

Chapter 1

1. Paul, an apostle, (not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead;)

Typical for the day, this epistle begins with the identification of the writer, and, in keeping with many of Paul's letters, this includes his authority as an Apostle (Romans 1:1; 1 and 2 Corinthians 1:1; Ephesians 1:1, Colossians 1:1; 1 and 2 Timothy 1:1; Titus 1:1). However, unlike most of his letters, this greeting includes the qualifications for his apostleship; inasmuch as this is a corrective letter, Paul clearly wants the Galatians to understand the authority that he carries, lest they show disdain for his instruction.

An *apostle* (*apostolos*) is simply a “messenger, one sent forth with orders.”¹ What is evident in the Scriptures is that the Apostles named by Jesus Christ were held in much higher regard than someone who was simply a *messenger*. These men carried the responsibility of bearing a message for Jesus Christ; several were given special insight into what God has planned for mankind, and they all bore the task of bringing this message to the world. It seems clear that none of the Apostles carried a greater responsibility in this area than Paul – as we will see, the Apostles who were centered in Jerusalem seemed to have difficulty leaving that city. Peter acknowledged that Paul taught many things that were difficult to understand, yet he also warned that those who twisted Paul's teachings did so to their own peril (2 Peter 3:16).

Many take the position that Paul is really the twelfth Apostle (Matthias was hastily chosen through Peter's initiative to replace Judas Iscariot), and this may well be true. Nevertheless, Paul never claimed that position for himself. When writing to the Corinthians, he declared that Jesus “was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve” (1 Corinthians 15:5); later in the text he acknowledges that “... last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time” and “the least of the apostles” (1 Corinthians 15:8-9). Clearly, there were more apostles than just the twelve, but it is also evident that not all of the Apostles accepted the same responsibility to spread the Message as that which the Lord placed upon Paul's shoulders.

The Greek phrase for *not of men* is literally *not from men*.² What Paul is seeking to establish right off is that his apostleship was not given to him by men; his calling and commissioning came from the Lord Himself (Acts 9:6). Matthias, by contrast, would have had to say that his commission as an Apostle came from the disciples of the Lord (under Peter's initiative) and not directly from the Lord. This places Paul's apostleship on an equal plane with the other eleven who were appointed by Jesus Christ, and adds weight to the suggestion that Paul is really one of the twelve. When Paul presents the Galatian believers with his qualification as an Apostle, it is to underscore with them the ultimate Authority of his commission (the Lord Jesus Christ).

Paul continues: *neither by man, or nor through man*.³ This completes the emphasis that his apostleship did not originate with man. Although Ananias was the first who gave Paul insight as

¹ Strong's Online, *The Online Bible*, <http://www.onlinebible.net/index.html>.

² Stephanus 1550 NT, *Bibleworks* 8.

³ Strong's Online.

to what the Lord had in store for him (Acts 9:10-17), it is clear from this that Paul did not look to Ananias as the one through whom the Lord placed this call upon his life. There is to be no misunderstanding on the part of the Galatian believers that Paul's authority, as an Apostle, came directly from the Lord; should they fail to heed his message to them, they would be spurning the instructions of the Lord. We can understand that this is a very important foundation for Paul to establish before launching into his letter of correction.

But by Jesus Christ, and God the Father – If you have not caught the significance of Paul's authority up to this point, then all doubt is now removed. Paul did not receive his commission from men, nor through any man, but directly from the Lord Jesus Christ and God the Father. This is important, for Paul did not receive a call from the Lord Jesus Christ to leave his occupation and follow Him in His earthly ministry (unlike the other Apostles who were called by the Lord). We learn from Acts 22:3 that, although from Tarsus of Cilicia, Paul grew up in Jerusalem and received a thorough education in the Jewish law from the highly acclaimed Gamaliel. It would seem that Paul may have had opportunity to hear Jesus teach, and would most certainly have been privy to the discussions that the Pharisees had regarding His teachings. When Paul met the Lord while journeying to Damascus, his mind was opened to a whole new understanding of the Word of God. Paul had been “taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers, and was zealous toward God” (Acts 22:3), yet, within a very short period of time, he was forever convinced that the One Whom he had been persecuting was, indeed, the promised Messiah (Acts 9:20). Keep in mind that he was a Pharisee, the strictest sect among the Jews at the time (Philippians 3:5), a group that was very precise in their keeping of the Law (*Pharisee* comes from a Hebrew root that means, “to separate”⁴). Nevertheless, the Lord totally changed Paul's theology within days! If ever there was anyone qualified to speak to the problems among the Galatian believers, it was Paul. He was a “Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; ... touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless” (Philippians 3:5-6). Yet the Lord did such a transformation of his heart that his hope was removed from his Jewish traditions – he was forever turned from the Jewish Laws and toward the Lord.

Later in his ministry, Paul commended the Bereans for checking his message against the Scriptures to ensure that what they were receiving was in keeping with God's Word (Acts 17:11); he was more concerned that they have a firm and true foundation for their faith (namely, the Scriptures) than that they should simply accept what he was saying. Today we have an Evangelical herd-mentality – if everyone is doing it or believing it, then it must be right; consequently, we have “spiritual leaders” who will boldly proclaim, “I am a Baptist by conviction.”⁵ What could that possibly mean except that if the Baptists are wrong, then he will also be wrong! He went on to say: “I believe our faith and practice is absolutely inline with what the Word of God teaches”; in other words, I have checked, but I have been persuaded (*believe*) that the Baptist position that I have is Biblically accurate.⁶ After meeting the Lord, we never hear of Paul saying, “I am a Pharisee by conviction!” Yet not everything that the Pharisees stood for was wrong; even Jesus encouraged His disciples to give heed to their instruction – just don't follow their example (Matthew 23:2-3). Paul knew what it meant to have his theological understanding turned on its head by the Lord of glory; yet today there is hardly anyone who will take the time to examine their denominational doctrines in the light of Scripture. It is much more fashionable now to emphasize the mystery of

⁴ Easton's Revised Bible Dictionary, *Online Bible*, “Pharisees.”

⁵ From personal correspondence with an elderly Baptist minister; June 12, 2008.

⁶ *Ibid.*

the Word of God and retain our personal biases than it is to examine what we have been taught against the Scriptures and change them as necessary. Too many “Christians” have become so comfortable with the status quo that anyone who would suggest a need to change according to God’s Word is considered to be a trouble-maker; as a matter of fact, the more lax our attitude is toward the Word of God, the greater hearing that we will have. Paul identified this condition: “For the time will come [it is here now!] when they will not endure [listen to] sound doctrine [Biblically accurate teaching]; but after their own lusts [passions, desires] shall they heap [accumulate] to themselves teachers, having itching ears [they crave only what they want to hear]; And they shall turn away *their* ears from [refuse to listen to] the truth, and shall be turned unto fables [myths, anything but the truth]” (2 Timothy 4:3-4).⁷ Nevertheless, our commission and calling from the Lord have not changed: “If ye love me, keep [a command] my commandments” (John 14:15); “... hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep [are keeping] his commandments” (1 John 2:3).⁸

Paul’s calling as an Apostle came from the Lord Jesus Christ and from God the Father, and you can rest assured that the Spirit was very active in his life, guiding him into all truth (John 16:13). Evangelicalism has produced a generation of accommodators – they are no more interested in knowing the truth than they are in raising a question about any of their well-crafted theologies. As Paul taught the Thessalonians concerning the coming Antichrist, he observed that there would be a great deal of deception “because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved” (2 Thessalonians 2:10). Unfortunately, today’s Evangelicals have not found the *narrow way* that leads to life – Jesus warned that it would be found by only a few, and those who do not hold a sincere love for the Truth of God’s Word will **never** find it (Matthew 7:14); Jesus also said: “I am the **way**, the **truth**, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me” (John 14:6), thereby identifying Himself as being that *narrow way*. In 1948, when Harold Ockenga announced a New Evangelicalism that excluded any idea of separation from error and the world, he led his eager Evangelical followers onto the broad road that leads to destruction.⁹ The modern Evangelical has never heard the full truth of the Scriptures (only smatterings mixed with error) and so has not been taught the Truth; they are a generation who is content with a religion that requires nothing of them and, nonetheless, deceptively assures them of heaven.

From the phrase, *who raised him from the dead*, two things come through that are of great importance. First of all, it is God the Father Who raised Jesus from the dead, and Who commissioned Paul as an Apostle; the resurrection power of God is behind Paul’s apostolic commissioning. Secondly, and perhaps more central to Paul’s overarching message, Jesus was raised from the dead. As Paul stated in his arguments to the Corinthians, “if Christ be not raised, your faith *is* vain; ye are yet in your sins” (1 Corinthians 15:17). Jesus, having been raised from the dead to never die again, is called the *Firstfruit* (*aparche*, singular) of those who have died (1 Corinthians 15:20).¹⁰ The resurrection of Jesus Christ is the life of the Gospel message. As a Pharisee, Paul probably assisted the Sanhedrin in spreading the rumor that the guards had fallen asleep and that the disciples had stolen Jesus’ body from the grave; but, when he met the Lord on that Damascus road, he learned very quickly that Jesus not only was alive, but also glorified. It was the resurrected Lord Who struck him down on that road and got his attention for a whole new

⁷ Friberg Lexicon, *Bibleworks* 8.

⁸ Strong’s Online.

⁹ Harold Ockenga, *Forword* to [The Battle for the Bible](#) by Harold Lindsell.

¹⁰ Strong’s Online; Stephanus 1550 NT.

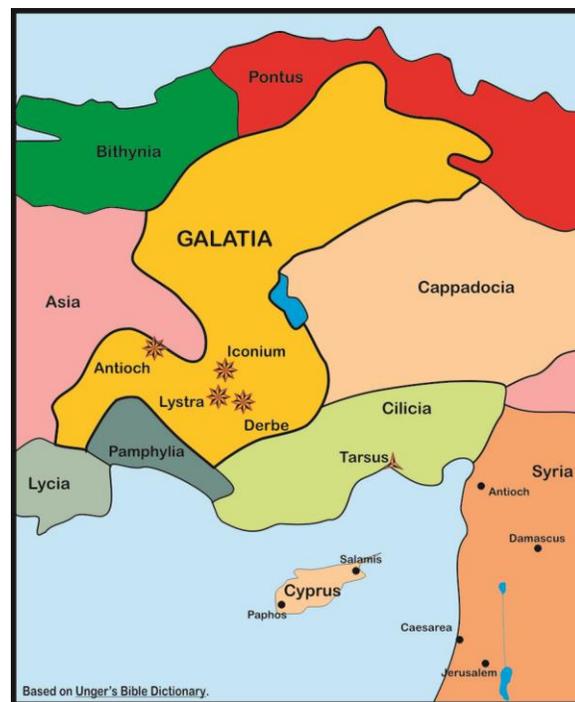
work (from persecutor to preacher). The centrality of the risen Lord to the message of the Gospel cannot be overemphasized, for thereon our hope in Christ is founded.

2. And all the brethren which are with me, unto the churches of Galatia:

All the brethren which are with me – this is unique to this epistle; in all of his other epistles, Paul indicates that they came from him, or from him and one or more named individuals (Sosthenes, Silvanus and/or Timotheus). This time he chose to include *all the brethren* who were with him, and they remained unnamed. From this we can note that this letter came to the believers within the region of Galatia not only reflective of what Paul declared to be true, but it also had the full support of all those who were with him. This was a letter of correction and instruction to which all of those who were with him added their hearty, “Amen!”

Finally, we come to the recipients of the letter – the *churches*, or *ekklesiai*, of the region of Galatia. This would have included several of the assemblies established on the journey taken by Paul and Barnabas (Acts 13 and 14) and probably some of the first groups of believers to be established in the region of Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey). When Paul declared Jesus as Messiah on that first trip through this region, he encountered strong opposition from the religious Jews, whether because of what he taught or from envy over the broad acceptance of his teachings. On the occasion of this corrective letter, we find the influence of Jews had caused some to question the instruction that they had received of Paul. We are reminded again that the devil will take any and every opportunity to stir up trouble, dissension, or to plant the seeds of doubt and heresy; he did not provide the new believers with a moment’s reprieve but sought to derail them as quickly as possible from their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. The fact that this letter is addressed to more than one *ekklesia* makes it evident that the devil had his finger in several of the assemblies in the region of Galatia. The devil may not be omniscient, but “... as a roaring lion, [he] walketh about, seeking whom he may devour” (1 Peter 5:8). What we must not overlook is that the devil is only *seeking* the children of God to destroy (*devour*); the children of disobedience (everyone who is not *in Christ*) are already under his spell (Ephesians 2:2).

It is also important for us to understand that the word *church*, as it is used today, has very little in common with the word that has been so translated in our English Bibles. The Greek word is *ekklesia* (singular form) and, literally, means *called-out ones*, and is more accurately translated as



assembly.¹¹ Today's *church* is highly organized (with programs, property, budgets, salaries, and tax-exempt status) and has a very definite downward flow of authority, with the primacy residing with the designated leader or leaders. A careful consideration of the Scriptures soon lays these to rest as being unbiblical; within our modern Christian community, we have departed so far from the Lord's instructions and have unwittingly patterned our coming together after the Roman Catholic Church. The *ekklesia* is a study all on its own;¹² suffice it to say that the assembly of Paul's day would have met in homes, was watched over by appointed elders who were not voted in for a three-year term, and they came together to exhort one another to grow in the Lord.

3. Grace *be* to you and peace from God the Father, and *from* our Lord Jesus Christ,

Now Paul presents his greeting: *grace be to you and peace*. *Grace* (*charis* [*khar'-ece*]) is that which provides joy or pleasure,¹³ and became a common greeting in that day: *grace to you*, or, we wish you that which will bring you joy. Looking at the Greek root for this word, what comes to mind is the modern Charismatic movement, which clearly has lost sight of the grace of God with their excesses. Rather than bringing joy or pleasure to God, they have become a source of blasphemy and a stone of stumbling to many; Kenneth Copeland, Benny Hinn, Joyce Meyer and Joel Osteen, to name just a few, all live lavishly upon the backs of their loyal supporters. The plain teachings of Scripture have been set aside for their own heresies; the excesses of the so-called Toronto Blessing (and its world-wide influences) are falsely attributed to the Spirit of God, and their leaders often live in unrestrained pursuit of the pleasures of this world. There is no evidence of the *grace* spoken of here; God is certainly not pleased with their carryings on, and, because they have departed so far from the Word of God, no one is edified or drawn into the Way through them.

Peace brings to mind the Jewish greeting, *shalom*. The Greek word translated as *peace* (*iere*) means *harmony, tranquility* and *peace*, whether nationally, inter-personally, or with God; the Hebrew word *shalom* carries the thought of completeness, soundness and, thus, peace and tranquility.¹⁴ Even though both the Greek and Hebrew words so translated include the concept of *peace*, their primary meanings differ.

Paul identifies the source of the *grace* and *peace* as being *from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ*.¹⁵ This is not a wish from Paul; rather, it is Paul's desire for the grace and peace of God to be upon these believers. This is God the Father and Jesus Christ administering grace and peace by the Spirit of God Who is actively at work in the hearts of each believer. Notice the second *from* has been supplied by the translators; the Greek brings God the Father and the Lord Jesus together into a single source for this grace and peace, emphasizing the unity that exists within the Godhead and the exalted position of Jesus. The word *our*, I believe, is significant here, for it is clear that Paul is seeking to include the Galatian Christians in acknowledging the pre-eminence of Jesus as both Lord and Messiah – an important understanding for them to have in order to better combat the error that they were facing.

¹¹ Strong's Online.

¹² Here is a link to this study: <https://www.thenarrowtruth.com/the-ekklesia-of-christ.html>

¹³ Strong's Online.

¹⁴ Ibid.

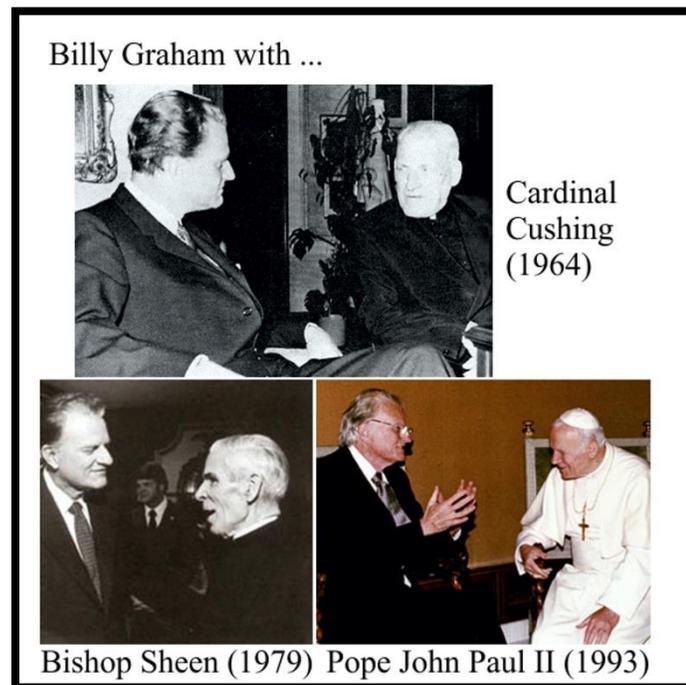
¹⁵ Stephanus 1550 NT.

4. Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father:

In the midst of his greeting to the Galatians, Paul takes a moment to remind them of what the Lord Jesus has done for them – a significant premise for seeking to correct their error. Paul sees the need to refocus the thinking of these people onto the Lord Jesus Christ, for the only way that they could have departed from the clear instructions of Paul would have been to turn their eyes away from the One Who died for them. The writer of Hebrews tells us that we need to be *looking unto Jesus*; *looking (aphorao)* means to have a single focus – in other words, we are to fix our gaze upon the Lord Jesus Christ and Him only. Clearly, the Galatians had lost that singular focus and were being drawn away from the Lord; by reminding them of what the Lord has done, Paul hopes to reset their focus and, thereby, correct the error that was creeping in among them.

Who gave himself for our sins – here is the central essence of the reason for the Lord coming to this earth, and our motivation for giving the Lord the uppermost position in our lives (and in obedience to the First Commandment – Exodus 20:3). From before the foundation of the world, the Triune God had determined that this would be how the redemption of mankind would be accomplished (1 Peter 1:18-21). Our salvation is eternally centered in Jesus: He said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me” (John 14:6); there is “one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus” (1 Timothy 2:5). Despite the best efforts of man to promote other ways to God, the words of the Lord remain firm – there is only One Way! Billy Graham might have embraced the Pope of Catholicism, Robert Schuller might well have accepted the Islam, and Rick Warren may walk alongside of the Buddhists, but that in no way impacts what the unchangeable God has openly declared as being the only way of salvation. The roots of Ecumenism have virtually hijacked the Evangelical movement, but none of that broadens the Way to God; there is only One Way, and that will never change: *Jesus Christ yesterday and today the same and unto the ages* (Hebrews 13:8).¹⁶ As Paul begins this

epistle of correction, he reminds these believers that Jesus gave Himself (He was not a victim of man’s actions) as the ultimate fulfilling sacrifice for our sins. He is the Shepherd Who laid down His life for the sheep (John 10:15-17); Jesus did not die from the torture of crucifixion: “... when



¹⁶ Stephanus 1550 NT.

he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up [active voice; Jesus relinquished His spirit to the Father (cp. Luke 23:46)] the ghost” (Matthew 27:50).¹⁷

Paul goes on to declare the **purpose** for the Lord’s sacrifice: *that he might deliver us from this present evil world* – so that we might be rescued (*deliver*) from the world, which is clamoring for our attention. In the Greek, this is a purpose statement with a subjunctive verb, which means that the verb is to be likened to the indicative mood (a statement of fact) rather than presently a possibility – the reason that Jesus gave Himself for the sins of humanity was so that He is able to rescue us (those who have placed our faith in Him) from the evil world.¹⁸ Although His purpose is clear, our deliverance can still be hampered by our deceitful hearts, which is why we have the many, many admonitions in Scripture to be vigilant (1 Peter 5:8), to test the spirits (1 John 4:1), or to guard against an evil heart of unbelief (Hebrews 3:12). Man was created in the image of God (Genesis 1:26-27), and even sinful man still bears that image (Genesis 9:6; James 3:9). God created Adam and Eve with a will and the ability to think and reason, and they exercised their will when they sinned. In all of the descendants of Adam and Eve, that will is very present and active, albeit with a sinful bent – our will is no longer exercised from a state of being sinless. Calvinism has removed the will of man; within their thinking, man can no longer choose because he is too deeply depraved – if God has chosen him to life, then there is nothing that he can do to lose it; on the other hand, if he has been elected to damnation, then he can do nothing to avoid it. It is a fatalistic theology that turns men into robots being moved about through life by a totally sovereign and deterministic God; this not only significantly encroaches upon man bearing the image of God, but it also renders all of the admonitions of Scripture as just so many empty words. Calvinism holds no motivation for spiritual growth, and history affirms that frequently its adherents become worldly compromisers.



John Calvin

Equally destructive is the theology of many Evangelicals that promotes the doctrine of eternal security – pray a prayer for salvation and you are set for eternal life, even if you live for the devil. However, this cannot be, for God would not provide warnings to remain faithful to Him if it was not necessary to do so. God’s desire for us is clear: Christ has paid the price for our redemption so that we might be rescued from a world that is doomed to destruction. Yet Jesus’ prayer was: “I pray not that thou shouldest take [in the Greek this is a purpose clause with a subjunctive verb, which (as before) makes this a statement of fact, not a mere possibility] them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep [again, a purpose clause] them from the evil [or Satan]” (John 17:15).¹⁹ Jesus has just noted that His disciples had received God’s Word and that they were not of this world, yet Jesus is asking His Father NOT to take them out of the world (which would be in keeping with what He had just said) but rather that He would protect them from evil. God is our only hope for being kept from the evil and the evil one of this age; hence Jesus’ command to abide in Him (John 15:4); for it is only as we are *in Him* that we are secure. “And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep [*should be keeping*; present tense (it must be continuous)] and

¹⁷ Strong’s Online.

¹⁸ Strong’s Online; https://www.ntgreek.org/learn_nt_greek/subj-purpose.htm.

¹⁹ Strong’s Online; Friberg Lexicon; https://www.ntgreek.org/learn_nt_greek/subj-purpose.htm.

subjunctive mood (possible only if we choose to do so)] his commandments” (1 John 2:3); therein is the essence of our protection.²⁰ The Psalmist declared: “I have chosen [perfect tense; a completed action] the way of truth: thy judgments have I laid *before me*” (Psalm 119:30); despite the teachings of Calvinism, there is a choice to be made and, clearly, we are capable of doing so.²¹ Abiding in Christ is a choice that Jesus commands us to make; obeying the simple commands of Scripture is also a choice, as is neglecting the Word of God. “How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation ...” (Hebrews 2:3); the clear understanding is that we won’t escape if we are careless with God’s proffered salvation.²² “Take heed, **brethren** [earlier they are called *holy brethren*], lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief [*apistia*; *no faith* or faithlessness], in departing [becoming apostate] from the living God” (Hebrews 3:12).²³

Paul identifies our deliverance from the world as being *according to the will of God and our Father*. “For this is the will of God, *even* your sanctification ...” (1 Thessalonians 4:3). There are many Scriptures that speak of the will of God, but, within the context of this passage, Paul’s explanation to the Thessalonians seems particularly fitting. The Greek word for *sanctification* is *hagiasmos* (*hag-ee-as-mos*’), which means holy living or consecration.²⁴ The evident root of *hagiasmos* is *hagios* (in Greek) from which we get our word *holy*;²⁵ again we are reminded that God has called us to a life of holiness (1 Peter 1:15-16), which requires that we live outside of the influence of the world and continually abide in the Vine (John 15:4).

The phrase *God and our Father* is interesting and, in our minds, might appear to be redundant. However, you will notice that this is the third reference to God being *our Father* in this one introductory sentence; Paul has begun this epistle by placing a strong emphasis on God’s role as our spiritual Father. This is not an empty repetition, but an emphasized truth that the Spirit of God desired these believers to understand thoroughly. To the Christians in the Galatian region, it would have been a reminder of Who their God is – something that harkened back to the message that Paul and Barnabas declared to them on their first journey through this area. The Galatians had lost touch with that first message of truth, and were beginning to waver in their walk with the Lord. This letter was written expressly to bring them back on course; they were being tempted to rejuvenate some of their Jewish ways. Paul reminds them that their redemption came in accordance with the will of God *and our Father*.

Within the Jewish tradition, God was not generally thought of within the context of being a Father to Israel but, rather, a God Who required holiness of His people and Someone to be feared. God told David that He would be a Father to his son, Solomon (2 Samuel 7:14), Isaiah spoke of the coming Messiah being the Everlasting Father (Isaiah 9:6), but it was Jeremiah who recorded God’s desire to be a Father to the people of Israel (Jeremiah 3:19; 31:9). Nevertheless, to the Jews in general, the concept of God as Father was not familiar; they would have more readily brought to mind God’s judgment on the idolaters at Shittim (Numbers 25:1-3, 9), or God’s immediate judgment on Uzza (1 Chronicles 13:9-10). However, when Jesus, the Son of God, came, preaching the kingdom of God, He spoke much of God as Father; the “Sermon on the Mount” holds many references to God as Father (and we being His children) and would have presented the Jews of the

²⁰ Strong’s Online.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Gingrich Lexicon, *Bibleworks 8*.

²³ Strong’s Online; Friberg Lexicon.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Strong’s Online.

day with a whole new understanding of God. To the Roman believers, Paul declared, “For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father” (Romans 8:15). This is the same message that Paul has for the Galatian believers, and one that we will look at more closely later on in our study.

5. To whom *be* glory for ever and ever. Amen.

There is much about God that we will never be able to comprehend while still in this body of flesh, and one of those things is His glory. The Greek word used here is *doxa*, and it speaks of the splendor and majesty of God.²⁶ We see this in our word *doxology*, which we use to refer to the old hymn of praise to God. Jesus spoke of this glory: “... O Father, glorify [*doxazo*] thou me with thine own self with the glory [*doxa*] which I had with thee before the world was” (John 17:5); “Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory [*doxa*], which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world” (John 17:24).²⁷ Before the Lord came to take on human flesh in the incarnation, He was arrayed in the glory of God; as He purposed to become the redeeming Sacrifice for mankind, He was prepared to set His glory aside so that He might walk among us. The writer of Hebrews explained it this way: “Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood [those whom Jesus came to save], he also himself likewise took part of the same [He took on a physical body]; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil ...” (Hebrews 2:14) – having done so, He is now glorified and seated in the presence of the Majesty in Heaven (Hebrews 1:3). God told Moses, “... there shall no man see me, and live” (Exodus 33:20); the glory and majesty of God is far beyond what sinful mankind can take in. While extolling the majesty of Christ to Timothy, Paul declared that He was “dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see ...” (1 Timothy 6:16). This is another result of the fall for, after sinning, Adam and Eve hid from the presence of the Lord when He came to them in the Garden (Genesis 3:8).

Paul here attributes glory to the Lord Jesus “for ever and ever,” for eternity. Jesus laid aside, for a season, the glory that He had with the Father, in order to accomplish the redemption of mankind as determined before the first element of creation was laid in place (1 Peter 1:18-20). To Him be glory!

The word *amen* is of Hebrew origin and means “so be it”²⁸ – may it be firmly established.

6. I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel:

²⁶ Strong’s Online.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

Paul is very focused in writing this epistle, and, after already establishing several fundamental truths in his greeting, he now gets right to the point. When we consider that one of the primary purposes for gathering together (as the *ekklesia*) is for exhortation (Hebrews 10:23-25), we recognize that Paul, even within his writing, did not waste time getting to his purpose; when the Galatians came together to hear this epistle, it would not have taken long for them to know the reason for it. Among Evangelicals there is an emphasis placed upon the *assembling of ourselves together* but little thought is given to *exhortation*, which is to be the reason for gathering in the first place; it seems that the modern *pastor* is far more concerned with retaining the approval of the congregation than in fulfilling his responsibility to exhort the people to grow in the Lord. If exhortation became the standard for coming together, most Evangelicals would undoubtedly either seek to remove the preacher or they would go elsewhere so that they could have their itching ears scratched (2 Timothy 4:3-4).

Paul begins with *I marvel*, I wonder, or I am amazed.²⁹ As he heard of the welfare of these assemblies in Galatia, he was astonished, but his amazement was not at their growth and development in the Lord; rather, it was at how quickly they were departing from the truths that he and Barnabas had imparted to them. What word would Paul use if he could see the condition of the assemblies today?

His wonder is: “that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ.” Let us consider this carefully, for this is, in a nutshell, the fundamental error that has given rise to this epistle. The verb, *are removed* (*metatithemi*), is in the present tense, which simply means that the action was still happening at the time of Paul’s writing³⁰ – in other words, the Galatian believers were still in the process of taking themselves away from God – it was not yet a completed action. *Removed* is in the middle voice, which means that not only are they (*ye*) doing the *removing* but they are also the one’s being removed; the action that they are taking is upon themselves. As W.E. Vine noted: “they were responsible for their own declension, rather than the Judaizers who had influenced them”;³¹ however, that does not remove the Judaizers’ responsibility in this error. Jesus said: “Woe unto the world because of offences! for it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh!” (Matthew 18:7). The Galatians were responsible for choosing to give heed to those who were promoting error, evidently without testing the message according to God’s Word. Therefore, Paul’s intent in writing this epistle was to bring them back to a proper spiritual position and understanding. Yes, they were the ones doing the removing – they were not being coerced, or in any way forced away from the Lord Who had called them – it was through the exercise of their own wills that they were choosing to leave the message of life; they were making the choice. The Greek word for *remove* literally means to *transpose*; it speaks to changing loyalties: the Galatians were turning away from the message of life that Paul had taught them and becoming apostate.³² We understand that the Galatian Christians were being convinced that they needed to add Jewish traditions to their faith in order to be truly saved; we often consider this to be syncretism – a melding together of aspects of Judaism and Christianity (in this case). However, if you consider this word that the Spirit of God uses here, it is clear that this was not syncretism but of actually replacing the reality of Christ with something else (which is apostasy).

²⁹ Strong’s Online.

³⁰ Strong’s Online; Vine’s Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words “remove.”

³¹ Vine’s “remove.”

³² Friberg Lexicon.

In our day of Ecumenism, we do not hear much about syncretism, which, when applied to Christianity, speaks of drawing practices that are decidedly unchristian in their origin and makeup, into Christian living. For example, a number of years ago our local Evangelical Free Church (EFC) invited a group of Pentecostal Indians to be the focus of their missions conference. The group brought with them a tee-pee, eagle feathers, sweet grass, drums, and whatever other paraphernalia that they had taken from their pagan culture and incorporated into their “Christian” faith. I raised a warning to the leadership at the time that these people had retained religious symbols from their paganism and sought to spiritualize them in order to make them acceptable within Christianity; at the time, I considered this to be syncretism: a joining of pagan traditions with faith in Christ. As



we look carefully at Paul’s evaluation of what the Galatians were beginning to do (and, in this example, of what the Pentecostal Indians had done), we can see that syncretism is really not the correct term to use in describing this transgression. It may be an acceptable term based on its definition, but its application would only be appropriate if we were speaking of bringing together Indian spiritism and Buddhism, for example – where each is equally in error. The difficulty with attempting to syncretize anything false with the truth of the Gospel is that, at the very moment that

you mix the false in with the true, you have destroyed the truth! Christianity is very exclusive; the Word of God cannot accommodate any error. Therefore, what I, at the time, viewed as syncretism (incorporating pagan religious symbols into Christianity) was in reality a transposition, or replacement, of Christianity with paganism. Therefore, when the EFC people participated with the Indians in their dance circle, they were not expressing their Christian faith in a new way but were practicing paganism shrouded under a canopy of Christianity. Likewise, when they held the eagle feather while praying (based on the pagan belief that it would assist their prayers in rising to the Great Spirit), they were no longer praying to the God of creation Who has redeemed us but were raising their voices to a pagan god. This is no longer Christianity; it is simply paganism hiding behind a thin veneer of Christianity – a wolf trying to pass itself off as a sheep.

The Galatian believers were guilty of removing themselves from God, “from him who called you into the grace of Christ.” Paul clarified for the Corinthians that “God *is* faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord” (1 Corinthians 1:9). It is God Who has called us to Christ, and the Galatians were in the process of choosing to turn away from Him and His calling. Here is the *calling* of God: “For God so loved the world [*kosmos* – humanity], that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever [singular – *everyone who*] believeth [*is believing* (present tense)] in him [the Son] should not perish [this is part of a larger Greek purpose clause that is explaining why God *gave His Son*; therefore, *perish*, although in the subjunctive mood, must be understood as a statement of fact: *everyone who is believing will not be ruined*], but have everlasting life [like *perish*, *have* is in a purpose clause so the subjunctive mood is a fact: *everyone who is believing is having everlasting life*]” (John 3:16).³³ His *calling* includes all of mankind (because His *love* [*agape*] embraced all of the *world*; not because we were lovely but He chose to *love* those whom He had created in His own image even while we were lost in sin – Romans 5:8), yet it is addressed specifically to individuals (the singular *whosoever*) and it remains open to the *whosoever* to respond to His calling. God’s calling is simple: hold a continuous belief

³³ Friberg Lexicon; https://www.ntgreek.org/learn_nt_greek/subj-purpose.htm.

in Christ – a persuasion that His work was to pay the price for my sins so that I can be freed from the death penalty that hangs over everyone in this world. However, such a persuasion requires a change of life: from slavery to sin to becoming enslaved to the righteousness of God (Romans 6:18); from an *old man* of selfish endeavors to a *new man* created by God in *righteousness* and *true holiness* (Ephesians 4:22-24). The *choice* that *whosoever* faces is more than just whether or not to believe, it includes making the *choice* to live in obedience to the commandments of the Lord – it is only then that the *not perish* and *have everlasting life* will hold true.

To Timothy, Paul wrote that it is God “Who hath saved us, and called *us* with an holy calling ...” (2 Timothy 1:9a); *called* (*kaleo*), as it is used here, speaks of being invited or summoned, with the clarification that God’s *calling* is *holy*.³⁴ As we’ve just noted, God’s call is to a life that will be lived out in holiness and righteousness; to the Israelites God said, “I *am* the LORD that bringeth you up out of the land of Egypt, to be your God: ye shall therefore be holy, for I *am* holy” (Leviticus 11:45). God’s *calling* is holy and to holiness, which is only reasonable because He is a *holy God*.

Let’s view this *holy calling* within a broader context: “According as he [God] hath chosen us in him [the Lord Jesus Christ] before the foundation of the world, ... *we, being holy and blameless before Him*, in love ... [He] *did predetermine [proorizo] us ... to adoption through Jesus Christ* to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will ...” (Ephesians 1:4-5, the italics are a more literal translation).³⁵ Paul explains that we have been *chosen in Jesus* and, therefore, unless we are *in Christ* we have no basis for claiming to be among God’s *chosen* ones. Jesus commanded us to *abide*, or remain, in Him (John 15:4) – this is something that we are to do, but, quite obviously, we must first come to be *in Him* in order to remain there. We have just seen that God’s calling is to all of humanity (John 3:16), but that the offer of everlasting life is only available to the individual who is continuously believing in Jesus and living in obedience to Him. Therein is living faith (an active belief coupled with active obedience – James 2:17) that sees us united with Christ – grafted into Him by faith (as Paul explained it in Romans 11:19-20). Once we are grafted, Jesus *says*: “Stay there!” – *abide in Me* (John 15:4)! God will not save us unless we choose to believe, and then we must remain (*abide*) in Him. It is as we are *abiding in Christ* that we are *holy and blameless before God*, and are *predetermined* to be adopted by God through what Christ has accomplished for us; however, this will only come to fruition if we **remain** in Christ because it is only as we are *in Him* that this is possible. What is particularly noteworthy is that the *adoption* that God has *predetermined* is **only available to those who are in Christ** – those who have been grafted into Christ and who are living in obedience to Him (those who are *holy and blameless before Him*).

Paul also wrote of these things to the Romans: “For whom he did foreknow [*proginosko* – to know beforehand], he also did predestinate [*proorizo* – to determine beforehand] *to be* conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be [*He being* (nothing to warrant *might* in the Greek)] the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover [now] whom he did predestinate [*proorizo*; we must understand this to be those whom God *did foreknow* who are destined to be conformed to Jesus Christ], them he also called [*kaleo*]: and whom he called [*kaleo*], them he also justified [*dikaioo* – to make righteous]: and whom he justified [*dikaioo*], them he also glorified [*doxazo*]” (Romans 8:29-30).³⁶ Having just considered the passage in Ephesians, we now have a basis for understanding who God has *predestinated* to be like unto His Son, Jesus – it is those who are *in*

³⁴ Strong’s Online.

³⁵ Strong’s Online; Stephanus 1550 NT.

³⁶ Ibid.

Him and who will be adopted because of what Christ has accomplished! John declared: "... we know that, when he [Jesus] shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is" (1 John 3:2b); the culmination of being made like unto Christ (that final step in our adoption) will come when we are caught up to meet Him in the clouds and are clothed in immortality (1 Corinthians 15:52-53). The *foreknowledge* of God of which Paul writes pertains exclusively to those who are *in Christ*; clearly, this is not all that God knows beforehand, but the context requires this narrow application to His *foreknowledge*. The quoted passage (Romans 8:29-30), flows out of all things working together for good to those who are *loving God* and who are *being called according to* (His) *purpose*, which very clearly identifies those who are faithfully abiding in Christ (if they are *love God* then they are also living in faithful obedience to His commands – John 14:15). Therefore, the *whom* of verse 29 can refer to none other than those who are *loving God* and *being called* according to His righteousness and holiness.

