.

But, as he who was born according to the flesh then persecuted him *who was born according to the Spirit, even so *it is now.** Galatians 4:29

In the previous verse, Paul noted that those of the church are the children of promise, thus equating us to Isaac. Now he continues with the analogy. He says that just "as he was born according to the flesh then persecuted him *who was born* according to the spirit..." This is a direct reference to Genesis 21:9 –

"And Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, whom she had borne to Abraham, scoffing." Genesis 21:9

The word used in Genesis 21 as "scoffing" means something rather light and not injurious, such as "to jeer at" or "to mock." Paul's word here in the Greek conveys the idea of aggressive pursuit, such as a hunter pursuing a catch. This doesn't mean that Paul has over-exaggerated the account. Rather, when a small child demonstrates a mocking attitude towards an even smaller child, it shows a streak of harmful intent. Sarah noticed this and it upset her greatly.

Isaac was the son of promise and Ishmael "persecuted him." Paul then makes the full analogy by stating, "...even so *it is now.*" The son of promise, meaning the church, was being bullied around by the son born according to the flesh, meaning those under the law.

They had their traditions and their long history, thinking these things were more important than the Spirit which was granted to those of the church by mere faith in Christ. The term Spirit here refers to the full term found in Ephesians 1, "the Holy Spirit of Promise" –

"In Him you also *trusted*, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise,¹⁴ who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory." Ephesians 1:13, 14

Paul's words are intended to show the Galatians exactly what was occurring with the Judaizers. They were actually persecuting the church through their false teachings.

Life application: Every verse of Galatians continues to be a warning to the church to not fall into the trap of turning to the law, in any form, for justification. We are to rely solely on the grace of Jesus Christ, being obedient to the prescriptions of the hand of Paul. Put away your legalism! Turn to Christ! Be pleasing to God through what He has done!

Wonderful, beautiful Lord Jesus! You came to do the work spoken through the prophets and wise men of God since the beginning of the world. They anticipated Your coming and wrote about You, including the fact that You would suffer and die for the sins of man. And yet, You still came, knowing what lie ahead. You resolutely set Your face towards the cross, shunning its shame for wayward souls like us. What manner of love God has lavished upon us! We have been called children of God because of the work of Another. Thank You Lord Jesus. Amen.

Nevertheless what does the Scripture say? "Cast out the bondwoman and her son, for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman."

Galatians 4:30

Paul, still continuing with his analogy between Hagar/Ishmael and Sarah/Isaac, returns to Scripture to show what New Testament faith in Christ should do with adherence to Old Covenant doctrine. As he asks, "...what does Scripture say?" He purposes that the Galatians make a sound decision based on the very words which pointed them to Christ in the first place. And its words, based on the analogy he has derived from it, tell them to "Cast out the bondwoman and her son."

This is a quote from Genesis 21:10. These words come from the mouth of Sarah when speaking to Abraham, but Paul ascribes them to the divine Source of Scripture. Like all

words recorded in the Bible, the Holy Spirit chose them from among countless words spoken by people throughout their lives. These are words actually uttered by them, but they hold special bearing on the process of redemption and so they are also those words which are used by God for us to understand His purposes for us.

Sarah had told Abraham to cast out Hagar and Ishmael; Paul is asking us to cast away doctrine which applied to the Law of Moses. It should be noted that he is not telling them to cast away the Old Testament. How could someone know what he was talking about unless they had the words of the Old Testament to refer to? Rather, he has equated Hagar/Ishmael with the doctrine of the Law of Moses; doctrine which is now obsolete and annulled.

Continuing on, he explains the reason why, using words still spoken by Sarah. He paraphrases the words for our understanding, but the intent remains –

"...for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the free woman."

The "son of the bondwoman" includes all who hold to works of the Law of Moses for their justification before God. The "son of the free woman" includes those who have trusted Jesus Christ alone for their right standing with Him. The contrast could not be made any clearer.

The Galatians had been duped into heresy by the Judaizers. The Law could never save, it never did save, and it was to be cast away. How is it that some people can't simply pick up this book from Paul's hand and accept it at face value?

Life application: In his analogy, Paul says to "cast away" the law as a means of obtaining justification. If you are clinging to the law to impress God, you are failing to do so. God is pleased with the finished work of His Son. For us, our trusting in that is what pleases Him.

Lord God, thank You for the wonderful day which lies ahead. There may be ups, and there may be downs, but through it all, we know that You are here with us. All things will come out as they should. We have a wonderful joy inside of us because we are counted as Your children because of the work of Jesus. What more could we ask? Praises to You, King of Eternity, for the manifold blessings You have given to us through Him. Amen.

So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman but of the free.

Galatians 4:31

Paul's conclusion on this matter is decided with the words, "So then." He has used an allegorical interpretation of Scripture to make a point about the superiority of the grace of Christ over deeds of the law. He has extended that interpretation to include the idea that the law is to be "cast out."

The "So then" that he writes is not just a statement concerning the allegory and its interpretation though. It is a statement that the entire idea he has been speaking about in this chapter, which includes the allegory, is decided. This final conclusion says, "...we are not children of the bondwoman but of the free."

Those in the New Testament economy are free sons of God through adoption. On the other hand, those who are under the law (or who still hold to the law, even though it is annulled in Christ), are not free, but in bondage. The law highlights sin. Sin is bondage. Therefore, the bondage of those under the law is sin.

Paul's words are to be taken as a testimony that we are not to insert the law into our attempt to please God. The only result of this is to show ourselves as being bound by sin; we highlight this in His presence. Instead, we are to show that we are free from sin through the work of Christ.

The use of the allegory can be summed up in the following contrasts –

The bondwoman, Hagar, contrasts the freewoman, Sarah.

The son of the bondwoman, Ishmael contrasts the son of the freewoman, Isaac.

The natural birth of the flesh contrasts the spiritual birth of the promise.

Mount Sinai contrasts Mount Zion.

The Law contrasts the Promise.

The earthly Jerusalem contrasts the heavenly Jerusalem.

Bondage (the law) contrasts freedom (grace in Christ).

The law is bearing few offspring (via the grace of the Day of Atonement) contrasts grace producing multitudes.

Those under the law persecute those who are under grace.

The law is to be cast out contrasts the inheritance of those in Christ.

Life application: Paul's contrasts are intended to show us the utter folly of pursuing deeds of the law in order to be justified. Don't display utter folly! Trust Christ alone.

Thanking You today, O God, for this wonderful life You have given us. There are pains and there are setbacks, but there is also a better day ahead for those who have called on Christ. In Him, we can look beyond even the best days and see something infinitely better ahead. And we can look past the terrible days, knowing that they are a temporary glitch on the road to glory. Thank You for Jesus Christ our Lord! Amen.

CHAPTER 5

Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage. Galatians 5:1

Paul begins chapter 5 with a summary thought concerning the allegory he used concerning the law and grace. The words, "Stand fast therefore" are an appeal to not be consumed by the false teachings of the Judaizers, but to adhere solely to the grace of Christ who has freed us from the law.

They believed in Him, they were sealed with the Spirit because of their belief and without regard to deeds of the law, and he was imploring them to stand fast "in the liberty by which Christ has made us free."

He uses the term "us" to show that he (and all Jews who had come to Christ) had been freed from the bondage of the law. The Gentiles, who never had the law, went straight from not having it to the more exalted status of being bestowed the grace of Christ. Together, both Jew and Gentile were granted a state of liberty because of His work.

As a heartfelt petition, he finishes the verse with, "...and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage." The Gentiles were never under the law, but they were not without law. Paul discusses this in Romans.

Despite not having the Law of Moses, they still had conscience, a law all its own, to show them that they were in bondage to sin. The Law of Moses increased sin, it highlighted sin, and it showed how utterly sinful sin is. In this, it brought an even greater yoke of bondage upon those under it.

Instead of going to a law which did this, he has petitioned them to "not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage." In Christ, they were freed from sin's penalty, and through sanctification they would be ever more freed from sin's power. In going back to the law, sin would again gain power over them. The Holy Spirit will not work through those who stand contrary to the finished work of Christ.

Life application: The Holy Spirit is the One who testifies of the work of Christ. As Christ fulfilled (and thus annulled) the law, then those who desire to be under the law and follow its precepts, will not receive the power of the Spirit for sanctification. If they have

never come to Christ in the first place, they have not even been freed from sin's penalty. For them, there is no justification before God and no imputed righteousness from Christ.

Lord God, it is evident that every type and shadow of the Old Testament finds its fulfillment in Christ. As this is so, then why would anyone want to go back under what was merely anticipating the glory to come through Him? Help us to never be so foolish as to think that we can draw nearer to You through observances which were fulfilled in Jesus! Instead, we will rest in His finished work. And a sweet rest it is indeed! Amen.

Indeed I, Paul, say to you that if you become circumcised, Christ will profit you nothing. Galatians 5:2

In the previous verse, Paul implored the Galatians to stand firm in the freedom by which Christ had made them free. He further warned them to not allow themselves to be burdened again by a yoke of slavery. He was specifically speaking of adhering to deeds of the law as a means of being pleasing to God. Now he says, "Indeed I, Paul..."

He dogmatically asserts, under the authority of his apostleship, that what he is about to say is to be held to as absolutely assured, and it is to be taken as the strictest of doctrine for the New Covenant believer. It was he who first preached to the Galatians, bringing them the message of Christ whom he had personally encountered.

He was a circumcised Jew and a meticulous adherer to the Law of Moses before that day. But now he had come to realize what faith in Christ involved. With that knowledge, and with his divinely appointed commission, he now will give words of warning.

They are words which resound throughout the ages in this precious epistle - "...if you become circumcised, Christ will profit you nothing." Paul uses circumcision as the standard for his argument against adhering to the Law of Moses.

It was so intricately tied up with the law that it was comparable to baptism for the New Covenant believer. If one were to say, "I will be circumcised in order to please God as the Law of Moses says," then it would indicate that the work of Christ, in fulfillment of the law, was of no value at all to that person.

Circumcision was a sign which only pointed to the coming Christ. Eventually, it became a mandate of the law itself. As He fulfilled the picture which circumcision formed, and as He fulfilled the mandate of circumcision found in the law, then there was no need for the rite any longer. Its purpose was fulfilled. As this is so, then it is a rite which was to no

longer be practiced for earning points with God. It was no longer a sign of covenant life (see 1 Corinthians 7:19).

Having said this, Paul's mentioning of circumcision is given *in relation to the law*. He is not saying that someone couldn't get circumcised as a cultural aspect of life, nor is he saying that a person couldn't get circumcised as a standard of health as is practiced today. For such reasons, there is no limitation or warning. Paul is speaking of being circumcised as a means of obtaining justification in addition to the work of Christ.

Life application: If someone tells you that your uncircumcision needs to be corrected in order for you to be pleasing to God, tell them, "Circumcision... we don't need no circumcision! We have Christ!"

O God! Your word tells us that circumcision of the heart is what makes us pleasing to You. The types and pictures of the Old Covenant only pointed to the coming Christ. Well, He came! In Him is fulfilled every type and every picture of ages past and of a law which is now set aside in Him. Thank You for the grace of Jesus Christ who has set aside the law which stood against us. Thank You for worship in Spirit and in truth! Amen.

And I testify again to every man who becomes circumcised that he is a debtor to keep the whole law. Galatians 5:3

Paul now gives a second proclamation as an avowed testimony to the precept he just stated. Taken together, they read -

"Indeed I, Paul, say to you that if you become circumcised, Christ will profit you nothing. ³ And I testify again to every man who becomes circumcised that he is a debtor to keep the whole law."

Some scholars see the word "again" as referring to a time when he preached this word to them, recalling it to mind now. Others see this as a second form of solemn witness. The second seems the most likely:

- 1) Indeed I, Paul, say to you...
- 2) And I testify again...

The Pulpit commentary further defines the thought –

"The word 'again' points, not to the substance of the subsequent affirmation, as if it were a repetition of that made in the preceding verse, which in fact it does not appear to be, but to the solemnity with which he makes this fresh affirmation."

In other words, he is making two distinct affirmations:

- 1) If you become circumcised, Christ will profit you nothing.
- 2) Every man who becomes circumcised is a debtor to keep the whole law.

The two thoughts complement one another. In the act of being circumcised according to the Law of Moses, Christ and the work He accomplished is set aside. In setting aside His work, one then becomes a debtor to the entire law. It is a self-condemning act. First, man is born with a sin debt (Psalm 51:5). This is something the law could never remove. But even more, James 2:10 says –

"For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one *point*, he is guilty of all."

The fact is that no-one can keep the whole law. The need for a Day of Atonement within the law itself proved this. Paul has already shown that no one can be justified by the law in Galatians 3:10. Therefore, Paul's repeated statements are given to emphatically show that falling back on the law, demonstrated by the outward act of allowing oneself to be circumcised, is a self-condemning act. Christ is of no value to such a soul. They will be judged accordingly.

Bible scholar Bengel notes that, "The use of the present tense intimates that the warning is not aimed at isolated acts, but at the introduction of a systematic practice involving a virtual transfer of allegiance from Christ to the Law."

In other words, Paul's note about circumcision, as was seen in the commentary on verse 2, is speaking about being circumcised for the specific purpose of attempting to be justified by deeds of the law. This then would be an external sign, like baptism is for the follower in Christ. Being so circumcised then would have the intent of showing allegiance to the system of the law.

Life application: Align yourself with the law, and you are bound to the entire law (the dim choice). Align yourself with Christ, and you are granted the fullness of His grace (the smart choice). Which choice interests you?

Lord God, I am overwhelmed by Christ in me, the hope of glory. Amen.

You have become estranged from Christ, you who *attempt to be justified by law*; you have fallen from grace. Galatians 5:4

The words of Paul in today's verse expand on the thoughts of the previous two verses. If one attempts to be justified by acts of the law, then the result is:

- 1) Christ will profit you nothing
- 2) You are a debtor to keep the whole law

Explaining it, so that even the dull can understand, he says that such an attempt to be justified by the law causes a person to "become estranged from Christ." This means that His fulfilled work, and thus the grace of Christ, is voided in such a person.

Works and grace are mutually exclusive. If someone is working in order to please God, then God's grace has no meaning to them. The relationship of grace is voided by the works and a separation (an estrangement) between the parties is the result.

As this is so, then it shows that this pursuer of the law has "fallen from grace." The word translated here for "have fallen from" is used in various ways. As a nautical term, it means, "to wander off course," or to be "cast ashore." One is no longer on the right route or even on the right ship. They are completely separated from the truth.

Understanding this, one would think that Christians would cling to the cross of Christ. It would seem that all followers of Jesus would be so grateful for God's grace that they would write about it, sing about it, and cling to it.

And yet, how many people simply forget what happened when they called out to Him at the beginning? Instead of trusting in grace, they trust in the lies of the devil. In so doing, they reject the only path to God which can bring about peace and harmony.

Life application: Whatever you add to the work of Christ will be counted as an offense against God. One cannot merit grace, and they cannot earn their place in heaven.

Lord God, it was grace that saved me the day I trusted in Jesus. So why should I think that something I do can keep on saving me now? If that were true, then my restoration with You wasn't really grace at all! I trusted grace then, and I will trust grace now. What

Jesus did is sufficient to save, and it is sufficient to keep on saving. Thank You, O God, for the work of Jesus my Lord. Amen.

For we through the Spirit eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness by faith.

Galatians 5:5

The first word explains Paul's intent for the rest of the verse. "For" (in Greek: gar) is setting this verse in contrast to the previous verse. Side by side, they read –

"...you who *attempt to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace.*"

This is in contrast to –

"...we through the Spirit eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness by faith."

Those who look for justification through the law by their own efforts are contrasted to those who trust in the operation of the Spirit for justification. The first is of human origin; the second is of divine origin.

The first results in falling from grace; the second results in the hope of righteousness by faith. The first displays a lack of trust in Christ; the second displays a complete trust in Christ. There is an absolute divide between the two, and it again shows that works and grace are mutually exclusive.

Concerning the words "by faith," according to Vincent's Word Studies, they are connected to the word "wait" rather than the phrase "hope of righteousness." In other words, the thought is, "...we through the Spirit eagerly wait (by faith) for the hope of righteousness."

Our hope is not in the law to grant us righteousness, but rather it is in the fact that the Spirit has acknowledged our faith, and our faith continues to be what we cling to. The hope of righteousness is the object of our faith.

Life application: The law cannot save anyone. But the fulfillment of the law can. What does that mean? Christ fulfilled the law and thus by faith in His accomplished work we have a sure and grounded hope that we will stand before God, having been declared righteous because of the work of Jesus. However, if we attempt to please God by deeds of the law, then our hope is in the law, not in Christ. One cannot have it both ways.

Lord God, we come to You with a sense of awe and wonder. At times, it is over the marvel of what Your hands have created. At times, it is how marvelously You have woven our lives together to bring us happiness, abundance, and joy. But the one thing that is greater than any other is that You have sent us Christ Jesus to grant us an even more marvelous eternity, fully restored to You once again. Thank You for Your kind hand upon us in all ways, especially in the giving of Your Son! Amen.

For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but faith working through love. Galatians 5:6

Paul has used circumcision as the benchmark for his argument against pursuing deeds of the law. If a person was not circumcised, he was excluded from the covenant people. It didn't matter if he did everything else the law required, if he weren't circumcised then he would not be counted as part of the congregation. Because of this, it stands as representative of the entire law for Paul's discourse.

What he tells the Galatians now is that this main tenet, upon which everything else followed, no longer mattered at all. The word "For" explains the words of the previous verse which said, "...through the Spirit eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness by faith." The Spirit is contrasted now with the flesh by saying that "in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything."

The division is complete. In Christ, circumcision, or the lack of it, has no bearing at all. If this is so, then any observance of the law also has no bearing at all. The law is a unified whole. It cannot be considered "the law" if any part of the law is overlooked or disregarded. Thus, with the setting aside of circumcision, the entire law is set aside. Why is this so hard for people to understand?

Instead of circumcision availing anything, Paul says that it is rather, "...faith working through love" which has practical power. Vincent's Word Studies notes that the word "working," being in the middle voice, does not mean "faith which is wrought by love." It is not passive.

In other words, as the Pulpit Commentary states, it does not mean "'...faith through love doing works of beneficence,' but 'faith evincing its vitality and power through the love which it begets in us.'" They continue by saying, "Love is not contemplated as a separate acting of the Spirit, added on to faith as it were by an extrinsic effort of the soul, but as a product of faith itself, by which faith exerts its own internal energy."

Why is this important? Because if doing things produced faith, then we would be following the same principles as that of Roman Catholic doctrine. We could claim that by doing things we have earned our faith.

This is not the case at all. It is clear that Paul was struggling with presenting precise and exacting words which could clearly show us what it means to have "faith working through love." Our love of God and what He has done for us through the giving of Christ is what impels our faith forward. This is something that circumcision could never do.

Life application: Do you have faith in the promises of God at all times? Does your faith weaken at times? If so, then go back to the beginning and contemplate what Jesus did for you there on Calvary's Cross. That should spur your faith back up to optimum levels of love!

Lord God, when our faith weakens and our hope seems to falter, all we need to do is turn back to the first moment when we realized that Jesus died on a cross for our sins. If we just sit quietly and ponder the cross, hope revives, faith is stirred, and our love increases once again! Remind us of this marvelous truth when life gets us misdirected. Remind us of the cross, O God! Amen.

You ran well. Who hindered you from obeying the truth? Galatians 5:7

The previous paragraph dealt with the Galatians receiving circumcision which would negate the freedom found in Christ. Now Paul abruptly puts forth this sentence. It comes from his pen almost in gasps, as if he is utterly confounded by what has transpired.

His first words are, "You ran well." This is a common metaphor in the New Testament; that of a runner in a race. We have a race set before us and the finish line should be our goal. In the case of the Christian race, our goal is to fix our eyes on Jesus and concentrate on Him as we continue with each step.

Unfortunately for the Galatians, this worthwhile and proper goal was impeded. And so, he asks next, "Who hindered you from obeying the truth." The word translated as "hinder" is explained by HELPS Word Studies -

It means "...properly, cut *into* (like blocking off a road); *hinder* (A-S) by "introducing an obstacle that stands *sharply in the way of a moving object*" (Souter); (figuratively) *sharply impede*, by *cutting off* what is desired or needed; to block (hinder)."

They had been on the right course, they had been pursuing Christ, and then they were cut off; having their course redirected. Their eyes were no longer on Jesus, but instead on observances which had been fulfilled by Him.

They had lost their goal because they were pursuing not the end of the law, meaning Christ, but the law itself. By pursuing the law, there could never be a finish line. They had stopped obeying the truth of Christ, and they had been deceived into the lies of the devil.

Life application: If you are not pursuing Christ through His finished work, then you are not pursuing Christ. Seemingly pious words such as, "I am observing the Sabbath because the law says I should, and Christ would be pleased with that" are utterly ridiculous. Christ is pleased with faith in what He did, not in what you do.

Forgiven and free! This is where I stand. Nothing can ever steal me away from the love of God in Christ Jesus my Lord. I know that He has overcome, and because I am in Him then I also have overcome. I will never change the course I am set on! Eyes on Jesus! Thoughts on Jesus! My heart, set upon the Lord. Thank You, O God, for my precious Jesus! Amen.

This persuasion does not come from Him who calls you. Galatians 5:8

"This persuasion" is referring to the words of the previous verse which noted that the Galatians had been hindered from obeying the truth. They were walking on the proper path and had been knocked off that path and onto a wayward one.

Paul notes that this was because they were persuaded to do so. In this, he uses a play on words. In the previous verse, he used the word *peithó* which is translated as "obeying." It means "persuade" or "urge." The Judaizers had actively persuaded the Galatians to leave the proper path.

In this verse, he uses the word *peismoné*. It comes from *peithó* and means "persuasion" or "conviction," but it is used only of self-produced persuasion. Rather than relying on "Him who calls you," they trusted the voice inside as a response to the aberrant teachings of the Judaizers. They had willingly rejected the leading of the Spirit in order to follow the lies of the devil.

The words, "from Him who calls you" are in the present tense. This is contrasted to that used in Galatians 1:6 which said, "I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel." They had been called by the

Spirit of God and had responded to His calling. Now they were responding to the false teaching of mere men.

And so, we can learn a valuable lesson from this verse. In the words, "This persuasion does not *come* from Him who calls you," there is a note that anyone can be called by God and respond to the simple gospel, but it does not mean that they will continue down the proper path after that day.

Instead, they need to listen to the Spirit. As the Bible is written, it is the words of Scripture which call out to us. As the Bible says that the law is fulfilled in Christ, then the law is done.

The Holy Spirit will never call one to be obedient to a law which is annulled. He will only call one to cling to the grace of Christ alone and any precept which follows after Christ's finished work. The Spirit is not confused, but anyone who observes any precept of the law fulfilled by Christ is. They have willingly deluded themselves and have turned from the truth.

Life application: Don't be confused. Hold to the grace of Christ alone for your salvation and for your continued walk towards your heavenly home.

Lord God, even in this modern world, we are continuously finding new life forms that show us beauty, wisdom, and wonder. We peer into the vastness of the cosmos and find new stars that are ten thousand times brighter than anything before imagined. We discover new types of energy that were never before thought of. All of this came from Your infinite intelligence. Here we are, the work of Your hands searching out Your majesty. And this will continue unabated for the ages of ages. How great You are, O God. We marvel at Your glory. Amen.

A little leaven leavens the whole lump. Galatians 5:9

At least three different major explanations for Paul's words here have been given. The first is that this is speaking of the doctrine of the Judaizers reinserting the law as a means of obtaining justification before God. The insertion of one small aberrant doctrine, such as circumcision, will lead to another and another until the whole congregation is corrupted.

The second is that there was already among the believers at Galatia a certain tendency to conform to rites and customs in their spiritual lives, and that they had simply

substituted old rites and customs with something else according to the teachings of the Judaizers. This is what has happened throughout Christianity, particularly in the RCC with the merging of pagan customs with those of the true faith.

The third option is that the false teachers themselves were being compared to leaven. They had crept in and subtly pulled away the believers from Christ and towards themselves. This is not unusual in churches, and it quickly leads to aberrant branches of Christianity, like King James Onlyism, etc.

As Paul has been speaking consistently throughout the epistle about the introduction of false doctrine by the Judaizers, this is most probably what he is specifically referring to. But as a proverbial saying, the premise holds true for each of the three possibilities above.

Once a little yeast is introduced into bread, it quickly permeates the entire loaf. So it is with false teachers and bad doctrine. Just a tad of either can lead to catastrophic results within a church body.

Life application: Stick to the word, and stick to proper context when evaluating the word. Don't get swayed by goofy doctrine, self-seeking teachers, or anyone who claims they have a special insight into Scripture that nobody else has. Further, stick to the grace of Jesus Christ alone. DO NOT insert precepts from the law into your walk. If you do, you will certainly be brought back into bondage, and you will have set aside the grace of God in Christ.

*Lord God, the smallest amount of yeast will make an entire loaf of bread rise. And the slightest bit of bad doctrine which is adhered to within a congregation will certainly result in corruption and turning away from You. As we are prone to wander, help us to keep our doctrine pure, to keep our noses in Your word, and to trust in the grace of Jesus Christ alone for our journey back home to You. With this, surely You will be pleased!
Amen.*

I have confidence in you, in the Lord, that you will have no other mind; but he who troubles you shall bear his judgment, whoever he is. Galatians 5:10

This verse begins with an emphasis on "I" in the Greek to show Paul's certainty in what he is proclaiming. The thought laid out here is based on what he just said concerning the fact that a "little leaven leavens the whole lump." They had turned from the truth and

were faced with the introduction of sin. A verse before that, he had told them that “This persuasion does not *come* from Him who calls you.”

And so, his words, “I have confidence in you, in the Lord” show his certainty that they will turn and do the right thing towards the One who calls them. They will reunite with the truth and go no further down the destructive path they have been following. He honestly feels that the case he has laid out is sufficient to wake them up and redirect them towards proper doctrine.

On the other hand, he still must address the instigator of the apostasy. And so, he says, “...but he who troubles you shall bear his judgment.” This person will be dealt with according to God’s judgment. It may be that such judgment is to be pronounced by the Galatians, such as in expulsion from the congregation.

Or he may mean that God will reserve this person’s judgment for the bema seat of Christ (assuming he is saved). Either way, judgment is to be rendered for the flagrant abuses he has perpetrated against the doctrine of grace which is found in Christ’s finished work.

Finally, he finishes this thought with, “...whoever he is.” The person will go unnamed. It may be that Paul knew who he was, or it may be that he had no idea who it was, but his words bring in the contrast between that person and the Galatians.