Paul then goes on to identify God's predetermination to be bringing these whom He knew beforehand (those who are *in Christ*) into the image of His Son, the Lord Jesus. This ties directly into what we learned from Ephesians: if we are **in Christ** then God has predetermined us to be adopted by Him and, here, it includes being made like unto the glorified Christ (which we earlier noted as being the culmination of our adoption by the Lord). Indeed, this will make Christ the *firstborn among many brethren*; He is the *Head of the body* (Colossians 1:18), the *ekklesia* made up of everyone who has lived or will live faithfully for the Lord. In this life we have the responsibility to wear the *new man* in holiness and righteousness (Ephesians 4:24), and grow in our understanding of the Lord Jesus (2 Peter 3:18) – all of which can only take place as we *remain* in Christ (John 15:4). "*There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit*" (Romans 8:1); in order to *abide* in that place of *no condemnation* before God (*in Christ*), we must be living (*walk*) in accordance with (*after*) the leading of the Spirit of God! Christ will be the Shepherd of a flock of those who have been changed to be like their Shepherd and, through His work, are *called, justified, and glorified*. As we have carefully understood the context of what we have looked at, we recognize that for those who are *in Christ*, God's *foreknowledge* includes an eternity with Him in glory: "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away ... Behold, the tabernacle of God *is* with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, *and be* their God ... He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son" (Revelation 21:1-7). However, this wondrous eternity is only available to those who, through a continuous faithfulness to the Lord, have their names recorded in the Lamb's Book of Life (Revelation 21:27b).

Before we leave this subject, we now have a basis for understanding the words of Jesus: "For many are called, but few *are* chosen" (Matthew 22:14). In our study of this subject, we have seen that God's call extends to all of humanity (He *loved the world*), but into that sacred place in Him, He warned that there would be only a few who would *find it* because its Access is narrow (Matthew 7:14; cp. John 14:6). The *chosen* are those who are *in Christ* by faith, and who *remain* in that place of life through obedience to His commands. All of mankind has an amazing calling from God, but unless we are prepared to take up our cross (the only way to become an *overcomer* for Him; Luke 14:26-27), we will not attain to the glory that He has prepared for those who are His – those who are *abiding in Christ*!

We have been called by God "into the grace of Christ." What is the grace of God or the grace of Christ? When God created man, he was made for fellowship with Him (Genesis 3:8), which is

why man was created in the image of God. Even though man sinned, God already had a plan in place to restore the fellowship that had been broken (1 Peter 1:19-20). Being eternally holy, God could not overlook the sin within man, yet because of His great love for fallen mankind and His desire to be merciful, God had already made provision for his redemption through the perfect sacrifice of His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ – that is God’s ultimate expression of His grace! God, through His perfect love and mercy, made a way for the salvation of mankind to the satisfaction of His equally perfect justice and holiness, so that man could, once again, enjoy fellowship with Him – that is the majesty of God’s grace! The reality of what the Galatians were doing is this: they were turning their backs on the provision that God had made for them in Christ Jesus and were separating themselves from God and that Ultimate Expression of His grace.

The word *removed* speaks of transposition, of replacing one thing with another, and *from* expresses separation; Paul clarifies that these Galatians were in the process of separating themselves *unto another gospel*. *Another*, as found here, is the from Greek word *heteros*, which “expresses a qualitative difference” and indicates something that is different;³⁷ this is **not** the Gospel that Paul brought to them. This is further evidence that they were not simply adding Jewish traditions to their faith in the Lord, but that they were literally changing gospels. Jesus said, “I am **the** way ...” (John 14:6, the definite article *the* is there in the Greek); there is only one narrow Way and that is Jesus Christ (Matthew 7:14). The Galatians were not guilty of syncretism, but of substitution; they were in the beginning to replace the Gospel of life with a gospel that held no life.

7. Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ.

Speaking of the gospel toward which the Galatians were moving, Paul says that it “is not another.” In our English, this sounds rather strange and appears to be a contradiction of what we just read: first, it is declared to be *another gospel*, now he says that it’s not *another*, so which is it? The word *another* in this case, is the Greek *allos* that identifies something that is the same; in other words, this gospel that the Galatians were being tempted to accept was **absolutely not** the same as the Gospel that Paul taught.³⁸ This leaves no doubt that the Galatians were in the process of substituting a totally different message for their faith in Christ. They were substituting a gospel that was essentially different for the true Gospel given to them by Paul and Barnabas; the two were not the same! Once again, we can understand that this was not syncretism; this was a complete departure from the true Gospel that had been imparted to them.

The Greek word translated as *trouble* means to agitate or to stir up.³⁹ It seems that there were only a few who were stirring up the whole group, and Paul’s evaluation is that these had in mind to *pervert*, or to change, the Gospel into something that was its opposite.⁴⁰ When Paul and Barnabas first brought the Good News to this area, we are told that “the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles ... against the brethren” (Acts 14:2). It seems evident that the *agitators* were still present, and that the disturbance continued to bear a Jewish flavor. Consider this last phrase

³⁷ Vine’s “another.”

³⁸ Friberg Lexicon; Strong’s Online.

³⁹ Strong’s Online.

⁴⁰ Vine’s “pervert”; Friberg Lexicon.

carefully: they have in mind to change the Gospel of Christ. This could never happen; it is impossible! The Gospel of Christ is a message of God's truth that is unalterable. These people were seeking to tinker with the truth of God, but, as we have already seen, as soon as you change the truth in the slightest, you destroy it – it is no longer the truth! It is impossible to add godless traditions to the truth of God; the moment that you do, the truth of God disappears – all that you have are godless traditions with a now deceptive appearance of being truth.

It might be argued that the Galatians were not adding godless traditions to their faith when they reverted to the Jewish ordinances. At their very best, the ordinances of Moses were a mere shadow of things to come (Hebrews 10:1); they underscored the holiness of God and man's inability to attend to his sin by himself. Yet even within this complex system of ordinances, regulations, sacrifices and the priesthood, salvation came to the individual only through faith in God; everything pointed forward to the day when the Redeemer would come to forever deal with sin and Satan as promised by God to the devil in the presence of Adam and Eve (Genesis 3:15).

In his letter to the Ephesians, Paul made the status of these Mosaic ordinances clear:

For he [Jesus] is our peace, who hath made both [the Jew and the Gentile] one [in Him], and hath broken down the middle wall of partition *between us*; Having abolished [to render useless by replacement; the replacement is the New Covenant in His blood (Luke 22:20)] in his flesh the enmity, *even* the law of commandments *contained* in ordinances [the Mosaic Law]; for to make in himself of twain one new man, *so* making peace; And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby ... (Ephesians 2:14-16).⁴¹

Jesus has come! The payment for the sins of mankind has been made; the shadows of the Mosaic Law vanished in the presence of the glorious light of the Gospel of Christ's redemption! The ordinances of the Mosaic Law were *abolished* (to render idle or of no further use);⁴² they were done away with through Jesus – not cancelled, but fulfilled: "Think not that I am come to destroy [*kataluo*; literally, *dissolve*] the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy [*kataluo*], but to fulfil [*pleroo*, to complete]" (Matthew 5:17).⁴³ Is it not clear from the Scriptures that the Mosaic ordinances were fulfilled through Christ, and that they are no longer in force? Undoubtedly, this was the Message that infuriated the unbelieving Jews in the region of Galatia on Paul's first journey! It was these Jews who stirred up the trouble for Paul and Barnabas (Acts 14:2, 19), unlike the Jews of Berea who tested Paul's words against the Scriptures (Acts 17:10-11). Therefore, when the Jews of Galatia considered going back to the Jewish ordinances, they were in effect seeking to again embrace ordinances that Christ had completed when He died on the cross; they were being convinced to reinstate the "shadow" when they already know the Light of God. They were seeking to replace the clarity of the Light with the dimness of the shadow, and the exalted Redeemer with empty ordinances.

Here is the subtlety of modern Evangelicalism: they suppose that they can hold onto the fundamental truths of God's Word even while they add the thinking and lifestyle of the world to it. What this passage in Galatians declares so very clearly is that the moment that we add anything to God's Word, our grip on the fundamentals of the faith has failed; we've seen that syncretism of God's truth with anything else is not possible but, like the Galatians, we can transpose, or substitute, something else for God's truth. The Lord has warned us about such things: "Ye shall

⁴¹ Friberg Lexicon.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Strong's Online.

not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish *ought* from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you” (Deuteronomy 4:2). “What thing soever I command you, observe to do it: thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it” (Deuteronomy 12:32). “Every word of God *is* pure: he *is* a shield unto them that put their trust in him. Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar” (Proverbs 30:5-6). “For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and *from* the things which are written in this book” (Revelation 22:18-19). Even though the latter promises relate specifically to the Revelation, the principle is the same: anything added to or removed from God’s Word is condemned (the other passages quoted provide a broad base of support for this). This *other gospel* that the Galatians were accepting, was made by *adding* to what the Gospel message proclaimed – namely, that it was necessary to keep some Jewish traditions in order to be truly saved. A moment’s consideration will reveal the importance of this: if you add to God’s Word you are, in fact, putting words into God’s mouth and soon it will be difficult to identify God’s message; if you remove from His Word, then you no longer have all of His instructions on how to live. We are to “... hold fast the profession of *our* faith without wavering” (Hebrews 10:23), yet if we have handled God’s Word carelessly (by adding or removing), that is not having a firm hold on our hope in Christ.

The moment that Harold Ockenga said, “We repudiate separatism,” he, and everyone who bought into his New Evangelicalism, aligned himself with a message that was not of God. You simply cannot mix error with truth and still call it truth; God’s truth is eternally pure and demands that it remain mutually exclusive of anything that would taint it. The New Evangelicalism announced by Ockenga was not an updated Gospel, it was no longer the Gospel at all; any shift made to the true message of Scripture and the Truth has been destroyed. It is small wonder that today we see the Evangelicals moving back alongside of, and into, the Roman Catholic Church. They are holding a gospel that has become increasingly compromised with the passing years so that now it is only a small step to embrace the Catholics as brothers – and the Evangelicals and Catholics truly are brothers in compromise, but not brothers in Christ. If we could fully comprehend the exclusive purity of God’s Word, we would be far more vigilant to “hold fast the form of sound words” that we have in our Scriptures (2 Timothy 1:13). “Blessed *is* the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But ... [blessed is he whose] delight *is* in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night” (Psalm 1:1-2). The blessing does not come simply from not doing something – the balancing requirement is to *delight* and *meditate* in the law of the Lord. “Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” (2 Timothy 2:15). If we truly understood the life-giving truth of the Scriptures, then we would spend more time *delighting*, *meditating*, and *studying* God’s Word than on things of so little consequence in light of eternity.

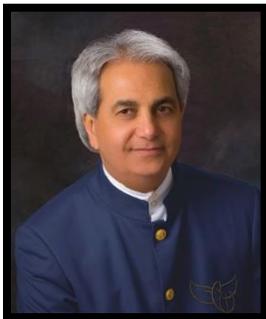
“Truth and Error went swimming. Error got out first and stole Truth’s clothes. Truth got out, but was too proud to wear Error’s clothes. That is why whenever you see error, it will always be clothed with some Truth ... but Truth is always the naked Truth.”⁴⁴ Truth, by its very exclusive nature, will not – cannot – must not be compromised!

⁴⁴ Ralph Colas, “Perspectives,” The Review (May 1999), p. 9.

8. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.

Paul is not finished underscoring the absolute necessity of not compromising the Gospel message in any way. Until I had looked carefully at these introductory verses in this epistle, I'm not sure that I fully appreciated how vitally important it is to hold the truth of God's Word without the slightest tinge of departure. Of course I hold to the inerrancy of the original texts of Scripture, but to know that even a small departure from the text of God's Word is really a complete departure from the truth makes me realize, in a new way, just how important it is for us to hold unswervingly to the right text of Scripture. There will always be those areas where a difference of opinion will surface (for there are many things within the Bible that we will never fully understand), but when we hear the clear and plain text of Scripture, we must be prepared to throw off anything to which we might hold that doesn't completely agree with God's Word. This stands in stark contrast to the Evangelical community where the Word of God has been spiritualized, rationalized, and politicized to the point that there is no longer a "thus saith the Lord" to be heard. The "gospel" of New Evangelicalism (which is no longer *new*) is reaping a harvest of complacent souls who are being assured of the glories of heaven while being fed the dainties of hell. "Woe unto [you] that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter" (Isaiah 5:20); this is the day when this finds fulfillment within the Evangelical community in general. Thirty years ago, these words of Isaiah seemed an impossibility; today one is judged to be "narrow" if one doesn't hold the Ecumenical perspective of what is acceptable. This judgment is not from the world, but from Evangelicals who, like the Pharisees of Jesus' day, are guilty of "laying aside the commandment of God, [in order to] hold the tradition of men" (Mark 7:8).

Paul goes on to emphasize that it is necessary for the Galatians to adhere to the message that



Benny Hinn

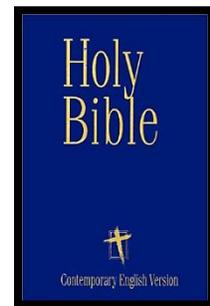
he and Barnabas originally presented to them. The word *though* covers two words in the Greek, which would translate as *even if*. We includes Paul, with his undisputable credentials as an Apostle of Jesus Christ, and all those who are with Paul at this writing. He goes on to include an *angel* or messenger *from heaven*; in other words, even if they received what they considered to be a special revelation from heaven itself, if it did not agree with the Gospel as it was first given to them, then they were to reject it. It is at this point that the charismatic movement and many other cults, which seem to herald a form of Christianity, have failed. When I searched online using the phrase "continuing revelations" I received over 21,000 hits, but as I began to look through them, it became immediately

apparent that most of them related to Mormonism and their defense of ongoing revelation, which forms the bedrock foundation for their heresies. However, the Charismatics and Roman Catholics also harbor a claim to ongoing revelations that take them into things that are expressly forbidden within Scripture. The whole laughing-revival movement evidenced in Toronto and Florida has come into being through men receiving "revelations" that they attribute to the Lord. Benny Hinn's statement concerning the Scriptures reveals just how open they are: "The Bible is the inspired Word of God, **a revelation** from God to mankind, the infallible rule of faith and conduct, and is superior to conscience and reason, but **not contrary to reason**" (emphasis

added).⁴⁵ This is an anemic statement, which not only leaves adequate room for Hinn’s visions and “anointings,” but also makes the Word of God subject to man’s ability to comprehend it. The Catholics, along the same vein, declare: “The Bible, as the inspired recorded [sic] of revelation, **contains the word of God ... all revealed truths are not contained in the Bible ...**” (emphasis added).⁴⁶ They, too, have fudged on the reality of God’s revelation to man, and have opened the door to their traditions and the *ex cathedra* declarations of their popes. All of these have claimed revelations from a messenger from heaven, yet they have failed to heed the warning given here by God: they have failed to measure what they claim against the clear teachings of Almighty God that are in the Bible.

The words *preach any other gospel* and *preached* are translated from the same word in Greek and speak of announcing good news.⁴⁷ The word *than* is very important here (*preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you*), not that you can necessarily tell that from our English translation, but the word in Greek (*para*) is the word *beside* (in English this would include *any other* and *than*).⁴⁸ The emphasis here is that they have been drawn to a “gospel” that is NOT the Gospel originally given by Paul; it is a “gospel” that is *beside* the true Gospel; in other words, it is a false gospel (keep in mind, there is only one Way – John 14:6). This is not the word of today. Today any differences are downplayed and the commonalities are emphasized so that unity can become the banner of the day; Paul’s position is that if it is not the true Gospel as originally given, then it is **not** the Gospel at all. Very simply, there are no variations to the Gospel – there is only one; those who are promoting anything that is different are proclaiming something that is not the Gospel. So when Billy Graham said: “I used to think that pagans in far-off countries were lost -- were going to hell -- if they did not have the Gospel of Jesus Christ preached to them. I no longer believe that,”⁴⁹ he is declaring a gospel that is **BESIDE** the Good News of the Scriptures; therefore his message is **NOT** the Gospel. It is not the Gospel with some differences – it is simply **not** the Gospel. This is a very narrow definition, but it is the only way to read these very clear teachings by Paul, and this is foundational to the Word of God.

Paul’s pronouncement on those who preach a gospel other than the only Gospel is that they are *accursed*. The word is *anathema*, which carries the thought of being doomed to destruction,⁵⁰ or to be given over to divine wrath.⁵¹ Notice, it is not the message that is *anathema*, it is the one who declares it! Within our modern context, this is not a politically acceptable statement to make about anyone – it would be considered judgmental and harsh, even if it is true. Here’s how the translators of the Contemporary English Version⁵² present this strong passage: “I pray that God will punish anyone who preaches anything different from our message to you! It doesn't matter if that person is one of us or an angel from heaven.” Notice that the



⁴⁵ http://www.bennyhinn.org/aboutus/article_desc.cfm?id=1392.

⁴⁶ The Catholic Encyclopedia, “The Bible,” <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/02543a.htm>.

⁴⁷ Strong’s Dictionary, *ESword*.

⁴⁸ Friberg Lexicon.

⁴⁹ <https://ovocebaptistainoltenia.wordpress.com/2010/05/03/billy-graham-general-teachingsactivities/>.

⁵⁰ Strong’s Online.

⁵¹ Friberg Lexicon.

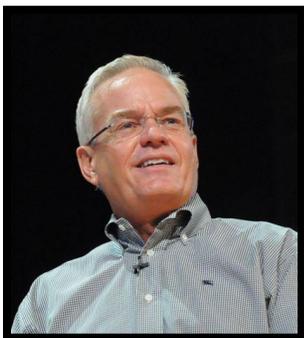
⁵² This translation of the whole Bible was first published by the American Bible Society in 1995, and is based upon the language of today’s magazines, newspapers and television. Clearly, they have taken to heart the obsession of the day to be politically correct.

destructive nature of *anathema* (being placed under a divine curse) has been reduced to mere punishment, and the fire of the Spirit of God against those who would change the Gospel message has been removed altogether.

9. As we said before, so say I now again, If any *man* preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.

Paul and Barnabas "... returned again to Lystra, and to Iconium, and Antioch, confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith ..." (Acts 14:21-22). When Paul and Barnabas met again with these new believers, after establishing an *ekklesia* in each town, it was for the express purpose of strengthening (*confirming*) the new life that was in them. The people were also *exhorted*, which literally means to call to one's side, and denotes "to admonish, exhort, to urge one to pursue some course of conduct."⁵³ What is clearly evident is that Paul and Barnabas took the time to instruct these new believers in the way of truth, and to challenge them to walk carefully in the way of life and remain in (*continue in*) the faith. They were warned, at this time, not to depart from the instruction that they had received.

Paul reminds the Galatians here that they had already been warned to remain in the faith, and he is saying it again. If anyone declares any *other gospel* than what was given to them, he is *anathema*. *Other* is the Greek word *para*, which means *alongside of*⁵⁴ (the same word as used in the previous verse); this *other gospel* is *alongside of* or *beside* the true Gospel – it is **not** the true Gospel. The thrust of this is that if anyone brings them a gospel other than what they have received, he is to be condemned.



Bill Hybels

We have here a re-emphasis of the previous verse. Paul has immediately come to the core of the problem and has declared that they are not to accept any other message than what they first received. There is no provision here for a tolerance of messages that are close (*para*) to the true Message. Paul's concern was not for unity, but for purity of doctrine and faith so that they remain in the Gospel of Christ. Chuck Colson has openly declared: "True unity is not sought by pretending that there are no differences, as modern ecumenists have done, but by recognizing and respecting those differences, while focusing on the great orthodox truths all Christians share."⁵⁵ These words stand in stark contrast to the words of the Spirit of God through

Paul. Today's average Evangelical is nourished on a steady diet of ecumenism and striving for unity, so that there is little or no discerning of the error in the modern message. Compromise of the truth of God is commended as being gracious in spirit; accommodation of divergent views is heralded as being tolerant and kind. Yet the call of God to purity and holiness has not changed, and it will not change despite the best efforts of man to rationalize these eternal truths away. The message that Paul is declaring to the Galatians with great emphasis is that if anyone brings a teaching that is different from the truths contained in our Scriptures, they are to be *accursed*; today

⁵³ Vine's "exhort."

⁵⁴ Friberg Lexicon.

⁵⁵ Chuck Colson, *The Body*, p. 104.

that would include men like Chuck Colson, Billy Graham, Robert Schuller, Rick Warren, Bill Hybels, and the list goes on. However, closer to home, that must also include the messengers in virtually all Evangelical churches – and, I fear, many so-called Fundamental Baptist churches as well. The clear meaning of the Bible has become skewed over time; the influence of the tentacles of the Roman Catholic Church has been stronger than anyone might care to acknowledge. We would do well to carefully ponder, and diligently heed, the warning given to the elder of the *ekklesia* of Pergamos to hold fast (Revelation 2:12-17). May the Lord open our eyes to His Truth, and grant us that determination to return to His Word with our whole hearts and lives. Will it be easy? “Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution” (2 Timothy 3:12).

10. For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ.

Paul now poses a question to these believers using the arguments that he has presented so far as a background: is he seeking to convince (*persuade*) men, or God?⁵⁶ Paul’s words to the Thessalonians would be equally applicable here: “For our exhortation *was* not of deceit [error], nor of uncleanness, nor in guile [deceit]: But as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, even so we speak; not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our hearts” (1 Thessalonians 2:3-4).⁵⁷ What is evident is that Paul has been entrusted with the true Gospel of God, and so his mission in life is to *persuade men* of the veracity of God’s message; he does not bring doctrines of his own making that he hopes to have God accept. Again the Galatians are reminded that Paul has been appointed by God to be entrusted with **His** Gospel to the Gentiles, and, subsequently, commissioned by God to present it to men with the hope of their eternal salvation.

Paul asks the rhetorical question, “Do I seek to please men?” He clarified for the Thessalonians that his goal was to please God (1 Thessalonians 2:4). Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy were each entrusted with the Gospel of God, and the thrust of their efforts was to please God, not men. Peter, when before the Sanhedrin, understood this principle clearly, and boldly declared: “We ought to obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:29). God’s message to mankind has rarely been popular, and neither is it always welcome. “Now thanks *be* unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place. For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish: To the one *we are* the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life” (2 Corinthians 2:14-16). Paul is saying that wherever we go (as faithful Christians) we exude the fragrance of the knowledge of God. To those who are being redeemed, it is a reminder of the life that we have in the Lord; to the unsaved, it is a conviction of the destruction that awaits them. The Gospel is God’s message to this world; it is not of man’s design so that it might be molded and massaged in order to calm the fears of those who must someday stand before God. Paul was very clear about the mission that God had given to him: “For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect” (1 Corinthians 1:17; cp. Romans 16:18). His focus was the proclamation of the Good News, and not with high-sounding words lest the redemption accomplished on the cross by Christ should be rendered of no

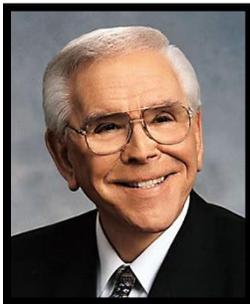
⁵⁶ Friberg Lexicon.

⁵⁷ Strong’s Online.

effect, or be made empty. Today, preachers frequently proclaim carefully crafted monologues filled with majestic rhetoric, but devoid of the cross.

What is interesting to notice is how soon the cross became a verbal symbol for all that Christ had done to purchase salvation for us. Paul told the Corinthians: "... we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness" (1 Corinthians 1:23; also Acts 17:32). The Jews of this day were very familiar with crucifixion; under the Roman regime, thousands upon thousands had been crucified for rebellion, or perceived rebellion, against Roman rule. To the Jew, the cross was an object of horror that was being inflicted upon them, as well as a reminder of the manner of death that had been meted out to Jesus, Who was now being proclaimed Messiah and Savior. Yet Paul, brought up as a strict Pharisee, now declares: "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ ..." (Galatians 6:14). Paul's desire to glory in the cross of Christ has nothing to do with the instrument of Christ's death, but everything to do with the redemptive plan of God that was fulfilled through the death, burial and resurrection of Christ; the "cross" was the symbol that came to encompass all that Christ had completed. The redemptive act of Christ, which took place upon a Roman cross, was the apex of all of time; everyone who came before looked forward to that grand redemption, and everyone who follows after must look back to what the God of the universe accomplished on that day. Paul's desire was that the message of the cross of Christ might stand, untainted and uncompromised by anything; the *cross* symbolized all that God had ordained for the redemption of fallen mankind from before the world was set in place.

Paul openly declares that his desire is not to cater to the whims and appetites of men, but to proclaim the truth of the redemption accomplished by God through Christ. He was very focused on this mission in life. Just how focused is made clear here: "for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ"; if he would have set out to deliver a message that would have been welcomed by men, then he would have failed his Lord. Men like Chuck Colson, Robert Schuller, Rick Warren and your average local pastor have not pondered this reality. The popular discourse today is a word of encouragement, a pep talk on brotherly love, or a motivational challenge to greater unity – none of which reflects God's untainted truth.



Robert Schuller

We live in a day when it is not uncommon for individuals to hold conflicting ideas or positions at the same time, and this is never given a second thought. For example, a 2005 survey found that 70% of Evangelicals believed that moral truth is absolute, while in the same survey only 60% of this same group indicated that they rely "on the principles contained in the Bible as their main source of moral counsel."⁵⁸ This means that at least 10% of the Evangelicals believed in moral absolutes, but they didn't look to the Word of God to determine what those absolutes were. At face value, this would demonstrate a contradiction of what it means to be an Evangelical (holding to an emphasis on the teachings and authority of the Scriptures).⁵⁹ Another survey conducted three years earlier, found that a full 94% of Evangelicals were "absolutely committed to Christianity"; while at the same time, 52% were "totally committed to getting ahead."⁶⁰ That means that at least a full 46% of Evangelicals are both absolutely committed

⁵⁸ <http://www.barna.org/FlexPage.aspx?Page=BarnaUpdate&BarnaUpdateID=194>.

⁵⁹ <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/evangelical?s=t>.

⁶⁰ <http://www.barna.org/FlexPage.aspx?Page=BarnaUpdate&BarnaUpdateID=119>.

to Christianity and totally committed to getting ahead. Clearly, there are many areas where such surveys are flawed but, nevertheless, it demonstrates that people will embrace conflicting concepts, and those who claim to be committed Christians are not immune. Jesus said, “Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also” (Matthew 6:19-21). The words of Jesus make it very clear that you cannot be absolutely committed to Christianity (i.e., to Christ) and at the same time be totally committed to getting ahead (laying up treasure on this earth): “ye cannot serve God and mammon” (Matthew 6:24). There are only two ways to hold contradicting positions like this: redefine the terms to alleviate the contradiction (which is very common today), or simply disassociate the two altogether (a view that one’s faith has little or no influence on how we live). It is into this quagmire of mental gymnastics that the Gospel of Christ enters today, yet the Gospel of God cannot be influenced or shaped by such a context of double-mindedness.

I charge *thee* therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away *their* ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables (2 Timothy 4:1-4).

No more apt description can be found of Evangelicals today, for they have surrendered to shaping the Gospel (which is an absolute impossibility, as we have seen) in order to make it more acceptable to their pleasure-seeking tastes.

11. But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man.

The word *but* is generally used when drawing a contrast, yet there is no contrast here. The Greek word *de* (sometimes translated as *but*) is a more general term than *alla* (which always speaks of a contrast), and could be translated as either *and* or *moreover*.⁶¹ The word *certify* means to make known, and everywhere that the Greek word is used, this is the only time that it is translated as *certify*.⁶² As Paul moves on in his letter, he is saying, “Moreover I am making known (*certify*) to you ...”⁶³ This indicates that what follows will continue with his present subject and provide further clarification. He has made the course of his challenge very clear, and he is not about to change his tone.

However, he inserts here the word *brethren*. After confronting them with their failure to hold to the true Gospel, and being amazed that their failure has come so quickly, he reassures them somewhat by calling them *brethren*. As we have noted earlier, the word *removed* (verse 6) is in the present tense, indicating that they had not completely fallen for a different gospel but were in the process of doing so. Although Paul does not lighten his sense of urgency in getting these people to understand the error that they were favoring, he does appeal to them as brothers and sisters in

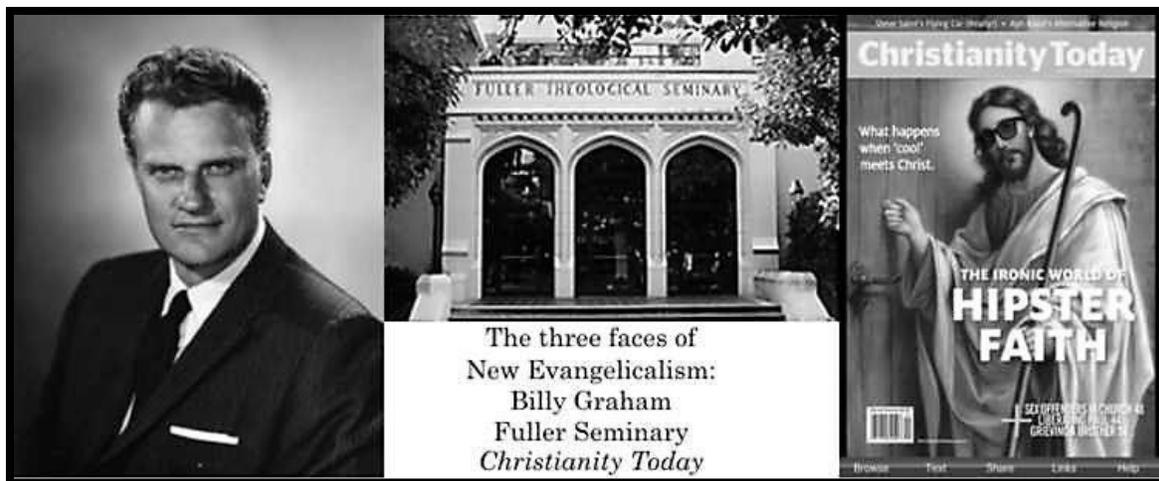
⁶¹ Strong’s Online.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Stephanus 1550 NT.

Christ. Even when Paul charged the Thessalonians to withdraw from a brother who did not walk according to the teachings given to them, he says to “count *him* not as an enemy, but admonish *him* as a brother” (2 Thessalonians 3:15). What we see here is this very concept in action; Paul is appalled at how quickly the Galatians had begun to depart from the Truth, yet he is admonishing, or warning, them as brethren in the Lord.

Paul is making certain that the Galatians understand that the Gospel, the Good News of Christ’s redemption, which he was proclaiming to them, was not *after* or *according to* man.⁶⁴ The message of life, which Paul and Barnabas brought to these people, was not one that originated with man – it was not based upon Paul’s, or anyone else’s, musings. Once again, this underscores the tremendous error into which these believers were falling; they were not tampering with the teachings of man but were seeking to “pervert the gospel of Christ” (Galatians 1:7). As we have already seen, this is impossible, for the moment that you change anything within the Gospel of Christ, you no longer have the Gospel, but a hybrid (a false gospel) of your own creation. When



New Evangelicalism turned its back on Biblical separation, promoted dialogue with the Liberals, became socially involved in order to redeem the culture, and reevaluated their attitude toward the historicity of Genesis, without realizing it, at that very moment they forsook the Gospel of Christ and embraced a different gospel (vs. 6-7). “Now I beseech [exhort] you, brethren, mark [to fix one’s eye upon, watch out for] them which cause divisions and offences [the trigger of a trap, i.e., that which causes one to stumble] contrary to [*para – alongside of*] the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid [turn away from] them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly [they are self-serving]; and by good words [flattering speech] and fair speeches [polished discourse] deceive the hearts of the simple [those who fear no evil from others, the unsuspecting]” (Romans 16:17-18).⁶⁵

The safeguard against the failure of the Galatian believers is found right here. First of all, identify those who are promoting error. How many times have we heard from the pulpits of today, “Someone you all know,” or “a popular teacher today” teaches thus and so, and he is wrong. That is totally unscriptural! Consider the Lord’s words to Ezekiel:

⁶⁴ Strong’s Online.

⁶⁵ Strong’s Online; Friberg Lexicon.

Son of man, speak to the children of thy people, and say unto them, When I bring the sword upon a land, if the people of the land take a man of their coasts, and set him for their watchman: If when he seeth the sword come upon the land, he blow the trumpet, and warn the people; Then whosoever heareth the sound of the trumpet, and taketh not warning; if the sword come, and take him away, his blood shall be upon his own head. He heard the sound of the trumpet, and took not warning; his blood shall be upon him. But he that taketh warning shall deliver his soul. But if the watchman see the sword come, and blow not the trumpet, and the people be not warned; if the sword come, and take *any* person from among them, he is taken away in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at the watchman's hand. So thou, O son of man, I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel; therefore thou shalt hear the word at my mouth, and warn them from me (Ezekiel 33:2-7).

Unless we *mark* the perpetrator of error, how will anyone be warned against him? They won't be! If we recognize the wolf that is parading around like a sheep, is it not our responsibility to identify that wolf so that the sheep can avoid him? That means pointing him or her out; they must be named! We are all watchmen; we have all been called to test the spirits whether they are of God (1 John 4:1) – but when we find them to be of the devil (not of God), do we keep that information to ourselves? If the watchman sees the enemy but does not sound the warning, then those who fall to the enemy will be required of his hand. What a tremendous responsibility we all have to sound the alarm against the enemy of our souls! Yet Evangelicals are strangely silent today.

Lastly, avoid the one who has been identified. This is only a two-step safeguard – it is not complicated. Not only do we find that Christians today (both Evangelical and Fundamental) are unwilling to take the step of identifying these frauds, but we then find that, even when the warning has been called, they refuse to heed it. I recall when I faced the pastor and board of our local Evangelical Free Church about them bringing in the Pentecostal Indians and their native trappings, they were unwilling to act on what the Scriptures plainly declared to be error. Excuses ranged from, “Dean Shingoose⁶⁶ (the Pentecostal leader) has been a Christian for twenty years,” to “I will trust the judgment of the head of the missions committee.” All that you can do then is avoid them (in this case, those of the Evangelical Free Church), for they have no ear for the warnings of Scripture, only an insatiable appetite for compromise and unity. Shortly thereafter, the pastor of this church declared from the pulpit that God's number one priority for the church is unity; in other words, don't try to hold us accountable to Scripture because we have another agenda.



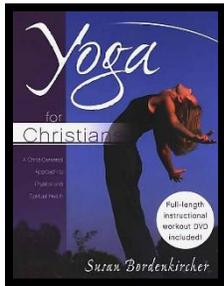
Shingoose performs Smudge Ceremony

12. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught *it*, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ.

⁶⁶ The photo included shows Dean Shingoose (on the left) performing the native smudge ceremony in the Foothills Hospital chapel. He says: “It's very important to many aboriginal patients to be able to connect to their traditional spiritual roots at difficult times such as hospital stays.” http://www2.canada.com/calgary_herald/news/story.html?id=b79129e1-5ada-4ec9-8a71-46e605ee57af.

Paul now goes on to clarify what he meant by stating that the Gospel that he taught, was not *after man* or *according to man* (verse 11).⁶⁷ It was neither a product of Paul’s contemplations nor did it come from someone else – Paul did not consult with a guru of his day to come up with the Message that he declared to the Galatians.

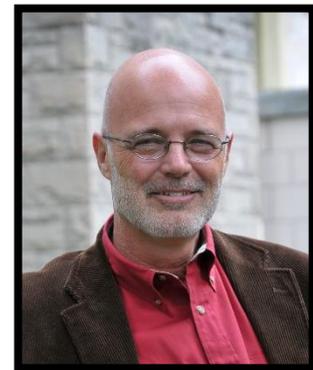
Today we hear of the Emergent Church and the influence that it is having worldwide; yet, will we recognize its face when it comes knocking at our door? The foundational premise of the Emergent Church is that of contextualized theology. By this, they mean that the message of the Bible must be made to fit within the context of the society and culture into which it is being presented; the reality is that they seek to manipulate and mold the Gospel into something other than what it should be. Our North American culture has been thoroughly influenced by what is



known as the New Age movement – a nebulous movement without leader or creed, but one that has infiltrated every area of life. Couched within a nest of relativism and extensive tolerance, New Age thinking spread rapidly throughout our society infiltrating the educational system so that children are exposed to this mindset from their earliest years, and so will see no wrong in it. This, in turn, has provided an avenue for the introduction of Eastern mysticism through such things as transcendental meditation, yoga, and martial arts (and you will now find these very things within the Evangelical movement as well). There are Evangelicals today promoting “Christian Yoga” (an oxymoron, if there ever was one) and heavy

involvement in martial arts; the excuse is that it is a form of exercise, yet the Eastern purveyors of these activities will readily admit that you cannot separate them from their religious context. Into this flagrant error comes the philosophy of contextualized theology.