Life application: Paul’s optimism concerning the restoration of right doctrine to the Galatians should be a hopeful reminder to us that there is also a chance that those who have departed from right doctrine in their own lives will be restored as well. However, it won’t happen all by itself. It requires someone to open the Bible and show them the error of their ways. That someone may be you.

Lord God, how heartbreaking it is for us to see people depart from the faith and turn aside to crazy doctrine. Help us to be able to present and defend the principle points of the faith in order to keep others from turning off onto the Heresy Highway. Rather, help us to always maintain our course on Right Doctrine Drive. To Your glory we pray. Amen.

And I, brethren, if I still preach circumcision, why do I still suffer persecution? Then the offense of the cross has ceased. Galatians 5:11

There is an emphasis here intended to bring in a stark contrast to the false teachers with the words "And I." This is immediately followed up with "brethren." He is speaking to them as saved believers and those that he was in fellowship with. His contrast is to show

them that he has their best interests in mind. If this is so, then those he is contrasting himself with do not. He is their brother in right doctrine; they are their enemy in false doctrine.

His next words, "...if I still preach circumcision," are taken by some that he once proclaimed that circumcision was a necessary part of the faith and that he had now changed his position on this matter. This is unlikely for several reasons. First, the book of Acts shows no such change in position.

Secondly, he was instructed by Christ on his doctrine and Christ does not change. Third, though he circumcised Timothy (Acts 16:3), it was for a special reason and not out of compulsion or as a necessary doctrine. There is no reason at all to assume that Paul ever proclaimed the necessity of circumcision in regard to salvation.

Rather, those who saw that he had circumcised Timothy may have thought he was setting a precedent for all others he preached to. Or, they may have seen that he lived as an observant Jew in order to win those under the law (1 Corinthians 9:20). It may also be that his early teachings before becoming a Christian concerning the law were being recalled by those who knew him then.

Or it might be that the false teachers may have simply maligned Paul by stating he once proclaimed circumcision, but now did not. Whatever is the case, the record supports Paul's doctrine of salvation by grace through faith - apart from circumcision - during all of his time as a believer in Christ.

In support of this, he asks "...if I still preach circumcision, why do I still suffer persecution?" Vincent's Word Studies notes that the first use of the word "still" refers to the time before his conversion. He then notes that the second "still" which is given "is not temporal but logical."

One thing logically follows after another, but in this case the logic was skewed. Where could the Jews and the false teachers find fault in him and persecute him if he were teaching that circumcision (and thus adherence to the Law of Moses) was necessary? The answer is that they couldn't. But they did, thus confirming his stand against such things. As Charles Ellicott states, "The two things are alternatives. If one is taught there is no need for the other."

And this is exactly what his final point is. "If I were not being persecuted, 'Then the offence of the cross has ceased.'" His gospel presentation was that only the merits of the

work of Christ, culminating in the cross of Calvary, were sufficient to save a person's soul. This was an offense to those who held that adherence to the Law of Moses was necessary.

They were depending on their own works, under the law, to establish their righteousness before God. But the gospel says that God has rejected that approach. To the Jews, and to those who feel that their deeds can please God more than the cross, this is the highest of offenses. It takes away their feelings of pride, and it takes away their ability to boast before God.

For Paul to change his mind about the all-sufficient nature of the work of Christ, and to claim that adherence to the law was necessary, would then take away any need to persecute him. But his persecution in this regard continued. Thus, it proved that he was being misrepresented concerning circumcision. Rather, he held completely and solely to the merits of Christ as a means of being justified before God.

Life application: The law is fulfilled in Christ. The law is nailed to the cross of Christ. The law is annulled through the work of Christ. If you can't understand this, then you may need to take remedial English. The Bible is rather clear on these things.

Lord God, surely we are prone to stray from Your chosen path for us. We fall into temptation, and we fall into sin. How miserable we are in Your presence without the shed blood of Christ to cover our failings. But... but how great You are that through His atoning Sacrifice our faults are covered, our wanderings are corrected, and we shall stand in Your presence pure and undefiled; acceptable to You because of the work of Another. Thank You for this marvelous assurance! Amen.

I could wish that those who trouble you would even cut themselves off! Galatians 5:12

The words of Paul here are as strong and direct as any which he writes anywhere else. They are also overflowing with irony. The words, "I could wish that those who trouble you" are written about the Judaizers who he has been speaking about all along.

They are those who have insisted that the Galatians insert deeds of the law into their theology. As the benchmark for this corrupt teaching, Paul has used the rite of circumcision. It is the physically identifying factor of those who were under the law. Without it, then that person wasn't even considered as Israel, much less an obedient Israelite.

The word "trouble" (Greek: *anastatoó*) is an especially strong word which comes from a root meaning "driven from one's home." They were turning the Galatians doctrine upside down and driving them from the sure foundation of Christ. For this, Paul says that he wishes they would "even cut themselves off." The word is *apokoptó* and is found just six times in the New Testament. All six involve the actual cutting away of something, including body parts.

His reference here turns on the idea of the circumcision of which he has been speaking. In essence, he is saying that they shouldn't just stop at their foreskin, but that they should go ahead and emasculate themselves.

The intent here is to show the utterly ludicrous nature of being circumcised in order to please God over and above what Christ had already done. "Gee, if you can make God happy by being circumcised, then keep on cutting. Maybe he will be more pleased with additional mutilation of the flesh." It is both ironic and sarcastic.

Versions such as the KJV, which apply this to the person as a whole, entirely miss what Paul is saying. They use "cut off" in the sense of the false teachers being "cut off from the Galatians."

This is not the intent of the passage at all. Other scholars see the intent as "being cut off from God." Again, this is incorrect. Paul's words hinge on the surrounding context, all of which is dealing with the rite of circumcision. A similar thought is found in his words of Philippians 3:2 -

"Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the mutilation!"

In that verse, he uses a term for "mutilation" which refers to the false circumcision of such depraved people.

Life application: Circumcision is of the heart. It doesn't matter how much of your body you cut away, only reliance on Christ can bring us to a right standing with God. Put away your reliance on deeds of the flesh! Be reconciled to God through the work of Christ alone.

I have a victory in Jesus which is complete! I have a hope of eternal life so sweet. Every deed of the law, for me Christ did meet. And the work of the devil, Christ did defeat. Thank You, O God, for what my Lord did for me! There is no fear here. Nothing can ever

separate me from Your goodness because I am in Christ - forgiven and free. Hallelujah to Christ my Lord! Amen.

For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. Galatians 5:13

The word "For" is given as a justification for the immensely strong words of the previous verse. He had said that those who were into cutting the flesh should go ahead and emasculate themselves.

"For" now explains that harshness. Unlike those Judaizers who stood against the gospel, Paul is speaking to the Galatians as "brethren." They were saved by Christ and stood in a completely different relation to Him than those false teachers. As they are his brothers, they "have been called to liberty."

The circumcising of the flesh is identification with the people of Israel and, more especially, a willingness to adhere to the rites and customs of those people who were bound to the law. In the coming of Christ, that law was now fulfilled, but those of Israel who had rejected Him spent their time not honoring God through Christ, but by boasting in the flesh.

Paul has noted that this is bondage. The Galatians however were free from this bondage and set at liberty by Christ. They were no longer under the power of sin, but are freedmen in Christ.

Because of this position they hold, he next admonishes them by saying, "...only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh." What is very easy to do when one has no law to guide them is to fall into the lowest levels of depravity. This was seen with the Corinthians.

For example, the man referenced in 1 Corinthians 5 had fallen into sexual immorality which was "such sexual immorality as is not even named among the Gentiles." Paul warns them of this. Freedom in Christ is not license to sin. Rather, he gives them a contrast to hold to by saying, "...but through love serve one another."

The word "serve" carries stress in this clause. As freedmen, they were not to serve the flesh, but rather they were to take on another form of servitude; they were to "serve one another." Paul will explain the basis for this in his words to come, but for now we must consider the contrast which has been presented.

Christians are freed from the constraints of the law, but they are, in essence, obligated to the service of one another. They are freed from sin's penalty, but they are obligated to freedom's standards and expectations. This may sound contradictory, but he clearly shows that with Christ's freedom come such expectations and responsibilities.

Life application: In Christ, we are given great freedoms, but with this also come great responsibilities. If we are to be faithful to this calling, we should continually talk to the Lord, asking for His guidance and assistance in our walk. On our own, we are prone to wander, but by keeping close to Him and to His word, we will be in a much better position to handle the trials and temptations which are sure to come our way.

Lord God, how easy it is to wander from Your straight path. Our hearts are geared towards taking every crooked road we set our eyes upon. Surely this is why Your word asks us to "Fix our eyes on Jesus." Help us in this Lord. Set Him as the desire of our hearts, the lamp for the stepping of our feet, and the constant stream of thought which flows through our minds. Keep us from our natural tendencies, and help us to follow the higher, spiritual ones that You instill in us. And we'll be sure to praise You as we go! Amen.

For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." Galatians 5:14

When Jesus was asked what the most important commandment is, He responded –

“You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind,’ and ‘your neighbor as yourself.’”

-Luke 10:27

Paul's words now echo that sentiment, but deal with the issue at hand, which is relations with one's neighbor. Therefore, he cites that part as pertinent to the situation which the Galatians were facing. If one is to serve in love, then everything else will fall into its proper place. We do not serve the law; it is fulfilled in Christ. We serve, rather, one another in love.

This is what is given to bind us together and to keep us from the very thing which had been forced upon them by the Judaizers. These false teachers wanted to control, not serve. They wanted deeds of the flesh, not love of the heart. These things are contrary to what is expected of saved believers in Christ.

Paul expands on the thought of this verse in Romans 13:8-10. There, he goes from the general proposition of this verse to the accomplishment of the action -

"Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law. ⁹ For the commandments, 'You shall not commit adultery,' 'You shall not murder,' 'You shall not steal,' 'You shall not bear false witness,' 'You shall not covet,' and if *there is* any other commandment, are *all* summed up in this saying, namely, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' ¹⁰ Love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore love *is* the fulfillment of the law."

Life application: If one is not acting in love, then it is not of God. Anyone can make an offering to a church, but unless there is love behind the offering, it is a vain and self-serving gift. The same holds true with any action between us and God and us and our fellow man. Love, therefore, is the fulfillment of the law.

Lord God, help our hearts to be open and responsive to the needs of others. Grant us the ability to love the unlovable, and also to devote ourselves to helping others in prayer, gifts of our energy, and in tears shed with them in their times of trouble. Help our efforts to not be simply self-serving, but to be without any strings attached. Surely, if love is behind our actions, You will be pleased with this. And so, help us in this, to Your glory. Amen.

But if you bite and devour one another, beware lest you be consumed by one another!
Galatians 5:15

Paul now uses metaphors to show the inevitable result of divisions and strife. He says that "if you bite and devour one another" it can only lead to serious harm. The idea here is in contrast to the loving and serving of the previous two verses.

People who stab one another over minor theological issues might be compared to those who "bite" at one another. Those who utterly destroy others over their theological variances could be compared to those who "devour" one another. The word translated as "bite" gives the idea of serious harm; that of "devour" gives the idea of complete ruination, where even no remains are left behind.

To avoid these harmful battles among the brethren, Paul admonishes them to "beware lest you be consumed by one another!" Just as wild animals bite and devour, they continue to do so until there is nothing left. At this point, they move on to find their next prey. If the Galatians cannot serve in love, they will inevitably come to a point where

they are completely devoured. The congregation will be destroyed, and the joy of Christ will no longer be proclaimed.

All of this starts with the first bite. A little theological quibbling over disputable matters generally explodes into complete ruin because pride steps in and refuses to relent. And how common this has become, especially on social media where people don't even have to face one another.

It has become the standard of many to simply shoot out arrogant and harmful words in order to show how theologically adept they are. And this usually occurs by those who actually know very little and who argue over matters they haven't fully thought through.

Life application: What value is there in tearing apart another person who has devoted their time to carefully analyzing and then preparing a commentary on a passage of Scripture? If you disagree on a point of doctrine, is it truly necessary to attack them over it? Instead, a simple comment about your own position should suffice to show what you believe.

Lord God, how easy it is to attack another Christian over a point of doctrine that we may disagree on. And yet, are we sure that we can defend our own position when we disagree? If not, then what purpose does it serve to attack and bite those we may simply have a misunderstanding with? Help us to be settled in our own doctrine first. Then we can defend what we believe in love rather than attacking in pride. Amen.

I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.

Galatians 5:16

As a rule of guidance and practical application based on verses 13-15, Paul now says, "I say then..." In order for the Christian to close the door to living in the flesh, and rather to open the door of serving in love, he provides the following advice which is that we are to "Walk in the Spirit."

Some translations more rightly say, "...by the Spirit." Either way, the New Living Translation gives an adequate and understandable paraphrase of Paul's intent with the words, "...let the Holy Spirit guide your lives."

We are to live by the Spirit as a rule for guidance and action within our lives. The term "walk" is a customary metaphor Paul uses. It is not to be taken literally, but as a means of expressing a life of constant and unwavering conduct. Our "walk," or our constant and

habitual practice, is to live by the Spirit. In so doing, we "shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh."

This is not referring to the simple desires of the physical nature, of which all of us continue to live with while in our earthly bodies. Rather it refers to the "desire which is peculiar to human nature without the divine Spirit" (Vincent's Word Studies).

When we live by the Spirit, this lust of the flesh can have no power over us. This is extremely well explained by Charles Ellicott -

"The flesh is known by a long catalogue of sins, the Spirit by a like catalogue of Christian graces, the mere mention of which is enough to show that the Law has no power over them. Those who belong to Christ have got rid of the flesh, with all its impulses, by their union with a crucified Saviour."

Ellicott's words concerning, "a long catalogue of sins" are rich in significance. If the law had not been given, those things which were mandated could not be considered sinful when done. For example, if there was no law that said, "You cannot eat pork," then there could be no penalty for eating pork. But as soon as the law was given, eating pork became a cataloged sin.

The same is true with coveting, wearing clothes of two different materials, working on a Saturday (a Sabbath), or any other of the 600+ laws which the Law of Moses prescribed. Each mandate only increased the knowledge of sin and increased violations when they occurred.

However, by receiving Christ who fulfilled the law for us, we are freed from the penalty of those laws because the law is annulled in Christ. Those sins can have no power over us when we walk by the Spirit.

As always, this is the great contrast that Paul highlights. It is also the reason why he adamantly asks us not to fall back on deeds of the law for our righteousness. When we do so, we only reapply that lengthy catalogue of sins to our lives and we end in a life of the flesh, not a life guided by the Spirit.

Life application: If you have been reading these verses of Paul and thinking, "Yes, but I know that I need to just not eat pork. The rest of the law is ok to ignore, but no pork chops..." Then you have still failed to grasp what Christ has done for you. It is all or

nothing. Stop putting deeds of the law back into your life! Be freed from it once and for all. Live by the Spirit; not by the flesh.

Lord God, it is so wonderfully marvelous to wake up each day and to think about the hours ahead... what will they be like? It's like opening a new gift each morning. As the paper is unwrapped, the suspense builds. And when the gift is finally opened, we rejoice at what we have received. Help us to look at the coming day with wonder, and to reflect on the day which has ended with delight. Give us the eyes of a child in the gift of each day that You have presented to us. Amen.

For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish. Galatians 5:17

Paul now explains the necessary reason why we should "walk in the Spirit" as he stated in the previous verse. It is because there is, as it were, a war between the two. They can never be at harmony with one another because they "are contrary to one another." This does not mean, nor does Paul imply, that the physical world, including our flesh, is evil. Rather, it becomes the seat of evil through our contrary carnal walk.

God created matter and declared it good. However, our natural inclinations since the fall have worked against what is good and have used the physical creation for evil purposes. In this Paul explains that "the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh." He further explains this in Romans 8:6-8 –

"For to be carnally minded *is* death, but to be spiritually minded *is* life and peace.
⁷ Because the carnal mind *is* enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. ⁸ So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God."

As noted there, it is the mind of the flesh, the carnal mind, which Paul is referring to. Only in Christ can there be a true break from this. In Romans 7, Paul sets up the dilemma with these words –

"For what I am doing, I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do. ¹⁶ If, then, I do what I will not to do, I agree with the law that *it is* good. ¹⁷ But now, *it is* no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. ¹⁸ For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but *how* to perform what is good I do not find. ¹⁹ For the good that I will *to do*, I do not do; but the evil I will not *to do*, that I practice."

-Romans 7:15-19

As the two are contrary to one another, we find ourselves in a losing war if we walk in the flesh. Only through reliance on Christ can we find the true victory. By faith in Him, we receive the Spirit. By continued faith in Him, we walk in the Spirit.

The point of Paul's words is to show that by falling back on the deeds of the law, we are not walking in the Spirit. The Spirit only guides those who trust in Christ, not in deeds. As this is so, those who walk in the flesh, meaning deeds of the law, cannot be pleasing to God. They are walking contrary to His purposes.

Life application: If you are following the Hebrew Roots movement or some congregation which says you should be following precepts of the law, you are not pleasing to God. You have been duped by the devil. Trust in God, rest in Christ, and walk in the Spirit.

Lord God, our hearts yearn for You, but our earthly minds long after the things of this world. Help us to prevail over these carnal desires and to fix our hearts, minds, and eyes on the Author and Finisher of our faith. Grant us the constant reminder that Jesus prevailed over the world and that through Him, we can too. This we pray to Your glory and for our sanctification. Amen.

But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. Galatians 5:18

In verse 16, Paul exhorted the Galatians (and thus us!) to "walk in the Spirit." Now he says that if we "are led by the Spirit," we are not under the law. To walk in the Spirit and to be led by the Spirit are the same concept differing only in that one is the cause while the other is the effect. It is the Spirit who should guide us. To understand this, we can look at the other option; that of the law.

If we are led by the law, then we will walk in precepts of the law. Paul is showing that the two are mutually exclusive. One cannot be led by the Spirit while being led by the law. One cannot walk in the Spirit if he is walking according to precepts of the law.

With the giving of a law, the knowledge of violating that law becomes known. When that same law is taken away, life apart from that law becomes possible once again. Christ fulfilled the Law of Moses, making it possible for sin (a violation of the law) to be dead in us. It also brought the possibility of being alive apart from the law through Jesus' work. This is noted in Romans 6:11 –

"Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Now, because of Christ's fulfillment of the law, in its entirety, the law is annulled for those who receive His work. Therefore, if we are in Christ, we "are not under the law." Again, Paul explains this in Romans 6 –

"Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts. ¹³ And do not present your members *as* instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members *as* instruments of righteousness to God. ¹⁴ For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace." Romans 6:12-14

Paul places "the law" and "the flesh" in the same category because of the requirement of circumcision. It was a work of the flesh and stands as representative of any deed under the law, or even of the entire law. Paul now shows that receiving the completed work of Christ and being "led by the Spirit" are in the same category.

They are two entirely separate dispensations. Mixing them makes no sense; it is contradictory, and one nullifies the other. If we observe works of the law, Christ is of no value to us; His work is annulled in us. If we are led by the Spirit, Christ is our hope; the law is annulled for us.

Life application: Stop with your works of the law! It is destructive and foolish.

Nothing on this earth will ever be as pleasing as the day we stand before You, O God, and receive Your words of approval - not for anything we have done, but for trusting in what Christ Jesus has done for us. Everything else is wasted effort. Your word asks us to boast in the Lord and so we shall! For all eternity we will hail the Lamb who suffered that we might live. Thank You for Jesus. Thank You for life eternal through His shed blood. Amen.

Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, Galatians 5:19

In Paul's words, "Now the works of the flesh are evident..." several points arise. The first is that some of these on the list he will provide are sins of the mind. Therefore, "flesh" is speaking of the corrupt human nature rather than the physical body itself. This corrupt nature manifests itself in these acts which are contrary to holiness and godliness. The list here from Paul's hand is similar to that which Jesus mentioned in Matthew 15 –

"But those things which proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and they defile a man. ¹⁹ For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries,

fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies. ²⁰ These are *the things* which defile a man, but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile a man."

-Matthew 15:18-20

Another point is that these are considered "works" to Paul. When one works, they receive wages for their work. Therefore, one can expect a type of payment for these works of the flesh. In the case of these types of works, the payment will be negative and, like the works themselves, destructive. Thirdly, Paul says these works are "evident." Man has a moral compass instilled in him. These sins are sins which are recognized in societies throughout the world.

Only when members of the society purposely harden themselves against their conscience do they ignore the internal warnings which accompany these works. The first is "adultery." It is a word which speaks of a physical union between a married individual and someone who is not their spouse.

However, it also is equated in the Bible with turning from the true God to false gods. It can further be defined as merging false religion with the true faith.

Fornication is the Greek word *porneia*. It is the basis of our modern "pornography." It can include whoredom, idolatry, etc. Properly, it means a "selling off" or "surrendering" of sexual purity. It further includes promiscuity of any and every type.

Uncleanness is the Greek word *akatharsia*. It is impurity or defilement in both a physical and moral sense. It comes from the idea of an open infection, leprosy, the birthing process, or even touching a corpse. Each of these defiles the physical man. The spiritual connection is anything that defiles or corrupts the spiritual and moral man.

Lewdness is the Greek word *aselgeia*. It includes things like outrageous conduct, conduct shocking to public decency, wanton violence, and wanton lewdness. It is the casting off of moral restraint and entering into unbridled licentiousness.

Life application: When there is a law, the law stirs up in us the ideas of that which is unlawful. If we are told to not pursue pornography, it piques our curiosity to see what pornography is. In Christ, we are to live by the Spirit and rely on Him as we walk in this fallen world. Only through Him can we prevail over the works of the flesh.

Lord God, who would have thought even two years ago that we would be in the absolutely horrifying state of moral corruption that we are now in. Our leaders are bent

on forcing every type of perverse and unholy act upon us. And the people are following this immoral and reprehensible path as sheep to the slaughter. I pray that hearts are turned back to You before Your wrath is unleashed on us in the most terrifying way. Certainly we deserve it. Help us to keep our hearts, eyes, and minds fixed on Jesus who alone can strengthen us in this day of battle. Amen.

...idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, Galatians 5:20

Paul continues his list of the evident "works of the flesh." Nine are given in this verse beginning with idolatry. This is the worship or service of an image. It is obvious if one is worshipping or serving an image that they are not giving faithful reverence to God. They are robbing Him of what belongs to Him alone. Idolatry can be something of the heart, or it can be manifested in outward displays. It is the final warning of John in his first epistle. He closes it with the words, "Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen" (1 John 5:21).

Sorcery is next. In Greek it is *pharmakeia*. The word gives a clue as to what the sin is linked to. It means properly "drug-related sorcery," as in the practice of magical-arts, and so on. It involves using medicine, drugs, and spells together. Anytime someone uses drugs in order to focus on the supposed divine, they are participating in this sin.

Hatred is defined as enmity, or hostility. It is the act of thriving on this attitude of the heart. Anti-semitism is a good example of this particular work of the flesh. It is an unbalanced thought process which demonstrates hatred for no particular reason.

Contentions are reflected in the attitude of quarreling, or strife. It is "a readiness to quarrel (having a *contentious* spirit), affection for dispute" (HELPS Word Studies). This is the person who argues for the sake of argument. There is nothing to be gained from such an attitude except further strife and enmity.

Jealousies are defined as those internal emotions where someone burns with inappropriate fervency. They lust for what they do not have and they often express their burning desires in physical or emotional outbursts.

Outbursts of wrath is a single word in the Greek, *thumos*. This indicates rage or a personal venting of anger. This is displayed by violent people who refuse to control their emotions, instead using them in tirades towards any or all around them.

Selfish ambitions are self-seeking, carnal ambitions. They are displayed by those who lust for themselves, satisfying every personal desire without care for those around them.

Dissensions are pointless, groundless factions. They are brought in by those who simply desire to divide and conquer. There is no harmony in them, but rather a desire to take over everything regardless of how they get it done. Democrats in the United States perfectly display this type of behavior. They are led by chief dividers who want anything but peace and harmony in the nation.

Heresies deal with religious aspects of life. People who hold to or espouse heresies are those who divide faith into self-chosen opinions or beliefs. There is normally no basis for their teachings except what they have made up out of their own heads.

A classic example of this would be King James Onlyism. There is no rational reason for it, but it is espoused to destructive levels by those who hold to it. A more relevant example to Paul's day is what brought in the need for his epistle; that of the teaching of the Judaizers.

Life application: Stay away from the list of things in this verse.

Lord God, help each of us to be sound in our thoughts concerning our faith, doctrine, and relationship with You. Grant us the good sense to stay away from nutty teachings that only distract us from what is right and proper. Help us above all to fix our eyes on Jesus. Surely with this You will be pleased. Help us in this, O God. Amen.

...envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told *you* in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. Galatians 5:21

In this verse, Paul completes his list of the "works of the flesh." After this, he will give a summary thought concerning people who pursue such works. This verse begins with envy. This is identified as strong feelings or desires which sour due to the influence of sin.

It is the jealousy of a bitter mind which shows displeasure at the success or blessing of another. HELPS Word Studies goes on to say that figuratively, it is "the miserable trait of being *glad* when someone experiences misfortune or pain."

Following this are murders. This item is not in many manuscripts, but assuming it belongs, it is the unjust taking of life from another human being. It does not include capital sentences of death that are rightly handed down. Nor does it include the taking of animal life.

The next item is drunkenness. This is immoderate drinking. The Bible does not forbid the consumption of alcohol during any dispensation. Only two times is it forbidden in Scripture. The first is when the priests performed their functions at the tabernacle/temple, and the second is when a person was under the vow of a Nazirite. Other than those two, drinking is not considered sinful unless it leads to drunkenness.

Revelries are the next category. This comes from the "village-merrymaking that took place at the gathering of the grapes." Eventually the word became associated with riotous parties and drunken feasts. These often "hosted unbridled sexual immorality."

Next, to show that this list is not all-inclusive, he adds in the comment "and the like." All such works of the flesh, and any others like them, are contrary to living a holy life, dedicated to the Lord. Because of this, Paul warns them precisely of the consequences of such acts with the words, "...of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told *you* in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God."

He was warning them now, before the Day of Judgment, just as he had previously warned them in person, that those who fail to come to Christ and who participate in such works of the flesh will not be saved. They will not participate in the messianic blessings which God offers through the giving of His Son. This brings in the obvious question as to whether our continued salvation is dependent on our works.