The Emergent Church encompasses all of these things: relativism (although to a declining degree; Brian McLaren, the prominent thinker of this movement has said that it is necessary to go beyond relativism to interspirituality⁶⁸), tolerance (you must be accepting of everyone else’s beliefs as being true) and Eastern mysticism (with the introduction of mantras, out-of-body experiences, and channeling). “Interspirituality is the outcome of contemplative prayer and is the uniting of all religions and the denial that Jesus Christ as the only way of salvation.”⁶⁹ All of these are accepted with open arms, as the experience becomes the determining factor as to what is acceptable; the sound doctrine that Titus was encouraged to speak, has been left behind (Titus 2:1). The spirituality that the New Age promotes is a metaphysical dimension that stands above all religions and draws them all together (hence, *interspirituality*); it is a dimension that they access through meditation and deep inner contemplation, thereby making contact with spirit guides who will reveal hidden mysteries to them.



Brian McLaren

One of the subtle reasons that the contemplative prayer advocates use for justifying their activities is that they are returning to the teachings of the original church fathers. However, they

⁶⁷ Friberg Lexicon.

⁶⁸ <http://www.lighthouse Trailsresearch.com/emergingchurch.htm>.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

are not speaking of the Apostles of Jesus or of their writings contained in our Scriptures. Rather, they are looking at the teachings of the mystical fathers, the *desert fathers* – those recluses of the early centuries who devised all manner of wild heresies.⁷⁰ Dallas Willard has been a strong



Dallas Willard

promoter of this new philosophy (for it is not Christianity); he came from a Baptist background, considered himself to be somewhat Calvinistic, and spoke the language of today's Evangelical. Willard made a very telling claim that exposes his heresy for all who have eyes to see: "... we *can* become like Christ by doing one thing – by following him in the overall style of life he chose for himself."⁷¹ Notice that the emphasis here is on doing the things that Jesus did, experiencing the life that Jesus led – not aspiring to be like Jesus in character through the operation of the Spirit of God within. By contrast, we read in the Scriptures, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me" (Galatians 2:20). "Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof" (Romans 6:11-12). Within Willard's world, there is no recognition of Jesus as the eternal Word of God and the Savior of mankind (which is not surprising since Biblical doctrine is dismissed as restrictive and old fashioned). The focus of the Emergent Church, spiritual formation, contemplative prayer or centering prayer (there are many names for this chameleon-like movement) is on experience – not the experience of new birth in Christ through the cleansing work of the Spirit of God, but on those experiences that we can have that do not restrict the expression of our human will. They hold to an ultimate form of pragmatism: if it works for you (which means, if it makes you happy or gives you pleasure), then do it – right and wrong have been dismissed in favor of a personally subjective standard. There is no room for anything as exclusive as God's Truth.

Willard sees the grace of Christ entering our lives through "... the power of ritual and liturgy or the preaching of the Word, through the communion of the saints or through a heightened consciousness of the depths and mystery of life."⁷² Spiritual formation calls for liturgy, and is fascinated with mysticism. What is mysticism? Is it simply something that is hidden or difficult to understand? Not really; it is defined as, "the pursuit of achieving communion or identity with, or conscious awareness of, ultimate reality, the divine, spiritual truth, or God through direct experience, intuition, or insight; and the belief that such experience is an important source of knowledge, understanding, and wisdom."⁷³ That is the mysticism with which the Emergent Church is enamored, and they have found a rich source of this in the reclusive fathers – the monks of ancient church history who also happen to be among the founding fathers of the Roman Catholic Church. What is amazing is that even though Satan has virtually destroyed any semblance of God's Truth within this movement, they will still use a form of the Scriptures to put forward a pretense of having Biblical support for their aberrant beliefs and behavior. They will speak of God

⁷⁰ <https://www.lighthouse Trailsresearch.com/blog/?p=22009>.

⁷¹ Dallas Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines*, (San Francisco, CA: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1988), p. ix.

⁷² Willard, p. x.

⁷³ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mysticism>.

and of Christ but only have “a form of godliness,” and, without the power of the Spirit of God, they flounder in confusion and darkness (2 Timothy 3:5).

Let me outline just a few signs of the Emergent Church so that we can more easily identify their activities:⁷⁴

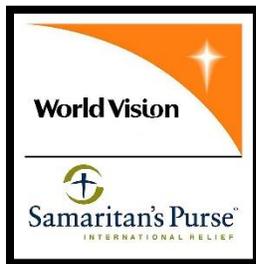
1. *Scripture is no longer the ultimate authority as the basis for the Christian faith.* This is very significant, for there are many churches today that still acknowledge (at least in their constitutions) that the Scriptures are the final authority for life, even if their practice tells another story. We must be discerning, we must do more than listen to their words, and we must watch their walk. Even Benny Hinn declares the Bible to be “the infallible rule of faith and conduct,”⁷⁵ and Rick Warren states the Bible to be the “supreme source of truth for Christian beliefs and living,”⁷⁶ yet both of these men continually depart from many of the clear instructions of the Word of God. When the leaders of New Evangelicalism revealed their colors back in 1948, one of their declarations was that they would re-examine some of the doctrines pertaining to the historical accuracy of the book of Genesis.⁷⁷ By doing this, they threw the door wide open for discussion on whether, for example, the six days of creation was a Biblical doctrine, thereby placing a question mark over much of what had been readily accepted as truth within fundamental thinking. We may condemn the leaders of the Emergent Church but we must recognize that the basis for their heresy has found traction through the acceptance of this New Evangelical teaching – they are simply the product of the error that was embraced by the leaders of this movement over 60 years ago.



Rick Warren

2. *The centrality of the gospel of Jesus Christ is being replaced by humanistic methods promoting church growth and a social gospel.* Once again, New Evangelicalism declared the necessity of placing a greater emphasis upon the social needs of the people being reached with the Gospel, to the extent that Evangelical (what was *New Evangelical* is no longer *new*) missions like World Vision and Samaritan’s Purse focus almost all of their resources and efforts on meeting the physical needs of the people while ignoring their spiritual needs. Inasmuch as they have forsaken the true Gospel, it is not surprising that the social and physical needs have overrun these organizations. It is not wrong to meet the needs of others but, as followers of Christ, that is not to be our first priority. Jesus, during His earthly ministry, healed many of their diseases, but we do not read of Him granting material possessions to those who were poor.

As a matter of fact, it is clear from the Scriptures that the poor have a favored place within God’s economy (Proverbs 14:31; 17:5; Matthew 5:3). When John the Baptist inquired of Jesus if He was the One, one of the evidences that Jesus presented as proof of His authenticity was that the “poor have the gospel preached to them” (Matthew 11:5) – not that the poor were now rich in the world’s goods. We’ve all seen the havoc that has been created by the church growth movement: business



⁷⁴ All the signs given here are extracted from a larger listing (*italics indicates a quotation*).

http://www.inplainsite.org/html/signs_of_emerging.html

⁷⁵ <http://www.bennyhinn.org/aboutus/articledesc.cfm?id=1392>.

⁷⁶ <http://saddleback.com/flash/believe2.html>.

⁷⁷ Harold Ockenga, Foreword, *The Battle for the Bible*, Harold Lindsell.

marketing techniques implemented to attract the modern worldly patron, served with a watered down gruel that is passed off as the Gospel. Yes, Rick Warren is very open and accepting of the Emergent Church philosophies, as he is of most religious thinking.

3. *While the authority of the Word of God is undermined, images and sensual experiences are promoted as the key to experiencing and knowing God.* How did the authority of the Word of God become undermined? New Evangelicalism declared a repudiation of Biblical separation, and a commitment to dialogue with the religious Liberals and heretics (“the theological dialogue of the day”)⁷⁸ – the result: the Word of God was left behind in favor of more compatible and comfortable philosophies. With the authority of the Word of God removed, experience became the measure of how we can know God. Satan has ensured that many have had positive experiences through meditation and looking inward so that it becomes a heralded method of getting to know God – or what they assume to be God. *These experiences include icons, candles, incense, liturgy, labyrinths, prayer stations, contemplative prayer, experiencing the sacraments, particularly the sacrament of the Eucharist.* All of these are sanctioned for people to experiment with in order to determine what works best for them. Notice how they, for the most part, reach out to Catholic traditions. Labyrinths, for example, find their source in ancient mythology and are common within the ancient Greek culture and, from thence, were absorbed into Roman Catholicism. These are unlike our modern maze or puzzle in that there is nothing to figure out – you simply walk a complex pattern that leads inward, then back outward, as a means to enhance inner meditation or contemplative prayer. Today, those seeking a mystical experience use the labyrinth to help them “achieve a contemplative state.”⁷⁹ In ancient times it was thought to be a spiritual journey of seeking God (the center of the labyrinth) and, subsequent to that, it became a substitute for a spiritual pilgrimage.



Labyrinth

What is readily evident is that this has no place within the life of a follower of Christ, yet the Emerging Church and contemplative prayer adherents embrace this heresy. This past Easter (and I use the word with full recognition of its pagan roots) a Mennonite friend of ours told us of a wonderful spiritual experience that she had by going through the Stations of the Cross (prayer stations) – a Roman Catholic ritual that is being embraced by those who should know better. The shrinking gap between paganism and Evangelicalism is bridged by many and sundry means – Satan delights in offering a smorgasbord of alternatives. However, when the authority of the Scriptures is questioned (or removed entirely), then there is nothing left to measure our experience against other than our own personal sense of satisfaction. Satan, the father of lies, will ensure that he bears the image of an angel of light for those who dabble in these things.

4. *There will be a growing trend towards an ecumenical unity for the cause of world peace claiming the validity of other religions and that there are many ways to God.* What immediately comes to mind is Rick Warren’s P.E.A.C.E.⁸⁰ plan that embraces all faiths without question, and opens the door to acknowledging the validity of all religions. Billy Graham, by extending eternal life to those outside of the faith and by embracing Roman Catholicism, has helped to broaden the

⁷⁸ Harold Ockenga, Foreword, *The Battle for the Bible*, Harold Lindsell.

⁷⁹ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Labyrinth>.

⁸⁰ When Warren first began his P.E.A.C.E. initiative, the “P” stood for Plant churches, now it stands for Promote reconciliation.

pathway to God in the minds of many Evangelicals. Robert Schuller's acceptance of the god of Islam as being the same as the God of Christianity has done much to spread the heresy that we all ascribe to one god. Yet all three of these men continue to be held in high regard among Evangelicals. Clearly, this kind of thinking is a product of the dialogue that the New Evangelicals began having with the Liberals and those of other faiths many years ago. Ecumenical unity is almost taken for granted today, and anyone who has a problem with such is looked at as being narrow minded and out-of-touch.

Can you see the subtlety of the Emergent Church philosophy? What began as a small questioning of the authority of the Word of God with New Evangelicalism, has grown into an acceptance of the methodologies of the heretical early church fathers to where, today, everyone can receive special enlightenment from their own spirit guides whom they contact through deep inner meditation. Even though the method of meditation specifically demands that you empty your mind completely so that you can then hear from the voice of the devil (which they mistakenly identify as Jesus), Evangelicals will accept this because it makes them feel good. The foundation



Bruxy Cavey

of all of this inner-focused meditation, or prayer, is that deep within all of us is a spark of the divine (which sounds like Mormonism 101, but is really Satanism 101 – Genesis 3:5). This thinking (in a better disguise than I've presented) is being taught in "Christian" schools like Wheaton College, Dallas Seminary, Briercrest Seminary, Trinity Western University and Prairie Bible College. Dallas Willard's writings have been used as course texts at Prairie, and the school recently brought Bruxy Cavey in, who is involved with the Emergent Church, "to challenge our students to a deeper commitment to Christ;"⁸¹ the influence of this errant teaching is very close to home. The flavor will depend on the situation; the emphasis is on molding the message to fit the context in which you find yourself. Nothing is static, absolutes are out, and what is called for is a mystical drawing together of all faiths at a level that stands above all religions. In essence, this is a spiritual tower of Babel where, through deep inner contemplative prayer, they ascend above all to be united within the realm of the spirits that oversee all.

By contrast, Paul declares that he did not receive the Gospel of God from man, nor was he taught it by man but, rather, he received it by revelation from Jesus Christ Himself. Consider, for a moment, how the devil is using the Emergent Church. When the devil approached Eve in the Garden, he said, "... ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil" (Genesis 3:5), and this lie has not changed through all of the years since. Today, through centered meditation and emptying their minds, people are receiving messages from the spirit world and accepting these as coming from God. The devil has blinded their eyes so that they accept what they hear in this altered state of consciousness as being God's word to them, when in reality it is the devil lulling them into an ever increasing state of vulnerability. They feel like gods, having received special messages from the spirit world; they are convinced that they are gods, for they have tapped into that inner being: the god within all of us. "The heart *is* deceitful above all *things*, and desperately wicked" (Jeremiah 17:9). They have found the *prince of this world*, the devil, and rejoice in their folly (John 16:11). Having abandoned the authority of the Word of God, they have no sense of their need to measure what they are receiving against the Scriptures, so whatever they hear, if it makes them feel good, then it becomes truth to them and they will live by it. What a tremendous deception, and it all began in Genesis 3 when the authority of God's Word to us was questioned. The Psalmist declared,

⁸¹ From a letter from Jon Ohlhauser, president of PBI, dated September 18, 2008.

“Through thy precepts I get understanding: therefore I hate every false way” (Psalm 119:104), and contained within that simple, yet profound statement is both the antidote to today’s apostasy and the reason that the apostasy is so great. Through the Word of God, we gain spiritual understanding that will keep us from being deceived by the devil’s alluring false doctrine; today’s Evangelical, by not understanding the Word of God (which is a direct result of false teachers and personal neglect), is fair game for every false doctrine that is proclaimed.

One of the distinctions of the teachings of Scripture is that they are eternally the same. They are the same in every culture and every situation. Paul’s Message came by revelation, not through inner contemplation but from Jesus Christ Whom he had persecuted. The source is the Lord Jesus Christ, the eternal Word of God made flesh (John 1:14), Who is *yesterday and today the same and unto the ages* (literal translation of Hebrews 13:8).⁸² This stands in stark contrast to man’s “Christianity” that is always in flux, ever being molded to fit the latest cultural quirk, and always subject to being trimmed or shaped to make it integrate with the latest fads and fashions. If there is one thing that should be obvious so far, it is that the Gospel of God does not change; man’s religion, on the other hand, will change with every wind that blows (Ephesians 4:14).

Paul will now go on to explain to the Galatians the course of action that followed his dramatic conversion.

13. For ye have heard of my conversation in time past in the Jews’ religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and wasted it:

This begins one of only a few passages that tell us a bit about Paul’s life and experience. This was never Paul’s focus, yet there were times, like this, when he would elaborate on how the Lord granted him the Message that he bore. Clearly, it was not done to aggrandize himself, but rather to provide a context and a reason for the recipients of his writings to accept the Truth of God as declared through him.

Paul begins with a reference to his life before he met the Lord that day on his way to Damascus. The word *conversation* refers to his manner of life.⁸³ Notice how this is phrased; he refers to his past life as being “in the Jews’ religion.” We have seen that this letter is directed to a people who were in the process of substituting a false gospel for the truth that had been given to them by Paul and Barnabas; they were being deceived into bringing elements of the Judaism that many of them had left into the Gospel. As we have also noted, it was “the unbelieving Jews [who] stirred up the Gentiles” in Galatia (Acts 14:2). Paul wanted it to be clear that he was no longer identifying with Judaism, that was in his past, that was where he came from but that was not where he now stood. By doing so, he draws a contrast between the Galatians’ position and his own; he was formerly a part of Judaism, but no longer. The Galatian believers had been born anew into the faith of Jesus, but they were now beginning to accept some of what Paul had left behind. Even as he begins the testimony of his experience within Judaism, he draws their attention to the fact that Judaism was in his past – he had left it behind.

⁸² Stephanus 1550 NT.

⁸³ Strong’s Online.

Perhaps it is in order, at this juncture, to clarify what Paul did and did not set aside. He calls what he used to be involved in “the Jews’ religion” (*Ioudaismos*, Judaism).⁸⁴ We have already noted that Paul was a Pharisee before his conversion, and very zealous to be the best Pharisee possible; this was also the group that received the greatest criticism from the Lord during His earthly ministry. Jesus condemned these Jewish leaders for not recognizing Him as Messiah, even while they claimed to strongly embrace Moses’ teachings. Jesus declared to them that they did not hold to Moses: “For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me: for he wrote of me” (John 5:45-47). What Paul left behind in his new life in Christ were the Pharisaical traditions and additions to the Mosaic teachings; these were merely men’s laws and held no authority at all (it was for these that Jesus condemned the Pharisees). However, he also left behind the ordinances and ceremonial laws of the Mosaic

The Law of God:

- ✓ Ten Commandments
- ✓ Written by God’s finger
- ✓ Written upon stone

covenant, for they had found their fulfillment (their completion, their end) in the Lord’s death, burial, and resurrection (Ephesians 2:14-16); they foreshadowed Jesus’ sacrifice for sin that was determined from before the foundation of the world (Hebrews 10:1; 1 Peter 1:19-20). What Paul did not leave behind was the Decalogue, written by the finger of God on tables of stone (Exodus 31:18; 34:1, 28). It is noteworthy that the Ten Commandments were established by a two-fold demonstration of their permanency: they were written on stone, and they were written by God. This stands in contrast to the Mosaic Laws, which were declared through Moses – no less binding upon Israel, but these would see their end, or fulfillment, in the Lord Jesus Christ (Matthew 5:17). The purpose of the ten-item declaration of the Law of God is to show us that we are sinners: “... I had not known sin, but by the law” (Romans 7:7); this Law, written by the finger of God upon stone tables, is alive and well today. Jesus declared, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second *is* like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets” (Matthew 22:37-40; cf. Deuteronomy 6:5; Leviticus 19:18). The first four Commandments of the Decalogue deal with our relationship with God, and the remaining six Commandments relate to our relationship with our fellow man. There are those today who proclaim that we are no longer under the law but under grace (quoting from Romans 6, but without regard to the context), which could be (and often is) interpreted to mean many things. It is most often abused to provide license to use our liberty in Christ as an occasion to fulfill the desires of the flesh (Galatians 5:13).

However, I would suggest that a careful reading of Scripture makes it clear that this is not a proper understanding of law and grace. Jesus said: “Think not that I am come to destroy [dissolve] the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil [to make full]” (Matthew 5:17).⁸⁵ Jesus fulfilled the Ten Commandments by keeping them perfectly (Hebrews 4:15); even though He lived by the Mosaic Laws before His death, He also made an end of them by being the One to Whom all of these statutes, ordinances, the priesthood and sacrifices looked forward (Colossians 2:17). The Law of God was death to us who could not keep it (Romans 7:6-11), and that was all of us, yet the Law is declared to be righteous and holy (Romans 7:12). What we must never forget is that salvation never came through the Law (Romans 3:20); salvation has always come through

⁸⁴ Strong’s Online.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

faith in the promises of God (Hebrews 11:7, 13), and such faith is always exemplified by obedience to God.

So, what of Paul's words, "For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace" (Romans 6:14)? First of all, consideration needs to be given to the context of this verse, which identifies the believer as being dead to sin – the pronouncement of the Law (Romans 6:6-18; 7:5,9). Further, I would suggest that the redeemed of Israel (those who exercised faith in the promised Redeemer), even though they lived under the ordinances and sacrifices of the Mosaic Law, were also no longer "under the law, but under grace." Although they were still required to keep the sacrifices and ordinances in obedience to God, they were redeemed through faith in His promises, and, as such, they were no longer under the condemnation of the Law. Did that grant them license to sin? By no means! "Ye shall walk after the LORD your God, and fear him, and keep his commandments, and obey his voice, and ye shall serve him, and cleave unto him" (Deuteronomy 10:1). However, Hebrews 11 makes it very clear that these men and women were saved through faith, in the same manner as we are today. The marvelous thing that we see in Scripture is that God's means of salvation has never changed – truly we have an unchanging Redeemer (Job 19:25-26).

The Law of Moses:

- ✓ Based on the Law of God
- ✓ Given to Moses through angels
- ✓ Fulfilled and abolished at the cross

One difference for us today is that the sacrifices and ordinances of the Mosaic Law have been fulfilled (completed, ended) through the death, burial and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. The call of God is still the same (Malachi 3:6): "For I *am* the LORD that bringeth you up out of the land of Egypt, to be your God: ye shall therefore be holy, for I *am* holy" (Leviticus 11:45); "... according as He who did call you *is* holy, ye also, become holy in all behaviour ..." (1 Peter 1:15). We are living in a day of fulfillment – Christ died once for all (we do not practice a continual sacrifice of Christ [Hebrews 10:10], unlike the Catholics in their Eucharist). Rather, we are baptized once into Christ, based upon a proper understanding of what baptism means (Acts 8:34-38; therefore, we do not need to be re-baptized every time that we fail [1 John 1:9]). "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit" (Romans 8:3-4; see Jeremiah 31:33 and its correlation with Luke 22:20). The Spirit of God is guiding our walk (present tense) in newness of life (Romans 8:4). Believer's baptism illustrates the reality of the spiritual change that takes place through new birth: we are identified with Christ in His death (we die to our sinful natures; down into the water), in His burial (our sinful natures are deemed buried and left behind; under the water), and in His resurrection (we are raised up in new life to walk after the Spirit of God, and no longer after the flesh – Romans 8:4; brought up out of the water). Paul states unmistakably that "the law *is* holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good" (Romans 7:12), and, as we walk by the Spirit, the righteousness of that holy Law will be fulfilled in us. Even though we are no longer under the Law, for we have died to it, yet, through the work of the Spirit of God, the righteousness of the Law will find expression through us. The Ten Commandments did not come with an expiry date (as we have seen, they came written by the finger of God upon tables of stone); what God required of man from the day of his creation, He had now inscribed in stone – man was now without excuse. What God continues to require of us is that the righteousness of that very same Law be lived out in us through the power and working of the Spirit of God. What

Paul left behind were the Pharisaical rules and regulations and the Mosaic ordinances and sacrifices; what he did not leave behind were the Ten Commandments of God, for, through the Spirit of God, the righteousness of these Commandments would find expression through his life.

Just in case the Galatians had forgotten the life that Paul was leading before his conversion, he provides them with a brief reminder. The words *beyond measure* are from two words in Greek that come together to make a strongly emphasized expression, *exceeding (kata), beyond measure (huperbolē)*.⁸⁶ Paul declares his persecution of God's *ekklesia* as being exceedingly beyond measure; it was way beyond what was reasonable given the situation. There is no indication that any of the other Jews took such drastic measures against the assemblies of Christians as Paul did, and he readily admits here that his response to them was way beyond what was called for. "And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord ..." (Acts 9:1). The Greek word for *breathing out* literally means to *inhale* (yes, *inhale*; not exhale), or *to be animated by*.⁸⁷ Saul's attack on the disciples of the Lord was his life; it was what kept him going. He was completely focused on eliminating this group by any and every means possible; he was possessed by the obsession of removing this group. Clearly, Paul was a man of great passion and, whatever he did, he did it with all of his being; after his conversion, he was equally passionate about the truth of the Gospel message.

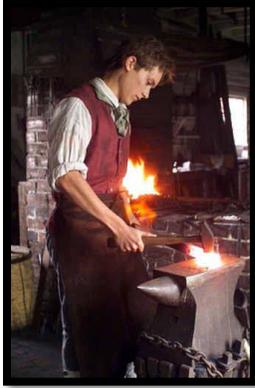
Paul states here that he *persecuted* and *wasted* the *ekklesia* of God. Jesus said, "I will build my church [*ekklesia*]" (Matthew 16:18), yet here is Paul persecuting what Jesus is building, and seeking to destroy (*waste*) it. What Paul soon learned as he journeyed to Damascus was that, even though he was persecuting the disciples of the Lord, he was really fighting against the Lord Himself. Jesus told Paul plainly, "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest ..." (Acts 9:5). If we consider the metaphor of the body, which Paul uses in 1 Corinthians 12:12-27 and Ephesians 4:15-16, Christ is the Head, and we who believe in Him make up the body. Physically, any injury to the body is obviously felt by the head, for the brain must take action with the appropriate healing responses; so, too, within the Body of Christ, any persecution directed at the Body will be felt by the Head. What comfort it is to know that the Lord is fully aware of all that is laid against us. "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (2 Timothy 3:12); "Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he *was* wounded for our transgressions, *he was* bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace *was* upon him; and with his stripes we are healed" (Isaiah 53:4-5). "*It is* Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us" (Romans 8:34). What comfort we can take in knowing that Christ knows the burdens that we bear and, wonder of wonders, He is interceding for us with the Father (Romans 8:34).

14. And profited in the Jews' religion above many my equals in mine own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers.

⁸⁶ Strong's Dictionary.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

We have here a description of Paul, the Pharisee. The Greek word for *profited* literally means *to beat forward*, and found its origin with a blacksmith beating a piece of metal to lengthen it.⁸⁸ What is evident from this one little word is the energy that Paul expended as a Pharisee; he did nothing half way. If the Pharisees sought to persecute the new believers in Christ, then Paul would excel at this task.



His zealous commitment saw him rise above those of his own age and station. Today, many would call him a driven man, one obsessed or possessed. Yet it is clear that his commitment was not to his own personal prosperity or prestige, but rather to what he deemed to be the truth of Judaism. He held a tremendous zeal for what he had learned from childhood as being truth – those traditions handed down through the Pharisaical teaching. He was a rising star in the world of the Pharisees; Gamaliel probably saw in Paul his own successor.

We have here, again, words coming together to emphasize the passion of Paul at this point in his life. He was *more exceedingly zealous*; the word *zealous* already speaks of an uncompromising and burning commitment to a cause, but to that is added a Greek word that means *more exceedingly*.⁸⁹ If some of Paul's peers in the Pharisaical traditions were zealous, he was that much more so. There can be no doubt that Paul was a fired-up Pharisee!

15. But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called *me* by his grace,

When it seemed good to God, everything changed. Paul could well have wondered why God didn't open the eyes of his understanding while Jesus was still carrying out His ministry on earth. Yet he acknowledges that God's timing in his life was not to be questioned; the transformation took place at a time that was good for God. The word *separated* means "to mark off from others by boundaries," and then to "set apart for some purpose."⁹⁰ There is a sense here that Paul could look back over his life and see how God had intervened and orchestrated the events, even from his birth, that had brought him to this time and place. Even during his years of studying Judaism, he could see God using this to prepare him for the work that was now given to him.

Paul never lost his sense of awe that God would specifically call him to launch His Gospel message to the whole world, and especially to the Gentile world. Consider the magnitude of God's grace that was demonstrated in Paul:

And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest, And desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem. And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven: And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou

⁸⁸ Strong's Online.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

persecutest: *it is* hard for thee to kick against the pricks. And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord *said* unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do. ... And he was three days without sight, and neither did eat nor drink. ... And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales: and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized. And when he had received meat, he was strengthened. ... And straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God (Acts 9:1-6, 9, 18-20).

Within four days, Paul went from persecuting all those who followed the way of the Lord Jesus, to preaching that Jesus was the Son of God. Paul knew the Scriptures, he had been thoroughly taught, and when his eyes were opened to God's truth (something that was hidden under the Pharisaical traditions), he immediately recognized Jesus as fulfilling the OT prophecies. Unfortunately, today's Bible Colleges are filled with methodologies and philosophies that bury, distort and confuse God's message in His Word to the extent that those coming out of these halls of learning remain largely ignorant of the Scriptures. When the Spirit of God opens our spiritual eyes of understanding, we must often go back to the basics and learn what it really means to be a child of God. Much of what we have taken for granted within Evangelical teaching needs to be re-examined in the light of God's Word – we must be Bereans and not fear to hold the doctrines, that we have held dear for years, up to the revealing purity of the light of God's Truth.

Much of what is heard within Evangelicalism today is molded, theologically and philosophically, so as to make a unified system for handling the Word of God; however, the result is that too often the truths of God's Word are bent or buried in the process. Slowly, over the years, the focus has shifted from the Scriptures to the systematic theologies that have been worked, re-worked and polished until they perfectly reflect man's image. God's word to Joshua was: "This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success" (Joshua 1:8). The Psalmist declared: "Blessed *is* the man [whose] delight *is* in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night" (Psalm 1:2), and: "O how I love thy law! it *is* my meditation all the day" (Psalm 119:97). The Law referred to here is that which was written upon tables of stone by the finger of God (Exodus 34:28) – the instructions of God that have been established forever. Our focus must be the Word of God; the Pharisees were condemned for losing this focus. Jesus showed them their failure to adhere to the Word of God: "Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition" (Mark 7:9). The Pharisees and scribes of Jesus' day had allowed their focus to shift from the text of God's Word to the decrees of their own making (which may have been loosely based on the Word of God), and to their carefully crafted systematic theology of Who God was and how He worked.

Sola Scriptura

One of the cries of the Reformers was, *Sola Scriptura* – *Scripture alone!* Within Protestantism, this phrase has been defined as "the Bible as God's written word is self-authenticating, clear (perspicuous) to the rational reader, its own interpreter ('Scripture interprets Scripture'), and sufficient of itself to be the final authority of Christian doctrine."⁹¹ Although the origin of this term and its definition are in great debate, for the Reformers, establishing the authority of the Scriptures

⁹¹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sola_scriptura.

(the last item in the definition), stood in sharp contrast to the position of the Roman Catholic Church, which held tradition as being equally authoritative. Evangelicals herald the same mantra today, yet they are caught in a web of their own deceit for the question for most of them is: which Scriptures? However, even beyond that, both the Evangelicals and the Reformed today must wade through their numerous theological systems that were supposedly developed to tell us what the Word of God says. In many ways, we have digressed to the structure of the Roman Catholics: only the well-educated can read the Scriptures and interpret their meaning; or, perhaps our digression goes back even further to the Pharisaical traditions of Jesus' day. Evangelicals may well declare *sola Scriptura* but they have, to a large degree, exchanged their theological systems of belief for the authority of the Scriptures; it is no longer truly *sola Scriptura*, but rather the authority of the Scriptures will be accepted according to my well-honed theology or my tradition of interpretation. In essence they say, "Don't speak to me of what Scripture declares that is contrary to my theology, it is too confusing"; they are forced to try to hang what they hear from the Word of God onto the framework of the particular Evangelical tradition that they have adopted. In many ways, this is little different from the Galatian believers who were in the process of substituting the traditions of men for the true Gospel that Paul and Barnabas had declared unto them; today's Evangelical has replaced the truth of God's Word with a form of theology (and often the Fundamentalist is no different). A comment received recently from a Calvinist exposed this so profoundly. He said, "I will have to ... seek to be filled with the Holy Spirit and use Scripture alone [the concept of *sola Scriptura*]! Additional to this I can use my precious puritan books"⁹² That is the Evangelical and the Reformed position on *sola Scriptura* today. I will use Scripture alone, **and** my favorite books that tell me what the "Scripture alone" is saying – that, my friends, is **NOT** *sola Scriptura*; that is granting tradition equal weight with God's Word (since the traditional prevails, it actually is given more weight). This Calvinist went on to justify his position in that he still claimed to hold to the authority of Scripture, but used the Puritan writings as a source of teaching to shed light on the Word of God. However, as good as these words sound, it is evident from his life that the Puritan writings provide the whole basis for his understanding of Scripture – he spends most of his time studying the Puritan writings, not the Word of God. The result is that tradition swiftly overtakes and suppresses the Word of God (Satan will see to that), as we have seen evidenced by the traditions of the Pharisees of Jesus' day, the traditions of the Roman Catholics today, and even in the lives of today's Evangelicals of whatever stripe. "Every word of God is pure: ... Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar" (Proverbs 30:5-6). We must guard against being drawn in by well-crafted systematic theologies, and we must guard against blindly accepting the writings of men without holding them up to the light of God's Word (1 John 4:1; cp. Acts 17:11). It is not wrong to consult the writings and teachings of others, but we must be vigilant to not accept what we hear and read without reservation (Romans 16:17-18). The same holds true for the words before you; do not take my word for it, but take the Word of God and search whether these things are so.

16. To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood:

⁹² Personal correspondence received October 21, 2008.

Here we see the grace of God at work within Paul; it was the grace of God that brought him from his occupation as a persecutor to his present compulsion to preach the truth that he once sought to eradicate. It was through His grace that God *revealed*, or made known, His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, to Paul, and it was done at a time that pleased God. The wonder of God's grace never left Paul's mind.

God's revelation of Jesus to Paul was not without purpose, for God opened Paul's eyes and understanding so that he could declare the good news of the Gospel to the heathen, the Gentiles – those who were not within the family of the Jews. In some respects, Paul had an easier task than Peter and James and the other Apostles who remained in Jerusalem. Acts 15 indicates that there was a tendency among the believers in Jerusalem to maintain some of the ordinances of the Mosaic Law – specifically circumcision and the tradition to separate from the Gentiles. This caused problems with them accepting the work that God was doing among the Gentiles (Acts 15:1-12), and a momentary double-mindedness on the part of Peter and Barnabas (Galatians 2:11-13). Paul, on the other hand, even though he would begin with the synagogues of the various cities that he visited, was always working with Gentiles and clearly held a more firm understanding of the melding of the two [the Jew and the Gentile] into one, along with the removal of the Mosaic ordinances (Ephesians 2:14-17).

Out of the contention among those in Jerusalem, came a compromise – at least it was considered to be such by the Jewish believers. For the Gentile Christians, their concession was “that they abstain from pollutions of idols, and *from* fornication, and *from* things strangled, and *from* blood” (Acts 15:20). The first two of these are contained within the Ten Commandments, and, therefore, are without question. As for *things strangled* and *blood*, Paul dealt with the matter of food with the Corinthians: “Howbeit *there is* not in every man that knowledge: for some with conscience of the idol unto this hour eat *it* as a thing offered unto an idol; and their conscience being weak is defiled. But meat commendeth us not to God: for neither, if we eat, are we the better; neither, if we eat not, are we the worse. But take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumblingblock to them that are weak” (1 Corinthians 8:7-9). He does not specifically mention *things strangled* or *blood*, but he deals with the broader matter of foods and our need to be aware of whether what we eat might be an occasion for stumbling to someone of a weaker conscience. The principle is that if our actions cause a brother to stumble, then we are wrong, even if there is nothing inherently contrary to the Scriptures in what we have done. “*Let nothing be done* through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others” (Philippians 2:3-4). There is no license within the liberty of Christ, only the necessity of being aware of how others are impacted by what we do – namely, the application of the last six of the Ten Commandments summed up in: “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself” (Matthew 19:19; Leviticus 19:18). It is not a matter of rights (“I have a right to do this because it is not condemned by Scripture”), rather, it is a matter of living in a manner that brings glory to God (Matthew 5:16). The mantra of today is “I have rights,” which generally can be interpreted to mean: “I can do what I want and you can't stop me”; yet you will never find that concept or attitude in Scripture (1 Corinthians 10:31-33). Paul exercised the rights that he had as a Roman citizen (Acts 22:24-29), but such rights were common to all citizens and were not individually focused. This is clearly not the same thing, and most of us would acknowledge that we understand the difference.

We have here the mission of Paul in a nutshell – he was called to declare the good news of Christ among the Gentiles (Acts 9:15). The mission given to the Apostles by the Lord was, “ye

shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth” (Acts 1:8). We see them centered in Jerusalem, and never really getting beyond Samaria (Philip opened up the venture into Samaria after the persecution that was generated by Saul – Acts 8:3-5). Even after Saul’s conversion, when he finally came to the Apostles at Jerusalem, it is clear that this was the center from which the Apostles worked (Acts 9:28). After he left, the established assemblies of believers still included only Judea, Galilee and Samaria (Acts 9:31), and Peter’s work was focused on these groups of believing Jews. It was not until God called Peter to Cornelius (Acts 10) that he began to understand that God’s message included the Gentiles as well. It seems evident that the “uttermost part of the earth” had fallen from the Apostles’ thinking; yet God’s call on Paul’s life was specifically to the Gentiles (Acts 9:15). Consider Paul’s life and the city of Jerusalem – this is the place where he had his greatest problems. It was here that he zealously persecuted the believers (Acts 8:1-3), this was where his preaching lead to a threat on his life (Acts 9:29-30), and where he was taken into Roman protection from a Jewish mob (Acts 22:21-24), which eventually resulted in him being taken to Rome. Paul understood far better the universality of God’s call to righteousness through the sacrifice that Christ made for the sins of mankind than did the Jewish Apostles who had walked with the Lord. Perhaps being born outside of Judea provided him with an easier acceptance of the Gentiles, first as a people, and then as fellow believers.

We have here the mission of Paul in a nutshell – he was called to declare the good news of Christ among the Gentiles (Acts 9:15). The mission given to the Apostles by the Lord was, “ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth” (Acts 1:8). We see them centered in Jerusalem and never really getting beyond Samaria (Philip opened up the venture into Samaria after the persecution generated by Saul – Acts 8:3-5). Even after Saul’s conversion when he finally came to the Apostles at Jerusalem, it is clear that this was the center from which the Apostles worked (Acts 9:28). After he left, the established assemblies of believers still included only Judea, Galilee and Samaria (Acts 9:31), and Peter’s work was focused on these groups of believing Jews. It was not until God called Peter to go to Centurion Cornelius (Acts 10) that he began to understand that God’s message included the Gentiles as well. It seems evident that the “uttermost part of the earth” had fallen from the Apostles’ thinking; yet God’s call on Paul’s life was specifically to the Gentiles (Acts 9:15). Consider Paul’s life and the city of Jerusalem – this is the place where he had his greatest problems. It was here that he zealously persecuted the believers (Acts 8:1-3), this was where his preaching lead to a threat on his life (Acts 9:29-30), and where he was taken into Roman protection from the Jewish mob (Acts 22:21-24), which eventually resulted in him being taken to Rome. Paul understood far better the universality of God’s call to righteousness through the sacrifice that Christ made for the sins of mankind than did the Jewish Apostles who had walked with the Lord. Perhaps being born outside of Judea provided him with an easier acceptance of the Gentiles, first as a people, and then as fellow believers.