If this is true, then that means that our initial salvation must be as well. Logically, if one has to do something in order to keep being saved, then the initial salvation is also dependent on what we do, or salvation is not a "guarantee." But it is called exactly that by Paul in Ephesians 1. The answer is that all sin is under the blood of Christ when one comes to Him by faith.

Hence, there are two distinct judgments noted in Scripture. The first is that for believers, and which results in rewards and loss of rewards. The second is for non-believers and it will result in condemnation. Paul speaks of these things in detail in his other letters. For the believer who has been cleansed by Christ, Paul will next explain what is expected of us while in this continued earthly walk.

Life application: If we are to live out our lives after coming to Christ pursuing any of the vile deeds of the flesh that Paul has described, then those around us will see and will never learn what it means to call out to Christ. We may not lose our own salvation when we stumble and fall, but we may become a stumbling block to those who might otherwise come to Him. Let us pursue holiness and righteous living all of our days.

Lord Jesus, You have set the example for us in right living and holy conduct. But we are fallen and prone to make really bad choices. Grant us the sense to hold close to Your word, to keep far away from those who practice wickedness, and to stand firmly on the sound moral base which Your word portrays. Keep us from waffling in our convictions as we see the immense depravity of the world ever-increasing around us. Amen.

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

Beginning with "But..." Paul now contrasts the deeds of the flesh of the previous verses with the fruit of the Spirit. One can understand the contrast when considering that "works of the flesh" stem from the natural, earthly man. He is fallen, and his works produce that which is unfit for the kingdom of God. To contrast this, that which stems from "the Spirit" is given to show that these do not flow from our own nature, but rather from God.

It should be noted that each of these fruits appear to be things which any person can possess, even if they have never come to Christ. However, this is incorrect. Only through the Spirit are our actions acceptable to God. Without Christ's covering, our works are tainted with sin, and any fruit we have is already corrupted. Further, the use of some of these words is only in relation to that which is of divine origin. This fruit of the Spirit includes:

Love - This is love which is expressed to our Creator and to other humans which is pure and undefiled. It follows the description given by Paul in 1 Corinthians 13, and it is a volitional act of the will. It is, in particular, love directed to God more than anything else. The reason for this is that this, as a fruit, is set in contrast to the works of the flesh which are carnal and earthly. This is uniting; that is divisive.

Joy - This word is etymologically linked to words meaning "rejoice because of grace," "joy because of grace," and "grace." Therefore, it signifies the knowledge and understanding of God's grace and favor. In essence, it is the recognition of His grace in our lives... something to be truly joyous about.

Peace - This word indicates "peace of mind." It is comparable to the Jewish word "shalom" which indicates more than just calm, but wholeness and completion when all the essential parts are joined together. It is God's gift of wholeness.

Longsuffering - Patience is the short definition here. But it is a bit fuller than that. It is a divinely regulated endurance which even is used by God of Himself to show that He is truly able to endure our waywardness in order to reveal His character to us. It demonstrates the ability to wait a sufficient time before expressing anger. Thus, it withholds any premature use of force concerning offense.

Kindness - This word is described as that which is well-suited for use. It is the ability to meet real needs in the way that God would meet them, and in the timing He would meet them. As it is a divinely generated type of kindness, it is rightly known as a fruit of the Spirit. The Spirit produces in us a goodness which meets the needs of others while avoiding natural, carnal harshness.

Goodness - This speaks of goodness which is intrinsic in nature. It is a quality or condition which is related to believers because its source is found in God. It is revealed in both moral and spiritual excellence.

Faithfulness - The word here is noted by HELPS Word Studies as "always being a gift from God; never that which can be produced by people. It is "God's *divine persuasion*" – and therefore distinct from human belief (confidence), yet involving it. The Lord continuously *births faith* in the yielded believer so they can know what He prefers, i.e. the *persuasion of His will* (1 Jn 5:4)."

Life application: In a cursory reading of these fruit of the Spirit, one might think that they possessed them apart from coming to Christ. This is not the case. The gifts that God offers, through His Spirit, are unique to believers. Further, they are not automatically obtained. Rather, they develop as we yield ourselves to Christ.

This can be done through prayer, praise, fellowship, study of the word, etc. Be well rounded in your walk and yield your life daily to the Lord. As you do, He will continue to fill you with His Holy Spirit.

It is such a wonderful thing to know that reaching my final goal isn't up to me at all. Here I am Lord, failing You daily... stumbling over my natural self. And yet, because of the work of Another, I am deemed holy and acceptable to You. Help each of us who have called on Jesus to first live for You because of that act. But secondly, to understand that when we

*falter, You have already forgiven the failing. What a great and gracious God You are!
Amen.*

...gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. Galatians 5:23

Paul completes his list of the fruit of the Spirit in this verse. This is not an all-inclusive list; other fruit and gifts of the Spirit are provided in his other letters as well. However, this list is given in contrast to the "works of the flesh" which he previously noted. The last two that he now mentions are:

Gentleness - This word is another one which has a root that emphasizes the divine origin of "meekness." In other words, it is a gentle strength which expresses power and yet it is a reserved power. Despite the ability to crush one's foes, there can be gentleness towards them. HELPS Word Studies says that it "*begins* with the Lord's inspiration and finishes by His direction and empowerment. It is a *divinely*-balanced virtue that can only operate through faith."

Self-Control - This means, properly, "dominion within." In other words, it is control of oneself that proceeds outward from within. Again, HELPS notes concerning this virtue, that it "can only be accomplished *by the power of the Lord*. Accordingly, [it] is explicitly called a *fruit of the Holy Spirit*."

Paul says of this list, which comprised the majority of verses 22 and 23, that "against such there is no law." This is speaking of the fruit (things), not those who display them (people). There is no law for such things because they transcend any law. They come from God and are fruit of His Spirit. Therefore, no law can exist against them. Instead, they are what will naturally flow from Him as we yield to His will.

Life application: It needs to be noted once again that as believers, we can never get more of the Spirit of God than that which was first received upon belief. However, we can yield to God and the Spirit can get more of us. This is the purpose of Paul's list of the fruit of the Spirit. Our ability to exercise these gifts is dependent on our yielding to Him and allowing Him to work through us.

I stand in awe of Your magnificence, O God. I tremble at the marvel and majesty of Your power which is displayed throughout the universe, and which is even evident with each change in the weather or each rising of the tide. Your hand controls such things; things which are far greater than the entire sum of human endeavor. We could no more stop a single tide from rising than we could contain the awesome fire of the greatest sun in the

galaxy. How absolutely majestic You are, O God! We stand in awe of Your magnificence. Amen.

And those *who are* Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

Galatians 5:24

Here we have a truth which is sometimes hard for us to understand as we continue to walk in this fallen world. Paul has just given a list of the works of the flesh and then a list of the fruit of the Spirit. He now states that "those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires." This is given to show the difference between the carnal man and the regenerate man. He explains this in great detail in Romans 6. In part, his words from Romans 6 state –

"What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?

² Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it? ³ Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? ⁴ Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

⁵ For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be *in the likeness* of His resurrection, ⁶ knowing this, that our old man was crucified with *Him*, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin. ⁷ For he who has died has been freed from sin."

-Romans 6:1-7

Paul is saying that through Christ, we are dead to the law. As the law is what brings about the knowledge of sin, and as we have overcome the law through Christ's fulfillment of it, then we have "been freed from sin."

If we are free from sin, then we should live in that freedom. The passions and desires which are aroused by the knowledge of the law are crucified with Christ. Because of this, we have the ability to bear the fruit of the Spirit instead of remaining in the works of the flesh.

Life application: Because Christ has overcome through the fulfillment of the law, and because of our position in Him, then let us live for Christ. If the passions and desires of the flesh return to our minds, let us look again to the cross, understanding that we are freed from their grasp. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus.

Glorious God, even those who have come to Christ face daily trials and temptations, but because He fulfilled the law, He is the end of the law for all who believe. Sin no longer has mastery over us. And so let us live for Him, crucifying those passions and desires. Help us in this. Let us be vessels which are instead useful for holy purposes. With Your hand upon us, we know this is possible. Thank You for Christ's victory which we too can now revel in! Amen.

If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. Galatians 5:25

Paul's words here show that those who have received Christ now live in a different way than they did before receiving Him. Before we lived in the flesh; now we live by the Spirit. The word "by" seems to be a better translation of the Greek as it more properly shows the divide between the old life and the new.

And so, "If we live [by] the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit." It is an indication that we can, in fact, be saved and yet not live according to the manner in which we were called.

Instead of acting as if we are dead to sin because we have moved to Christ who fulfilled the law for us, we continue to live in sin. Paul now shows us that this is not the proper way to conduct ourselves.

Interestingly, he uses a completely different word for "walk" than that which he used in verse 5:16. There the word was used in an ethical sense. It was intended to show the conduct of our life. In this verse, he uses a word which means to walk in line as if in strict accordance with a particular pace.

If we think of "keeping in step," or "walking in cadence," we get the idea of what Paul means. He uses the same word in a graphic way in Romans 4:12 concerning our following in the steps of Abraham. Paul is asking us to walk in cadence with the leading of the Spirit and not be diverted from that sound and reasonable path.

Life application: If one is in a military unit, he is expected to march according to the steps of that unit. It would be contrary to the discipline of the formation for everyone to walk to the beat of their own desires. Such is the case with walking in step with the Spirit. It is contrary to walk according to the works of the flesh when we have been called to walk in step with the Spirit.

Lord God, it is a marvelous thing to know that we have been redeemed by the blood of Christ. As we have, help us to walk in step with that calling now. Nobody in a military

formation who walked contrary to the cadence of their unit would be pleasing to the commander of that unit. As this is true in an earthly organization, how much more should we walk according to the leading of the Spirit! Help us in this, O Lord. And thank You for the life we truly have been called to! Amen.

Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.

Galatians 5:26

Paul's admonition here is correctly translated by the NKJV in using the word "become." He is not saying that they are any of these things, but they are to be careful to not become any of these things. The reason must be attributed to the false teachings of the Judaizers.

They crept in and had taught their destructive heresy concerning inserting deeds of the law in order to be justified. In so doing, it would naturally lead to each of these things, just as it did among the Jews where there was always a subtle competition as to who was the most pious because of their deeds of the flesh.

Paul's warning then has been to put away works of the flesh and to trust in the work of Christ. In so doing, they would not become "conceited." The Greek word gives exactly this idea. It speaks of empty glory, self-deluded conceit which is motivated by "delusions of grandeur," and boasting in what there is absolutely nothing to boast about.

When one is under grace and knows it, then there is no reason at all to act in this way. The boasting one would exhibit would be in the One who bestowed the grace; not in self (see Galatians 6:14).

The words "provoking one another" are given next because one who is boastful about himself will naturally provoke those around them. In their supposed superiority, they will be haughty and arrogant and look down on those around them.

On the contrary, when one understands the grace which has been bestowed upon them, then they should naturally look at others as on an equal footing. Christians all belong to the same family, and they will all share in the same blessing because of their adoption by God. And so, what is there to boast in? And with nothing to boast in, there will be no reason to provoke those around them.

Likewise, Paul says that they should not be “envying one another.” It would make no sense for someone to envy someone else who has received exactly the same blessing as they did. Grace is unmerited favor. To envy someone else’s grace is illogical.

Many scholars look at Paul’s words of this verse in merely a societal context, attributing it to wealth, position, status, or possessions. It is true that we shouldn’t either boast in these things, or be envious of others who have these things. However, Paul’s words here must be kept in context. He has been speaking of deeds of the flesh contrasting fruit of the Spirit. Therefore, his words are preeminently referring to spiritual matters and life in Christ.

Life application: Let us never assume that the fruit of the Spirit that we possess somehow make us better than those around us. Further, let us never be envious of someone who has a very strong and vital ministry or ability within the body.

Each of us was saved by grace, and each of us has gifts of the Spirit which have been given according to the wisdom of God. The best thing we can do is to cultivate those gifts which we have been given, and do so to His glory.

You have been so very good to us, O God. Each of us who have been adopted into sonship because of the work of Christ has been blessed with grace. How then can we boast over others who have been saved by the same grace? And why should we feel the least bit envious of the gifts of the Spirit that another possesses? They were portioned out by You for Your purposes. Instead, help us to cultivate our own gifts and to be content that we are serving You with those gifts which came from You in the first place. Great are You, O God, for having included us into Your family! Amen.

CHAPTER 6

Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who *are* spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted.

Galatians 6:1

Paul's letter to the Galatians now reaches its final chapter with words of admonition which are immensely valuable to pay heed to. He begins with the word "Brethren..." in order to set the tone. He is speaking to his beloved brethren in Galatia, but his words include even us today who are a part of the same body. The heartfelt nature of the address is intended to elicit continued harmony. As he is speaking to fellow Christians, the words imply that the action they are to take also involves fellow Christians.

It is in this context that he says, "...if a man is overtaken in any trespass." The idea of being overtaken does not include someone who is living in sin, or is prone to returning to some old sin. In such a case, that person is to be properly disciplined, rebuked, or even ex-communicated. For such a one, the circumstance would dictate the punishment. Rather, this is speaking of another brother who simply falls into some sort of temptation and fails to resist it.

At such a time, Paul tells them that, "...you who *are* spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness." The one who is spiritual is speaking of the one who is guided by the Spirit of God. His conduct is explained in Galatians 5:16-18 and defined by the fruit mentioned in Galatians 5:22-25. One of those fruit is actually referred to by Paul now; gentleness. As the individual is guided by the Spirit, they should possess that fruit in some measure. Paul asks them (and thus us) to depend on this trait when dealing with such a brother.

There is an especially important reason for this too. We should each carefully consider ourselves lest we also become tempted. In other words, none of us are above falling into temptation. If we harshly treat a brother who has been overcome by sin, when our time inevitably comes, there will be at least two repercussions that we will face for that harsh treatment:

- 1) We will be disgraced because of our own haughty attitude. Our arrogance will be on more prominent display.
- 2) We may receive the same treatment from our fallen brother because of the sad precedent we set.

Paul, always thinking ahead, wants to preempt the pain and suffering that comes from unclear reasoning concerning our state as Christians.

Life application: If we harshly treat a brother who has fallen, we may very well ruin a friendship for no good reason. How much better it is to empathize with other's failings and do our best to maintain sound and friendly relations with those around us who have called on Christ.

Lord God, help us to have hearts of humility toward others. Help us to have empathy for their failings. Each of us is prone to temptation, and when we fall, we would hope for the same kind words of restoration that we should be giving out when those around us slip and fall as well. Keep us from haughty arrogance and help us to be caring towards those who are just as human as we are. Grant us this ability, O God. Amen.

Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. Galatians 6:2

In this verse, the stress is on the words "one another's." Paul is highlighting the mutual relationship which was noted in the previous verse. When a brother falls, we should be there to gently restore them, just as they will – most probably – have to gently restore us when we face temptation and fail. When they are weak, we are to be strong; when we fall, they are to be there to restore us to a right walk. Paul noted this in the book of Romans as well –

“We then who are strong ought to bear with the scruples of the weak, and not to please ourselves.” Romans 15:1

This is what we are called to do because Christ Himself first bore our burdens. Further, as our High Priest, He continues to bear our failings before the Father, making intercession for us. It is in our acting in this manner of bearing one another's burdens that Paul says we will “so fulfill the law of Christ.”

The law of Christ is superior to the Law of Moses in this regard. The Law of Moses was of stern discipline; the law of Christ is that of grace and mercy.

The display of these attributes results in love for one another. And this is exactly what Christ commanded us to observe –

“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. ³⁵ By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.” John 13:3, 35

Life application: It is incumbent on us to restore those around us who demonstrate failings in their Christian walk. In our bearing their burdens, the law of Christ finds its fullness in such dealings with one another.

Lord God, how easy it is to tear others down when they stumble and fall in their walk. And how easy it is when someone disagrees on a minor point of doctrine to completely divide the fellowship that once existed between the two. How perverse we are to ignore Your word which asks us to bear one another's burdens and to have love for one another. Forgive us of our arrogance and help us to work together in harmony as we walk in this often-difficult path of life. Amen.

For if anyone thinks himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself.
Galatians 6:3

This verse bears directly on the previous verse which said, “Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.”

The person who is unwilling to help a brother who has slipped to get back on the proper path is just a human as well. In his looking down on the fallen brother in contempt or accusation, he is demonstrating that he “thinks himself to be something.”

In essence, “How could you allow this deplorable sin into your life. I would never!” Such a person, acting in his haughty and arrogant manner, is no better than the one he is accusing. He thinks the fallen brother is nothing, but this just proves that “he is nothing” also.

We as humans tend to put a high value on ourselves, but in this we are only deceived. We all get up and put our pants on one leg at a time. We are all growing older; we will all die. We are not special or unique out of all of the human race, and so we need to recognize it.

When our fall does come, we will inevitably get our comeuppance for the arrogance we display towards others. For this reason, let us not think too highly of ourselves, but rather let us empathize with those who fall into various sorts of sin; leading them lovingly back to restoration.

Life application: Humility in the present will generally be rewarded with kindness in the future.

Lord God, please help us to not be arrogant towards our fellow brothers and sisters who stumble and fall in their walk with You. Instead, help us to be there for them. Help us to be empathetic to their shortcomings and to gently and kindly speak words of restoration. And help us to do so directly from Your word, showing them where their conduct has failed and reminding them that there is help from You in their time of need. Grant us such ability and wisdom. Amen.

But let each one examine his own work, and then he will have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another. Galatians 6:4

Paul's words here are an admonition to not make evaluations about our own life and conduct in comparison to others. When we see another fall and say, "I've never done that," we tend to get smug and self-confident. Rather, Paul exhorts us to "each examine his own work." We are to use a set standard of who we are, which does not include others. Our standard should then be that which comes from God, which is Scripture.

As God is the ultimate standard, and as His word has been given to us for the rule and guide of our conduct, then we can examine ourselves impartially in relation to it. The word "examine" gives the idea of "proving by testing." If we have gold, we prove it by melting it down and checking for impurities. When the impurities are taken away, we have proved the purity of the gold.

When we prove ourselves against the word of God and then remove the impurities it identifies, then we "will have rejoicing" in ourselves alone. We will be able to say, "I have aligned my life and my actions with the true standard which is above all others." This is where our sure rejoicing, or glorying, will lie.

In testing ourselves against another, there will always be fault, because all others are faulty. No matter how many times we look better than those around us, we can never truly know how secure we are against the ultimate standard. But when we prove ourselves in relation to Christ and His word, we can make positive corrections towards that which is pleasing to God.

Life application: Without Scripture, we truly are ships without rudders. We are cast about in a raging sea of confusion. But when we align our lives according to the true

manual for mankind, we find purpose and direction for our wayward souls. Keep your nose in Scripture!

Lord God, comparing ourselves against the failings of others is a pitiful place to find self-righteousness. Rather, when we compare our lives and actions against the true manual for mankind, the Holy Bible, we can be confident that we are on the right path. In this, we can be pleasing to You because we are following the precepts You have handed down to direct us to the safe shores of heaven's paradise. Give us the wisdom to pick it up, read it often, and apply it to our walk and conduct. Amen.

For each one shall bear his own load. Galatians 6:5

Here we have Paul explaining the previous verse which told us that each person should “examine his own work.” He said that “then he will have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another.” The explanation is that “each one shall bear his own load.” In this, he uses a different word than was used in verse 2 for “burden.”

In verse 2 it was *baros* – a weight; burden. “Figuratively it is real substance (what has value, significance), i.e. carries personal and eternal significance” (HELPS). In this verse, he uses the word *phortion* - a burden; the freight of a ship. “Properly, a burden which must be carried by the individual, i.e. as something personal and hence is not transferrable, i.e. it cannot "be shifted" to someone else” (HELPS).

The verb in verse 2 is present imperative; “you shall surely do this now.” The verb in this verse is future indicative; “you shall bear.” The latter is the antithesis of the former. While the first is given for each of us to sympathize with others in their troubles, the second is given to show that we each will answer to God for the loads we have carried. We cannot transfer our load to another for judgment, but we can take on the burden of those around us for their relief.

Life application: If we are willing to take on the burdens of those around us, then our own loads will be lessened on that Great Day when the actions of our lives are presented before the Lord. Do we want the light burden of assisting others now, or do we want the heavy burden we must carry to the Bema Seat of Christ? Choose wisely.

Glorious God, we all have heavy loads to carry, but we also have the ability of taking the burdens of others upon ourselves. Though it at first seems contradictory, it is true that by taking on the burdens of others, we actually reduce our own load before You. Help us to be willing to assume the weight of others for their relief, and to lighten our own load for

Your approval on the Day when we stand before You. Give us this heavenly wisdom here in our earthly walk. Amen.

Let him who is taught the word share in all good things with him who teaches.

Galatians 6:6

There is a conjunction at the beginning of this verse in the Greek, *de* or “but,” which has not been translated by the NKJV. Some other versions include it, such as the BSB –

“However, the one who receives instruction in the word must share in all good things with his instructor.” Berean Study Bible

The conjunction is not superfluous, but is given as an exception to the previous verse which said, “For each one shall bear his own load.” Paul has admonished that all will bear their own load, but he doesn’t intend that this means we shouldn’t think of the needs of others, and particularly concerning the needs of ministers. In their case, Paul highlights an exception.

“Let him who is taught the word” includes any who receive instruction from a minister of the word. If they do, they are included in this verse. For them, they are “to share in all good things with him who teaches.” In other words, what their lives are blessed with should become the same things that the minister of the word is blessed with.

If the recipient of the word is blessed with grain, they should share their grain with their instructor. If they are blessed with oranges, they should also share their oranges. And if their income is of money, then they should be willing to share of that income with their minister. This is because the minister is fulfilling a job which also takes of his time, his efforts, and which is a part of his devotion to God.

Having explained this, Vincent’s Word Studies disagrees that this verse is speaking of blessing a minister with the temporal blessings which the student provides to the minister. Rather, his analysis says –

“...that the disciple should make common cause with the teacher in everything that is morally good and that promotes salvation. The introduction at this point of the relation of disciple and teacher may be explained by the fact that this relation in the Galatian community had been disturbed by the efforts of the Judaizing teachers, notably in the case of Paul himself; and this disturbance could not but interfere with their common moral effort and life.”

In other words, Vincent's deems this verse as one of participation in the same conduct as the teacher of the word, rather than one of giving to a minister of the word. If this is so, then the one so participating is susceptible to being led down the primrose path.

One goes to an instructor for instruction. If the instructor provides faulty instruction, then the one participating in that faulty instruction has only the faulty instruction of the instructor to be instructed by! To "share in all good things with him who teaches" would then require discernment and follow-up study by the one being taught.

This analysis actually fits with the tenor of the coming verses quite well though and is not to be discarded, though it is a minority opinion.

Life application: The first analysis of this verse, that of caring for one's minister, is something which is certainly appropriate to do. However, the second analysis is given so that a contrasting, yet valid, view can be considered. Always study to show YOURSELF approved after listening to the instruction of the instructor. Sound doctrine doesn't end with his instruction, it only begins there.

Lord God, as we are all on different levels of knowledge in relation to Your word, please send us sound teachers and instructors in it who will properly handle an evaluation of it. Help us not to get caught up in crazy doctrine which only detracts from a close and personal walk with You. Thank You for the preachers and teachers in my own life. Help me to be willing to support them, just as they have edified me. Amen.

Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. Galatians 6:7

The previous verse spoke of sharing "in all good things with him who teaches." As noted, Vincent's Word studies says that this is speaking of students sharing in the sound teachings of instructors and not getting swayed by false doctrines. Paul now directs his thought to the attitude of the heart by saying, "Do not be deceived."

The words are especially important and are intended to call out for the reader to pay heed. As Albert Barnes notes, "The sources of the danger were the corruption of their own hearts, the difficulty of knowing their true character, the instructions of the false teachers, etc." Paul was asking them not to rely simply on the evaluation made by the heart which is so wicked that it ranks among the greatest of deceivers.

In so doing, they would be liable to mocking God, but “God is not mocked.” The verb here literally indicates sneering with the nostrils flaring in contempt. We have been given the word of life in the explanation of what Jesus did. In turning back to the law for our justification, it is an act comparable to mocking God.

And so, we have a choice as to whether we will follow such false teachers who insist on living by deeds of the law, or we will follow the truth of the word which says that our justification comes solely by the merits of Christ.

To show us that we cannot have it both ways, he says, “...for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.” This is a truth which he conveyed to the Corinthians as well –

“But this I say: He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.” 2 Corinthians 9:6

Paul is using a material concept to make a spiritual application. If a farmer sows a great deal of good seed, he will generally reap a great harvest. If he only sows a little, or if he sows bad seed, then he will reap sparingly. The same is true with spiritual matters. If a person teaches as the Judaizers taught with their false doctrines, there will be a harvest of bad doctrine. If a person teaches the word of the apostles (today it is the Holy Bible which records their words), there will be a harvest of sound doctrine.

The word “that” in “that he will also reap” is emphatic – it is that and nothing else. Good doctrine for life cannot be reaped if bad doctrine is sown into it. And sound doctrine will be reaped when sound doctrine is sown. In the end, it is a sober choice, but one which God is carefully watching over as the Day of Judgment draws near.

Life application: Garbage in; garbage out. If we fill our lives with those who teach false doctrine, we will be filled with false doctrine. God is not mocked. Let us not fill ourselves with garbage. Cling to the cross of Christ, and to that alone, for your right standing with God.

Lord God Almighty, You have all the power in the universe in Your hand. You have given us Your word to guide us, and that word tells us that we are to trust in what You have done through Jesus and not to attempt to be justified by works of the law. Just as You don't need our efforts to keep things going in the universe, You certainly don't need our efforts to keep us on the right path to glory. Help us to trust in the finished work of Christ, just as we trust that the galaxies will continue to spin in their heavenly paths. When we trust Christ's efforts, certainly all will turn out as it should. Thank You for Jesus! Amen.

For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life. Galatians 6:8

Paul gave the contrasting means of sowing either in the flesh or in the Spirit in previous verses. In 5:19-21, he listed the works of the flesh. He then contrasted those with the fruit of the Spirit in verses 22 & 23.

In his words here, he shows the difference in effort wrought between the carnal man and the spiritual man by using the terminology of sowing and reaping. Though a carnal, unregenerate man can only sow to his flesh, a saved believer can sow either to the flesh or to the Spirit. When one sows to the flesh, they “will of the flesh reap corruption.”

Whether a non-believer or a saved believer, the same holds true. If we fall back into sin, such as over-drinking, we will further corrupt our flesh. The liver will fail, the body will degrade, and then we will eventually die of our addiction. The same is true with any such sowing of the flesh.