We read here that Paul, after his conversion, “conferred not with flesh and blood.” Acts 9 declares, “But Saul increased the more in strength, and confounded the Jews which dwelt at Damascus, proving that this is very Christ. And after that many days were fulfilled, the Jews took counsel to kill him ...” (Acts 9:22-23). Perhaps it was between these two verses that Paul “conferred not with flesh and blood.” If Paul had conferred with *flesh and blood*, it would very likely have been with the core group of Jerusalem – that group of Apostles who were still stuck in Judea and who still did not realize that God had broken down the wall of separation between the Jew and the

Gentile through Christ's sacrifice (Ephesians 2:14-15). God had greater plans for Paul, and He accomplished this by "revealing His Son" to him in a way that caused the Jerusalem group some contention.

17. Neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me; but I went into Arabia, and returned again unto Damascus.

Here is a glimpse of what took place between Acts 9:22 and 23. First of all, Paul establishes that he did not go up to Jerusalem to those who were already Apostles. This is important in that Paul is dealing with a people who were in the process of replacing the Gospel message given to them with that which included a return to Jewish rituals and ordinances. God revealed His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, to Paul; however, it was not through the Jewish Apostles who were still mentally confined to Jerusalem. The Gospel that God wanted Paul to take to the ends of the earth held a message of reconciliation that had been accomplished by Christ – something that Peter and the other disciples did not yet fully comprehend. Even though the disciples in Jerusalem were "older" in the Lord, God gave Paul specific instructions that went beyond the Jews and included the Gentiles. Peter, later in his life, readily acknowledged that Paul spoke a Message that was sometimes difficult to understand (2 Peter 3:14-17), albeit one that must be neither ignored nor twisted.



Arabian Desert

Paul received the special revelation from the Lord in the country of Arabia. If you consider that Damascus is on the western edge of the Arabian wilderness, Paul did not have to travel far to arrive in this area. It is interesting to think about the role that such wastelands have played in the lives of many of God's chosen servants. Moses spent forty years in the wilderness tending sheep, then another forty leading the children of Israel in their desert wanderings and watching the Lord remove all those over twenty years of age (except two). David spent several years in the wilderness with his men, avoiding the threatenings of

King Saul. John the Baptist was a man of the wilderness, where he carried on much of his ministry (Mark 1:4). Jesus, after His baptism by John, was led into the wilderness to face the temptations of the devil for forty days (Luke 4:1-2). Now we see that Paul left Damascus and went into Arabia to receive the revelation of God concerning His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

We read in 2 Corinthians 12:2-7 of an experience that Paul had; this could have been part of his time in the wilderness where God revealed His truth to him. It is only speculation as to when Paul would have had the experience that he relates to the Corinthian believers, but what is evident from Paul's life is that he had a far deeper understanding of the full message that God had for all of mankind than did the other disciples of the Lord. After receiving the Lord's instructions in the wilderness of Arabia, Paul returned to Damascus; we have no indication as to how long he had been away.

18. Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and abode with him fifteen days.

Luke writes of this time:

And after that many days were fulfilled, the Jews took counsel to kill him: But their laying await was known of Saul. And they watched the gates day and night to kill him. Then the disciples took him by night, and let *him* down by the wall in a basket. And when Saul was come to Jerusalem, he assayed [attempted] to join [cleave] himself to the disciples: but they were all afraid [to put to flight by terrifying] of him, and believed not that he was a disciple. But Barnabas took him, and brought *him* to the apostles, and declared unto them how he had seen the Lord in the way, and that he had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus (Acts 9:23-26).⁹³

What we don't see in Acts, but which is evident in our passage, is that Paul spent three years in Damascus preaching the Word of God – declaring the revelation of Jesus Christ as received from God. In the city where Paul went to rain havoc upon the heads of the believers, for three years he preached the very message that he had been determined to stamp out.

What we don't see in Galatians, but what is clearly evident in Acts is that it was a threat to his life that forced Paul to leave Damascus. The persecutor had become the persecuted. His one-time allies, the Jewish leadership, were now his enemies and sought to kill him.

In our passage, we are told that Paul “went up to Jerusalem to see Peter.” *See* is the Greek word *historeo* (*his-tor-eh'-o*), and this is its only occurrence in the NT. This word means “to inquire into” or “to gain knowledge of by visiting.”⁹⁴ There was purpose to Paul's desire to see Peter, the one who had walked with the Lord throughout His ministry. Paul makes no mention here of the difficulties that he experienced by trying to gain the confidence of the brethren in Jerusalem, but from Acts we learn that he was not immediately embraced as a fellow believer. Their last impression of Paul was as the persecutor who caused the dispersion of the believers from Jerusalem (Acts 8:3-4), and the one who was party with those who stoned Stephen to death (Acts 7:59-8:1). However, there was one among them, Barnabas, who bridged the gap and opened the way for Paul.

We are told that Paul stayed with Peter for 15 days, and during this time he “spake boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus, and disputed against the Grecians” (Acts 9:29). The Grecians spoken of here were Jews who had not been born within the land of Israel, who spoke the Greek language, and had adopted many of the Greek ways of living; they were also referred to as Hellenists. Although Paul had been born outside of Judea (Acts 22:3) and very evidently spoke the Greek language, he had been raised and educated in Jerusalem and was thoroughly taught in the ways of the Pharisees (the strictest sect of the Jews). It says that Paul *disputed against* these Hellenists; i.e., he had some serious discussions with them. In our day, *dispute* carries the thought of heated disagreement, and, evidently, that is where Paul's discussion with these men went; however, within the Greek, the word so translated identifies more of a mutual discussion. It is interesting, and perhaps somewhat telling, that the Apostles in Jerusalem seemingly permitted Paul to work with

⁹³ Strong's Online.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

the Jews who were often despised for having taken on so many of the customs of the Greek culture. Perhaps Peter felt that Paul could do no harm among those people; even though they were of full Jewish ancestry (unlike the Samaritans), they were not openly accepted within the Judean Jewish community because of their perceived compromises. Even though he may have been more prepared to work with them than any of the rest of the Apostles, it is very evident that Paul's Message of truth caused no small aggravation among the Hellenists – to such a degree that they were prepared to kill him in order to silence him. He caused a tumult (*confounded*) among the Jews of Damascus, and evidently caused no small stir in Jerusalem as well (Acts 9:22, 29).

After 15 days in Jerusalem, the Hellenistic Jews were prepared to do away with Paul! What the Jews of Damascus put up with for three years (Galatians 1:18), these Jews of Jerusalem were only prepared to endure for 15 days. Paul had probably honed his debating skills to the place where the Jews realized that they must either change their ways or remove Paul from the scene.

19. But other of the apostles saw I none, save James the Lord's brother.

During Paul's brief stay in Jerusalem, the only Apostles whom he saw were Peter and James; the latter, it seems, was the head of the assembly in Jerusalem (in Acts 15, James takes the lead in arriving at a compromise concerning the Gentile believers). It appears that Peter may have set about to limit Paul's influence within Jerusalem; it is clear that although Paul was in Jerusalem, he was not accepted as one of the Apostles by any means. His exposure to the Apostles was limited, and he was given the castoffs of Jewish culture with whom to speak. We are told, "But Barnabas took him, and brought *him* to the apostles, and declared unto them how he had seen the Lord in the way, and that he had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus" (Acts 9:27). The Apostles to whom Barnabas took Paul were Peter and James. Then we read: "And he was with them coming in and going out at Jerusalem" (Acts 9:28); Paul was with Peter and James, going in and going out of Jerusalem. Could it be that he was being chaperoned?

I wonder if James was thinking back to this meeting with Paul when he wrote: "be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only" (James 1:22). The Hellenistic Jews heard Paul's Gospel message as given by God, yet their response was to try to silence him rather than do what was clearly God's Word. God's desire for us has always been obedience (that we might be doers – those who take what is heard and act on it); He required it of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, and He still requires it of us today. One more time we must realize that God does not change and has not changed.

20. Now the things which I write unto you, behold, before God, I lie not.

Here is a pause in the flow of Paul's narration to underscore the truth of what he is saying. Remember, the Galatian believers were substituting a message that included Jewish traditions for the freedom that they had in the Gospel brought to them by Paul. They may well have contended that they were not setting the fundamentals of the Gospel aside – they were simply enhancing it by requiring some of the Jewish traditions with which many of them would have been reared. This is not a very different argument from that presented by the New Evangelicals when

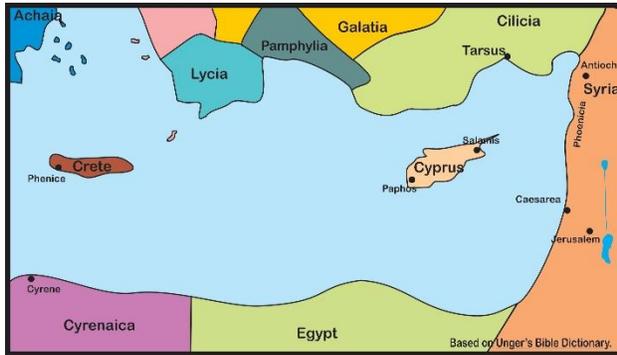
they first made their stand against the Fundamentalist position on the Word of God. What Paul made clear in the opening remarks of this letter was that they were not *enhancing* the Gospel, but were *replacing* it with something that was not the Gospel (similarly, the New Evangelicals substituted a far more socially “sensitive” message for the true Gospel). As discussed earlier, it is not possible to practice syncretism with the truth of God’s Word – you cannot add anything to the exclusive truth of the Scriptures and still contend that you hold the Truth. Nor, on the other hand, can you remove anything from the truth of Scripture and still claim to hold God’s Truth – you may have a portion of it, but you no longer hold the Truth as God intended it. A mixture of anything with the “pure” Word of God is unacceptable (“Every word of God *is* pure: ... Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar” Proverbs 30:5-6). It matters little whether the added element is social activism, Native American spiritism, or simply giving prominence to the theological musings of those who purport to be wise in their own understanding – the result is the same: the Word of God has been compromised, and therein is the devastation.

Paul takes this break to underscore to these believers that what he is declaring to them is the truth, and he calls on God as his Witness. What he endeavors to emphasize one more time, is that the Gospel, as he and Barnabas presented it, was not a Message received through any man (the Apostles in Jerusalem at that time were not yet preaching the full Message), but he received the revelation directly from God of all that was accomplished through Jesus’ time on earth. The Apostles who had walked with the Lord throughout His ministry knew the Son of God, but they were having great difficulty getting beyond the mold that had been caste by Judaism. They saw Jesus as the fulfillment of the Jewish prophecies of the Scriptures but they did not yet comprehend the universal aspect of the Gospel message (the commission to go to “Samaria [those who were half Jews], and unto the uttermost part of the earth [the Gentiles]” was not fully understood). Their Jewish traditions had lost sight of the fact that God’s message has always been universal in nature; the Jews were to become a people who bore God’s invitation to the rest of the world (Exodus 19:6). This never happened during the OT days, although there were specific times when it should have been evident; when Jesus reminded the Jews of these times, it only served to anger the religious rulers (Luke 4:24-30). Paul came with God’s Message for the Gentiles (and the Jews) and shattered the mold of Judaism, preaching a Gospel that declared the Jews and Gentiles were now one in Christ (Ephesians 2:11-22).

21. Afterwards I came into the regions of Syria and Cilicia;

In Acts 9 we read, “And he spake boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus, and disputed against the Grecians: but they went about to slay him. *Which* when the brethren knew, they brought him down to Caesarea, and sent him forth to Tarsus” (Acts 9:29-30). Paul was taken by those in Jerusalem to the coastal town of Caesarea, and put on a ship that would take him back to where he had come from – Tarsus, a town on the coast of Cilicia.

We read in Acts 11 that, because of the persecution that Paul stirred up at the time of the martyrdom of Stephen, the followers of Christ moved north into the area of Antioch of Syria (as well as to Phenice and Cyprus) and they declared the Word of God, but *unto the Jews only*. (Acts 11:19-21). Antioch was an important, wealthy city and home to a large Jewish population. The Jewish Christians from Jerusalem may have been scattered but they had not lost their narrow focus – within their minds, the Message that they preached was only for the Jews. However, the Lord



brought Christians from Cyprus and Cyrene (a town on the northern tip of Africa) to Antioch, and they preached the Lord Jesus to those despised Hellenistic Jews. It is fascinating to see how the Lord blessed His Word as it spread to those who were not highly acclaimed by the Jews. Philip brought the Message to the Samaritans (those despised half-Jews) and “the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake ...” (Acts 8:6), and the Lord also used him to open the eyes of an Ethiopian

eunuch who would have taken the message back to his own country (Acts 8:37). Cornelius was advised by an angel to call for Peter, who came to him after his own heavenly persuasion; for Peter, this was not a voluntary mission and, while he was still talking to those whom Cornelius had gathered together, “the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard [to hear with understanding] the word” (Acts 10:44).⁹⁵ The Lord was chipping away at their ingrained Jewish tradition of separating from those who were not like them. When these Christians came from Cyprus and Cyrene to Antioch, they preached among the Hellenistic Jews, and the Lord (once more) blessed His Word among these people. News of this reached the Jerusalem group and they sent Barnabas to investigate what was happening up there in Antioch; we are told that they sent him to “go as far as Antioch” (Acts 11:22). You’ll recall that it was Barnabas who opened the way for Paul when he first arrived in Jerusalem (Acts 9:27). When Barnabas saw what the Lord was doing in Antioch, he departed for Tarsus to get Paul (Acts 11:25) – in contradiction to the instructions that he’d received from the Christian leaders in Jerusalem. He evidently saw the work and understood what was taking place in Antioch and was reminded of the Message that Paul had endeavored to plant in Jerusalem, and so we have Paul arriving in Syria, being brought from Cilicia by Barnabas.

In this letter to the Galatians, Paul was not focused on telling the story of his journey (we pick up most of the details of this from Acts), but rather on those things that would draw the Galatian believers away from the error that they were courting. What he has endeavored to underscore, to this point, is that the message of the Gospel, which God gave to him, did not come from those who were centered in Jerusalem; he did not get it from the Jews whose focus was on the Jewish race. The readers of this epistle will begin to understand that if Paul had received instruction from the Jerusalem believers, then he would very likely not have entered the region of Galatia to preach the Gospel (at least not as soon as he did). Although he doesn’t speak here specifically of the difficulties that he ran into with the leaders of the Jerusalem assembly, it is clear that the full Message that God had given to him was without influence from those who seemed to have great difficulty getting past their Judaism. Perhaps even this hesitancy on the part of the Jerusalem disciples had become an influence among the Galatian believers, which could account for Paul’s emphatic clarification that the Gospel, as he delivered it, was from God and not from Jerusalem.

⁹⁵ Friberg Lexicon.

22. And was unknown by face unto the churches of Judaea which were in Christ:

Here we have confirmation that Paul's ministry in Jerusalem, during his short time there, was very limited. We've already seen that he only met with Peter and James, and it is evident from this that he was not taken to the assemblies of believers that were located around the city of Jerusalem; Paul was unknown to these people. After Paul was escorted out of Jerusalem, we read: "Then had the churches rest throughout all Judaea and Galilee and Samaria, and were edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied. And it came to pass, as Peter passed throughout all *quarters* ..." (Acts 9:31-32). After Paul left Jerusalem, Peter then visited the various assemblies throughout the area (obviously something that hadn't happened while Paul was present). The two things that are very evident are: 1) Paul had no exposure to the Christians around Jerusalem and, 2) Peter's ministry to this time had been limited to those assemblies within the Judean area; he graciously included the Samaritan believers where Philip had worked and where he and John had confirmed the legitimacy of this work (Acts 8:14, 25). Even the persecution generated by Paul did not send these men out of this center of Judaism.

In many respects, I don't think that we fully appreciate the contrast that existed between the Message that Paul was given by God for all of mankind, and the message to which the Apostles, who had walked with the Lord during His ministry on earth, were still clinging. On the day of Pentecost, there were Jews from every country living in Jerusalem, and the first converts would have included just such a mixture of languages and backgrounds – yet they were all Jews now living in Jerusalem. However, it wasn't long before there was a contention between the Hellenistic Jews and the Hebrews (Acts 6:1), and the Apostles turned this contentious matter over to seven men. Among these seven we find Stephen (the first martyr) and Philip, the first to take the message of the Gospel to those outside of the Jewish confines. This was a stretching time for the Jewish Christian leaders, for now the Message of God's truth had been taken to, and received by, the Samaritans – those despised half-Jews. There seems to have been an acceptance of these believers, for Peter did include the Samaritan region in his travels (Acts 9:31-32). He may well have recalled the ministry that Jesus had among the Samaritans at Sychar (John 4) and accepted this extended work as a result. However, when the Lord took Peter to Cornelius, this caused great concern among the Jewish believers in Jerusalem (Acts 11:1-3), and only after Peter carefully rehearsed what the Lord had done, were they somewhat mollified (Acts 11:18). It was difficult for these people who had been steeped in the understanding that they were to have nothing to do with the Gentiles, to realize that God had always made provision for them (Numbers 9:14; Ephesians 2:13-18). Furthermore, now that the barrier between the Jew and the Gentile had been done away with in Christ, He desired that they be completely accepted. Jesus' commission that they go to the "uttermost part of the earth", in their minds probably meant that they should include the Jews of all nations within their target audience; since this happened at Pentecost, the commission was accomplished. Yet God's plan was far larger than that, and it was this bigger picture that they struggled to accept.

Today we have the exact opposite problem. A general acceptance of everyone and everything, within the broad definition of Christianity, has resulted in the term (Christian) losing much of its meaning. The narrowness of God's approach to the sinfulness of mankind is spurned in favor of a wide-ranging acceptance of everything that seems spiritual. Whereas the believers from Jerusalem sought to restrict the Gospel message to be for the Jews alone, today's Evangelicals have compromised the Gospel to such an extent that they are able to include virtually

anyone and everyone who claims the name *Christian*. Neither position is correct; both the Jews and the Evangelicals held/hold their positions strongly, and were/are resistant to anything that might call for them to change. The Jewish believers of Paul's day resisted the pressure to freely extend the Gospel message to the Gentiles; Evangelicals today protest loudly when they are faced with a narrow, Biblical definition of what it means to be a follower of Christ. Notice the difference: the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem were believing in Christ but simply needed to understand more fully that the Gospel message was for everyone; Evangelicals today are, for the most part, deluded professors of Christianity but not possessors of new life in Christ. In the former, the Spirit of God was present to work and enlighten; in the latter, the Spirit of God must seek to convict them of sin and their need of repentance, even while they are convinced that they are righteous and have no need of repentance. Evangelicalism, and this includes Protestant and Baptist denominations, has become the "Christian religion" according to Satan, presenting a shallow pseudo-faith in designer theologies that applies a numbing salve to the minds of those who are being deceived. The result is a self-righteous generation of professing Christians who see no need for repentance, and who accept the sacrifice of Christ as religious rhetoric – a part of their lives but something that will never require anything of them. Unfortunately, this delusion is so seductive that it has drawn those away who once held to a living faith in the Lord Jesus Christ – those individuals who are turning their backs on the Lord of glory to become part of the falling away (*apostasia*) spoken of in 2 Thessalonians 2:3.⁹⁶

There are those within the pre-tribulation-rapture camp who like to wiggle their way around this word (*apostasia*) and say that it should really be translated as *departing*, which they then apply as departing for heaven, not departing from the faith.⁹⁷ The word *apostasia* means "a defection, revolt, apostasy,"⁹⁸ or "a falling away."⁹⁹ Looking at the etymology of the word *apostate*, we see that it is "from Gk. *apostasia* 'defection, desertion, rebellion,' from *apostenai* 'to defect,' lit. 'to stand off,' from *apo-* 'away from' ... + *stenai* 'to stand.'"¹⁰⁰ None of this sounds even remotely like a *departing* in the sense that the pre-trib enthusiasts would like it to have. On the contrary, it sounds more like a word that would be fitting for those who forsake, who turn away from, and who act in rebellion against God. Hence, the warning "let no man deceive you by any means ..." (2 Thessalonians 2:3). The Greek word for *deceive* (*exapatao*) is an intensive word that means "to beguile thoroughly, to deceive wholly," and is much stronger than *apatao*, which means to deceive.¹⁰¹ Also, the word (*deceive*) as it is used here, is in the subjunctive mood, which means that it is a possibility, but not necessarily a reality – hence, the warning to make sure that this deception does not catch you! This flows directly into the coming of the *apostasia* or rebellion; *come* also bears the subjunctive mood – the *falling away* comes through the choices made by individuals, and it is that choice that is represented by this mood.¹⁰² The truth of the matter is that apostasy will happen, and the warning is given so that it need not happen to you! Paul, in writing to the Thessalonian believers, is warning them so that they will not be wholly deceived and, thereby, be numbered among the apostate. Hebrews 3:12 warns us: "Take heed, brethren [speaking to brethren in Christ], lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the

⁹⁶ Strong's Online.

⁹⁷ https://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1081&context=pretrib_arch.

⁹⁸ Vine's "fall."

⁹⁹ Strong's Online.

¹⁰⁰ <http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?l=a&p=17> "apostate."

¹⁰¹ Vine's "deceive."

¹⁰² Strong's Online; Friberg Lexicon.

living God.” This is one of many corroborations of the warning that we see in 2 Thessalonians 2:3. Unfortunately, we see few around us today who are heeding this warning and who are guarding against being caught in the web of deceit that is being spun within Evangelicalism. For the most part, the older pillars of Evangelicalism have fallen for those lies and become apostate; the younger generation of Evangelicals no longer hear the truth, so they are not apostate (as in having fallen away) – they are simply reprobates, or heathens.

23. But they had heard only, That he which persecuted us in times past now preacheth the faith which once he destroyed.

Even though Paul had not visited the various assemblies of believers around Judea, it was evidently common knowledge that the persecutor was now the preacher. The one who had caused the believers in Jerusalem to be scattered in every direction, thereby spreading the Word of God, was now one of them.

It is a comfort to know that Satan does not always make the best decisions; however, we must also note that he loves to use those who are religious. Evidently, he thought that he could use Paul to suppress the new believers and to cause them to turn away from the faith that they had embraced. By stirring up severe persecution, perhaps he thought that they would abandon their faith, and it is possible that he may have had a limited success. However, the persecution proved to be a means of launching the believers out of their huddle in Jerusalem into many outlying areas: *Judea, Samaria, and to the uttermost part of the earth* (Acts 1:8). That in no way lessens the distress that Paul (used by Satan) caused these early believers, but it does provide a perspective on those difficult times in our lives of which we need to be aware. “Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby” (Hebrews 12:11). *Chastening* speaks of that which builds character – hardships or trials that come our way, or are permitted into our lives, so that we may grow in God’s grace. Despite the noble purpose for the chastening, it does not bring happiness into our lives. However, if we use these trials to be strengthened in our inner man, if we are vigorously *exercised* by them, then they will result in righteous fruit. When struggles come our way, and they will, we must permit the Spirit of God to use them to build into us the character of Christ so that we may be “transformed by the renewing of [our] mind” (Romans 12:2). Ephesians 4 challenges us to “put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness” (Ephesians 4:22-24). The putting on of the new man is accomplished by growing through trials and tribulations; as we are properly exercised by the chastening, the righteousness of the “new man” will take root in us to the glory of God. It is not within us to respond to trials in a manner that will produce godly righteousness – that is the effective work of the Spirit within us: “... that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit” (Romans 8:4). I’m sure that Satan finds it most confusing as to why a believer would respond to chastening in a way that causes the righteousness of God within to flourish.

As noted, we must also realize that Satan is not above using religion to cause all kinds of havoc in the lives of true believers. Those who opposed Jesus’ ministry, more than any other group, were

the Pharisees, the strictest sect of the Jews who would tithe so meticulously that even their herbs were not overlooked (Matthew 23:23). Despite considering themselves to be the spiritually elite among the Jews, they permitted themselves to be used by Satan as a continual threat to Jesus' ministry – a threat that ultimately led to His crucifixion by which God fulfilled the Mosaic Law and paid for the salvation of all men. In like manner, we need not think that we are oppressed by anything new when we are ridiculed and gnashed at by those from within the Evangelical community. Their broad form of Christianity is a special hybrid that has been custom designed by Satan to bring delusion and confusion – sufficient truth to relax the casually observant hearer and enough error to draw the naive away from the truth. We must not be surprised that the greatest opposition does not come from the world, but from those who profess to be fellow-Christians.

24. And they glorified God in me.

Not surprisingly, Paul's conversion brought much rejoicing among the Jewish Christians, and they gave glory to God for removing this irritating source of persecution.

Chapter 2

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

We are now provided with another window into the time-line of Paul's life – he returned to Jerusalem fourteen years after he had been escorted out by the Apostles. Acts 14 states that as the first evangelistic tour by Paul came to an end, he and Barnabas "... sailed to Antioch, from whence they had been recommended to the grace of God for the work which they fulfilled. And when they were come, and had gathered the church together, they rehearsed all that God had done with them, and how he had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles. And there they abode long time with the disciples" (Acts 14:26-28). This *fourteen years* provides a time frame for the *long time* of Acts 14. What follows in the book of Acts outlines the reason for Paul and Barnabas making the journey to Jerusalem.

And certain men which came down from Judaea taught the brethren, *and said*, Except ye be circumcised after the manner [according to the custom] of Moses, ye cannot be saved. When therefore Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension [strife] and disputation [mutual questioning] with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about this question. And being brought on their way by the church, they passed through Phenice [the region of Phoenicia¹⁰³] and Samaria, declaring the conversion of the Gentiles: and they caused great joy unto all the brethren (Acts 15:1-3).¹⁰⁴

Once again, we have the matter of some *dissension* spoken of very matter-of-factly in this epistle. Yes, Paul went up to Jerusalem again, but the reason for the journey was to meet with the leaders of the assembly there to sort out with them the Message that God had given him for all men, including the Gentiles. Acts tells us that he went up with Barnabas and *certain other* with them; we find out in our passage that one of those was Titus.

What Paul is doing is beginning to build his case to the Galatians that the elders and leaders of the assembly in Jerusalem did not dissuade him from the Message that he brought to the Gentiles, and part of that case is to specifically identify Titus as being with them during this time.

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

¹⁰³ Friberg Lexicon.

¹⁰⁴ Strong's Online.

The first phrase, *I went up by revelation*, is somewhat difficult to understand. The word *revelation* means “disclosure”¹⁰⁵ or “an uncovering or revealing.”¹⁰⁶ What this indicates is that Paul went to Jerusalem having been given insight by God specifically for dealing with this matter with the Jerusalem brethren. Acts 15:1-2 clarifies for us that the necessity of the Jewish rite of circumcision for the Christian (as held by some in Jerusalem) led to a major disagreement between those of Jerusalem and Paul and Barnabas, who had seen the work of God (without circumcision) among the Gentiles throughout the region of Galatia and elsewhere. It is evident that this delegation, which went from Antioch to Jerusalem, was charged with the task of resolving this matter. The assembly in Antioch selected the delegates to take their case to the Apostles in Jerusalem, but it was really Paul and the Message of truth that God had given him that were at the center of this dispute. This tells us that God prepared Paul for the task that was ahead: the Message, which God had given to him, was being called into question and he went to Jerusalem with the assurance that God was going to enable him for this undertaking.

In Acts 15 we read: “And when they were come to Jerusalem, they were received of the church, and of the apostles and elders, and they declared all things that God had done with them. But there rose up certain of the sect of the Pharisees which believed, saying, That it was needful to circumcise them, and to command *them* to keep the Law of Moses. And the apostles and elders came together for to consider of this matter” (Acts 15:4-6). The *believers* with a Pharisaical background (not unlike Paul) would not let go of their Judaism (unlike Paul); they wanted the Law of Moses to remain in place – it was what defined them as Jews. What is interesting to consider is that the position of these *believers* was never evident until Paul and company arrived and began to rehearse what God was doing among the Gentiles; it was as Paul began to relate what God had been doing among the Gentiles that some of the brethren voiced their demand that the Law of Moses must be imposed upon these new Gentile believers. What this also tells us is that the Jewish Christians of Jerusalem were, for the most part, still adhering to the Mosaic Law and continuing their Jewish traditions. It caused the Apostles and elders, the leaders of the assembly in Jerusalem, to put their heads together to try to determine what to do with these conflicting opinions – further evidence that they had never considered this matter until now. During their huddle Peter rehearsed how the Lord had dealt with him regarding Cornelius and that there was no differentiation between Jew and Gentile before God (Acts 15:7-11). With this the bickering stopped, and Paul and Barnabas could proceed to relate all the signs and wonders that God had done through them among the Gentiles. The Christians from Antioch presented what God had done; they provided the assembly in Jerusalem with an account of all that had taken place (Acts 15:12), but what we find in our passage is that the Message that Paul was bringing to the Gentiles (the real essence of the “problem”) was presented only to the leadership



¹⁰⁵ Strong's Dictionary.

¹⁰⁶ Friberg Lexicon.

for evaluation. The events of God's working among the Gentiles were given to all, but the ultimate source of the contention was dealt with *privately* among "them which were of reputation" – those who were recognized as the leadership of the assembly in Jerusalem. Paul, in setting the stage for dealing with the error that was taking over the Galatian believers, states very specifically that he laid out before the Jerusalem leadership "**that Gospel**" that he was proclaiming to the Gentiles. Paul set forth before these men, the full Gospel message that he was preaching – something that he had not been permitted to do when he went up to Jerusalem the first time (Galatians 1:18-19).

We see in our passage that the defense of the Message that God had committed to Paul was made to those of *reputation*. As the delegation from Antioch went to Jerusalem, along the way they openly *declared* what God had done among the Gentiles and "caused great joy unto all the brethren" (Acts 15:3). Their *declaring* was more than just a quick word; it means "to narrate in full."¹⁰⁷ As they passed through the regions of Phoenicia and Samaria (both were along their route from Antioch to Jerusalem) they took the time to fully rehearse, to the brethren in these areas, the salvation of the Gentiles and the works that God had done among them. This news of God's grace at work was met with joy. Yet when they arrived in Jerusalem, they laid out the Message of God's redemption for all men only before those of *reputation*; these would be the Apostles and elders as noted in Acts 15:4. *Reputation* is from a Greek word that means "to think," and by implication "to seem."¹⁰⁸ Someone's reputation is what is generally accepted about him but it does not mean that it is either true or false. In this case, it would refer to those who were held in high regard among the brethren in Jerusalem – those who were Apostles and elders.

Out of this private rehearsal of the Message that Paul had been given **by God** (we've seen that emphasized in Galatians 1:12), we see James taking the leading role in resolving this dispute (Acts 15:13-21). What is very interesting at this point, is to notice how James approaches this difficulty. When the disruption first arose among all of those who had come to hear from Paul and Barnabas, Peter, after some private discussion with the other Apostles and elders, reminded everyone of what God had shown him through his experience with Cornelius (Acts 15:6-11). As James begins, he says: "Simeon [Simon Peter] hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name" (Acts 15:14). James took what Peter had rehearsed, and broadened his experience with Cornelius to remind them that God came to Abraham, a Gentile, and for his obedience He promised that he would become a "great nation" and that through him everyone would be blessed (Genesis 12:2-3). With the passage of time, the Jews' focus had become exclusive and arrogant; they had forgotten that God had come to their father, Abraham, when he was a pagan, and that it was through his faith in God that he was considered to be righteous. Is it any wonder that God, all through the Mosaic Law, made provision for the *stranger* who dwelt among them (Exodus 12:49; Numbers 9:14)? God's call to mankind has always been universal, but the Jews, through their pride in being of the seed of Abraham and the contempt for the heathen that they had learned through their years of captivity, had neglected God's Word to them and harbored great disdain for anyone outside of their race. James reminds them that the prophets spoke of the peoples of the world desiring the Lord. First he quotes from Amos (Acts 15:16): "In that day will I raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen, and close up the breaches thereof; and I will raise up his ruins, and I will build [or rebuild] it as in the days of old" (Amos 9:11),¹⁰⁹ and then the words of Zechariah (Acts 15:17): "Yea, many people and strong nations [a reference to non-

¹⁰⁷ Strong's Online.

¹⁰⁸ Strong's Dictionary.

¹⁰⁹ Strong's Online.

Jewish peoples (Gentiles)] shall come to seek the LORD of hosts in Jerusalem ...” (Zechariah 8:22). There are numerous passages in the OT Scriptures that speak of God’s call to all of mankind; very specifically, when Abraham was called it was with the conditional promise that “in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed” (Genesis 12:3). The Message that Paul declared to these men was not new, but it had been much neglected among the Jewish people.

God’s promise to Abraham was that all the peoples of the earth would be the beneficiaries of what He was about to begin with him (Genesis 12:3; 22:18). This promise was repeated to Isaac: “And I will make thy seed to multiply as the stars of heaven, and will give unto thy seed all these countries; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed ...” (Genesis 26:4). The Psalmist understood the universal call of God: “God be merciful unto us, and bless us; *and* cause his face to shine upon us; That thy way may be known upon earth, thy saving health [salvation] among all nations” (Psalm 67:1-2).¹¹⁰ “And it shall come to pass in the last days, *that* the mountain of the LORD’S house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem” (Isaiah 2:2-3; Micah 4:1-2). “I will have mercy upon her that had not obtained mercy; and I will say to *them which were* not my people, Thou *art* my people; and they shall say, *Thou art* my God” (Hosea 2:23). These are just a sampling of the many passages that show the grace and mercy that God always had toward those whom the Jews despised, yet, despite the scribes and Pharisees being sticklers in keeping their rules and regulations, they failed to read the Word of God with understanding – they, like many theologians today, read the Scriptures in the light of their own doctrines. The Jewish Christians brought this baggage with them into their new faith, and, as we have seen, they had great difficulty letting it go.

How easily we condemn the scribes and Pharisees, yet what seems all too common today is that our theologies determine how we interpret God’s Word and what we do. I will never forget the shock and disappointment that I felt when I read from an elderly “Fundamental Baptist” pastor: “I am a Baptist by conviction.”¹¹¹ Rather than searching the Scriptures to determine whether a position different from the Baptist tradition is more Biblically accurate, he simply staked his spiritual security and welfare on his Baptist theology. What a copout! If we are not prepared to take our favorite or traditionally accepted theologies to the Scriptures and weigh them carefully against the standard of God’s Word, then we are not worthy to teach others. As a matter of fact, the training that such men receive is neither Biblical nor sound; they have never been taught to study the Word of God, only to defend their particular, polished theology.

With this reminder of the work of God among their own people, James brought the discussion to a conclusion that they all seemed to find acceptable. We’ve already looked at the list of requirements that they enumerated, and noted that this is the last time that we ever hear anything of this list. Although the matter was officially settled in principle, as we can see from this epistle to the Galatians, it had not been settled in every area or within every individual. The very same issue had reared its head again; there were still some “Jewish Christians” who thought that it was necessary for the Gentiles to keep some of the Jewish traditions in order to be truly saved.

¹¹⁰ Strong’s Online.

¹¹¹ From personal correspondence with an elderly Baptist minister; June 12, 2008.

In our passage, Paul clarifies why he met privately with the Apostles and elders to discuss the Gospel that he was proclaiming to the Gentiles: “lest by any means I should run, or had run, in vain.” The Greek word for *vain* speaks metaphorically “of one who boasts of his faith as a transcendent possession, yet is without the fruits of faith”¹¹² – in other words, someone whose faith is no deeper than their words. There is humility in Paul’s approach to the brethren in Jerusalem; he did not go in with a heavy hand and chastise them for their inability to accept the task that the Lord had given him or the Message that the Lord had revealed to him. Paul came to them confident in what the Lord had given him, but not arrogant toward those whom some might have considered to be stuck in the rut of Judaism. This is a fine line that modern Evangelicals fail to navigate; in their well-documented and finely crafted theologies, they take great pride, and, in arrogance, they condemn those who do not agree with them. I have seen this to be particularly prevalent among the leaders of the independent Baptist churches where they enjoy overt control, and maintain that control through spiritual intimidation and intolerance of anything that is contrary to their understanding. However, not unlike the Pharisees of Jesus’ day, they fail to evaluate their doctrines against the whole of Scripture, but rather interpret the whole of Scripture in the light of their theologies. Paul’s instruction to Timothy fleshes out the approach that he took with the leaders in Jerusalem; it is so appropriate for our time (yet so often ignored): “And the servant [*doulos*; slave] of the Lord must not strive [be disputing]; but be gentle [kind] unto all *men*, apt [able] to teach, patient [in trials], In meekness [humility] instructing those that oppose themselves [who stand in opposition]; if God peradventure [perhaps] will [*may*; *give* is in the subjunctive mood – those who *oppose* face a choice] give them repentance to the acknowledging [the full knowledge] of the truth; And *that* they may recover themselves [come to their senses (subjunctive mood)] out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will” (2 Timothy 2:24-26).¹¹³ That does not sound remotely like defending a theology or a personal opinion, but carefully presenting the Word of God, which is “sharper than any twoedged sword ... a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart” (Hebrews 4:12), so that it may be used by God to confront the wayward with His truth.

3. But neither Titus, who was with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised:

Paul moves on to cite an example that speaks against adding circumcision or any of the other traditions of Judaism to faith in Christ, and thereby destroying the true Gospel. We’ve already noted that when he went up to Jerusalem as part of the delegation to sort out this knotty problem, Titus was part of that group. Having just stated that he made his case before the leaders of the Jerusalem assembly, Paul draws a significant contrast as he begins here: *but* – here is something that stands in contradiction to what has come before. *Neither* is the Greek word *oude* (*oo-deh’*), which can also be translated as *not even*.¹¹⁴ The thrust here is that *not even Titus* (who was with Paul at Jerusalem and a Greek) *was compelled to be circumcised*. What Paul is seeking to drive home to the Galatians is that if this was such a defensible issue, then the leaders in Jerusalem had an opportunity to make their point by insisting that Titus be circumcised after the custom of the Jews, but they didn’t. Clearly, there were those among the believers in Jerusalem who tried to enforce such (Acts 15:5), but Jerusalem leadership was coming to realize that God was making no

¹¹² Strong’s Online.

¹¹³ Friberg Lexicon.

¹¹⁴ Strong’s Online.

such demands upon those who came to faith in Christ, and so they had no justification to do so either. God had made it clear when bringing Peter to Cornelius, that the Jewish attitude toward the Gentiles had to change, yet we can see from both the attitude at Jerusalem and from that in Galatia that some things change very slowly.

4. And that because of false brethren unawares brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage:

It is important to note that this does not break from the text just before it: it is all part of the same situation – a further development of the same thought. We have here Paul’s evaluation of those in Jerusalem who raised their voices in an effort to compel the Gentiles to be circumcised and to keep the Law of Moses in order to be saved. They are called false brethren, *pseudadelphos* (*psyoo-dad'-el-fos*), literally an untrue or false brother.¹¹⁵ This is “one who ostentatiously professes to be a Christian, but is destitute of Christian knowledge and piety.”¹¹⁶ When Paul rehearsed to the Corinthians the many trials and hardships that he had endured for the sake of the Gospel, he included in the listing the danger that he faced from *false brethren* (2 Corinthians 11:26). We have already seen that Paul’s life had been in danger from the Jews of Damascus (Acts 9:23) and from the Hellenistic Jews of Jerusalem (Acts 9:29). Paul does not speak of these false brethren posing a physical threat to him but they were seeking to undo his work.

The phrase, *unawares brought in*, is actually only one word in the Greek – *pareisaktos* (*par-ice'-ak-tos*), and means to be smuggled in or to be joined under false pretenses.¹¹⁷ What is evident, but we might not catch it at first glance, is that these *false brethren* were included without anyone being aware of their hidden agenda – they were secretly included. This means that there were men among the believers in Jerusalem who did not appreciate the freedom in Christ that was being proclaimed among the Gentiles – those who desired everyone to hold to their familiar Jewish lifestyle and exclude the Gentiles unless they were circumcised and kept the Jewish Laws. Acts 15:5 identifies these, who voiced their objections to the Gospel message that Paul was bringing to the Gentiles, as believers from among the sect of the Pharisees – those whom Paul calls *false brethren*. The difficulty that the Galatians were facing (and which Paul is writing to correct) is the same problem that these men in Jerusalem had – they were replacing the purity of the Gospel message with a hybrid that included the practices of Judaism; something that Paul has identified as “another [a different] gospel, which is not another [of the same kind]” (Galatians 1:6-7).¹¹⁸ What is equally evident is that the leaders in Jerusalem did not quash this backward thinking because they were not sufficiently convinced that the Gospel was truly open to all of the Gentiles. Peter may well have been led by the Lord to Cornelius, but it seems that this venture was considered to be a one-time event and no one was persuaded that this was to become the norm. Incredibly, the very men who were probably Paul’s companions in the school of Gamaliel were now those who opposed him; the traditions and laws that were formerly Paul’s very life and at which he had

¹¹⁵ Strong’s Dictionary.

¹¹⁶ Strong’s Online.

¹¹⁷ Friberg Lexicon.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

excelled above all of his companions, now proved to be a source of grief to him (1:14). This is not uncommon, and easily understood if you pause to consider that the influence behind those who profess, but do not possess, is Satan. As long as you are going along with things as they are (the area of departure from the truth of the Scriptures does not matter), you will have little or no opposition. However, when your eyes are opened to the truth that God has in His Word, then the scene will change quite rapidly to one of conflict and even hostility at every turn. As I reflect on my time at Briercrest Biblical Seminary, everything went smoothly as long as I embraced Evangelicalism, but when I began to turn to the Truth of Scripture, my difficulties began. Satan loves to include enough religion in a person's life to salve the conscience, but not enough to bring a desire for the truth. The father of lies will abide a half-truth (because it still bears his influence), but he cannot stand the pure truth.

These false brethren came in *privily*, i.e., stealthily,¹¹⁹ and they came with a purpose. Satan always has a purpose in what he does and it is never good. They came to *spy*, or to “search out with a view to overthrowing.”¹²⁰ Undoubtedly, these men had heard about the freedom in Christ that Paul was preaching to the Gentiles, and their sole purpose in attending this rehearsal of all that God had been doing was to bring pressure to bear upon Paul to change his Message. These men



came into the assembly stating that the Gentiles needed to be circumcised and keep the Mosaic Law, yet Paul uses this strong word to describe their purpose. If there is one thing that Paul is desperately trying to get the

Galatians to understand, it is this: by seeking to make Jewish practices an integral part of their faith, they were in the process of transposing, or substituting, a false gospel for the true Gospel of God (Galatians 1:6-7). What we must not miss is the **narrow** definition of God's truth; Jesus said: “I am the way, the truth, and the life: **no man cometh unto the Father, but by me**” (John 14:6). Evangelicals today would seek to convince everyone that there is room for variations in understanding God's ways, and so we find those who are promoting Evangelicals and Catholics, Evangelicals and Mormons, Evangelicals and Muslims, and Evangelicals and anything but the narrow truth of God's Word. In fact, the Evangelical Free Church (EFC) pioneers permitted a significant diversity in beliefs based upon this stated premise: “if Scripture alone is the rule, and Scripture is open to various interpretations, and believers are free in conscience to interpret as they feel ‘led’ by the Holy Spirit, it follows that they may be led to different views.”¹²¹ What is stunning is that these *pioneers* held such a flawed view of both the Scriptures and the Spirit of God as to arrive at such a nebulous conclusion. It is no wonder that the EFC has long since forsaken any semblance of holding to the narrow Message of the Scriptures in order to ride high on the wave of Ecumenism.

Satan's tactics are not new, and he demonstrated an ability to mix truth and error from the very beginning. Jesus described him as one in whom there is no truth; he is the father of lies (John 8:44). Because there is no truth in him, he cannot abide the pure truth, and everything that he touches becomes corrupted. This is why Timothy is exhorted to be careful, to “take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee” (1 Timothy 4:16) – and we must do not less. Jesus identified the way of life as being narrow, and said that there would be few who would find it (Matthew 7:14). There are no variations

¹¹⁹ Strong's Online.

¹²⁰ Vine's “spy.”

¹²¹ David V. Martin, *Trinity International University 1897-1997*, p. 19.

from the Word of God for “The words of the LORD *are* pure [clean] words: *as* silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times” (Psalm 12:6).¹²² “Thy word *is* very [exceedingly] pure [refined]: therefore thy servant loveth it” (Psalm 119:140)¹²³; this is a very different testimony than that given by the founders of the EFC. The Word of God must be our focus, we must not deviate from it and we must weigh all things against it; we must not add anything to it, nor take anything away from it (Deuteronomy 4:2; 12:32; Revelation 22:18). However, this is precisely what the critical thinkers have done in producing the Greek text that underlies modern translations of the Bible: they produced a corrupted text – one that has both added to and taken away from the preserved text of God’s Word. This, in turn, opened the door to produce a plethora of translations that have resulted in an increased confusion in the minds of most Evangelicals today and has served to undermine the authority of the Scriptures. Satan’s tactic in all of this is to provide a text that may retain a measure of truth, but which is mixed with sufficient changes to place a question mark over the whole matter of Biblical inerrancy and authority. Once this has taken place, the Scriptures are no longer a rule for life, and Satan has gained a huge victory in the lives of those who should know better; the “thus saith the Lord” now carries with it a doubt that renders it, “yea, hath God said?” (Genesis 3:1).

These *false brethren* entered in to overthrow the freedom that is in Christ Jesus. Paul is very pointed in his explanation of what these, of the sect of the Pharisees, were seeking to do among the believers in Jerusalem; once again, he uses the activities that took place in Jerusalem as a means to emphasize to the Galatians how close they were coming to losing their grasp of the truth. By attempting to impose the Mosaic laws and circumcision upon Gentile believers, they were essentially trying to bring them under bondage to the Mosaic Law. When Paul preached at Antioch in Pisidia, he declared: “Be it known unto you therefore, men *and* brethren, that through this man [Jesus] is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses” (Acts 13:38-39). The Message that God had given to Paul was one of liberation from the Law of Moses through faith in the finished work of Christ. The Greek word translated as *bondage* means to enslave utterly.¹²⁴ This is an intensive word and speaks of something that is far beyond merely being subject to something. Bring to mind, at this point, two things: 1) Paul has already identified these men as seeking to overthrow their freedom in Christ (*spy out*), and 2) he has clarified that the Galatians were about to exchange the true Gospel for a message that was not the Gospel at all. Could this situation have been running through Peter’s mind when he wrote: “For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known *it*, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them” (2 Peter 2:20-21)? The gravity of the situation is evident; these men in Jerusalem (and among the Galatian believers) were endeavoring to replace the Message of freedom in Christ with a false gospel that would bring absolute enslavement and death; they were seeking to draw the freed-ones back under the yoke of slavery to an order that had been ended in Christ. The warning is: take heed (1 Timothy 4:16)!

¹²² Strong’s Online.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Strong’s Dictionary.

5. To whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might continue with you.

We come now to where Paul draws his experience in Jerusalem together with his exhortation to the Galatians.

To whom refers to the false brethren who sought to overthrow the freedom that is found in Christ Jesus, those who sought to cling to the bondage of Judaism. *We* would refer to the delegation from Antioch, sent to Jerusalem to defend the message of the Gospel as given through Paul – namely, those who understood the full Message that God had for all people, a Message that the Jews of Jerusalem had evidently not yet fully understood. Paul, and company, did not yield (*gave place*) by submitting to (*subjection*) what these false brethren proclaimed, not even for *an hour*. The thrust of this is that Paul was not swayed in any way to surrender to their demand that all Christians submit to circumcision and the Mosaic ordinances and traditions. Surely, as Paul wrote to the Ephesians, he would have had this situation in mind: “... That we *henceforth* be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, *and* cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive ...” (Ephesians 4:14). We must be strongly founded upon the teachings of Scripture recognizing that there will always be those who will seek to lure us away from God’s pure Word. Again, we must be reminded to hold to the pure doctrine (2 Timothy 1:13) and avoid everyone who would seek to compromise its truth in any way (Romans 16:17-18). This is perhaps the greatest problem within the Evangelical community today – generally speaking, they are so completely ignorant of the Word of God that they are no match for those who come along with high-sounding words. We live in a day when there is a smorgasbord of theologies to choose from – it is a matter of finding one that fits what you want out of life; Christianity has become a self-centered religion, custom-designed by Satan to deceive the very elect, those who are in Christ and should know better (Matthew 24:24)!

The purpose that Paul gives for taking a strong stand against these Judaizers is so that the truth of the true Gospel will *remain permanently* with the Galatians and with us.¹²⁵ Paul’s stand against this error was another step taken in the preservation of the Word of God. This is something that the higher critics of the Scriptures will never acknowledge, and, therefore, they seek all kinds of external resources to verify the veracity of the Word of God. Jesus said: “... it is easier for heaven and earth to pass [to perish], than one tittle of the law to fail” (Luke 16:17).¹²⁶ The Psalmist declared: “For ever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven” (Psalm 119:89); Isaiah wrote: “The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever” (Isaiah 40:8). Peter identified the preserved Word with the Gospel: “But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you” (1 Peter 1:25). Clearly, the Psalmist, Peter and the Lord Jesus Christ had no difficulty understanding that our God-given Scriptures are also kept in His mighty power. If we could grasp that the Lord Jesus Christ is the Word of God come in the flesh, then we would have less difficulty accepting God’s promised preservation of the Bible. “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. ... And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us ...” (John 1:1-2, 14). What we have recorded and preserved for us is the only revelation of Jesus, the eternal Word, that second Person of the Trinity. We find the promise of

¹²⁵ Strong’s Online.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

His coming as Redeemer in Genesis 3:15, we see the fulfillment of all things in Him in the final passages of Revelation and, in between, we see God revealing His grace to fallen mankind, always looking forward to the Promised One Who would come to take away the sins of the world. Our Scriptures do not contain the complete revelation of Jesus Christ (John 21:25), but they contain what God has determined to be what we need, and, because it is a revelation of the eternal Son of God, it only follows that it will be preserved and continue to stand long after the worlds have passed away. In many ways, the higher critics have the same purpose in mind as the Judaizers of Paul's day: they are seeking to overthrow the authority of the Word of God and the faith of all those who are established in the faith of Christ alone. We must be alert, and recognize their tentacles in the errors that we face every day; we see their influence in the theologies defended by the learned and in the proliferation of translations and paraphrases available today, which do not spring from God's preserved text of Scripture.

Paul declares here that he stood against the Judaizers so that the Truth would remain permanently established with those to whom he preached the Gospel of God. Paul rejected the bondage of Judaism so that the God-given truth of the Gospel would prevail, yet he found those among the Galatians who sought to undermine what he had defended in Jerusalem before the Jewish leaders. He is saying that their position was wrong then, and it is still wrong now – the question for the Galatians, and for us today, is this: why are you permitting yourselves to be deceived into following a message that is not God's pure Truth? In reality, there have always been those who “will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away *their* ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables” (2 Timothy 4:3-4). We must be vigilant lest we find ourselves caught in the snare of their positive-only, hybrid-blend of lies with enough truth to be deceiving.

6. But of these who seemed to be somewhat, (whatsoever they were, it maketh no matter to me: God accepteth no man's person:) for they who seemed *to be somewhat* in conference added nothing to me:

Paul now refers to those among the dissenters who were of some reputation; they *seemed to be somewhat*. There were among those who sought to cling to the Jewish ways, some who were held in high regard; perhaps even some among the Apostles saw the need to hold tenaciously to the old ways. We do know that Peter had great difficulty getting past the fact that God had removed the separation between Jew and Gentile. The Lord gave him a vision, took him to Cornelius, and then gave those Gentiles the gift of languages to prove to Peter (and those who were with him) that the way for the Gentiles had been opened – things were no longer as they had always been.

Seemed, used twice in this verse, is exactly the same Greek word translated as *reputation* in verse two. Paul declares that it does not matter to him what they were, whether held in high regard or not, it made no difference; he knew that God is not influenced by anyone's outward appearance. We may appear to be many things to many people, but God knows the heart: “I the LORD search [investigate, explore] the heart [the seat of knowledge, thinking], I try [examine, prove] the reins [kidneys, the seat of emotions, affections] ...” (Jeremiah 17:10);¹²⁷ the Lord is the only One Who

¹²⁷ Strong's Online.

has access to the inner thoughts and motivations of a person. The prophet Samuel was reminded of this as he sought for the Lord's anointed from among Jesse's sons (1 Samuel 16:7). As Paul presented the Gospel, which he had been preaching to the Gentiles, to the leaders in Jerusalem, he was confident that he was not on trial – the Lord had revealed the Message to him that he was to take to the world, and, in that, he was secure. Perhaps the Jewish leaders within Jerusalem felt that Paul was there to have them evaluate the Gospel message that he was preaching, and either accept, modify, or reject it; Paul was under no such impression. He preached the pure Word of God, and was incensed that anyone would try to mix it with anything else.

Unfortunately, we live in a day when the error of the Jews of Jerusalem is being repeated. Oh, we may not be under pressure to return to the ordinances and regulations of Moses; the error might not be the same in kind, but it is the same in principle. The Jews of Paul's day were steeped in the doctrines of the Jewish faith, and their religious traditions demanded that they have nothing to do with the unclean Gentiles. Now they were faced with a doctrine that called them to set aside some of what they had learned and consider a new way. Today, Baptists and Evangelicals of all stripes cling to what makes them unique; even with the massive shift into Ecumenism, their unique traditions are carefully maintained, and they have learned to ignore that with which they're not familiar and still embrace one another as fellow Christians; within the diverse Ecumenical movement, there is an accommodation of such differences. However, if you approach any within this group (and sadly, many "Fundamental Baptists" are not much different) with a Biblical position that is contrary to their theology, they will immediately dismiss you; their accommodation has bred a strong tolerance for almost anything except the pure truth of God's Word. If the Message that you bring is not in keeping with their theology or within the parameters of their tolerance, you will be set aside as holding little relevance to them. If you embrace a Biblical position that is in opposition to that held by any of their stalwarts, you are very likely to be branded as a narrow-minded legalist and sent packing. We have yet to learn the lesson that we are not to look to our carefully designed theologies, but to God's Word and His desire that we live in accordance with what He has given to us.

However, as in Paul's day, this is not a common or popular theme today. "Pastors," particularly those who are Independent Baptists, are more concerned about maintaining their position within their congregation than almost anything else. They see their role as being solidly Biblical, even though they have never, personally, taken the time to weigh their theologies against the Word of God (they have been led through a "Scriptural" basis for their theology – and that is something that is remarkably different), and, by concluding that their positions are Biblical, they place themselves above reproach. This is not unlike the leaders of the assemblies in Judea who also would have considered their understanding to be Biblical; the believers who were of the sect of the Pharisees would not have voiced their objection (Acts 15:5) if they had not felt very comfortable that they were Biblically correct. They were Jews by conviction, and only sought to retain some of their familiar practices that bolstered their Jewishness. Today we hear of those who are Baptists by conviction, or those who are longstanding members of the Evangelical Free Church, and, by hoisting these tattered-excuses as flags of identification, they will utterly reject Biblical teaching because what they hear does not agree with their traditions. They may never admit to such, but that makes what they hear no less true.

Paul speaks here of those who were of reputation, and clarifies that this mattered not one iota to him; his focus was on the Message and the doctrine, and the necessity of it lining up with the Scriptures. For the most part, we see little concern today for the teachings of the Word of God –

typically the average Evangelical only tries to stay in line with his denominational position, which, as a rule, permits him a great deal of latitude. This is not unlike the Jew of Paul's day; they, too, were concerned that they not depart from what they had been taught. However, as soon as these people are confronted with a truly Biblical position (whether the Judaizers of Paul's day or the Evangelicals of today), they will not look beyond their group's documents (if they look that far) to determine if they will accept what you say, or not. Today, it would be more common for an Evangelical to limit his reference to what his favorite theologian or preacher says on the matter; their cry would be: "I am of Warren," "I am of Graham," or, perhaps the more conservative would say, "I am of MacArthur" (cf. 1 Corinthians 1:12). We have entered an era where it is not really expected that anyone should try to understand the Scriptures; such heavy religious thinking is left to the experts – those highly educated and acclaimed doctors of theology who have the required intelligence to interpret the Word of God for us. This is reflective of the Roman Catholic Church, which traditionally has withheld the Scriptures from their people (and to a very large degree from their own bishops), lest someone arrive at an understanding that is contrary to the Church's doctrinal position; they limit the interpretation of Scripture to those within the upper hierarchy of the Church. The Galatians suffered from the same dementia; when Jews from Jerusalem said that they needed to add circumcision and the ordinances of the Law of Moses to their faith, they were ready to make the change. Paul tells them that they are about to transpose error for the truth of God, they are about to forsake the pure truth and embrace a deadly mixture of truth and error (which is only a more deceptive form of error), and they are about to turn away from Christ as their Redeemer. The matter was very serious for them, and it is equally as serious for us – there is a pervading ignorance of what God desires for those who want to walk in His ways, and, unfortunately, the truth will not be heard from the learned men of reputation.

Today we have men who are held in high regard – men who should have a Message of life and



LA Crusade 2004

faith in Christ, but many of whom provide a deadly concoction of truth and error (it may not be the same mixture as what the Galatians were being fed, but the results are the same). Perhaps the most famous example is the late Billy Graham; during his lifetime he has caused irreparable damage in the hearts and lives of those whom he professed to draw to faith in Christ. Evangelicals today have grown up venerating this man, and most, without looking into the matter, will attribute multiplied thousands of converts to his crusade ministry; he is the *pope* of Evangelicalism who can do no wrong. With such a

"tremendous" track record, how could anyone who considers himself to be a Christian do anything other than praise the man? However, what anyone will find if he is prepared to look, is that from the earliest days of his crusade ministry, Billy Graham turned all of his "converts" back to the denominations from which they came. If they were Roman Catholics before the meeting, they were directed to go back to the Catholic Church for follow-up after the meeting; if Greek Orthodox, or United Church, or Anglican or Lutheran, it mattered not – each one was encouraged to return to his or her own denomination. Graham was a significant contributor to the rapid spread of Ecumenical thinking, for he was declaring for everyone to see that all denominations were equally acceptable in God's eyes. Therefore, even if (and that little word "if" is deliberately included) Billy Graham preached a message that was true to the Word of God, anyone who came forward for salvation would have been sent back to their own denomination, no matter how corrupt it was. He was saying, in essence, that it is acceptable to take the salvation that Christ offers and add it to whatever you are familiar with, and that is okay. Paul declares so plainly in this letter that it cannot

be this way. If you wave a red flag regarding the teaching and practices of Billy Graham today, you will very quickly lose your audience. We see Paul, Peter and James facing those in Jerusalem who sought to include keeping the ordinances of Moses with their faith in Christ, and Peter and James had to agree that this should not be required of Gentile believers (Acts 15:19), yet we find the Galatian believers caught in this very error. Nothing has changed in two thousand years except the content and context of the error.

Returning to our verse, Paul states very clearly that those with whom he conferred while he was in Jerusalem *added nothing* to the Message that he had received of God for the world. *Conference*, as used in this verse, is exactly the same Greek word that is found in Galatians 1:16 where Paul made it very clear that he *conferred not* with anyone. If we consider these two comments together, we see that Paul did not confer with men when he received the message of the Gospel from God, and we see here that after laying before the Jewish leaders the Gospel that he had been preaching, they added nothing to the Message. The Gospel that Paul was preaching to anyone who would listen, was the complete and true Gospel – there was nothing missing, and nothing to be added! The word that Paul and Barnabas preached to the Galatians on their journey through that area, was the pure Gospel; it was in need of nothing! This presents a strong argument against what the Galatians were doing; within the Message that Paul delivered, there was no room for reverting to the traditions of Moses – for mixing truth with error. How could the traditions of Moses, which were received from God, be considered error? Paul very carefully explained to the Ephesians how these traditions had been ended at the cross of Christ (Ephesians 2:14-16), and what God has ended we must not seek to perpetuate. As we will see, there was not only no room for such, but adding these Jewish traditions undermined the very truth of God’s Message.

7. But contrariwise, when they saw that the gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto me, as *the gospel* of the circumcision *was* unto Peter;

This reflects a very astute summary of the position of the Jewish leaders of Jerusalem. James declared the compromise that they were prepared to put forward: “Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world. Wherefore my sentence is, that we trouble [harass further] not them, which from among the Gentiles are turned to God: But that we write unto them, that they abstain from pollutions of idols, and *from* fornication, and *from* things strangled, and *from* blood. For Moses of old time hath in every city them that preach him, being read in the synagogues every sabbath day” (Acts 15:18-21).¹²⁸ If you consider this carefully, it appears that they have not given anything away – the focus of this judgment is on the Gentile believers. They are permitting the Gentiles to remain as they were when they turned to the Lord (they were suspending the demand that they be circumcised). However, they were still holding strongly to the teachings of Moses, for James included the comment that Moses was being preached in the synagogues of all cities every week (Acts 15:21) – if these Gentile converts wanted to learn about Moses’ Laws, there was ample access for them.

The letter, which they wrote to the believers in Antioch, did not contain this comment regarding Moses, but neither did it contain a condemnation of those trying to impose the ordinances of Moses

¹²⁸ Strong’s Dictionary.

and circumcision upon Gentile believers (Acts 15:23-29). The closest that they came is recorded in verse 24: “Forasmuch as we have heard, that certain which went out from us have troubled you with words, subverting [literally, to pack up baggage; within a military context it meant to plunder a town¹²⁹ – thereby indicating the damage that was being done] your souls, saying, *Ye must be circumcised, and keep the law: to whom we gave no such commandment*”¹³⁰ They acknowledge that the men who were causing the strife in Antioch did come from them, but they deny sending them with that message. What is not declared openly, but which we can glean from the overall tone of this chapter of Acts, is that the Jewish Christians around Jerusalem were just that – Jewish Christians; by example, they were showing that the traditions of Moses and the rite of circumcision were still of value. The product of the conference in Jerusalem was that the Gentiles would no longer be held to their Jewish standards; it was a compromise that “permitted” Paul to continue to preach the Gospel message, which the Lord had given to him, without interference (at least officially) from the Jewish believers. The old saying, a man convinced against his will is of the same opinion still, seems to fit this situation very well; the Jews, unarguably, were forced to accept the Gospel that had been committed to Paul as being genuine and pure, yet their wills had not made the change. Despite the lesson that God had brought to Peter through the household of Cornelius, they seemed, for the most part, to remain unconvinced that the traditions of the Jews were fulfilled, completed, and done away with in Christ (Ephesians 2:15).

In our verse, Paul indicates that the leaders in Jerusalem realized that he had been given a Message for the Gentiles, and they had to admit that it was a pure Message. However, it is also clear that they were not prepared to accept the Gospel that Paul was preaching and apply it to themselves. Their conclusion was that Paul had been entrusted with the Gospel to the Gentiles, and Peter to the Jews; the rut of Judaism ran too deeply for such a massive paradigm shift so quickly. Even as Peter penned his second epistle, he still admitted that there were many things that Paul taught that were difficult to understand (2 Peter 3:16).

8. (For he that wrought effectually in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision, the same was mighty in me toward the Gentiles:)

This is a restatement of the previous verse. Even as God expressed His power at work through Peter to those of the circumcision (the Jews), so this same God also expressed His power through Paul to the Gentiles (the heathen). The words *wrought effectually* and *mighty* come from exactly the same word in the Greek; *energeo*, to be at work: God was working through both Peter and Paul.¹³¹ What Paul wants these Galatians to understand is that God was not biased toward the Message of Peter to the Jews over the Message that Paul had been given for all of mankind. Somehow, the Galatian believers had been persuaded, or were being persuaded, that the Gospel message as found among the Jews was superior to what they had received through Paul and Barnabas. However, Paul is building his case that this is not the situation at all; the dichotomy was due to the Jerusalem believers being unwilling to accept that their Jewish traditions had been fulfilled, abolished, and done away with in Christ Jesus (Ephesians 2:15).

¹²⁹ Strong’s Online.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ Friberg Lexicon.

9. And when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship; that we *should go* unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision.

Pillars is a word that is used to refer to a “column supporting the weight of a building,” and, within our context, would speak of those who were the primary elders within the Jerusalem assembly.¹³² Once again, we have that word *seemed* that, as we have previously noted, speaks of having a reputation (which may or may not be factual). What is interesting is that Paul never declares these men to be the pillars, nor does he say that he went to those in Jerusalem who were the leaders, but to those who were “of reputation” (2:2). There could be a couple of reasons for this. First of all, Paul does not want to ascribe undue prestige to these men, for, although the elders of an assembly bear a greater responsibility than the others, they do not hold an elevated position. Secondly, although these men were the reputed pillars of the assembly and were looked to for leadership, they were in error on this important matter of what the Lord had really accomplished through His death, burial and resurrection. Even though, by all appearances, they were the elders responsible for holding to the purity of doctrine, they had failed on this occasion.

As Paul penned this letter to the Galatians and recalled the situation when he had faced those of reputation among the elders of Jerusalem, he undoubtedly recognized the fruit of their failure to deal decisively and properly with the problem of mixing Jewish traditions with the Gospel. Could it be that these leaders were not exercising Biblically based discernment in dealing with the Judaizers? Although elders do not hold positional authority, they do hold the much greater responsibility of leading by example; even a cursory review of First Timothy 3 and Titus 1 will reveal this. Two verses in Hebrews 13 are often used to support the concept of positional authority within a church (namely, the ultimate authority of the pastor), yet they actually speak of the very same exemplary leadership responsibility. “Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow ...” (Hebrews 13:7); then: “Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls ...” (Hebrews 13:17). We have here the nuts and bolts of what the Independent Baptists like to use as their basis for pastoral authority. However, careful consideration of the terms used here quickly unravels any such authoritative control – something that they are not prepared to do lest they be forced to undo some of their Baptist theology. First, the word *rule* means *to lead, to go before*,¹³³ and has absolutely nothing to do with pastoral control. This has everything to do with the responsibility of the elders to lead their assembly by example in the ways of truth and correct doctrine (1 Peter 5:1-3; 1 Timothy 4:16); as Paul dealt with the Jerusalem leaders, this was an area of failure. They were not prepared to denounce the retention of the Mosaic traditions and, thereby, it became a snare within their assembly, and a stumbling block to others. By example, the leaders of Jerusalem were supporting the preservation of the very traditions that had been fulfilled and abolished in Christ. Secondly, the *obey* of Hebrews 13:17 means *to be persuaded*, which agrees completely with John’s exhortation that we are to *try the spirits*; we are to test to ensure that those who are in leadership adhere to the Word of God (1 John 4:1). If we give this careful consideration, we might remember

¹³² Vine’s “pillar.”

¹³³ Strong’s Online.

that Jesus said: “Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant: Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many” (Matthew 20:25-28). Jesus made it abundantly clear that there was to be no hierarchical authority within the assembly, contrary to what we see today – particularly within the Independent Baptist movement, and perfected within the Roman Catholic Church. What Paul experienced at Jerusalem was the influence of those of reputation – everyone was following their example, and no one was testing their teaching to ensure that it was in line with the Word of God. The reputed leaders failed to recognize God’s fulfillment of the Mosaic ordinances, and the people of Jerusalem followed them without weighing their position against the Scriptures – a double failure.

Were these Judaizers using the traditions of Moses in order to draw closer to God? Since Christ had already come, this would have been impossible. All of these traditions had been fulfilled and done away with through the redemption accomplished by Christ, Who died once for all time (Hebrews 9:28). No, these were traditions with which they were comfortable; they grew up with them and were reluctant to give them up (Acts 15:1-3, 5). If they had searched their Scriptures, they would have recognized that the Lord took pleasure in none of these traditions; God set them in place through Moses in order to instill in the hearts of Israel a fear of the Lord God and to provide them with an understanding of His holiness – a holiness that they were to reflect. The Mosaic Laws were intended to make Israel a kingdom of priests and a holy nation (Exodus 19:6) until Messiah came to establish a New Covenant with Israel (Jeremiah 31:31-33) – a Covenant that was implemented by Jesus Christ with His disciples (Luke 22:20). Isaiah, if they had taken the time to ponder his warnings, identified the futility of perpetuating empty rituals (Isaiah 1:10-17). The Lord declared through Isaiah, “Bring no more vain oblations [empty offerings]; incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with [I cannot endure]; *it is* iniquity [or, idolatry], even the solemn meeting” (Isaiah 1:13).¹³⁴ What the Lord so clearly condemned within Israel of old, the Jews of this day were seeking to perpetuate – empty rituals. However, this time the rituals were empty because they had been fulfilled in Christ (not because they were carried out without faith in the Lord); they were never meant to be anything more than a shadow of things to come (Colossians 2:17). “For he [Christ] is our peace, who hath made both one [the Jew and the Gentile], and hath broken down the middle wall of partition *between us*; Having **abolished in his flesh the enmity**, *even* the law of commandments *contained* in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, *so* making peace ...” (Ephesians 2:14-15). What the Jews needed to recognize, more than anything else, was that Christ had made an end of their familiar Jewish rituals.

We read that Peter, James and John gave Paul and Barnabas the *right hands of fellowship*; they gave them their approval. They determined that there was nothing to be changed regarding the Message that Paul and Barnabas were proclaiming. However, it was a guarded approval – you go to the heathen, and we’ll go to the Jews. By doing this, they would be able to retain their traditions and customs without any difficulty, for they would be working among their own people. What they did not foresee was the very



*The Law of Moses
ended at the cross!*

¹³⁴ Strong’s Online.

problem that Paul now faced in the midst of the Galatian believers. By carrying on with their Jewish practices, the leaders of Jerusalem permitted the Christians within their community to develop the error of holding to both the Gospel of Christ and the traditions of Moses. Although the leaders reluctantly agreed not to hold the Gentiles to this practice, others came to see this as the correct way, and were determined to convince the Galatians. What had become normal practice within the assembly of Jerusalem, Paul called a different gospel – one that was not of the same kind as what had been given to the assemblies in Galatia by Paul and Barnabas (Galatians 1:6-7). Although Jerusalem assembly may have begun well, their traditions took over their hearts and they made them a part of the Gospel message – hence, the error! “Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath *days* [literally, *sabbaths*, there is no definite article in the Greek]: Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body *is* of Christ” (Colossians 2:16-17).¹³⁵ Paul elaborated on this in Romans 14:14-15, the essence of which is: don’t do anything that will cause a brother to stumble in his walk with the Lord. By holding onto their Jewish traditions, the reputed leaders in Jerusalem led others to conclude that the faith of Christ and the Jewish traditions together formed the Gospel message. However, Paul has made it abundantly clear in this epistle, that this is **not** the Gospel, but something else altogether. How carefully we need to walk lest we unwittingly approve error in the eyes of those who do not fully comprehend God’s call on our lives. Perhaps a fitting example of this would be how we approach what is known as the “Christmas season,” something that is delved into with great enthusiasm but which bears a greater influence from paganism than anything that could be construed as being Biblical. Do we hold to truth during this worldly festive time or do we join in the celebrations that flow out of the worship of the pagan sun-gods? Perhaps if we understood that the “reason for the season” is not the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ but the re-birth of the sun-gods of various pagan cultures, we might be more inclined to set the festivities aside. We, like the Jews of Paul’s day, need to look more to the Scriptures and less to the culture around us.

10. Only *they would* that we should remember the poor; the same which I also was forward to do.

It is interesting that the KJV follows the pattern of the Bishop’s Bible (one of the reference Bibles used in the translation) by placing a period at the end of verse nine, thereby inserting a break in thought. However, all of the older translations that I checked (including Wycliffe, Coverdale, Geneva, and Tyndale), did not show such a significant break. Robert Young’s literal translation ends verse nine with a comma, which supports the other old translations by drawing verses nine and ten together.

The difficulty that we face as we consider this verse is that we often look for the parallel to it within the documented letter that was sent to the Antioch Christians by the leadership of the Jerusalem assembly (Acts 15:23-29). However, if we pause for a moment, we will realize that the thrust of this verse is directed at Paul and Barnabas, and not the Gentile Christians in general. In all likelihood, this was an admonition given by the Jerusalem leadership to Paul and Barnabas as they gave to them their “right hands of fellowship.” We do see that on more than one occasion Paul was instrumental in sending support to the believers in the Jerusalem area. Acts 11:28-30

¹³⁵ Stephanus 1550 NT.

speaks of the famine that hit the whole world, and relief was sent to the Christians in Jerusalem by the hands of Paul and Barnabas (which would have taken place before this meeting). We read of similar occasions in Romans 15:25-26 and 1 Corinthians 16:1-3. This confirms Paul's words here that he was indeed diligent (*forward*) in providing for the poor.

I will readily admit that I puzzled over this verse for some time. When I hit such occasions, I will consult with commentaries to see what others have said on the matter. It was interesting to note that most commentators agreed that Galatians 2 fits the best with Acts 15 as they are dealing with the same issue of drawing Jewish traditions into Christianity. However, when it came to this verse specifically, either they would make no comment at all or they ignored the direct correlation that they'd made between Galatians 2 and Acts 15, and related this verse to Acts 11 (Peter preaching to Cornelius, a Gentile). It appears to me that the leaders of Jerusalem had nothing to add to what Paul was preaching, but, rather than remain speechless, they exhorted Paul and Barnabas (as preachers to the Gentiles) to not forsake the poor. As already noted, this was something in which Paul and Barnabas had already been involved – and to Jerusalem, no less; something of which James, Peter and John should have been fully aware.

11. But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed.

Paul now launches into a significant teaching section using the actions of Peter as the springboard – and, as we can see from this verse, it was not a positive example either. You will recall from our study so far, that the Jews of Jerusalem were having great difficulty getting beyond the traditions of Judaism, and Peter was no exception to this, even though the Lord had given him the vision of the sheet and specifically sent him to the Gentile, Cornelius (Acts 10). You will recall that Peter defended himself before the Jerusalem assembly (Acts 11:2-4, 18) regarding this matter, perhaps before the same people who declared that the Gentiles needed to be circumcised and keep the ordinances of Moses (when Paul and Barnabas arrived from Antioch – Acts 15:5). However, through all of this, it seems that Peter was still not completely convinced that the Gospel was now free of the old circumcision and ordinances of Moses. It was probably far easier to work with the Jews of Jerusalem if you left their traditional practices alone; after all, the traditions had been given by God to their father Abraham and to Moses, and so they must still be necessary. The traditions may not have been the core of the doctrine that they taught, but it is very evident that they were not teaching that these things were no longer of any spiritual value.