On the contrary, “he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life.” This is where the difference between a believer and a non-believer lies. The non-believer can only sow to the flesh because they have never called on Christ and received eternal life. However, a saved believer, can sow to the Spirit. When they do, they will receive rewards for their efforts. The difference falls in the judgments of believers and non-believers.

The saved believer in Christ will be judged at the Bema Seat of Christ. This is detailed in 2 Corinthians 5:9, 10. Those who are unsaved will stand at the Great White Throne judgment recorded in Revelation 20:11-15.

Life application: If you have called on Christ, your eternal rewards will be based on what you do for Christ during this extremely short walk of life. Be sure to consider this wisely and work for those things which will spring up to great rewards. Don't squander your time, but seek out the Lord and His will every moment of your life.

Lord God, if my eternal rewards are based on this short life I live, how silly I would be to squander my time and efforts chasing folly. Grant us a heart of wisdom to seek You and Your will every moment of our lives. This moment counts forever, and so help us to make the best of it; to Your glory and for our eternal standing with You. Christ died so that we may live. Help us then to live for Him. Amen.

And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart. Galatians 6:9

Taken with the previous verse, the thought is more fully developed –

“^{For} he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life. ⁹ And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart.”

What becomes apparent is that sowing to the Spirit does not necessarily mean an immediate harvest. Instead, perseverance is required. This then indicates that the past few verses have, in fact, been referring to the doctrine of teachers as they sow. In other words, Paul is exhorting the teachers in this verse by saying, “And let us not grow weary while doing good.”

A sound teacher will often face many overwhelming challenges. There is an abundant amount of work to be accomplished each week, there are demands on time, there are requests for donations from open hands at every side as well. Along with this come constant attacks against a sound teacher’s doctrine.

There is ingratitude for his efforts; there is a using of him until he is spent, and then he is cast off as newer targets are identified. John Bunyan gives heartfelt words concerning such a person –

“His own people know no voice like his. He does not need to bribe and flatter and run after his people. He may have, he usually has, but few people, as people go in our day, and the better the preacher, sometimes, the smaller the flock. It was so in our Master's case. The multitude followed after the loaves but they fled from the feeding doctrines till He first tasted that dejection and that sense of defeat which so many of His best servants are fed on in this world. Still, as our Lord did not tune His pulpit to the taste of the loungers of Galilee, no more will a minister worth the name do anything else but press deeper and deeper into the depths of truth and life, till, as was the case with his Master, his followers, though few, will be all the more worth having.” John Bunyan

Paul asks us (meaning those who are doing the sowing) to not weary in these good efforts. His words are not without personal experience. Instead, he was a forerunner of all those he now instructs who would face such a challenging duty.

In 2 Corinthians 11:22-29, he goes through a long list of his own trials to show that perseverance is needed in order to meet the challenges as they arise. And it is that harvest season which should be the goal. This is reflected in the words, "...for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart." The time of harvest will come, but awaiting it is bound to be beset with countless trials. This is reflected in his words to the Romans –

"Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, ² through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. ³ And not only *that*, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; ⁴ and perseverance, character; and character, hope. ⁵ Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us." Romans 5:1-5

Life application: Anyone who is a teacher of proper doctrine, whether an ordained minister or simply someone who loves sharing the word with others, can expect hardships and trials as he sows in sound doctrine. It is inevitable. But with perseverance, a harvest will eventually come. Don't tire in your efforts, but redouble them with each setback. The Lord will be pleased with your labors.

Lord God, help us not to weary in our efforts of sharing the good news of Christ to those around us. There will inevitably be setbacks, and there will be people who speak against our efforts; but help us to persevere and to never cease with this wonderful message. In due time, our sowing of the seed will produce its harvest. Be with us and guide us in this long process which is often filled with pulling up weeds and working against vipers which bite at our heels. Keep us strong in this battle, O Lord. Amen.

Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith. Galatians 6:10

"Therefore" is stated for us to think on what has just been presented. Paul has been speaking of sharing all good things and not wearying while doing so. To sum this thought up, he adds in that "as we have opportunity, let us do good to all."

Not only should we share in all good things, and not only should we not weary in doing good, but we are admonished to do so to all. This then includes Jew and Gentile, it includes men and women, and it also includes the otherwise unlovable. We are asked to use our fruit of the Spirit in a manner which will be evident to any and all around us.

But Paul next places an extra stress on “especially to those who are of the household of faith.” Those who are believers in Christ are to be given extra attention in our efforts of doing good. When they are in need, we are to open our hand and provide them a blessing. When they are sick, we should come to them with comfort; when they are in grief, we should mourn with them.

We should be willing to go an extra step in carrying the burdens of our fellows in Christ because they are our eternal family members. We are united in this household of faith by the work of Christ.

Life application: It is not always easy to find a loving attitude towards some of our fellow Christians. However, we have been called to share ourselves with them to the greatest extent possible. Let us endeavor to fulfill the words of admonition given to us by the hand of Paul in order that we will be pleasing to God who inspired his words to us.

Lord God, I admit that it is often hard to find a loving attitude in me for some of those of the household of faith. To be honest, some of them wear me down with their idiosyncrasies. But I also know that I also certainly wear them down with mine! Help us, O Lord, to overlook the faults of others and to strive for harmony within the faith. Surely You will be pleased with our fervent attempts at working towards peace among one another. Amen.

See with what large letters I have written to you with my own hand! Galatians 6:11

This single verse is one which involves the highest of speculation by scholars as to what Paul means. Some see it as a confirmation that he wrote the entire epistle with his own hand; something that can be confirmed by the large size of the handwriting he uses.

It could also refer to the important nature of the letter. In essence, “See how great of an epistle I have written to you... with my own hand!” It would mean that he took the time to write the entire letter himself to show how concerned he was over the issue. Instead of having a scribe write it, he wrote the whole thing himself.

The aorist tense he uses here could refer to the entire letter, or to just the final verses. If the final verses only, then he had a scribe write the letter. After this, in order to authenticate it, he begins this final greeting in his own hand.

Further, the tense of the verb – regardless as to whether he is referring to the whole letter or just the final verses – may be Paul’s way of inserting himself into the reader’s

position as the letter is being read. In essence, “See with what large letters I am (right now) writing to you.” In this, he would be making the letter active at the moment it is being read.

As to why he wrote with large letters, speculation again is high. But what appears to be the most logical explanation is that he suffered from eye troubles which necessitated writing that way, as anyone with bad eyes would be prone to do. This idea is substantiated in other passages where Paul’s vision seems to be deficient.

Another view, however, is that he wrote with large letters to highlight the importance of the contents of the epistle. IT WOULD BE LIKE TYPING AN ENTIRE EPISTLE IN CAPITAL LETTERS! This is possible, but the content of the letter itself calls out that it is of the highest importance. Writing larger would not add anything to the substance of what is said.

In all, the entire verse is one of present-day mystery and speculation. No matter what, it is a note of authentication concerning Paul’s authorship. It is further a note of the extremely important nature of the letter.

Life application: Paul’s concern over inserting the law into our life and conduct was so sincere that he took the time to write this letter. In it are many warnings that we are not to fall back on deeds of the law for our justification before God.

Christ Jesus fulfilled the law, and the law is now obsolete and annulled. Even if verses like Galatians 6:11 carry high speculation, the overall content of the letter does not. We are saved by grace, and we are to rest in the finished work of Christ.

Lord God, You have written us a letter directly from Your heart, and You have signed it with Your own personal style of writing. The words reflect who You are and what You desire for us. And yet we would prefer to watch TV or go to the movies than look into Your heart and see the love You have for us which is displayed on every page. Forgive us of this and turn our affections to this wonderful word. Thank You for Your letter of love to us. Amen.

As many as desire to make a good showing in the flesh, these *would* compel you to be circumcised, only that they may not suffer persecution for the cross of Christ.

Galatians 6:12

Paul lays bare the very heart of the matter in this verse. He clearly and openly displays the intent of the Judaizers and one of the main reasons behind their aberrant teachings. "As many as desire to make a good showing in the flesh" speaks of externals. In essence, "If I do these external things, people will see and will nod in satisfaction." Or even more, "If I have this outward appearance, I will seem more holy and righteous than those around me." It is the same attitude as the hypocrites whose attitude Jesus rebuked –

"And when you pray, you shall not be like the hypocrites. For they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward." Matthew 6:5

The external prayers of these people were to draw attention to themselves. The same is true with the Judaizers. In turn, they compelled those in Galatia "to be circumcised." Paul has shown that circumcision in the flesh means nothing. Christ fulfilled that type and picture and thus it no longer applies to the people of God. And yet, because they were circumcised, they tried to make it a point of personal righteousness to the Galatians.

It was, as the scholar Ellicott notes, "To wear a specious exterior in the earthly, unspiritual element in which they move."

Paul is using circumcision as representative of any deeds of the law. Therefore, the same thought follows through with a Sabbath observance, observing the Feasts of the Lord, wearing certain garments, conducting a service in Hebrew, not eating certain foods banned under the law, and on and on and on. All of these are externals; all are fulfilled in Christ. They are set aside and no longer are required.

In demanding this of the Gentiles, it then allowed them control over the Gentiles. They became the standard, not Christ. This sad, twisted thinking is still realized today in the Hebrew Roots Movement and in many independent messianic synagogues. And unfortunately, so many are brought under this aberrant teaching, to their own detriment.

But Paul explains why these Judaizers still follow the customs, traditions, and precepts of the law. He says it is so "that they may not suffer persecution for the cross of Christ." This is the heart of the matter.

They can claim to be law-observant Jews while claiming to be followers of Christ. The two are contradictory and mutually exclusive. If one is a follower of Christ, he is not an

observer of the law which Christ fulfilled. Instead, he follows Christ who embodies that law.

Life application: Follow Christ; nothing else.

Lord, if I am going to suffer, may it be for Your name. Amen.

For not even those who are circumcised keep the law, but they desire to have you circumcised that they may boast in your flesh. Galatians 6:13

This is the second reason that the Judaizers insisted on circumcision. The first was so that they wouldn't have to suffer persecution. By continuing to practice deeds of the law, they wouldn't be faced with rejection by those who held only to the law. They could say, "I'm a follower of Jesus, but I am also a follower of Moses." The "Moses" part would then gloss over the offensive "Jesus" part and save them from being persecuted.

The second reason is now given. He first says, "For not even those who are circumcised keep the law." This is speaking specifically of the Judaizers who claim they are followers of Jesus, but the premise holds true with anyone under the law. Paul clearly shows in Romans that no one is able to keep the law.

This is the reason why there was an annual Day of Atonement. Anyone who didn't observe the Day of Atonement was to be cut off from the people. This is because no one ever met the law, even for a single year of their life.

Thus, it demonstrates that even the Judaizers, who demanded that the Gentiles be circumcised, didn't keep the law. And so, their demanding circumcision in the Gentiles wasn't at all for what they claimed. Rather, it was because "they desire to have you circumcised that they may boast in your flesh."

Boasting in the flesh means "works." Works are contrary to grace. Therefore, they are boasting in doing what Christ was implicitly unable to do. To them, if Christ can't save by grace alone, then their idea is that it is "grace plus works."

For these people, the cross is insufficient; God failed; they need to overcome God's deficiencies. It is that simple. Anyone who insists (or even implies) that we need to do things from the Law of Moses in order to be pleasing to God has rejected the grace of Christ. In our walk, it is all Christ, or it is a rejection of Christ.

Roman Catholicism is similar to the teachings of the Judaizers in that they say works are necessary because justification by grace alone is insufficient to save. This is found in the canons of the Council of Trent. One of several such canons is Canon 9. It states –

“If any one saith, that by faith alone the impious is justified; in such wise as to mean, that nothing else is required to co-operate in order to the obtaining the grace of Justification, and that it is not in any way necessary, that he be prepared and disposed by the movement of his own will; let him be anathema.”

This is heresy. One cannot cooperate in grace. Reject this stupid, heretical stuff.

Life application: Cling to the cross of Christ.

Heavenly Father, apparently doctrine matters. You have given us an entire book of doctrine to teach us what You expect of us. However, it is so much easier to make stuff up out of our own heads and to claim that You are still speaking out Your will for us today. Help us not to get caught up in that kind of nonsense. Instead, give us hearts that are willing to search out Your precious word and to adhere to what You have given us for our life and practice. Help us in this, O Lord. Amen.

But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. Galatians 6:14

The emphasis of the Greek in this verse is in the word “I.” Paul had just said, “For not even those who are circumcised keep the law, but they desire to have you circumcised that they may boast in your flesh.”

He now contrasts himself to these false teachers. They boasted in the flesh of those they misled; Paul boasted in Christ’s cross. They boasted in that which only leads from death to death; he boasted in that which leads from death to life. They boasted in that which was carnal; he boasted in that which is spiritual.

His words then reflect the very heart of God’s redemptive plans for man. In man, there is sin, separation, and death. In Christ, there is freedom from sin, adoption as sons of God, and eternal life. There is no other place that anyone should ever make the boasting of their religious life, because only in the cross of Christ is there any true hope.

A question arises as to which it is that Paul is speaking of though in his boasting. Is it the cross or is it the Lord Jesus Christ. In other words, should this read “by whom” or “by

which?” The Greek allows for either, and so, one must refer to the previous verse to really make the proper deduction.

The Judaizers had boasted in the flesh based on circumcision. It was where their boast lay. Therefore, as a contrast to that, Paul introduces his boast which is the cross based on crucifixion. Therefore, the term “by which” or “through which” is a better rendering of this verse.