Our verse speaks of a time when Peter came to Antioch – a time that is not spoken of in Acts; it does not appear to be when the letter of concession was sent to the Gentiles in Antioch, for that was sent by Judas and Silas (Acts 15:32). Perhaps Peter came to Antioch to view firsthand the work and ministry in which Paul was involved. We are told that Paul opposed (*withstood*) him in person; he did not cut him down behind his back but, rather, dealt with the problem head on. Too often we disagree with someone to other people, and the person to whom we are opposed will never know unless it comes back to him by way of gossip. If we do not have the courage to face the individual with the problem, then it is better not to say anything than to attack him through the avenue of public opinion (gossip). We must always ensure that the rebuke, or correction, matches the context of the offense. Jesus said: "... if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him

his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother” (Matthew 18:15). Notice, the offense is against an individual – therefore, the rebuke and first attempt at reconciliation is made on the same basis. The passage in Matthew goes on to tell us that if we are unsuccessful, then we are to try again with a few others to bear witness of the response, and, if that is unsuccessful, then the matter is to go before the assembly. There is a prescribed process for dealing with sin, and we must be slow to bring the error of others to the attention of everyone. However, as we see demonstrated on this occasion, when there has been a public offense (a sin against everyone), then that sin must be dealt with publicly. The error of Peter was not against Paul personally, but against all of those who were present and, therefore, Paul’s rebuke was made before everyone.

Blamed, as it is used here, comes from a Greek word that is much stronger than what we would understand from our English; it actually means that Peter is to be condemned.¹³⁶ If we have not recognized, to this point, how serious Paul saw the problem of adding Jewish traditions to the Gospel, it should very shortly become perfectly clear that this was totally unacceptable.

12. For before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles: but when they were come, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision.

James was the leader of the assembly in Jerusalem, and here we find a group coming from Jerusalem to Antioch, again. The last time that such a group arrived in Antioch, it resulted in a delegation going down to Jerusalem to resolve the matter of whether the Gentiles should be required to be circumcised and keep the Mosaic ordinances. Now, however, it seems that their agitation was of a different sort.

Peter had evidently gone to Antioch alone, that is, he was not part of a larger group from Jerusalem that arrived later. Before this group came from Jerusalem, Peter had overcome his Jewish fear of the Gentiles and was sitting with them to eat his meals; he was becoming one with the assembly in Antioch. However, when these Jewish Christians arrived on the scene, suddenly Peter felt a little uncomfortable sitting with the Gentiles and withdrew himself from eating with them. The first thing that this tells us is that the Christians from Jerusalem had not changed their ways; they were still incorporating Jewish traditions into their new Christian faith, otherwise, they would have simply sat with the Gentiles for their meals. What evidently took place was that the Jewish Christians sat apart from the Gentiles to eat; they would not mix with the “heathen” – even though they were both redeemed by, and united through, the same blood Sacrifice.

Here is an interesting observation: *fearing* as it is used here (as in Peter *fearing* the Jews) is from exactly the same Greek word as that used in Matthew 14:30 – “But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid” Peter’s fear in observing the storm as he walked on the water to Jesus was the same “natural” response that he had when in the presence of the Jews from Jerusalem – he feared their reaction should he be seen mingling with the Gentiles. It may well have been a natural response, but it was definitely not spiritual.

¹³⁶ Strong’s Online.

We are told that Peter *withdrew* (*hupostello*, *hoop-os-tel'-lo*), which means *to draw back*;¹³⁷ perhaps a “metaphor from lowering a sail and so slackening the course, and hence of being remiss in holding the truth”¹³⁸ – a sailing metaphor used against a fisherman, yet it serves to underscore the serious error into which Peter had fallen. We read as well that he *separated* himself, that is, he *set off by boundary* with the purpose of excluding the Gentiles.¹³⁹ Could there have been an invisible line down the middle of the room – Gentiles there, and Jews over here? It almost seems that marked.

13. And the other Jews dissembled likewise with him; insomuch that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation.

Unfortunately, most times our actions are not carried out in isolation, particularly when we are in error. Peter had a sudden attack of “Jewishitis” when the delegation came from Jerusalem, and he withdrew from eating with the Gentiles. However, once again, Peter led by example and it was not in keeping with the liberating message of the Gospel. The other Jews within the assembly in Antioch began to follow Peter’s lead and separated themselves from the Gentiles as well. It went so far that even Barnabas, the preaching companion of Paul, withdrew and ate with the segregated Jews.

Paul uses some strong language to describe this situation. The words *dissembled* and *dissimulation* are not familiar to us, and, as a result, we can easily miss the thrust of this verse. The Greek word translated as *dissimulation* is *hupokrisis* (*hoop-ok'-ree-sis*), which is most often translated as hypocrisy.¹⁴⁰ Paul describes the actions of these Jews, who had been mingling with the Gentiles without difficulty, as hypocrisy – they acted in one manner when it was just the Antioch assembly and in a different way when some Jews came from James. What is clearly evident is that the Jews of Jerusalem were not being taught that the ordinances of Moses were fulfilled and done away with through the finished work of Christ on the cross. These Jews from James were obviously still following their traditions and so they separated themselves from the Gentile Christians to eat their meal – it was their Jewish custom that drew Peter and the other Jews away from what had been their practice up to this time, and therein was their hypocrisy.

The word *dissembled* is quite similar to *dissimulation* but with one slight difference. It means, “to join in acting the hypocrite.”¹⁴¹ The other Jews joined Peter in acting the hypocrite; Peter was the first hypocrite, all the rest proved to be copy-hypocrites. Although all were guilty of being hypocritical in this situation, it was Peter who started the domino effect, and it was Peter whom Paul saddled with the responsibility for this error. If Peter had stayed the course and continued to eat with the Gentiles, perhaps the Jews from James would have been influenced to set their Mosaic habits aside and join the rest. However, this was not the case.

What is fascinating to realize is that even though the Jews of Jerusalem had granted liberty to the Gentile Christians to be free from following the Mosaic ordinances, they could not bring

¹³⁷ Strong’s Online.

¹³⁸ Vine’s “draw.”

¹³⁹ Strong’s Dictionary.

¹⁴⁰ Strong’s Online.

¹⁴¹ Vine’s “dissemble.”

themselves to live by that same standard. Paul called it hypocrisy – and that would seem to be an appropriate term.

14. But when I saw that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel, I said unto Peter before *them* all, If thou, being a Jew, livest after the manner of Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews?

The stage has been set, the illustration has been laid out, and now Paul begins to describe the significance of the error. It would seem that the Galatian Christians had had a visit from some of the Christian Jews from Jerusalem as well; in all likelihood, they would be able to relate very specifically to what took place in Antioch and, more importantly, to Paul's explanation of the failure of these men to understand the reality of the Gospel.

The words *walked uprightly* (which here carry the modifier *not*) come from the Greek *orthopodeo*, which literally is to be straight footed.¹⁴² The idea is to go directly forward,¹⁴³ or to walk in a straight course.¹⁴⁴ This is what these men were NOT doing, and they were led into this error by Peter. We would do well to carefully ponder Jesus' words to someone who desired to follow Him: "... Lord, I will follow thee; but let me first go bid them farewell, which are at home at my house. And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God" (Luke 9:61-62). In order to do a proper job of plowing a straight furrow, it is necessary to keep your focus forward, else your furrow will wander; Jesus was making it clear that if we would follow Him, we must focus our eyes ahead so that we will plow a straight furrow. "... let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset *us*, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto [have a singular focus on] Jesus the author and finisher of *our* faith ..." (Hebrews 12:1-2).¹⁴⁵ If you begin to look around at other things or back to where you have come from, then your furrow will no longer be straight because you have lost your focus. The Psalmist declared, "Lead me, O LORD, in thy righteousness because of mine enemies; make thy way straight before my face" (Psalm 5:8). What is evident from Scripture is that the way of the Lord is a straight path: "The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain: And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see *it* together: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken *it*" (Isaiah 40:3-5; cp. Luke 3:4-5). The Lord will make the crooked straight; crooked is always used to refer to that which is twisted, misshapen, and evil. Deuteronomy 32:4-5 declares the contrast between the Lord and a people who are crooked: "*He is* the Rock, his work *is* perfect: for all his ways *are* judgment [just or right]: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right *is* he. They have corrupted themselves, their spot *is* not *the spot* of his children: *they are* a perverse and crooked generation."¹⁴⁶ Paul

¹⁴² Strong's Dictionary.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Strong's Online.

¹⁴⁵ Friberg Lexicon.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

identifies the path taken by Peter, and all of those who followed his example, as not being straight – or, in other words, it was crooked, or twisted, a departure from the straight path of the Lord.

We see Paul calling Peter to account before all those present; he saw that *they* were departing from the straight path of the Lord, but he holds Peter responsible. Peter's transgression was against everyone present – he led the Jews, who had been open to the Gentiles, into separating from them; he gave the Judaizers encouragement that they were right in their assessment of the necessity of following the traditions of Moses, and he erred against the Gentiles by giving them the impression that they were second-class Christians. Despite the letter from Jerusalem approving the Gospel that Paul had delivered to these people, they were once again given cause to wonder if anything had changed at all. Paul had already dealt with this issue before the leaders of the Jerusalem assembly, and he was not about to have it undermined.

Paul begins his accusation of Peter by clarifying that Peter, a Jew, was living as a Gentile (i.e., in the freedom of the Gospel of Christ) and not as after the manner of the Jews (subject to the Mosaic traditions) before they received company from Jerusalem – he felt free to fellowship with the Gentile Christians. The Jews (specifically those from around Jerusalem) clung to their Jewish customs and traditions, and were not prepared to set them aside – even for the freedom offered in Christ. When Peter first came to Antioch, he entered into that freedom, associating with the Gentiles with no difficulties – he set his Jewish habits aside and, seemingly, broke out of the rut of Judaism. The question that Paul puts to Peter, focuses on the essence of what he had done. By moving over to eat with the Jerusalem Judaizers, Peter was forcing (*compellest*) the Gentiles to live as the Judaizers. The message that was being shouted at these Gentile Christians was that if they wanted to have fellowship with the Jews, they were then going to have to be circumcised and keep the traditions of Moses (Acts 15:5). The very thing that Peter, James and John had faced when Paul and the delegation from Antioch met with them had still not been laid to rest. This is further evidence that the Jews of Jerusalem were not prepared to follow the liberty of the Gospel message that Paul was preaching; they were thoroughly enmeshed in their Jewish traditions, to the point that they held them as being essential to their new life in Christ. No one had the Gentile Christians in a choke-hold forcing them to follow the traditions of Moses, but the wide, empty space between the Gentiles and the Jews during their meal times told them very strongly that, if they wanted to get anywhere as Christians, they were going to have to adopt the practices of the Jews.

15. We *who are* Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles,

Paul now draws specific attention to those Christians who were Jews by birth, and he is including himself within this group. He is deliberately excluding the Gentile Christians from the thrust of his next comments, those who were still called the “Uncircumcision” by the “Circumcision” of Jerusalem, “aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world” (Ephesians 2:11-12). His focus is on the recipients of the covenant of Moses who have now placed their faith in Jesus Christ as their Messiah and Savior, those who were chosen of old to be a “kingdom of priests” before a fallen world (Exodus 19:6), yet who were now unwilling to fellowship with their Gentile brothers in the Lord.

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

Paul declares what the Christian Jews knew but seemed unwilling to practice. They knew that no one is justified, or rendered righteous, by means of keeping the Law. "... by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law *is* the knowledge of sin" (Romans 3:20). What mankind must face, but is often unwilling to accept, is that we are all sinful and helpless to do anything for our own salvation; "... we are all as an unclean *thing*, and all our righteousnesses *are* as filthy rags ..." (Isaiah 64:6) – and that includes both the Jew and the Gentile. Our most righteous acts are worthless before God Who is infinitely holy and just, because they come from a heart that is naturally sinful. It is clear that sinful man can do virtuous acts, yet these are of no value before a righteous God; they cannot purchase a moment of forgiveness or cleansing from Him. The most righteous act carried out by a sinful man is still a filthy garment before the Lord. "Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine



David Yonggi Cho

linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints" (Revelation 19:7-8). What a contrast! The righteous acts of a sinful man are as filthy rags; the righteousness of the redeemed saints of the Lord appears as clean, white, fine linen, for it is the righteousness of Christ (Titus 3:5). "And he [Abraham] believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness" (Genesis 15:6). The righteousness of the Lord has always come through faith (Hebrews 11 openly declares this reality), through believing God – something that can only be demonstrated by obedience to His instructions (James 2:18).

Man's inborn sinfulness is not a particularly popular topic for discussion today among some groups, and it is often either downplayed or ignored by them. David Cho, for example, leader of the world's largest liberal, Evangelical church in Seoul, South Korea, believes that we can reach our "unlimited potential, simply by exercising a positive attitude."¹⁴⁷ This has the appearance of filthy rags, and sounds very much like the positive-thinking philosophy of Norman Vincent Peale. Peale openly declared: "It's not necessary to be born again. You have your way to God, I have mine. I found eternal peace in a Shinto shrine."¹⁴⁸ Yet, unfortunately, such heresy did not discourage Billy Graham from stating: "I don't know anyone who has done more for the kingdom of God than Norman and Ruth Peale, or have meant any more in my life"¹⁴⁹ Clearly, both Graham and Peale had no qualms about ignoring



Norman Vincent Peale

¹⁴⁷ <https://www.solascriptura-tt.org/SeparacaoEclesiastFundament/PaulDavidYonggiChoCellChurch-JBeard.htm>.

¹⁴⁸ <https://ovocebaptistainoltenia.wordpress.com/2010/05/03/billy-graham-general-teachingsactivities/>.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

the clear teachings of the Word of God – a very dangerous move, even though it is not discerned as being such by most Evangelicals.

Charles Finney, a well-known preacher of the early 1800s, defined sin as being “the voluntary transgression of a known law;”¹⁵⁰ he maintained that “every sin, then, consists in an act of will.”¹⁵¹ Finney might well be regarded as just another heretic attached to our “Christian” heritage, and that assessment would not be wrong. Unfortunately, we can see his fingerprints all over modern Evangelicalism; he popularized many things including evangelistic crusades, revival meetings, altar calls, invitations, and even the moral reformation of our culture¹⁵² (today commonly referred to as “saving our culture”). In addition to all of the cosmetic inheritances from Finney, his definition of sin has not been lost within our modern thinking either. Rick Warren states: “Although man has tremendous potential for good, he is marred by an attitude of disobedience



Charles Finney

toward what God called ‘sin.’”¹⁵³ Regrettably, along with a flawed view of sin comes a skewed view of what is necessary for salvation, and it is this unbiblical view of salvation that forms a fundamental building block in the bridge to Ecumenism. The Scriptures paint a very different picture of who we are; the problem is much deeper than simply not projecting a positive attitude or succumbing to an *attitude of disobedience*. The Psalmist said, “Behold, I was shapen [brought forth] in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me” (Psalm 51:5)¹⁵⁴ – with conception the sinful inheritance from Adam is attached to the new life that begins in innocence. Jesus declared that it was the heart that produced all sorts of evil; it was not simply the actions that were sinful, but the heart, the source of those actions, was the seat of sin (Mark 7:21-23). Paul further clarified this: “Wherefore,

as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned ... Therefore as by the **offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation**; even so by the righteousness of one *the free gift came* upon [to] all men unto justification of life” (Romans 5:12, 18). There was one offense that landed all of mankind in the pool of sin: we are born sinners – the corruption of sin is inherited from Adam (1 Corinthians 15:22). If it were only a matter of individual disobedience, then these verses would make little sense; however, through Adam we have inherited a sin nature, a heart of deceit that renders us all sinners before God. Herein is the reason that Jesus Christ, eternal God made flesh, remained sinless: He was conceived by the Holy Spirit, not by man (Luke 1:35). The Jews had this inherent sinfulness just as surely as the Gentiles did – Adam is the father of us all.

The Law of Moses was added to ensure that mankind understood their position before a holy God: “... the law was our schoolmaster *to bring us* unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith” (Galatians 3:24). The Law established, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that sin was a reality for all of mankind, and it presented, in a tangible way, the need for faith in order to come to God. “Without faith *it is* impossible to please” God (Hebrews 11:6); this held true for the Israelite coming to present his sacrifice upon the altar in Jerusalem as well as for the Gentile who stood afar off and

¹⁵⁰ Charles Finney, *Systematic Theology*, Lecture II, <http://truthinheart.com/EarlyOberlinCD/CD/Finney>

¹⁵¹ *Ibid*, Lecture XIV.

¹⁵² https://www.wayoflife.org/reports/the_influence_of_chrales_finney.php.

¹⁵³ <http://www.saddleback.com/aboutsaddleback/whatwebelieve/index.html>

¹⁵⁴ Strong’s Online.

watched. The Law of Moses did not change the way to God, it simply confirmed God's holiness and man's sinfulness, and foreshadowed how the Lord would one day redeem mankind. The way to God has always been by faith in the grace of God. What the Jews from Jerusalem could not get past was their traditional way of living. God is bigger than Judaism; long before Moses, God was there instructing those who sought after Him (Genesis 6:22; 18:19), but the Jews were having great difficulty grasping that truth.

These Jews from Jerusalem, including Peter, knew that there was no justification through the keeping of the Law. In simple terms, this is why they came to the Lord Jesus Christ by faith; they recognized that the Lord, through His death, burial and resurrection, had procured their justification. These Jews knew that God could never pronounce them righteous only through their adherence to the demands of the Law; therefore, they appropriated the cleansing that comes through Christ. The point that Paul is very carefully delineating is that these Jews, who were enmeshed in practicing the traditions of Moses, knew that it was only in Christ that they would appear as righteous before the eternally holy God. It would be by faith that they would be justified, not by works of the Law (not the Mosaic Law, nor God's Law – the Ten Commandments).

“But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets [this phenomenal truth is what these Judaizers were missing]; Even the righteousness of God *which is* by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference: For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth *to be* a propitiation [an appeasement, a means of forgiveness] through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; To declare, *I say*, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus. Where *is* boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith. Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law. *Is he* the God of the Jews only? *is he* not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also: Seeing *it is* one God, which shall justify the circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith. Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law” (Romans 3:21-31).¹⁵⁵

Something that we are prone to lose sight of, and what the Jews of Paul's day failed to grasp, is that the Law of Moses and the prophets of old all anticipated the coming of Christ. The Psalmist David looked beyond the sacrificial system (Psalm 40:6-8); Isaiah spoke prolifically of the coming Messiah (Isaiah 53:1-9; 55:1-5). Moses declared: “The LORD thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken ...” (Deuteronomy 18:15), and the Lord confirmed this (by repetition): “I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him” (Deuteronomy 18:18). Jesus came, the eternal Word made flesh (John 1:14), He spoke all that the Father commanded (John 8:28), and clarified that He had fulfilled the words of Moses and the prophets (Luke 24:44). Jeremiah spoke very specifically of a New Covenant being established with Israel (compare Deuteronomy 4:13-14 with Jeremiah 31:31), and Jesus instituted that very thing with His disciples (Luke 22:20; Hebrews 8:13; 9:1; 10:6-10), and Peter was there with Him when He did it. Peter experienced, firsthand, the Lord instituting the New Covenant, yet he clung to a form of the Old Covenant and tried desperately to bring the two together.

¹⁵⁵ Friberg Lexicon.

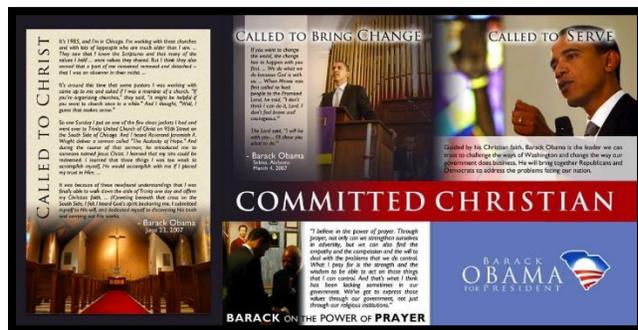
Paul goes on to state that the reason that the Jews believed in Jesus Christ was that they realized that there was no justification through the Law. They were persuaded that they could be justified before God, declared to be just and righteous through the works of Christ, not through the works of the Law. If we pause for a moment and give this our attention, we will be amazed that these Jews who sought to include the traditions of Moses in their new faith, understood that there was no justification before God through the Mosaic traditions – yet they clung to them and sought to impose them on the Gentiles as well. Knowing that there was no spiritual benefit realized from their traditions, they still endeavored to make them integral to their new life in Christ. Clearly, what they had failed to make time for was an examination of their own Scriptures, which would have made plain to them that the foreshadowing had been fulfilled in Christ (Colossians 2:17; Hebrews 10:1-2).

However, are we much different today? Evangelicals have adopted a casual attitude toward spiritual things. Much thanks for this goes to men like Billy Graham who have reduced what it means to be a disciple of Christ to going forward at a meeting (for those who are fortunate enough to add this to their résumé of spiritual activities), pray a simple prayer, and then return to an apostate denomination to live a wonderful “Christian” life. Jesus, on the other hand, identified what He expected from a disciple, and it was a tad more than Billy Graham’s expectations. Jesus declared: “If any *man* come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple” (Luke 14:26). We might understand that Jesus was not advocating that we become hateful toward those closest to us, but what He sought to emphasize is the love that we are to have for Him: our love and commitment to Him must be **above** that of close family ties, and even **greater** than our love for our self! Commandment Five tells us that we are to *honor* our parents (Exodus 20:12), and Paul likened a husband’s love for his wife to be like unto that of Christ for His *ekklesia* (Ephesians 5:25) – Jesus’ *hate* comes under Commandment One (make no other gods – Exodus 20:3), and how easily a spouse or one’s family can become a higher priority than the Lord. Jesus continued with an exhortation to count the cost of following Him first (Luke 14:28) because there is a price to be

paid, and it is better to make the commitment with that understanding in mind (2 Peter 2:21). Paul confirms, “... all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution” (2 Timothy 3:12). These words are a far cry from what we hear and see today.

It might be very popular to have a “Christianity” that does not interfere with one’s lifestyle (like President Obama being referred to as a committed Christian¹⁵⁶), but

that is not what Jesus taught. Increasingly, today’s Evangelical is becoming convinced that he is spiritually prepared to meet God: they’ve had a spiritual experience and that is sufficient to carry them into heaven with ease. The position of the believing Jews of Jerusalem was such that they recognized that the Law could not justify them before a holy God, and so they came by faith to Christ. However, rather than looking closely at the sacrifice that Jesus Christ made for all of mankind, they sought to drag their Jewish customs into their new faith in Christ. Today’s

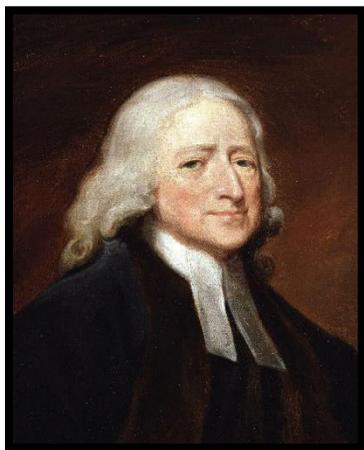


¹⁵⁶ <http://www.ndtv.com/article/world/obama-is-a-committed-christian-says-white-house-45964>

Evangelical endeavors to hold his spiritual experience as a “fire insurance policy” while he continues on in his worldly ways; like the Jews of Peter’s day, he has embarked on an impossible journey that will end in the destruction of his faith. The Evangelicals need to realize that faith in Christ **must** be followed with a lifetime of faithfulness to Him, and Paul has made it perfectly clear that the Galatians were replacing the true Gospel with a false one – both groups are religious, but neither one holds the truth of the Gospel that leads to life eternal. You simply cannot grasp a part of the Truth, ignore the rest, and come away unscathed! The Galatians were setting in place their departure from God Who had called them into the grace of Christ. If we cling to a lie (or a half-truth), then we are party to the lie. The eternal destiny of liars has been spelled out for us: “... the fearful [cowardly]¹⁵⁷, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and **all liars**, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death” (Revelation 21:8). “Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief [*apistia* – *no faith*; faithless], in departing [withdrawing] from the living God” (Hebrews 3:12).¹⁵⁸

17. But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, *is* therefore Christ the minister of sin? God forbid.

Paul now poses a very interesting question to those who are seeking to incorporate their Jewish traditions into their new faith in Christ. Keep in mind that these were Jews who recognized that their Mosaic traditions were insufficient for salvation. Paul builds a foundation for his question and it is this: while looking for the justification that comes through what Christ has done, we are at the same time still sinners. This is a very interesting premise to establish. It seems that what is showing its head here is the concept of sinless perfection. Did these Jews think that by claiming the cleansing of Christ by faith and holding tenaciously to the traditions of Moses that they would achieve sinless perfection in this life? Perhaps. Remember that the root of this Judaistic error comes



John Wesley

from those who came out of the sect of the Pharisees – those who saw themselves as the truly spiritually elite segment of the Jewish society. They have now added faith in Christ to their superior spirituality – what more could it mean than complete sanctification? Even though they accepted the fact that without Christ they could never be declared righteous, they still remained unwilling to release their self-appointed pre-eminence over the Gentiles. Even as they sought to be righteous in Christ by faith, they were still *sinners*; this “indicates the ‘surprise of the Jew’ who learned for the first time that before God he had no moral superiority over the Gentiles whom he superciliously dubbed ‘sinners,’ while he esteemed himself to be ‘righteous.’”¹⁵⁹ What these Jews were discovering was that the ground at the foot of the cross of Christ was level; they were not a step above the heathen

Gentiles. The attitude of the Pharisees is openly evident in the parable that Jesus told of the

¹⁵⁷ Vine’s “fearful.”

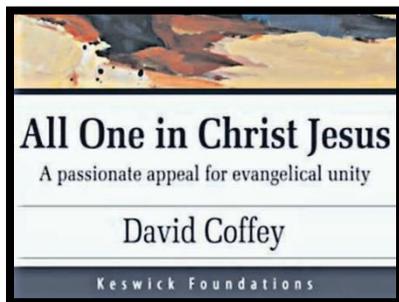
¹⁵⁸ Strong’s Online.

¹⁵⁹ Vine’s “found.”

Pharisee and the publican entering the temple. The Pharisee’s prayer, “God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men,” amply illustrates their assessment of their own spiritual superiority (Luke 18:11) – it was this attitude that was being carried into their new faith in Christ.

The concept of sinless perfection, or complete sanctification, is not unheard of today. John and Charles Wesley held to a form of sinlessness for the truly born-again Christian, and this is still commonly held within the Methodist denomination, which is an outgrowth of the Wesleys’ ministry. What is known as the Holiness movement (to which the Wesleys were contributors) holds to a second experience after salvation (most commonly referred to as the baptism of the Holy Spirit) that will lead, either immediately or through time (depending on the denomination), to this sinless perfection. There are many groups today that have ties of varying degrees to the Holiness movement; the Pentecostals sprang out of this group, the Quakers, the Salvation Army and the Christian and Missionary Alliance all owe some of their heritage to this group. The revival fellowships and the Keswick conferences have also flowed out of the Holiness movement.

In the past, whenever I heard of Keswick conferences, I always envisioned that it would be the very spiritual who would attend such sanctimonious gatherings. However, the Keswick organization is one that promotes the contradiction of the “Lordship of Christ” and Evangelical unity under its banner, “All One in Christ Jesus.”¹⁶⁰ Even while they



desperately cling to a highly spiritual aura of committed Christianity with one hand, they tenaciously maintain a firm grip on heresy with the other (not much different from the Jews who touted faith in Christ but would not



relinquish their Jewish customs). It only takes a very brief look at the Canadian Revival Fellowship and the Keswick movement to realize that they are fraught with Ecumenism –

their pursuit of unity has surpassed any concern that they may ever have had for the lordship of Jesus Christ. An objective view of the Holiness movement, as well as most of its offshoots, leads to the conclusion that the movement was destined for heresy from the very beginning, for it included in its record of founding principles the idea of “entire sanctification.”¹⁶¹ You simply cannot begin a journey with one flat tire and expect it to mend itself and inflate as you go; you cannot begin with a serious flaw and expect to promote a spiritual work that is Biblically sound – it simply cannot be done. Undoubtedly there have been those who have been used of the Lord from within these movements, but that does not excuse anyone who truly desires to live Biblically from participating with them (Romans 16:17-18).

The question posed by Paul is an interesting one. If, while we look to be justified by faith in the sacrifice that Christ made for us, we are found to be sinners, does that make Christ a minister of sin? *Minister* is from the Greek word *diakonos* (*dee-ak'-on-os*) from which we get our word *deacon* – one who executes the commands of another.¹⁶² If, as it appears, these Jews thought that they had the upper hand on sinless perfection, or complete sanctification, and then were found to

¹⁶⁰ http://www.keswickministries.org/who_we_are

¹⁶¹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Holiness_movement

¹⁶² Strong’s Online.

still be sinners, then one of two options was available to them: either they were not perfect as they thought or Christ was the servant of sin. In reality, what Paul has presented here is a no-win argument against what they were desperately trying to impose on the Gentiles. The only way that they could maintain a spiritually superior position (perfection like unto the sinless Son of God) would be to make Christ subject to the sin that they found in their lives. It would seem inconceivable that they would presume to be that arrogant. To help them out, the Spirit of God used the word *ara* (translated as *therefore*) which is a Greek particle “denoting an interrogation to which a negative answer is presumed”;¹⁶³ in other words, this is a rhetorical question that requires a negative response. However, just in case they missed all of this, the verse ends with *me (may) ginomai (ghin'-om-ahee)* – literally, *let it not be!*¹⁶⁴ These Jews are left with only one option: their high opinion of themselves has been proven faulty; before God, they

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

The thrust of Paul’s words here is this: if I rebuild those aspects of the Mosaic Law that I have declared to be destroyed, or removed, because they have been done away with in Christ, then I only establish myself as a lawbreaker. The word *transgressor* carries the thought of violating the Law; even though it carries a central thought similar to the Greek word for *sinner* (which is applicable to everyone), it is different to that extent (i.e., it identifies an active breaking of the Law). Paul has openly and fervently declared that the Mosaic Laws have been done away with, replaced by a New Covenant as foretold by the Jewish prophets (Jeremiah 31:31). His Message has been that there is neither Jew nor Gentile in Christ (Galatians 3:28), so for him to again set the Mosaic traditions in place would be to declare that he has been wrong and is a lawbreaker for having broken the Mosaic Laws.

19. For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God.

This is the believer’s view of “a man is not justified by the works of the law” (Galatians 2:16). “Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another [*you became someone different*], even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God. For when we were in the flesh, the motions of sins, which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death” (Romans 7:4-5).¹⁶⁵ Notice that it is through the sacrificed body of Christ that we become dead to the Law of Moses, for in Christ the ordinances and traditions of Moses have been removed (Ephesians 2:14-16); Christ came in fulfillment of the Law (Matthew 5:17). The irony is that the Law ensured our death – “The sting of death *is* sin; and the strength of sin *is* the law” (1 Corinthians 15:56). Sin is the painful reminder of the death that lies ahead, and the Law became the power of sin in that it confirmed that no one is righteous, thereby substantiating the sentence of death. The Law ensured our death, yet, at the same time, it spoke of a coming day when the foreshadowed and promised

¹⁶³ Strong’s Dictionary.

¹⁶⁴ Friberg Lexicon.

¹⁶⁵ Stephanus 1550 NT.

redemption would be accomplished. Through faith in Christ, Who is the Lamb slain from before the foundation of the world (1 Peter 1:18-21), we become dead to the Law – releasing us from its condemning grasp. The Law produces death, but now in Christ we are dead to the Law and alive unto God for the purpose of bearing fruit for Him (John 15:5; Ephesians 4:24). Christ came to forever fulfill and remove the Law of Moses, and through His death, burial and resurrection, the end of the Mosaic Law is realized. By faith in Christ, Who is the fulfillment of the Law, we are rendered dead to the reach and condemnation of the Law (it no longer has jurisdiction over us, for we are dead in Christ – Romans 6:3), and the righteousness of Christ (the Law of God finding voice through us) becomes ours through the inner working of the Spirit of God (Romans 8:1-4).

20. I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.

The first phrase of this verse sets the foundation for what follows – *I am crucified with Christ*. We have just seen that, through the body of Christ, we are reckoned as being dead to the Law of Moses (Romans 7:4). Here we are told that if we are *in Christ*, then we are identified with Christ in His crucifixion – when He paid the price for sin upon the cross, we were there with Him.¹⁶⁶ The verb (*crucified*) is in the perfect tense (an action that has been completed in the past, does not need to be repeated, and has ongoing consequences), passive voice (our identification with Christ in His death is the work of God within us) and indicative mood (it is a statement of fact).¹⁶⁷ “For in that he [Christ] died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God. Likewise reckon ye also [*even so you must be considering*] yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Romans 6:10-11).¹⁶⁸ Through faith in Christ, we are accounted as being crucified with Him – one time only; inasmuch as Christ died only once, it follows that we can be identified with Him in His death only the one time.

This is significant, and underscores the reality of another passage of Scripture: “For *it is* impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put *him* to an open shame” (Hebrews 6:4-6). We are exhorted: “Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God” (Hebrews 3:12). There are at least two very important principles here that we must not miss. The first is that Christ died once (and only once). We might think that that is obvious, but there is a vast, worldwide and very powerful group that does not acknowledge this reality – the Roman Catholic Church. Each time that they celebrate their Eucharist, they perpetuate the death of the Lord Jesus Christ in a twisted and corrupt manner. Through the magic of the priest’s incantations, the bread of the Eucharist becomes the very body of Christ, essentially identical in all aspects. Typically, the participants in the Eucharist only partake of the wafer; within the wisdom of the Catholic leadership, they have changed the two elements of the Lord’s Supper

¹⁶⁶ Strong’s Online.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ Stephanus 1550 NT.



Pope Gregory I

into one – the wafer. “If any one denieth, that Christ whole and entire - the fountain and author of all graces - is received under the one species of bread; because that - as some falsely assert - He is not received, according to the institution of Christ himself, under both species; let him be anathema.”¹⁶⁹ The Council of Trent specifically identified those for condemnation who would deny that Christ, *whole and entire*, is contained within the wafer. In Catholic tradition, the “word *Mass* ... first established itself as the general designation for the **Eucharistic Sacrifice** in the West after the time of Pope Gregory the Great (d. 604) ...” (emphasis added).¹⁷⁰ Notice that they openly identify their Eucharist as a *sacrifice* – a sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ with every mass that they celebrate; within their system, the Eucharist is an

essential part of salvation. Whatever happened to the Lord’s words: “... this do in remembrance of me” (Luke 22:19)? It is very evident that the Catholic Church has added to the Word of God; “add thou not unto [God’s] words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar” (Proverbs 30:6).

The second thing that we must not miss from the passages quoted is the reality that salvation can be lost, and, should we turn away from the Lord, the forfeited salvation cannot be regained. The warning in Hebrews 3:12 is very real; we must guard against a *heart of unbelief* through which we would turn away from the Lord (become apostate!). Hebrews 6:6 clarifies for us why it is impossible to restore someone who has experienced new life in the Lord, and then has forsaken it and fallen away. When we are born anew in Christ through faith in His death, burial and resurrection, we are identified with Him in His once-for-all-time death on the cross. If we then, through a heart of unbelief (faithlessness) turn away from Christ, we have just turned our backs on the only way of salvation (Jesus said that He is the ONLY way to the Father! – John 14:6). To endeavor to return to Christ would be to attempt to sacrifice Him one more time upon Calvary, which is impossible according to Scripture. Salvation is through only one Way (Christ), and it is available only one time. This may run contrary to the teaching of many today, but the Scriptures, the Word of God, bear this out.

Man will always put options forward that do not bear the support of God’s Word. Calvinism declares the elect (those whom God has chosen for salvation) to be eternally saved – they cannot be lost even if they should desire to be so; they are eternally preserved. On the other extreme, we have men like Charles Finney who declared that salvation was lost every time that you sinned. Neither position is correct according to the Word of God; we must be on guard against such extremes.

Paul goes on: even though I was crucified with Christ, nonetheless I am living (present tense), and he quickly adds: “yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.” Here is the mystery of the Christian life. Even though by faith I have reckoned myself to be crucified with Christ, yet I am alive; however, because I am crucified with Christ, it must be Christ Who lives out His life through me. Even though my crucifixion with Christ is a past action, I must continually apply that historical reality to my present living. “Likewise reckon [present tense] ye also yourselves [*even so you must be considering* (present tense; imperative mood, this is a command)] to be dead indeed unto sin, but

¹⁶⁹ Council of Trent, Session XXI, Canon III, edited by J. Waterworth, 1848.

¹⁷⁰ <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/10006a.htm> , “Sacrifice of the Mass.”

alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Romans 6:11).¹⁷¹ As we are able, by the Spirit of God, to reckon, or account, ourselves to be dead to sin when temptation confronts us, to that extent we experience the reality of being crucified with Christ. We are told to “put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; And be renewed [*being renewed*; present tense, passive voice (God must do the *renewing*)] in the spirit of your mind; And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness” (Ephesians 4:22-25).¹⁷² It is that present tense renewing by the Spirit of God that will instill the reality of being crucified with Christ into our daily living. It is not that we attain unto complete sanctification as Charles Finney and his Holiness crowd claim, but it is that we no longer live in a pattern of sin, and when we do sin, we confess it to God Who is “faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9). John also wrote: “Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him” (1 John 3:6), and it is texts such as this that men like Finney would latch onto in an effort to support their complete-sanctification teachings. However, it is important to pay attention to the tenses of the verbs used in this verse in order to understand what is really being said. Despite the mockery that was made for referring to the Greek and Hebrew at the 2008 KJB Conference put on by the Sword of the Lord,¹⁷³ we must recognize the limitations of our English language so that we can adequately glean some of the finer details from the original texts. Looking at 1 John 3:6, the word *abideth* and the second *sinneth* are both in the present tense and active voice – which simply means that the subject (*whosoever*) is presently doing these actions. So we have: “whosoever is abiding in [Christ] does not sin: whosoever is sinning hath not seen Him” In the first case, we have the present, ongoing activity of abiding in Christ, and in the second case, we have a present, ongoing activity of sinning. We must balance this with 1 John 1:8 – “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us,” and the admonition that follows to confess our sins. John is not writing about sinless perfection, but, rather, a life that is patterned after abiding in Christ (John 15:5) and an active confession of sins that are committed due to the weakness of the flesh. What this eliminates is a lifestyle of sin and compromise, and what it embraces is a life of abiding in the Vine (John 15:4-6) and producing the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23) to varying degrees (Matthew 13:8, 23).



Paul continues: *and the life which I now live in the flesh*, or “and what I am now living in the flesh.”¹⁷⁴ Yes, the *now live* is a present tense verb and describes an ongoing activity. This ongoing activity of living in the flesh (Paul goes on to say) is being carried out (present tense *live*) by the

¹⁷¹ Stephanus 1550 NT.

¹⁷² Strong’s Online.

¹⁷³ <http://bibleversiondiscussionboard.yuku.com/topic/3925>; Norris Belcher, a board member of the Sword of the Lord, mocks those who refer to the original Greek and Hebrew texts in their study of Scripture. The position presented at the KJB Conference was that the KJB is the inspired Word of God and completely infallible. This elevates a less than perfect translation to the same level as (or higher than) the original texts – the English language is simply not able to express all of the nuances of either the Greek or Hebrew, despite the ranting of the men at this Conference.

¹⁷⁴ Stephanus 1550 NT.

faith of the Son of God. He draws the parallel here between living in the flesh and living by faith – both are verbs in the active voice. “By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice ..., by faith Enoch was translated ..., by faith Noah ... prepared an ark, by faith Abraham ... went out, not knowing whither he went” (Hebrews 11:4, 5, 7, 8). Abraham “believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness,” (Genesis 15:6) so “... that he might be the father of all them that believe ...” (Romans 4:11). We hear much among Evangelicals about *believing* and *believers*, but we see little evidence of godly living. Why is that? In the dumbing-down (Biblically) that has taken place within Evangelical circles, they no longer properly understand the Object of their belief. *Believe*, as it appears in the Greek text, is the word *pisteuo* (*pist-yoo'-o*) – a verb, an action word, and it means to place confidence in,¹⁷⁵ or to think to be true.¹⁷⁶ *Faith*, on the other hand, comes from the Greek word *pistis* (*pis'-tis*), a noun that means a “conviction of the truth of anything ... in the NT of a conviction or belief respecting man's relationship to God and divine things.”¹⁷⁷ These two words are very closely related and must not be separated; an understanding of both the action (*believe*) and the description of the action (*faith*) are necessary.

Among Evangelicals today, *believing on Jesus* receives the greatest emphasis: recognize that you have failures (the terms *sin* and *sinner* are frequently frowned upon as being unnecessarily harsh), believe on Jesus, receive Him into your life and you will be saved for all eternity. They have forgotten the parable of the soils that reminds us that the soil of our hearts must be prepared (Matthew 13). Are Evangelicals counseled to count the cost of following Jesus (Luke 14:25-33)? No! It is virtually unheard of today; to the Evangelical who is fed the message of “just believe,” counting the cost would be considered to be far too negative and needlessly demanding. The teaching today is this: pray a prayer, believe, and you are set for eternity – no qualifiers, no exhortations, no instruction (doctrine has been downplayed to the point that it is no longer of any importance – which fits well with the Ecumenical flavor of the day). It is standard practice to believe and live like before – fine, upstanding citizens of this world, unprepared to qualify for the Lord’s “well done” (Matthew 25:21), but equally unprepared to hear: “depart from me, ye that work iniquity” (Matthew 7:23). Evangelicals learned well from Billy Graham who would “convert” them and send them back to their former, often spiritually-dead churches. James tells us very clearly how far just believing will get you: “Thou believest [*pisteuo* (*pist-yoo'-o*)] that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe [*pisteuo*], and tremble” (James 2:19).¹⁷⁸ Today we read that Abraham *believed* the Lord and it was accounted unto him as righteousness (Genesis 15:6), and we latch onto that and ignore the context. Abraham *believed* in the Lord, acted upon what the Lord told him, and that (believing and acting) was counted to him as righteousness; by faith Abraham “went out, not knowing whither he went” (Hebrews 11:8). Abraham believed what the Lord told him, he considered the cost and went forth in obedience. Abraham had an active belief in the Lord but it was based on reality; it is essential that we understand the price of following the Lord before we say, “I believe.” The Word of God that fell on the rocky soil produced an immediate “I believe,” but when stress was added because of the Word, the faith evaporated and the *believing* disappeared (Matthew 13:20-21). Likewise, the weedy soil produced new life, but the cares of this world were permitted to choke the new life out (Matthew 13:22 with John 15:2).

¹⁷⁵ Strong’s Online.

¹⁷⁶ Friberg Lexicon.

¹⁷⁷ Strong’s Online.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

Those within mainline denominations will be more likely to speak of faith – a noun that is supposed to represent what they actively believe; however, with time it has degenerated into the *Anglican* faith, or the *Presbyterian* faith, or perhaps some other formalized *statement of faith*. They own the word *faith*, they might even hold to the formality of their traditions but there is no longer any active belief in the words of their faith. One is as sad as the other. The Evangelical “believes in Jesus,” but has no understanding of Who He is or what he should believe; the mainline Protestant holds tenaciously to the tradition of his faith, but has lost all understanding of what that faith means. In both cases “they will not endure sound doctrine,” but have turned away from the truth of the Word of God and have “turned unto fables” (2 Timothy 4:3-4), which stand in contrast to the truth (Titus 1:14).

What Paul is advocating here is to live your faith like Abraham of old – He is “the father of all them that believe” (Romans 4:11). There is no room here for the modern believe-receive gospel, nor for faith in a tradition. This is an active belief in God and His living Word, demonstrated by living in obedience to His Word through the power of the Spirit. Paul declares that the life that he is now living is being lived in accordance with the living faith of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. This is not faith in a preacher. This is not faith in a denomination or a movement of long standing. It is not even faith in knowing that I prayed a prayer after the pattern that I was given. This is abiding in the Vine (John 15); this is the reality of walking after the Spirit (Romans 8:1, 4). This is a prepared soil that produces an abundance of the fruit of the Spirit despite the challenges (Matthew 13:8, 23 with Galatians 5:22-23), a heart that is thoroughly committed to enduring to the end (Hebrews 3:6).

We now come to the statement that makes it all possible: “the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.” “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son ...” (John 3:16). Here we see the perfect unity of purpose of both God the Father and God the Son. God the Father so loved that He gave the eternal Word to take on the form of sinful man, and the eternal Word, begotten in the form of sinful man, so loved that He gave Himself for my (our) sake. However, we must not become high-minded and endeavor to create the false impression that we are of such incredible value to God that He simply had to redeem us – He couldn’t help Himself. “But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8). The word *commendeth* literally means to put together, and here it tells us that God is *demonstrating* or *revealing* His love (it is in the present tense).¹⁷⁹ He is doing this “while we were yet sinners,” or *we still being sinful*.¹⁸⁰ “The LORD looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand [to act wisely], *and* seek God. They are all gone aside, they are *all* together become filthy [morally corrupt]: *there is* none that doeth good, no, not one” (Psalm 14:2-3¹⁸¹; along with Romans 3:10). Even while God was demonstrating His great love for us, we were still very much preoccupied with sin, which serves to confirm our destiny of eternal separation from God in hell.

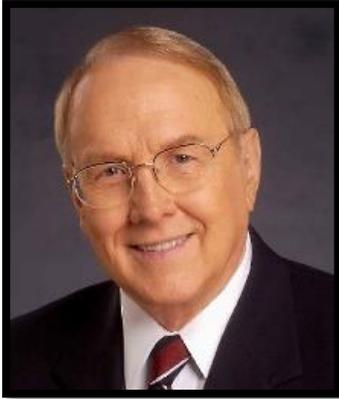
This is not a popular theme today. It is far more in vogue to speak of building one’s self-esteem, and of learning to love yourself first so that you can better love others. Robert Schuller redefined sin to be “any act or thought that robs myself [sic] or another human being of his or her self-esteem.”¹⁸² He redefined sin to be a failure to think highly enough of one’s self or of permitting

¹⁷⁹ Strong’s Online; Friberg Lexicon.

¹⁸⁰ Stephanus 1550 NT.

¹⁸¹ Strong’s Online.

¹⁸² Robert Schuller, *Self-Esteem, the New Reformation*, p. 14.

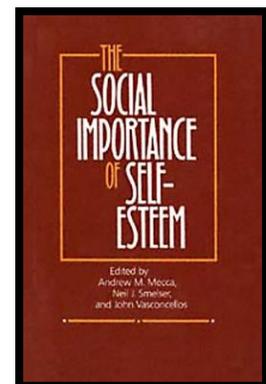


James Dobson

someone else to hold a high estimation of himself. James Dobson is quoted as saying that if he could prescribe one thing for the women of this world, it would be “a healthy dose of self-esteem and personal worth (taken three times a day until the symptoms disappear). I have no doubt that this is their greatest need.”¹⁸³ Wow! According to these two highly esteemed Evangelicals, the antidote for sin is a strong and “healthy” self-esteem. Despite this clear departure from the declarations of God’s Word that we are sinners who are doomed to destruction without the Lord, here are two popular Evangelicals who promote the need for man to think “more highly than he ought to think” (Romans 12:3). We live in a world filled with self-hyphenated words: self-esteem, self-worth, self-love, self-acceptance, self-justification, and so the list goes, but you

will never find *self-denial* among them, even though that’s what Jesus requires if we desire to be His disciple (Matthew 16:24). The beginning of man’s love-affair with self-esteem did not originate with the first purveyors of psychology, although psychologists will promote it for all that they’re worth; rather, with man, the “self-esteem movement began in the third chapter of Genesis.”¹⁸⁴ After the sin of Adam, God came to the Garden to commune with him and Eve, but they fled from His presence. When God asked Adam if he had eaten of the forbidden tree, he invoked the first case of self-justification: “The woman whom thou gavest *to be* with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat” (Genesis 3:12). Moreover, Eve used the same technique, passing the blame to the serpent. However, what is evident from Genesis 3 is that self-justification does not work with God; we are still responsible for our actions. We need to go back one-step further to find the father of self-esteem: “How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! *how* art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; **I will be like the most High**” (Isaiah 14:12-14). What should be obvious to all who read this, even if we fail to make the connection in our day, is that Satan did not suffer from low self-esteem, but rather from an inflated self-esteem called pride! Now why would someone like Dobson, who professes to be a Christian, promote something that was the devil’s downfall? Could it be that they have heeded the cunning whisper of Satan in his efforts to destroy mankind?

In the late 1980s, California embarked on a government-supported, three-year, \$735,000 study to discover the relationship between low self-esteem and social ills in six specific areas: 1) crime, violence and recidivism, 2) alcohol and drug abuse, 3) welfare dependency, 4) teenage pregnancy, 5) child and spousal abuse, and 6) children failing to learn in school.¹⁸⁵ The thinking that sold the governor on supporting this study with taxpayers’ dollars was the possibility of eventually balancing the state’s budget through the results of a more productive society (paying more taxes) and reduced criminal activity. The product of this study,



¹⁸³ Martin and Deidre Bobgan, *James Dobson’s Gospel of Self-Esteem & Psychology*, p. 99.

¹⁸⁴ <http://www.pamweb.org/selfestm.html>, “Self-Esteem for Christians?”

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

carried out by a task force of twenty-five, was a book, *The Social Importance of Self-Esteem*, in which the stated premise of the study is that “many, if not most, of the major problems plaguing society have roots in the low self-esteem of many of the people who make up society.”¹⁸⁶ Despite the best efforts of those involved in this study, “the report contained little to support that assertion.”¹⁸⁷ “However, more recent studies indicate a definite relationship between violent behavior and **high** self-esteem” (emphasis in original).¹⁸⁸ Now why should the conclusions of this latter study not be surprising? The father of sin, the devil, has exhibited the highest possible self-esteem (to be like God), and has passed this along to those who are drawn into the “we-are-gods” philosophy of the New Age movement, which also finds its roots in the lie of Satan in the Garden of Eden. Paul declared to the Philippians: “Let nothing *be done* through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves” (Philippians 2:3); we are to consider others as being superior (literally, to hold over¹⁸⁹). Jesus said: “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second *is* like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets” (Matthew 22:37-40). The focus of our affections is to be, first of all, toward God and then, secondly, toward our fellow man; within today’s philosophy, the first order of business is for you to love yourself, something that does not even enter Jesus’ summary of God’s commandments. However, the Lord does say that “If any *man* will come after me, let him deny himself [lose sight of one’s self¹⁹⁰], and take up his cross, and follow me” (Matthew 16:24). It does not take an in-depth study of the Scriptures to conclude that we are not called to bolster self-esteem, but rather to crush it (to esteem ourselves dead unto sin – Romans 6:11) and permit the Spirit of God to work in us so that we might walk in newness of life with Him (Romans 6:4).

The provision has been made for us to live according to the leading of the Spirit of God; Jesus, as the eternal Word, gave Himself (He was not murdered) for us. From the very first sacrifice made in the Garden of Eden to cover the sin of man, God has demonstrated His love and mercy for sinful mankind; however, when Jesus, eternally God in human flesh, gave Himself on the cross for the sins of the world, the **final sacrifice** was made. “If we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins ...” (Hebrews 10:26). Jesus died once and brought an end to the ordinances and sacrifices of the Mosaic covenant (Ephesians 2:14-16). This is the simple truth that the Galatian believers had been hoodwinked into questioning; this is the liberating truth that the believers in Jerusalem struggled to accept. There is no place for keeping the Mosaic traditions in the new life in Christ; this is why Paul called what the Galatians were being persuaded to accept a *different gospel* – it was not the Message that he had brought to them (Galatians 1:6-7).

¹⁸⁶ Neil J. Smelser, “Self-Esteem and Social Problems: An Introduction,” *The Social Importance of Self-Esteem*, <http://www.escholarship.org/editions/view?docId=ft6c6006v5&chunk.id=d0e465&toc.depth=1&toc.id=d0e465&brand=ucpress>

¹⁸⁷ R.F. Baumeister, J.D. Campbell, J.I. Krueger, K.D. Vohs, “Exploding the Self-Esteem Myth,” *Scientific American*, November 2005, <http://www.sciam.com/article.cfm?id=exploding-the-self-esteem>

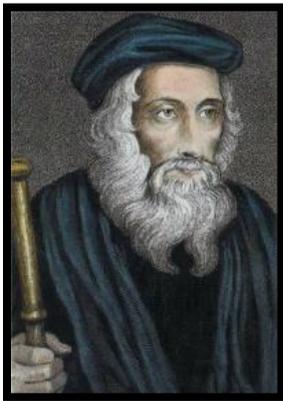
¹⁸⁸ <http://www.pamweb.org/selfestm.html>, “Self-Esteem for Christians?”

¹⁸⁹ *Vine’s* “better.”

¹⁹⁰ Strong’s Online.

21. I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness *come* by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.

In this very brief recap of the position that Paul has just established, one that is secured by Christ living through the believer, he makes this initial declaration: “I do not set aside the grace of God.”¹⁹¹ Grace is a benevolent bestowal despite our unworthiness – a benefit provided through the great mercy of God. The Catholics view each of their eight sacraments as a means of instilling saving grace into the life of the participant. We recognize the error of this, but what seems to gnaw around the edges of Paul’s declaration is the possibility that the Jewish believers saw an element of saving grace in keeping the Mosaic traditions, or, at the very least, accused Paul of discounting the grace of God by declaring the Mosaic ordinances to be ended. As we have already noted, these were, for the most part, traditions established by God through Moses, and the Jews were not prepared to give them up easily. The Message that Paul was given, in plain terms, does not in any way undermine the grace that God has for us.



John Wycliffe

As a matter of fact, Paul contends that if our approval before God came by way of the Law of Moses, then Christ died for no purpose. He underscores and emphasizes one more time that if we could be reckoned righteous by means of the Law, then Christ did not have to die. The KJV renders the last phrase, “Christ is dead in vain,” which is another indication that the Bishop’s Bible was a resource recommended to the translators to be used in developing the new translation. It is clear, if we understand anything from Scripture, that Christ is not dead, but rather “is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us” (Romans 8:34). John Wycliffe (1395) translated this as, “thanne Crist diede with out cause,”¹⁹² thereby easily demonstrating the truth in this matter. Likewise, Tyndale and Coverdale after him, and even the translators of the Geneva Bible captured the truth concerning

Christ in this phrase: not that Christ is dead, but that He would have died for no purpose if we could gain righteousness before God through the keeping of the Law. However, as we have seen in Paul’s testimonial identity with Christ on the cross, the grace of God is very present in permitting us to live in the flesh through faith in the Son of God, Jesus. The Law ensured that we all died, but God’s grace is effective to bring life through faith in Jesus, Who redeemed us. “For by grace are ye [you are being] saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: *it is* the gift of God ...” (Ephesians 2:8).¹⁹³ What could demonstrate the marvelous grace of God more than that? God’s gift of salvation will be the ultimate expression of the grace that He has extended to sinful mankind!

¹⁹¹ Friberg Lexicon.

¹⁹² <http://www.studylight.org/desk/?l=en&query=Galatians+2§ion=0&translation=wyc&oq=Galatians%25202&new=1&nb=ga&ng=2&ncc=2>

¹⁹³ Stephanus 1550 NT.

Chapter 3

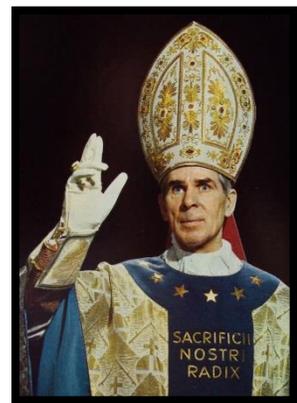
1. O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you?

Paul now turns his attention away from Peter's failure to understand the full message of the Gospel and begins to address the error that the believers of Galatia were in the process of embracing. In Chapter Two, Peter's inability to discern the reality of his new life in Christ was used to provide a basis for emphasizing the inability of the Law of Moses to provide justification for anyone before God. Meticulously keeping the Law of Moses, without an active faith in the promises of God to bring salvation, led only to nauseating God (Isaiah 1:11); Israel's first king learned this truth too late: "Behold, to obey *is* better than sacrifice, *and* to hearken than the fat of rams" (1 Samuel 15:22b). It is through the grace of God, through faith in the work of Christ (the OT saints looked forward; we look backward) that we are declared righteous before a holy God – something that cannot be supplemented by keeping the ordinances of the Law of Moses without destroying the Gospel message (Galatians 1:6-7).

The Greek word for *foolish* means simply, *to not understand*.¹⁹⁴ However, as the word is used within this particular context "it signifies senseless, an unworthy lack of understanding."¹⁹⁵ The significance of this is that the Galatians did not understand but they should have; it was a failure on their part that they did not comprehend this truth. This was exactly the same difficulty that Paul had had with Peter; he should have understood the freedom of the message of the Gospel, but, for some reason, he struggled with it.

The Greek word translated as *bewitch* is a negative word, and primarily means to slander but also, as in this case, "to mislead by an evil eye, and so to charm."¹⁹⁶ Our English word *fascinate* is quite closely related to this concept, and speaks of an almost hypnotic control. What Paul identifies within these Galatians is a virtually mindless following after the Judaizers. They did not question the Jewish-tainted departure from the Message that Paul had brought to them, they simply followed the error; they failed to examine the Scriptures in order to determine if what they were hearing was in accordance with God's instructions (Acts 17:11). It seemed to make sense, and the promoters of this false message were so sincere and gracious, how could they possibly be wrong?

This is so similar to what we find among Evangelicals today. The movement is fraught with followers who do not know the Word of God, and who do not take the time to determine what the Bible might have to say about things to which they are supposed to be committed; they simply follow the charismatic leader of their preference. Billy Graham had a huge following for many years, and if you want to lose your



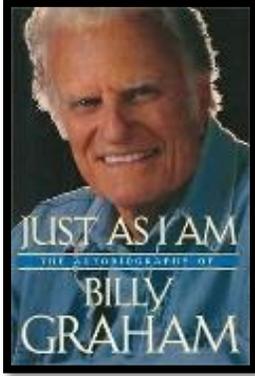
Fulton Sheen

¹⁹⁴ Strong's Online.

¹⁹⁵ Vine's "foolish."

¹⁹⁶ Vine's "bewitch."

audience very quickly, then just mention something negative about this giant in the eyes of Evangelicals. However, as early as 1944 Billy was cultivating a friendship with Catholic bishop, Fulton Sheen,¹⁹⁷ and that was not necessarily wrong. When they first met, Billy expressed gratitude to him for “his ministry and his focus on Christ”¹⁹⁸ (now that presents a problem; Sheen had a regular television broadcast, which, Billy openly admitted, he watched from time to time). Yet in his autobiography, *Treasures in Clay*, Sheen titles one chapter as “The Woman I Love” – a chapter that was devoted specifically to Mary, the object of the Eucharistic sacrifice that he made every Saturday.¹⁹⁹ His regard for Christ was such that he declared: “[when] I go before the Judgment Seat of Christ, He will say to me in His Mercy: ‘I heard My Mother speak of you.’”²⁰⁰ Sheen’s primary focus was on Mary and he looked to her for his salvation, not to the finished work of Christ. The reality is that the Catholics do not have a *finished work of Christ*, for they sacrifice Him afresh in every Eucharistic celebration, and their crucifix exposes their failure to attribute “it is finished” to Christ’s work on the cross.



However, Billy’s attention had not only been drawn to the Catholics; from his earliest ministry times, Ecumenism has been his creed. Writing about a crusade that he held in Boston (c. 1950) he says, “... a number of Roman Catholic priests and Unitarian clergy, together with some of their parishioners, came to the meetings along with those from Evangelical churches. With my limited Evangelical background, this was a further expansion of my own ecumenical outlook. I now began to make friends among people from many different backgrounds and to develop a spiritual love for their clergy.”²⁰¹ It was during this time that Billy “began to realize that there were Christians everywhere. They might be called modernists, Catholics, or whatever, but they were Christians.”²⁰² To the Evangelicals who are so enamored with Billy Graham, Paul would say: “O foolish Evangelicals, who has bewitched you? Why have you failed to discern the call of Scripture to a life of holiness and doctrinal purity?” The error is the same: a failure to use the Scriptures as a guide, and a willingness to accept the teaching of others because they appear to be good people or they speak smooth words.

“Let no man deceive you with vain words ...” (Ephesians 5:6); this is a command that carries the present tense – it is to be a continual part of our Christian living; we can never afford to relax our guard. If there was ever a time when this command needs to be followed with great diligence, it is today. Evangelicalism is ripe with a proliferation of voices, and every one of them is calling for the ear of the unsuspecting. “Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ” (Colossians 2:8). When the founders of New Evangelicalism planted their flag over 60 years ago, they set the stage for the violation of this warning from God; one of their determinations was to educate themselves to a level where they could adequately dialogue with the liberal theologians.²⁰³ They became fluent

¹⁹⁷ When Sheen died in 1979, Billy counted him as a friend for over 35 years; David Cloud, *Evangelicals & Rome*, p. 81.

¹⁹⁸ Billy Graham, *Just as I Am*, p. 693.

¹⁹⁹ Cloud, *Evangelicals*, p.81.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁰¹ Graham, *Just*, p. 167.

²⁰² Cloud, *Evangelicals*, p. 82.

²⁰³ Harold J. Ockenga, *Foreword to The Battle for the Bible* by Harold Lindsell.

in the philosophies of the age and quickly lost sight of the Word of God. They failed to recognize God's expressed truth that righteousness and unrighteousness have no basis for fellowship (2 Corinthians 6:14); they opened communion with darkness and very quickly became partakers with them (Ephesians 5:7 and the progression of Psalm 1:1). We cannot afford to be amazed at the blindness of the Galatians, or the inability of Evangelicals to recognize the error of Billy Graham; we must "beware" lest we are caught in the very same snare of fine words and rational arguments.

Who has bewitched you "that ye should not obey the truth?" The error was not that the Galatians had chosen to follow one man over another (as the Corinthians had done – 1 Corinthians 1:12) – they were failing to discern the truth! The word *obey* in Greek, *peitho* (*pi'-tho*), carries the central thought of being persuaded;²⁰⁴ therefore, within this context, we must understand that the obedience flows out of having been convinced of the veracity of a position. This is not blind obedience; this is obedience that comes from being fully persuaded of the trustworthiness of the message. It seems that the people of Galatia simply had not been thoroughly convinced of just how narrow the Gospel message was that Paul and Barnabas had brought to them. On the other hand, if they had been persuaded, then they had succumbed to someone with a more eloquent presentation (*bewitched*). Keep in mind that they had not left Paul for another preacher of the Gospel; they had left the Gospel that Paul preached, for another gospel that was a very different kind (Galatians 1:6-7) – something that was far more serious. The difference is significant, for the life is in the message not the messenger; in fact, they were forsaking the Truth for a fable.

The last part of the question that Paul puts to the Galatian believers, reminds them of the Message that had been delivered to them. The order of words within the KJV could lead one to the conclusion that it was a message of Jesus Christ being crucified among them – which might be construed to support the Catholic Eucharist that crucifies Jesus during each mass. It is helpful to take a literal translation of the Greek words that serves to establish the thrust of this passage: "to whom according to your understanding Jesus Christ was described clearly among you crucified."²⁰⁵ The literal translation clarifies that it was the Message of Jesus Christ crucified that was declared among them. The KJV translates the Greek *prographo* (*prog-raf'-o*) as "evidently set forth," which serves to emphasize that the Message of Jesus Christ crucified was openly proclaimed to them. Although *prographo* means *to write before*, within the language of that day it was used in a manner that meant *proclaimed*.²⁰⁶ What cannot be missed is Paul's reminder to these people that they had heard, openly and completely, the message of the Gospel of Jesus Christ crucified.

We might tend to be critical of these people. They had the Apostle Paul preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ to them, and yet they were in the process of setting it aside for something that was not the truth. Part of the delusion, or deception, was that the Galatians wouldn't have admitted that they were setting Paul's Gospel aside. We have the completed canon of Scripture in our hands today and yet, as we scan the landscape of Evangelicalism and Fundamentalism, what quickly becomes evident is the lack of adherence to the truth and the enthusiastic acceptance of compromise and error. "The heart *is* deceitful above all *things*, and desperately wicked ..." (Jeremiah 17:9). "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall" (1 Corinthians 10:12). "Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from

²⁰⁴ Strong's Online.

²⁰⁵ Stephanus 1550 NT; Friberg Lexicon.

²⁰⁶ Vine's "openly."

the living God” (Hebrews 3:12). How easily we can replace the truth of the Scriptures with a tradition or a tainted teaching that we might find more comfortable. Unless we read the pages of Scripture with a purpose to learn and grow in our walk with the Lord, we will be like the Galatians – oh, we may not succumb to holding to the Mosaic ordinances, but rest assured, we will fall for something else that is not the true Gospel message. We have just seen two warnings to “take heed” – unless we do take heed by exercising continual discernment, we will become fair game for any huckster selling a gospel with a positive message and a smooth slogan.

2. This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?

Paul has another question. He is using questions in an effort to stimulate their thinking – something that he seems convinced they did not do when they fell for the message of the Judaizers. As Paul tries to get them to understand that they have fallen for error, he presents truth in a question form.

The essence of his question is this: did you receive the Spirit of God by keeping the Law (of Moses), or through faith? The answer is obvious, and this will form a foundation for Paul’s arguments that will follow. Paul is asking that they consider their own experience, and evaluate where they are going in light of how they came to their present position. We must remind ourselves at this point, of Paul’s clear declaration of what these people were in the process of doing. He has already stated: “I marvel that ye are so soon removed [to transpose; exchange] from him that called you [it is God who calls us – Romans 9:24] into the grace of Christ unto another [different] gospel: which is not another [of the same kind]; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert [transform into something opposite] the gospel of Christ” (Galatians 1:6-7).²⁰⁷ Paul declares that they are not being obedient to the truth (Galatians 3:1). This is not a small error or a momentary lapse in judgment; this is turning away from the truth, turning unto error, and doing it with eyes wide open. They may not have understood the full implications of what they were doing, but they were not being forced to accept this teaching – they were embracing it willingly. This verse reminds us that these people, who were replacing the true Gospel with a false one, who were turning from the truth to error, had received the Spirit of God! They had not prayed a prayer during an emotional high; rather, they understood the Message that they were taught, and they had received the Spirit of God – they were truly born-again!

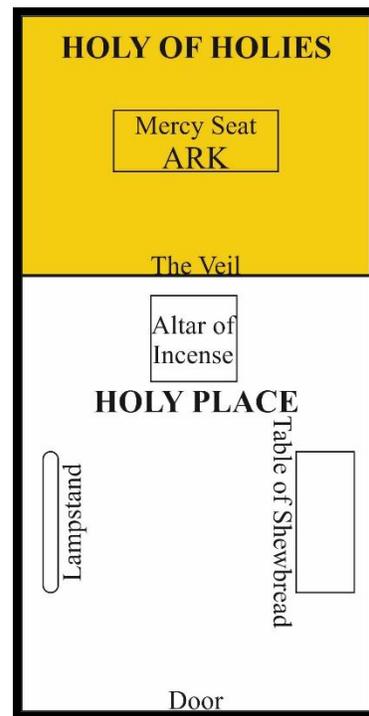
We looked earlier at Hebrews 3:12 – “Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.” The *unbelief* spoken of here is *faithlessness: apistia* – literally, no faith.²⁰⁸ The Galatians were replacing their faith in Christ with a dependency upon abiding by the works of the Law of Moses; in essence, they were becoming *faithless*. They thought to increase their spirituality by requiring Jewish works along with their faith – the subtlety of this error is that the result would actually be the opposite of what they anticipated. They were permitting faithlessness to enter their hearts – the very warning that we read of in Hebrews. We are warned against removing ourselves from God or falling away from Him; the Galatians were removing themselves from the Gospel of God to something that was not of God (Galatians 1:6-7).

²⁰⁷ Strong’s Online.

²⁰⁸ Strong’s Dictionary.

The parallels between the warning in Hebrews and the actions of the Galatians are strong. What is so clear is that the Galatians had been born again; they had received of the Spirit of God, yet they were now in a position of becoming faithless and following error rather than God. If we review the parable of the soils (Luke 8:13-14), we will be reminded that even when the Word of God springs to life within the individual (they believe), it does not ensure a harvest of spiritual fruit. We must guard against faithlessness crowding out our faith in Christ. The protection of the Lord against all external attacks is very adequate (John 10:29), but what we must guard against is a heart of unbelief.

If we look back to the First Covenant made by God with Israel at Mt. Sinai, it is clear that the Spirit of God rested between the cherubim, above the Ark of the Covenant, within the Holy of Holies (Exodus 25:20-22; Leviticus 16:2). The presence of God was there in the midst of the children of Israel, but it did not abide within anyone in particular. The exercise of their faith required them to keep the ordinances of the Lord, which included presenting the acceptable sacrifices to the priests who, in turn, would bring them before the Lord. Their access to the Lord was always through the priesthood, and always within the prescribed format that served to emphasize the gulf that existed between the God of all holiness and sinful mankind. The bridge between God and the children of Israel existed, just like it does today, and it was also narrow and required a mediator. Through faith in what God had provided, temporary cleansing from sin could be received (the sacrifices needed to be repeated – Hebrews 10:1).



Within the New Covenant, we come to God by faith in the finished work of Christ; the way is narrow and demands a Mediator (1 Timothy 2:5). He is both our High Priest and our perfect Sacrifice. “Now of the things which we have spoken *this is* the sum: We have such a high priest [i.e., after the order of Melchisedec], who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens ...” (Hebrews 8:1). “But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption *for us*” (Hebrews 9:11-12). As we come to Christ by faith through repentance, the promise that we have is that the Spirit of God will abide within us (Romans 8:9; Ephesians 1:13 – marked [*sealed*] by the Spirit). This is a significant difference to the First Covenant where the Spirit remained between the cherubim in the Holy of Holies. After Jesus’ ascension, the disciples saw the evidence of the Spirit of God descending upon them individually in the form of “cloven tongues like as of fire” (Acts 2:3). This was new! The gift of speaking in unlearned languages became the sign to these early disciples of the presence of the Spirit of God as they proclaimed the Gospel to foreigners. This was used to convince Peter that God had poured out His Spirit upon Cornelius (a Gentile) and those who heard and understood his Message to them (Acts 10:44-48).

Paul’s question to the Galatians – did you receive the Spirit through the works of the Law – would have received a resounding, NO! Within the Mosaic system, the Spirit of the Lord did not come to abide within each individual who exercised faith in God’s provision; this was a fresh

experience characteristic of the New (Fresh) Covenant established by the Lord Jesus Christ, and it came by faith in Christ's completed work as our Sacrifice and High Priest. This was all accomplished outside of the Law of Moses but in fulfillment of it – it did not come into being silently. Moses spoke of this day (Deuteronomy 18:18), and Jeremiah, the Prophet, foretold the day of just such a New Covenant (Jeremiah 31:31-33). The difficulty that the Galatians had was that they were not sufficiently grounded in the Word of God to withstand the siren song of those who came preaching a Christianized form of Judaism. Even though Paul preached a Message that provided them with all that they needed for this life and the life hereafter, they sought to incorporate works into it, thereby forsaking the Gospel, which they had originally accepted from Paul.

This is the pattern into which many have fallen in the years since. The Roman Catholics plunged into it in a huge way, and have destroyed all but a few remnants of the Message that God has given to us in His Word. Their doctrine of salvation has been reduced to a list of things that must be done within the rigid framework of their organization. The message of the Emergent Church tosses every vestige of order aside in order to focus on the experiences that make you spiritual (within their frame of reference – a different form of works), and exhibit no concern for doctrine; after all, doctrine is cold and divides, while experiences are warm, exhilarating, and we can learn from each other through them. Hence, they speak of emptying the mind and listening to the voice of god (small “g”). God never speaks of emptying the mind; rather, “Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool” (Isaiah 1:18). Jesus spoke once of emptiness: “When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and findeth none. Then he saith, I will return into my house from whence I came out; and when he is come, he findeth *it* empty, swept, and garnished. Then goeth he, and taketh with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there: and the last *state* of that man is worse than the first. Even so shall it be also unto this wicked generation” (Matthew 12:43-45). By tossing aside any need for the teachings of Scripture (other than enough isolated texts to salve the conscience that their practices are spiritually acceptable), Emergent Church followers place themselves in the same precarious position as the Galatian Judaizers; they have replaced the Message of God with one that is not from Him. They might well empty their minds and hear voices, but they are really communing with demons, even while they think that they are hearing from God (Matthew 7:21-23).

3. Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?

Foolish comes from the same Greek word as used in verse one and means “not applying ... the mind,” “an unworthy lack of understanding.”²⁰⁹ What is evident is that the Galatian believers’ conduct demonstrated a definite *lack of understanding* the message of the Gospel clearly, yet it is equally evident from Paul’s word used here that they should have known better. It is not that these people did not understand the Message of truth that had been delivered to them, but when the twisted message of the Judaizers came along, they were unable to discern the error of this new message in light of the truth that they had already received. Rather than weigh the new information

²⁰⁹ *Vine’s* “foolish.”

against the truth, they bought the bill of goods without giving it another thought – perhaps because they heard it from “Christian” Jews (convinced by hearing some of the right words), or possibly because these people came from the Jerusalem area and knew Peter (conned by the use of a trusted name).

Evangelicals today are guilty of the very same error. Today’s latest spiritual fad declares that they are to become very quiet, empty their minds, and listen to the voice of God speak to them. The prospect of hearing the voice of God, the enthusiasm of friends who have heard a voice speak to them, or simply the need to belong, propels the unsuspecting Evangelicals into the fold of the Emergent Church/Spiritual Formation heresy. There no longer is a sufficiently deep understanding of the Scriptures with which to protect the average Evangelical from becoming fair game of the latest fad to hit the masses. The overall, Biblical-dumbing-down of Evangelicals plays into the hands of the devil, and makes them prey to any heretic who comes along. There is no consideration of the Word of God in such matters because the Scriptures have been set aside in favor of well-honed theologies that fail to accurately represent God’s Word. The inordinate focus on unity, which has gripped the Evangelical churches for more than 60 years, is beginning to pay dividends; the *modus operandi* has been to downplay doctrine in favor of fellowship – and if there is one thing that the Emergent Church is good at, it is neglecting doctrine. After all, doctrine divides – even the Scriptures will attest to that: “Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them” (Romans 16:17). The great Evangelical failure today is that very, very few test anything that they hear or read against the standard of the Word of God; the error into which the Galatians fell was to accept what they heard without consulting God’s Standard. “The word of the Lord endureth for ever” (1 Peter 1:25); we must not neglect that eternal Word – our spiritual life depends on it.