It is the cross of Christ, meaning His work, which we boast in. This in no way diminishes the glory of Christ, but rather highlights it. When we say, “My son got straight A’s,” we are boasting in his accomplishment.

And yet, at the same time, we are highlighting the son. Had Christ not suffered and died on the cross, there would be no point of boasting. However, the cross is the instrument of His victory. It is that instrument “by [which] the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.”

We are dead to sin because our sin has been nailed to the cross (Colossians 2:14). The law which stood against us is no longer in effect because it is Christ who was nailed to the cross, and it is Christ who embodies the law. The boast is in the act; the highlight is on the Son. Charles Ellicott eloquently describes the matter –

“The Apostle is aware that in this he is putting forward a startling paradox. The cross of Christ was “to the Jews a stumbling-block.” They attached to it only ideas of ignominy and shame, and yet it is precisely this of which the Apostle is most proud. He is proud of it as the ground of his salvation, and therefore as the cardinal object of all his hopes and aims.”

The term “the world” here is speaking of the carnal world of the flesh. This is the very thing that the Judaizers boasted in. But such things are ended in Christ’s cross. They are no longer able to trap us and tempt us if we have our focus on Christ. Instead, we are dead to the world through life in the Spirit. Praise God for the cross of Jesus Christ!

Life application: Memorize this verse.

Lord God, there is only one thing which I will boast in concerning my relationship with You. That is the work of Jesus Christ, culminating in the cross. He was born under the law, but without Adam’s inherited sin. He lived under the law without violating it. He died in fulfillment of the law on Calvary’s cross. As He embodied the law, the law was nailed to

the cross with Him. I will never (no, never ever) boast in deeds of the law. Rather, I will boast in the cross of Jesus Christ my Lord, and in Him alone will I find my rest. Amen.

For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but a new creation. Galatians 6:15

The words "For in Christ Jesus" are given to show that a change occurs when one receives Christ. Past distinctions are set aside and there is a wholeness that all alike share in. To show that this is true in the highest sense, he continues with the words, "...neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything."

Paul has used circumcision as the benchmark requirement for works of the law. If one is not circumcised, then there is no other thing that he can do under the law to be pleasing to God. Adherence to the law starts with circumcision. However, in Christ who fulfilled the law, this preeminent distinction is utterly swept away. This is such an important point that he has stated it in similar terms in both Galatians 5:6 and in 1 Corinthians 7:19.

We are now identified, not with an external mark upon our body, but with the internal sealing of the Holy Spirit. Being "in" Christ comes by faith in Him. This is the thought of Romans 10:9. When we believe, we are saved. At that moment, we are sealed with the Holy Spirit according to Ephesians 1:13, 14. This is our "baptism of the Holy Spirit." It is a one-time occurrence upon belief in Christ.

From that moment, we are "a new creation." God positionally sets us in the heavenly places at that moment (as noted in Ephesians 2:6) showing that salvation is a "done deal." The concept of eternal salvation permeates Scripture. Verses such as 2 Corinthians 5:7, when looked at objectively, can mean nothing other than this. To assume that we are a "new creation" and yet could suddenly become unsaved is unfathomable.

We are a new creation because God in us "has made all things new." The old is passed away; the new has come. And it is all a work of Christ.

Life application: If Paul says that being circumcised or being uncircumcised has no bearing on who we are in Christ, and as circumcision is the preeminent sign of acceptance into the terms of the Law of Moses, then it means that the Law of Moses, in its entirety, is of no effect for those in Christ.

If you are still adhering to precepts of the law, you are estranged from Christ. You are a debtor to the whole law. Put away your silly attempts at finding righteousness through self and put on Christ, wholly and completely.

Lord God, wonderful and precious it is to be in Your presence and to share in Your daily abundance. Today, grant us the peace of Christ in our lives, and direct our steps according to Your will and Your word. Be with us through trials and difficulties and restore to us joy and contentment. We ask this knowing that it is undeserved. And should our trials continue, give us just enough strength through them to be able to praise You. With this, we will be well-pleased. Amen.

And as many as walk according to this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God. Galatians 6:16

“And as many as walk according to this rule” is speaking of the rule he has just laid out concerning circumcision. It is a practice which avails nothing concerning our righteousness before God. As circumcision is the benchmark for speaking of the corporate body of laws known as the Law of Moses, it means that Paul is speaking of those who hold to the grace of Christ alone, apart from deeds of the law, for a right standing before God.

The word for “rule” here is *kanón*. It “was used for a summary of orthodox Christian doctrine in the early Church (its “consensual theology”) – called “the rule (*kanōn*) of truth” or “rule of faith” (*regula fidei*).

This represented the core theological convictions prevailing in the local churches in the “post-apostolic era” (particularly from ad 100 on)” (HELPS Word Studies). It is now what is thought of as the doctrine to be found in Scripture, which is the rule and canon for our doctrine.

It is to such as these that Paul petitions “peace and mercy be upon them.” These are terms used elsewhere by Paul, to indicate a sense of wholeness, both internally and externally, concerning life, spiritual contentment, and the blessed hope of redemption through Jesus Christ.

Following this come some of the most misunderstood or twisted words in the New Testament. They say, “...and upon the Israel of God.” Charles Ellicott incorrectly states in part –

“The benediction is addressed, not to two distinct sets of persons (‘those who walk by this rule’ and ‘the Israel of God’), but to the same set of persons described in different ways. ‘And’ is therefore equivalent to ‘namely:’ Yea, upon the Israel of God. By the ‘Israel of God’ is here meant the ‘spiritual Israel;’ not converts from Judaism alone, but all who prove their real affinity to Abraham by a faith like Abraham’s.”

Ellicott has mixed apples and oranges here. He is correct in some aspects, but then faulty in others. Vincent’s Word Studies says –

“The καὶ ‘and’ may be simply collective, in which case the Israel of God may be different from as many as walk, etc., and may mean truly converted Jews. Or the καὶ may be explicative, in which case the Israel of God will define and emphasize as many as, etc., and will mean the whole body of Christians, Jewish and Gentile. In other words, they who walk according to this rule form the true Israel of God. The explicative καὶ is at best doubtful here, and is rather forced, although clear instances of it may be found in 1 Corinthians 3:5; 1 Corinthians 15:38. It seems better to regard it as simply connective. Then ὄσοι [many] will refer to the individual Christians, Jewish and Gentile, and Israel of God to the same Christians, regarded collectively, and forming the true messianic community.”

Vincent’s is correct up until the last sentence where he, like Ellicott, unites Jews and Gentiles under the umbrella of “Israel,” thus making “Israel” a spiritual entity formed from the two.

Paul never calls Gentiles Israel. Rather, when he speaks of the Gentiles, he calls them under the collective father of the faith, Abraham. However, Israel is always considered separately from the Gentiles. Therefore, the first clause is speaking of all who follow the practice as is laid out by Paul in this letter, Jew and Gentile who reject the false teachings of the Judaizers.

The second clause, speaking of the Israel of God, specifically refers to those Jews – of the stock of Israel – who have followed this truth. They are the true Israel who have left deeds of the law behind and have pursued righteousness through Christ alone. In other words, they are set in contrast to the Judaizers who have not.

Life application: The church did not replace Israel and this verse cannot be used to substantiate that teaching. Rather, it shows that Israel is Israel, but there is only a portion of Israel – a remnant (Romans 9:27 & Romans 11:5) – that is in a right standing with God.

Lord God, Jeremiah promised a New Covenant with the House of Israel and the House of Judah. If a New Covenant has come, then the Old is set aside. Thank God for the shed blood of Christ who has fulfilled the law for us and who has set us on a new path, a better path, to restoration with You. Thank You that we have peace with You through the blood of His cross! Amen.

From now on let no one trouble me, for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus.
Galatians 6:17

The words “From now on” are in the genitive case. Thus, they are a temporal statement meaning “at any time in the future as distinguished from throughout the future” (Vincent’s Word Studies).

Paul had obviously been troubled concerning his apostleship, possibly having been accused of not being a true apostle. Or he may have been accused of not fulfilling his duties as an apostle. For one of these reasons, or for some other, he now defends himself against this. It is a one-time statement to cover any future accusation against him.

In his defense, he says, “...for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus.” The word for “marks” is *stigmata*, the plural of *stigma*. It refers especially to a brand or mark burned into the skin. Slaves, like animals, were branded to show who they belonged to. Further, Albert Barnes notes that it applied to “devotees to an idol god sometimes caused to be impressed on themselves the name or image of the divinity which they adored.”

These *stigmata* were the proof of ownership by another. Paul’s many scars and tears of his flesh proved that he was owned by Christ. His apostleship showed what he had suffered for Christ, and indeed what he was willing to suffer for Him. They were an ever-present reminder to him, and an ever-visible witness for others, to see and know what he was willing to endure for his Master.

These marks then are set in contrast to the mark of circumcision which the Judaizers and false teachers held in such high regard. They gloried in the cutting of their flesh as a sign of adherence to the Law of Moses, but Paul was filled with the afflictions of Christ as a sign of his complete allegiance to Him. As agreeable an honor it was for him to bear these marks, so it was equally disagreeable to him that those in opposition boasted in any other way.

Paul was wholly devoted to Christ and the cross was where his boast lay. What Christ did for him was sufficient to keep him enduring worldly afflictions and abasements.

It is sad that the term stigmata has been used in such a negative way since this epistle was written. St Francis of Assisi supposedly went through such spiritual anguish that the actual marks of Christ's Passion imprinted themselves on his own body. Since then, others have claimed this as well.

his is a far different thing than what Paul is speaking of. He went out and suffered for the sake of Christ, receiving his marks in the mission field. People who claim they have received a spiritual imprinting of Christ's actual sufferings may have done nothing at all for Him in this regard.

There can be no comparison between that which Paul suffered for his Master and the marks of supposedly super-spiritual people who have started to bleed in their hands and feet because of an inner mental suffering.

Life application: Paul has set a standard which many throughout the ages have been willing to follow. He was willing to physically suffer at the hands of others for his devotion to Christ. How far are we willing to go for our Lord and Master? Each of us must resolve this and be willing to stand by it should the time come.

Lord God, how willing are we to suffer for Christ our Lord? Help us to resolve this now because it sure appears that the world in general, and the liberals in our government in particular, are looking to quiet our faithful testimony of the gospel, righteousness, and holy living. Are we willing to endure whatever it takes to continue to share this message? Help us to be fixed in our resolve that we will never compromise the tenets of Your word. Help us to always stand for the gospel of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Brethren, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ *be* with your spirit. Amen.

Galatians 6:18

This final greeting is extremely similar to that of the closing of the book of Philemon. There is a difference though in Paul's use of the word "brethren" which he adds here. And what is unfortunately ignored by the KJV and the NKJV is the fact that the word is at the end of the greeting, not the beginning. It comes just prior to the word "Amen."

Placing it there is not without purpose. Instead, it is a final note of fellowship to the people who he so cherished and to whom his heart and affections were directed.

Despite the temptations of the Judaizers, Paul still considered them brethren and wanted that point highlighted, even at the very last moment of his direct and purposeful epistle.

“The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ” is one of the greatest concepts found in the Bible. Man is fallen and man needs grace for his salvation and for his continued walk with the Lord. Paul asks for this marvelous blessing to be bestowed upon the Galatians. In this petition, it is understood that they are undeserving of it.

One cannot merit grace. Therefore, the petition is one of hope that this unmerited favor "of the Lord Jesus Christ" will continue to be lavished upon them - sinners already saved by that same grace.

This grace, being unmerited, is especially highlighted here for them to consider their position before God. They have been tempted by those who reject Christ; they have been led astray to deeds of the flesh; they have been called to be circumcised by those who boast in the flesh, etc. Paul is reminding them that they stand by grace and that this grace should be with their “spirit.” The spirit is the highest part of man. It is the aspect of us which is reconnected to God because of grace, not works.

Man spiritually died when Adam disobeyed God; Jesus Christ regenerates our spirit through His work. Faith in that deed, and faith alone, is what brings this about. Paul asks them to consider this and let this grace continue to be that which guides their spirit. And with that said to his “brethren” in Galatia, he closes with “Amen.” So be it!

Life application: If you have come to the book of Galatians, read it, contemplated it, and still think that you should be pursuing works of the law in order to make God happy (or happier) with you, you have a serious issue with understanding grace. You may not be saved at all.

One cannot earn grace, but can only receive it by faith and then press on in that grace until His coming again for us. Put away your deeds of the law, stop trying to earn what is free, and stop sneering at God’s offer of peace. Be reconciled to God through the cross of Jesus Christ.

Lord God, we are all on different levels of spiritual understanding, but there is one point which even the youngest child can understand – we cannot earn grace. You have offered us grace, and all we need to do is to reach out our hand and receive it. Help us to never add to what You have done through the grace found in the cross of Jesus. Help us to

boast in what He has done, and to put away our deeds of the flesh in a pitiful attempt to please You. We praise You for Christ our Lord. Amen.

Poem by Izabela Bednara

*I don't wish to be an eagle
so majestic and high.
I don't wish to be an owl
that could see every sight.
I don't wish to be a peacock
with its colors so bright,
neither a yellow canary
with its song stealing hearts.*

*I'm fine to be a sparrow
insignificant and meek,
my feathers are shabby
and my beak's not unique.
But just the same
I am happy and free
for as all other birds
I get to sit at my Lord's feet.*