Paul now poses a very significant question to the Galatians: “having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?” We have just come through a passage where Paul makes it crystal-clear that “by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified” (Galatians 2:16). The Jews of Jerusalem understood this, and turned to the Lord Jesus Christ in faith for cleansing and justification – they were born again by the Spirit of God; however, their failure came when they also sought to hold onto the traditions of their Jewish faith and make them essential for salvation. The Galatians, on the other hand, came to faith through the ministry of Paul and Barnabas; they came into spiritual life by the Spirit of God (Galatians 3:2), and now, through the influence of these Judaizers, they were in the process of replacing their justifying faith with a dead faith-works hybrid (Galatians 1:6-7). Having begun in the Spirit did they now expect to come to perfection through the works of the flesh? “For to be carnally [fleshly] minded *is* death; but to be spiritually minded *is* life and peace. Because the carnal mind *is* enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be” (Romans 8:6-7).²¹⁰ These are strong words, and we need to take heed. We have already seen that the Galatians were replacing the true Gospel with one that was false (Galatians 1:6-7), and it is evident that this false gospel of works is *death*, and *enmity against God*. These were people who were born-again by the Spirit of God and who had begun to live the life of a new creation in Christ, but through deception they were being convinced to turn their backs on the God of life in favor of a life of works that could only bring apostasy and spiritual death.

²¹⁰ Strong’s Online.

These people began with the Spirit of the God of creation abiding within them, and they were now preparing to substitute personal effort to bring them to perfection – literally: successfully completing what the Holy Spirit had begun.²¹¹ Here we have another indication that some of the “Christian” Jews of Jerusalem considered their lives to be sinless: they were very spiritual Pharisees as Jews (Acts 15:5), and now they had added justification by faith to complete their image of spiritual perfection. Satan deceived the Pharisees into viewing themselves as being superior to everyone else, and that deception was retained by these Judaizers so that they had now arrived: righteous Pharisees (keeping the Law of Moses) now professing faith in Christ! However, Satan had not only deceived the Judaizers, but he was using them to spread his deception to those who were unwary (Romans 16:18), not alert and vigilant (1 Peter 5:8), and who failed to “try the spirits” by the Word of God (1 John 4:1).



Harold Lindsell

Paul has just very thoroughly established that through the works of the law no flesh can be justified, and has made it equally evident that the Judaizers, themselves, recognized this truth. The question posed here only serves to underscore the failure of the Galatians to realize what it was that they were doing. Having begun in the Spirit, Who is the justifier of all who exercise faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, did they now hope to come to ultimate fulfillment through works, by which no man can be justified? This is the bottom line of their transposition of gospels: they are replacing the Gospel of life through the Spirit of God with a gospel of works by which no one can be justified before God. They professed an understanding of faith in the Lord, yet failed to relinquish their Jewish traditions as being fulfilled in Christ. We might express our outrage at the blindness of these Galatian Christians, but we must guard our words carefully in this regard. When the New Evangelicals announced their platform and set out to influence Evangelicals, they embarked on exactly the same pathway – except that they were not deceived into it. Through careful determination, they set out to demonstrate, by their works, a new way for Evangelicals – a way that departed from the Scriptures on many fronts. They replaced faith in Christ and His Word with works, and it did not take many years for their departure from the truth to become evident to those who were discerning. Although a participant in the movement, Harold Lindsell recognized that with the denial of the inerrancy of Scripture, the discarding of other foundational doctrines would very quickly follow.²¹² Although he expressed his concerns in print, to the outrage of hard-line New Evangelicals, there is no indication that he ever stepped out of the movement. However, there were other men like Charles Woodbridge, who began in the organization but left it when he saw the direction in which it was going, and he went to great lengths to warn others of the dangers. What we must recognize is that the path that the New Evangelicals took was similar to that undertaken by the Galatians – both set aside the reality of justification by faith alone in Christ to embark on a journey of self-justification through works (although, because of their blindness, neither group would recognize it as such, or admit that this is what they had done). As incredible as it may seem, the devil’s question has not changed: “Yeah,

²¹¹ Friberg Lexicon.

²¹² Harold Lindsell authored *The Battle for the Bible*, which speaks of this error, yet he never removed himself from the apostasy of the New Evangelical movement. His daughter, Joanne, married Robert Webber, one of the premiere advocates of ancient-future worship – a return to the practices of the Catholic mystics and eastern gurus.

hath God said?” (Genesis 3:1), and equally astonishing is the fact that foolish men (those who should know better) will still fall for that age-old question.

4. Have ye suffered so many things in vain? if *it be* yet in vain.

We are provided here with a glimpse into the lives of the Galatians; what is evident is that they had endured suffering because of their faith in Christ. You will recall that when Paul and Barnabas first went throughout this region, persecution from unbelieving Jews was a notable factor (Acts 13:50; 14:2). Sometime later as Paul and Silas followed the same route through Lystra and Iconium, and Paul desired to bring Timothy along with them, he felt compelled to have him circumcised because of the attitude of the Jews in that region (Acts 16:1-3). Inasmuch as Timothy’s father was a Greek, he undoubtedly felt that it would be a barrier to ministry among the Jews; however, the question that surfaces (to which there is no answer) is this: did Paul’s capitulation to a Jewish tradition create additional trouble for the Gentile Christians in this area? This could have become an object lesson used by the Jewish Christians to pressure the Gentile Christians into keeping the traditions of Moses. Their argument would have been along these lines: if Paul deemed it necessary to circumcise Timothy before he could join him in ministry, then surely, if you want to be a good Christian, then you must follow the Jewish traditions. Paul may well have determined that since a portion of their work was to the Jewish people, circumcision would only improve Timothy’s ministry among these hypersensitive people, yet this may well have been used against the Message that he brought.

However, despite this and how the Jews would undoubtedly have used Paul’s actions in this case, the Message that Paul proclaimed did not include any hint of keeping the Mosaic traditions (something that he made very clear in his letters to the Ephesians and Colossians). As a matter of fact, after his tour through Jerusalem, it would have been very amazing if he would not have emphasized the completion of the Jewish traditions in Christ. What is evident is that the Galatians knew the truth about being free in Christ alone; after all, they had “begun in the Spirit.” It would have been while they were living in accordance with the Gospel message of justification through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ that they experienced suffering and persecution – perhaps from the zealous Jews in their area, as they seemed to be the primary source of aggravation for Paul in his ministry. If we consider that their persecution was probably from the Jews, it would have been for believing that Jesus was the Messiah and for not keeping their traditions. They could have already been under pressure to embrace the Jewish ways, so that when Jews, professing to be Christians, came from Jerusalem with the message that it was necessary to keep the traditions of Moses, it would have proven to be an irresistible means of allaying the persecution that they were under. Humanly speaking, we always try to alleviate the difficulties that we face, and it would have been no different for the Galatians. However, we are told: “For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake” (Philippians 1:29). Suffering because of our allegiance to Christ is to be expected – something that Paul had not been remiss to include in his Message to these people (Acts 14:22).

“The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with *him*, that we may be also glorified together. For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time *are* not worthy *to be compared* with the glory which shall be revealed in us” (Romans 8:16-18). The thrust

of Paul's question to the Galatians is this: has your suffering for Christ been for no purpose? The Christian life is a call to suffering (2 Timothy 3:12); this is not presented to us as something that is avoidable. Jesus made it clear that we are to count the cost of following Him (and suffering persecution is part of that cost), when He identified what is required of His disciples (Luke 14:25-33).

As we consider Paul's question, we must keep in mind what was happening to the Galatian believers: they were in the process of replacing the Gospel of Truth with a gospel of error, the message of faith in Christ with a message of works according to the Jewish traditions (Galatians 1:6-7; 3:1-2). For their sufferings to have been without purpose would mean that the reason for their sufferings would have been lost. The reason is really quite simple: they had placed their faith in Christ for the salvation of their souls – an action that brought the wrath of the Jews upon them. For the sufferings that they had endured to become of no purpose, means that they would have forsaken the reason for their sufferings, namely, faith in Christ alone. “For it had been better for them not to have known [to know thoroughly] the way of righteousness, than, after they have known *it*, to turn from [to turn one's self away from] the holy commandment delivered unto them” (2 Peter 2:21).²¹³ We have already seen that Christ died one time only: “For in that he died, he died unto sin once ...” (Romans 6:10), and that we are “crucified with Christ” (Galatians 2:20), which also makes this a one-time action. Therefore, if someone comes to Christ by faith and then turns himself away from Him to walk a different pathway (as Peter describes), there is now no sacrifice available for his sins because he has spurned the only Way available (Hebrews 6:4-6). “Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from [to withdraw one's self from, to fall away²¹⁴ or to apostatize from²¹⁵] the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils” (1 Timothy 4:1). This would be the only reason that the sufferings of the Galatians could be without purpose; Paul recognized the elements of apostasy within what they were in the process of doing.

As we noted in Galatians 1:6-7, at the time that Paul was writing this letter, the Galatians were in the process of replacing the Gospel of Truth with a false gospel. Therefore, we have the latter part of our text, “if *it be* yet in vain.” Paul's hope is that, after reading his words of exhortation, they will reject the error that they are courting and return to the true Gospel of faith in Christ alone. If they repent and take action to embrace the truth once again, then their sufferings will not have been without purpose, for they will remain as partakers of the present sufferings with the promise of glories in Christ to come. We must take heed lest the deceitfulness of the enemy should find root in our hearts and lead us to giving heed to “seducing spirits” (1 Timothy 4:1), and find ourselves among those who fall away from the faith.

5. He therefore that ministereth to you the Spirit, and worketh miracles among you, *doeth he it* by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?

Paul has another question for these people. Questions require thought and consideration before an adequate response can be given; Paul is trying to get these people to think about what they

²¹³ Strong's Online.

²¹⁴ Ibid.

²¹⁵ Vine's “depart.”

are doing. Evangelicals today have been conditioned to not think, but to leave all spiritual contemplation to those who are highly educated and who propagate teachings that are in line with denominational traditions and favored theologies. The Spiritual Formation/Emergent Church movement has capitalized on the cognitive inabilities of the average Evangelical, and it promotes the increasingly popular practice of emptying the mind in order to permit spirit voices to be heard – all under the guise of increased spirituality and communion with God. The unsuspecting (the *simple* of Romans 16:18) are prime candidates for this deception, for they fail to realize that they have not placed their faith in the Lord but rather in what they have been told – the two not necessarily being the same thing.

Ministereth comes from a Greek word that means to supply fully or abundantly.²¹⁶ The pronoun *He* can only refer to God, for He is the supplier of the Spirit. Jesus said: “But the Comforter, *which is* the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things ...” (John 14:26). The Galatians were not deprived of the fullness of the Spirit of God that they should seek fulfillment of their faith through the works of the Jews. God’s provision of the Spirit is not only abundant, but is continuous (both *ministereth* and *worketh* are in the present tense).²¹⁷ *Miracles* is from the Greek word *dunamis* (from which comes our word *dynamite*), and speaks of powerful acts of a supernatural nature.²¹⁸ Both the provision of the Spirit of God and the mighty acts of God were not only historical occurrences, which the Galatians could look back on with feelings of nostalgia, but they were present activities demonstrating the working of God in their midst. However, God will not abide man’s rebellion forever (Genesis 6:3); “For he said, Surely they *are* my people, children *that* will not lie: so he was their Saviour. In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel [messenger] of his presence saved them: in his love and in his pity he redeemed them; and he bare them, and carried them all the days of old. But they rebelled, and vexed his holy Spirit: therefore he was turned to be their enemy, *and* he fought against them” (Isaiah 63:8-10, cp. Ezekiel 18:24).²¹⁹

This reality is made plain in John 3:16 where the word *believeth* is a present tense verb; this is not an action that only takes place once; rather, we must be exercising a presently active belief in order for the reality of this text to become ours. If Evangelicals today would only understand this simple concept, they would recognize the spiritual death that they court as they live like the world. If we once get our minds around the necessity of belief being a present action, then this warning takes on new meaning: “Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God” (Hebrews 3:12). Continual believing that results in consistent actions is faith; unbelief is faithlessness – may God help us to heed this warning!

Paul’s question for the Galatians is very simple: are these mighty works, and the presence of God’s Spirit actively in you by the works of the Law, or by faith? Did God begin to work among you mightily when you began to keep the ordinances of Moses, or when you exercised faith in the finished work of Christ? The question is a simple one. The understood response, based upon all that Paul has clarified up to this point, is devastating to those who are promoting faith plus Judaism. The Spirit of God came through an active faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. God demonstrated this so clearly to those of Jerusalem, yet there were many from that area who seemed not to understand it. On Pentecost, the disciples of Jesus spoke in languages that they had not learned – a sign of the

²¹⁶ *Vine’s* “supply.”

²¹⁷ Strong’s Online.

²¹⁸ *Vines’* “miracle.”

²¹⁹ Strong’s Online.

presence of the Spirit of God to those who heard (Acts 2:4). When Peter declared God's truth to Cornelius and his household, these Gentiles spoke in other languages – again a sign to those who heard (this time it was a sign for Peter and his company) that the Spirit of God was present (Acts 10:44-46). Despite the indisputable evidence that the very presence of God, in the form of the Holy Spirit, comes through faith, we find believers out of the sect of the Pharisees wanting to Judaize their Christian faith (Acts 15:5), and their failure in this regard caused problems way over in Galatia. Paul's goal is to get these Galatian believers, who were beginning to move in the direction of the error of the "Christian" Pharisees of Jerusalem, to recognize that the reality and vitality of the Spirit of God comes only by faith in the Lord Jesus.

6. Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.

Paul now appeals to the example of the father of the Jewish nation, Abraham, to support the point that he is trying to make with the Galatians. Even as they would have had to concur that the Spirit of God operated in them through faith and not by keeping the Law, Paul now reminds them that it was exactly the same for Abraham. "And he [Abraham] believed in the LORD; and he [the Lord] counted [or reckoned] it to him for righteousness" (Genesis 15:6).²²⁰ The word that Paul uses, *accounted*, is the same as the Hebrew word translated as *counted* in this text. Abraham demonstrated an active faith in the Lord and God reckoned (*counted*) his active faith as righteousness.

Once again, we are reminded that our lot and responsibility is to walk in obedience to what God has commanded. Abel demonstrated obedience to what the Lord desired, and his offering was accepted by the Lord; on the other hand, Cain knew God's requirements just as surely as Abel, did his own thing that resulted in the Lord rejecting his offering (Genesis 4:3-5). Abraham walked in obedience to the Lord's desires for him, and the Lord counted him righteous (it was Abraham's active faith, not his works, that brought the Lord's approval; he was called and he obeyed – Hebrews 11:8). We, too, must exercise an active faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and what He has done for us, determine to walk in a manner worthy of God's calling on our lives (Ephesians 4:1), and to abide in the Vine (John 15:5). Through the power of the indwelling Spirit of God, the righteousness of the Law of God (beginning with the Ten Commandments now written upon our hearts) will be lived out through us (Romans 8:4; Hebrews 8:10). It is nothing of us; it is God's gift through His grace (Ephesians 2:8-9), yet we are called to guard against permitting an evil heart of unbelief to turn us away from God (Hebrews 3:12-13).

7. Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham.

The thought here is simply that because Abraham was declared righteous through his faith (something that the Galatians would have been able to find within their Hebrew Scriptures), they should have understood that those who are exercising an active faith in God are the children of Abraham. This might seem to be a very simple fact to us, but for the Jews who were being told that there was no difference before God between them and the Gentiles, this would have been a very difficult concept to accept. As a matter of fact, this would run contrary to all that they had

²²⁰ Strong's Online.

held dear for many, many years, particularly the Pharisees among them who were the most zealous in defense of the superiority of the Jews. The Jews, for years, had tracked their genealogies; it was their bloodline of Jewish heritage that was their pride. Now Paul is saying: “Neither give heed to fables and endless genealogies ...” (1 Timothy 1:4), and “avoid foolish questions, and genealogies, and contentions, and strivings about the law; for they are unprofitable and vain” (Titus 3:9). Their Jewish legacy is placed alongside of *foolish questions* and *contentions*, and now those who exercised the faith of Abraham are being called the children of Abraham regardless of their ancestry (Romans 4:11-16). “But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ” (Philippians 3:8) – this is Paul’s expression of how freely he relinquished his Jewish inheritance in light of the Gospel of Christ. Paul had faced this very matter in his own life, and despite his strong Pharisaical tradition, he had learned to place the truth of Christ over all things. This is something that Paul says that these Galatians need to understand, for clearly, if they could comprehend this elemental truth, then they would have less difficulty with the Judaizers who were seeking to draw them away from God’s truth.

8. And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, *saying*, In thee shall all nations be blessed.

Paul is not finished yet. He now shows them specifically from their own Hebrew Scriptures (which we call the Old Testament) the promise of salvation for the Gentiles. He quotes from Genesis 12:3 – “And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.” The Hebrew word translated as *families* in Genesis 12:3 means races, thereby presenting a much broader application of Abraham’s blessing than *families* might suggest.²²¹ By using *ta ethnos* (*nations*, Gentiles, non-Jews or foreigners), Paul has quoted the OT accurately, provided the greater context for the blessing, and, by placing it within this passage, he also makes the point that the blessing promised to all peoples through Abraham is justification by faith in Jesus Christ, the promised Messiah. He shows that the promise made to Abraham by God was prophetic (a declaration of a future fact before there is any evidence of its reality), and identifies justification by faith, as it was proclaimed to Abraham, as being the Gospel – a declaration of *glad tidings*.

Keep in mind that this was written to the Galatians who were in the process of turning away from the Message that Paul had delivered to them, to a message that made works an essential part of their salvation. The Gospel (the Good News), as it was declared to Abraham, did not include works, but it did include obedience. We must not miss that there is a difference between these. Abraham had faith in God (he believed Him) and he obeyed His command to leave his family and country; Abraham believed God (he had faith in God) and it was counted to him as righteousness. Abraham’s faith was demonstrated by his obedience, but it was by his faith that God reckoned him righteous (Genesis 15:6). Abraham’s obedience (his works) attested to the fact that his faith in God was real, but did not contribute to his righteousness before God.

Jesus came, in fulfillment of the prophecy made to Abraham, and brought an end to the Law of Moses, which simply foreshadowed the ultimate sacrifice that Jesus would make for the sins of the world (Colossians 2:17). Therefore, when the Judaizers sought to perpetuate the Mosaic

²²¹ Holladay Lexicon, *Bibleworks* 8; [English and Hebrew Lexicon](#), Selig Newman (1832).

traditions, they were not acting in obedience to the Lord, but, rather, were seeking to carry on a practice that had been ended by Jesus. The New Covenant, spoken of by Jesus with His disciples at their last supper before His crucifixion, was a fresh approach whereby God writes His commandments (the same original Ten) upon the hearts of those who come to Him by faith (Jeremiah 31:31-33). Through the abiding presence of the Spirit of God, and through our steadfast faith in the Lord (John 15:5), the righteousness of the Law of God will be lived out through us (Romans 8:4). Our righteous works must be in obedience to what God has asked of us through His Word, not religious traditions that we have received from our ancestors. However, we must understand that our works have no bearing on our salvation (Ephesians 2:8-9), but, rather, are an expression of the faith that we have in God. So why does James, after recalling Abraham's justification by faith, declare: "Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only" (James 2:24)? What James makes a case for is this: faith without obedience is dead and, therefore, no faith at all. He is not advocating for ritualistic or liturgical works that have no bearing on God's desire for us; rather, he is making the point that if we say that we have faith in God, but do not express that faith in obedient works, then our faith is alone and dead (James 2:26). The hinge upon which James' argument swings is this: "a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works" (James 2:18). He is not saying that faith and works are the same thing or even equals, but that the works must flow out of an active faith. Herein was the error of the Judaizers who caused no end of grief for the Galatians – they had laid faith and works side-by-side, and that must never be; works that will be pleasing to God must always flow **out of** faith (faith is the source).

Evangelicalism (and even much of Fundamentalism) today has become an empty religion of works. True faith in the Lord Jesus Christ has been melded, molded, and mutilated in order to make it conform to the various theologies and traditions that are common today. As upright as some traditions might appear, there are few that have not reshaped Biblical faith in God into a pretzel that fits neatly within their particular theology. However, to complicate the modern picture further, most Evangelicals today would not even hold tenaciously to their reshaped concept of faith, but would set it aside on a whim to embrace their "brother." The spiritual landscape is rapidly being leveled by the bulldozer of Ecumenism; unity has become the mantra of Evangelical thinking, and anything and everything that would impinge on this all-pervasive unity is considered to be divisive and dispensable. No longer is it common practice to use the Word of God as our Standard in all things pertaining to life and practice; it is now considered normal to begin with the already diluted theologies and work from there to build bridges to other faiths. The faith of Abraham has been virtually lost today, and certainly finds no place in the minds of those who are bent on Ecumenical unity.

*Faith without
obedience is dead.*

9. So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham.

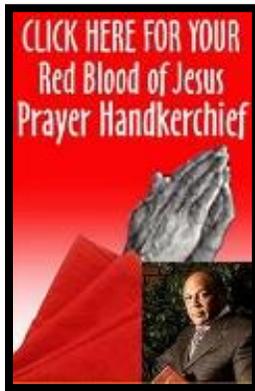
So then, or therefore, draws this back to the previous verse that quotes the promise that the Lord gave to Abraham. It is because of this promise that those who come to God by faith in the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ are blessed in Abraham. This is the fulfillment of the international blessing that God promised would come through Abraham. We might look at this and respond quite nonchalantly, but to those who were falling from faith in the Gospel into the

faith-works lie of the Judaizers, this would be eye opening. Through faith in the Lord Jesus, anyone can become the recipient of the blessing that God promised would come through Abraham's descendants (Romans 4:13-17). There was no room for works within this promise; it comes only through faith in exactly the same way that Abraham was reckoned as being righteous: faith, and subsequent obedience.

10. For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed *is* every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.

Paul has just come through an exposition of the reality of faith in Christ being the fulfillment of the promise that was made by the Lord to Abraham of old. It has been a positive declaration of the truth of drawing the faith of Abraham together with the Spirit of God working within the individual. We have learned of the inability of the Law of Moses to deposit the Spirit within the heart of those who exercise faith in the Lord Jesus Christ – this is only possible through faith, not through the works of the Law.

The focus shifts just a little now, to look more specifically at the inabilities and purpose of the Law. Once again, the message is very straightforward: those who are occupied with trying to produce the works of the Law are under a curse (there is no definite article in the Greek).²²² The Galatians were being convinced that it was necessary to keep the Laws of Moses; they were being persuaded to place themselves under a curse, and they were doing it willingly. We have already learned that the Law does not provide justification before God, it does not provide the Spirit of God, and it does not make anyone a child of Abraham. Now we learn what the Law does: it places the worker of its demands under a curse.



We might say, “How can this be?” Surely, no one would be foolish enough to move from faith in Christ alone to a combination of faith in Christ and works of the Law, which is really not faith at all. Paul describes this as “another gospel,” one of a different essence and a perversion of the the “Gospel of Christ” (Galatians 1:6-7). How could anyone make such a foolish error? Today we hear much from the televangelist crowd about sowing “the seed” of faith – meaning, send us your money and the Lord will surely bless you. Trinity Broadcasting Network loves to use this concept during their fund raising drives; send them a \$1,000 as a seed of faith and then watch the Lord bless you abundantly. On a website called “heart2heartbeat” you can print out a page that has a picture of a white handkerchief on it, a “prayer handkerchief” that has been “anointed and prayed over” and can be used for your own special miracle.²²³ Like many other Pentecostal televangelists, Kerney Thomas also makes use of a “prayer handkerchief” in order to hook those who are looking for help. His handkerchiefs are red, and he will send one out to anyone requesting one; then, within 24 hours of receiving it, they are to send it back to him with their name and address written on it; this becomes a “point of contact” to enhance the effectiveness of his

²²² Stephanus 1550 NT.

²²³ http://heart2heartbeat.com/prayer_handkerchief.htm

prayers.²²⁴ All of these, Trinity, “heart2heartbeat,” and Thomas, are promoting a faith-works message: if you do “this” (and “this” will vary from charlatan to charlatan), then the Lord will bless you (which generally means to give you what you want). The lie is similar to that being fed to the Galatians – do these things, add these works to your faith in Christ and your spiritual life will be perfected. The lie is also identical to that given to Eve so long ago: “... For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil” (Genesis 3:5). “Do this, and great things will happen” is the promise of Satan, and his charlatans have no difficulty in finding new prey, even today.

The quote that Paul makes comes from Deuteronomy 27:26 – “Cursed *be* he that confirmeth not *all* the words of this law to do them. And all the people shall say, Amen.” This is the last in a series of twelve curses pronounced upon those in Israel who would transgress in eleven specific areas, and this summary curse covers anything that anyone would do that was not in line with the Law of Moses. These were to be proclaimed as the children of Israel entered into the Promised Land, as a reminder of their responsibility to God. Representatives from the descendants of Rachel and Leah were to stand on Mt. Gerizim (left in picture) to bless the people, and representatives from the remaining tribes were to be on Mt. Ebal (on the right). As the people of Israel would pass between the two mountains, those on Mt. Ebal would shout the curses recorded in Deuteronomy 27:15-26, and the people would respond, “Amen.” There was a commitment on the part of the people to abide by the Law of Moses, which meant keeping the sacrificial system and the myriad of statutes and ordinances. Two things come together to make a significant point for the Galatians: first of all, they already understood that no one is justified by the works of the Law (Galatians 2:16); secondly, since no one can keep all of the requirements of the Law, an offense in one point is sufficient to ensure that they are cursed (James 2:10 and Deuteronomy 27:26).



Mt. Gerizim (L) and Mt. Ebal (R)

Incredibly, the Galatians were being convinced to set aside faith alone in Christ for a works additive that would see them become cursed. Reminder: Paul identified that what they were falling for was another gospel – a perverted gospel (Galatians 1:6-7) that would see them living in disobedience to the truth (Galatians 3:1).

11. But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, *it is evident*: for, The just shall live by faith.

We have here a reiteration of the culminating argument of chapter two: “by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified” (Galatians 2:16). Paul adds the clarifying words here: *in the sight of God*, or, literally, “before God.”²²⁵ What these Galatians were becoming convinced of,

²²⁴ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kerney_Thomas

²²⁵ Friberg Lexicon.

albeit falsely, was that their justification would somehow be made more complete if they kept the Mosaic traditions. Within the eyes of the Judaizers, there was some degree of justification, or grace, that was accorded them through keeping the Law of Moses, otherwise, why would they have shouldered the yoke? However, Paul is very carefully, and painstakingly, peeling the veneer away from the Galatians' new, false gospel to reveal just how badly they were departing from God's truth.

As individuals send money to charlatans offering prayer handkerchiefs that have been prayed over and anointed for the professed purpose of bringing miracles into the lives of the recipients, they are deceived into believing that the purchased item will provide them with sufficient justification before God to warrant a miracle. God declares that there is no justification before Him through such, neither for the charlatan nor the duped. His Message has not changed; we must come to Him through faith in the redemption that was accomplished by Jesus Christ, the eternal Word made flesh. There is nothing that we can do to improve our image before a holy God (Isaiah 64:6); it is all of faith in Christ, our Redeemer. However, Satan will continue to push his lies with power and great finesse (Romans 16:18); we are called to "try the spirits [to test or examine – present tense!] whether they are of God" (1 John 4:1).²²⁶ This process of testing the spirit of a man in order to determine his allegiance, is to be a continual part of our daily living; we can never let our guard down and relax. A local woman, after changing churches several times, exclaimed how good it was to be able to relax now and enjoy the teaching without having to continually evaluate what was being taught. When we adopt that attitude, we have just entered the realm of the "simple" of Romans 16:18 – those who are unwary, those who fear no evil from others but make themselves vulnerable to the subtleties of Satan's ploys.

The Galatians had been convinced that they needed to mix the Old and the New Covenants together; they needed faith in Christ, but they also needed to practice the ordinances of the Law of Moses. Habakkuk 2:4 declares: "the just shall live by his faith," and Paul quotes that passage here. Here is an Old Covenant prophet (Habakkuk) who openly declared that the just are to live by faith, not by works (the Lord made this abundantly clear through Isaiah as well – Isaiah 1:11-20). What we need to understand (this is something that these Galatians failed to comprehend) is that justification before God has always been by faith in what God has provided through His grace and mercy. When Adam and Eve sinned, God, in His mercy, clothed them with coverings that He made (Genesis 3:21); the coverings that Adam and Eve had improvised were wholly inadequate (Genesis 3:7). Even though Moses had carefully delineated God's desire regarding the sacrificial system, it still did not provide man with one iota of justification before God unless it was accompanied by faith. Hebrews 11 clarifies that it was faith in God that made the saints of old righteous before Him; He required faith before the Mosaic Law, during its application, and it is this same faith that is effectual under the New Covenant that was instituted by the Lord Jesus Christ. However, do not forget that saving faith has always been accompanied by works: Abel, through faith, offered an acceptable sacrifice to God (Hebrews 11:4), by faith Abraham went out (Hebrews 11:8), by faith Moses chose to identify himself with his own people (Hebrews 11:24), and we, by faith in Jesus, the Author of faith, must run with patience the race that is set before us (Hebrews 12:1-2). Works of obedience are always a necessary product of the faith (James 2:17), but they will never combine with faith to our justification (Ephesians 2:8-9). It was this truth that the Judaizers failed to apprehend, and the Galatians were being duped into losing sight of this fundamental truth. Evangelicals today shout their ignorance of this truth by loudly proclaiming that we are not under

²²⁶ Strong's Online.

law but under grace. Salvation (or justification) never came by the Law (Galatians 2:16), but always by faith in the merciful grace of God.

12. And the law is not of faith: but, The man that doeth them shall live in them.

Paul now includes a quote from Leviticus 18:5 – “Ye shall therefore keep my statutes, and my judgments: which if a man do, he shall live in them: I *am* the LORD.” Preceding this is a warning to Israel that they were not to do as the Egyptians had done (what they were familiar with from their past), nor were they to do as the Canaanites (in the land to which they were going, Leviticus 18:3). In the ordinances and laws that God had given to Israel, there was life – if they would do them. Is this a contradiction to what has just been so clearly explained concerning faith?

Within its context, this quotation from Leviticus 18 follows the warning of the Lord to Israel to walk in His ways. They were not to follow the ways of the Egyptians (who had been decimated by the hand of the Lord when He brought Israel out), nor the ways of the Canaanite peoples who were going to be judged by the Lord and annihilated. What follows the quoted passage is a detailed explanation of the sexual sins that the Israelites (and any stranger who was with them) were to avoid (this includes incest, homosexuality and bestiality), lest they should face the same judgment as the Canaanites who practiced such perversions (Leviticus 18:26-28). The observation has often been made that a nation that follows the principles of God’s Word in their governance, will experience a peace and prosperity that will not be there for the nation that contravenes God’s principles. In other words, there can be a blessing for living according to God’s standards, even if it is not a product of a living faith. This verse would seem to support this.

However, there is more to it than that. Paul’s opening comment, “the law is not of faith,” provides an essential thought regarding the Law. In order to find life through the Law, it was required that it be kept perfectly and completely in every respect; “for whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one *point*, he is guilty of all” (James 2:10). To be a lawbreaker did not require you to break all Ten Commandments or all of the Law of Moses; breaking one Law was sufficient. Paul has already very clearly made the point that no one is justified before God through the works of the Law. “The law entered, that the offence might abound” (Romans 5:20); in other words, God established His Law so that there would be no question as to the sinful nature of man. What we must not forget is that God’s Law did not begin with Moses at Mt. Sinai; it was present even with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. Cain and Abel knew that the Law of God required an animal sacrifice in order to express their faith in what God would one day do to redeem lost mankind (Genesis 4:3-5). Abel came to the Lord in faith; Cain’s failure was that he sought the Lord’s favor through his own works. We read of Abraham keeping God’s “charge,” “commandments,” “statutes” and “laws” (Genesis 26:5), and Abraham “believed in the Lord; and [the Lord] counted it to him for righteousness” (Genesis 15:6). God made His requirements known to Abraham, but his righteousness came through his faith in the Lord. Faith has always been the key that unlocks the favor of God; Cain learned firsthand that God’s approval could not be obtained through works, and recognized the favor of God upon his brother, Abel.

The rich young ruler came to Jesus and asked, “Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?” (Matthew 19:16). Notice that the question is “what can I do?” Before Jesus responded to his question, He sought to lead this man to recognize Who He was – God. The young man addressed Jesus as “good,” and Jesus provided him with clarification that there was

only one who is good, and that is God – and then immediately went on to answer the man’s question. The implication is that He accepted the descriptive “good,” even as it applies only to God. Although this man sought to justify himself before the Lord by claiming to have kept all of the commandments that Jesus identified, he still recognized a lack within. Jesus then cut through the man’s aura of self-righteousness by telling him to dispose of everything that he owned and to follow Him – a call to abandon self-righteous works and physical security, and to exercise faith. On hearing this, the man went away sorrowful. Jesus called him to get sell his possessions (his security), give the proceeds to the poor, acquire treasure in heaven and put his faith in the Lord (follow Him); the call was to replace his own works that were not satisfying, with faith in the Lord. The one thing that this man could do, in order to demonstrate his faith in God, was the one thing that he was unwilling to do; his faith rested in his possessions, his position and his perceived self-righteousness, and he was unwilling to give these up for eternal life. He exhibited the righteousness of the Pharisees (Luke 18:11) and failed to recognize Who Jesus was, even though he had called Him “good.”

As mentioned before, individual spiritual life under the Mosaic Covenant came only through faith. Hebrews 11, the faith chapter, refers to the lives of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David and Samuel, and goes on to say: “... these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise” (Hebrews 11:39). These all lived under the Mosaic Law, yet their recognition by God was due to their faith in His promise of a Redeemer to come. “Christ *is* the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth” (Romans 10:4); to everyone who has faith in Christ, He is our “wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption” (1 Corinthians 1:30). Like the rich young ruler, those who do not exercise faith in God will be judged according to their works. “And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is *the book* of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works” (Revelation 20:12, the religious of Matthew 7:21-23 will find their place among these). Therefore, we are reminded, and the Galatians are called on to exercise faith to see “that no man is justified by the law [through works] in the sight of God” (Galatians 3:11).

13. Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed *is* every one that hangeth on a tree:

Paul continues with some straightforward language to these Galatians who were trying to mix the works of the Law of Moses with faith in Christ, thereby creating a whole new gospel that was devoid of its saving element. He is building a very strong case against what the Galatians were falling for – a faith-plus-works message that was entirely outside of the Good News of Christ (Galatians 1:6-7). What Paul declared so clearly in his opening comments, he now is expanding on so that there will be no misunderstanding in their minds when they have heard and digested his words.

Christ hath redeemed us. This alone speaks of that which is completely aside from what the Judaizers were attempting to introduce; we must not lose sight of the fact that the addition of works to faith in Christ results in a false gospel that is not good news. The word *redeemed* does not simply mean to buy; it is much more than that. In the Greek, the word is *exagorazo* (*ex-ag-or-ad'-zo*), a strengthened form of the word *buy* that means to “buy out ..., especially of purchasing a slave with

a view to his freedom.”²²⁷ Christ paid a debt that He did not owe, because I owed a debt that I could not pay.²²⁸ To understand the reality of this redemption, we need to be able to identify with the servant who was brought before his king in Jesus’ parable about the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 18:23-27). The servant owed a debt of 10,000 talents (equivalent to a modern-day debt of at least \$6 billion) – significantly more than most servants would be able to pay, considering that he would have to work for over 164,000 years in order to pay it off (one shekel or drachma was a day’s wage, and there are 6,000 drachmas to one talent²²⁹). This man owed a debt that he had no hope of ever paying – he faced an impossible situation. We stand before God as sinners, unclean; our best efforts come out as filthy rags before Him (Isaiah 64:6). Yet God, even as the



Shekel

king in Jesus’ parable, made a way for us, but it is not through anything that we can do – it is only through His forgiveness that is made available through His mercy. However, God’s forgiveness cannot be a word-in-the-wind, for His perfect justice would not permit such. The covering for sins has always required the shedding of blood (Hebrews 9:22); God shed the blood of animals in order to provide coverings for Adam and Eve (Genesis 3:21). From Abel through to Christ, the blood of

animals was shed in order to provide a temporary remission of sins (if it was done in faith); the Mosaic sacrificial system elaborated on the requirements for making a sacrifice and established a priesthood to mediate between men and God, but it did not initiate the necessity of a blood sacrifice. Jesus came, as determined from before the foundation of the world (1 Peter 1:20), as the sinless Lamb of God to shed His blood once (John 1:29; Hebrews 9:28), so as to become the final Sacrifice for sin (Hebrews 10:16-18). Christ died as the Sacrifice for our sins, and He lives as our High Priest in the presence of God (Hebrews 8:1). You will recall that at the moment that Jesus died, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom (Matthew 27:50-51) – that indicated the end of the responsibilities of the high priest on earth, and, really, the whole sacrificial system under the Mosaic Law; the way had been opened into the Holy of Holies through the death of Christ. “For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, *which are* the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us ...” (Hebrews 9:24).

The redemption that was accomplished through the Word made flesh, is a marvel of God’s mercy and grace in providing a way for one sinless Man to fulfill the requirements of His perfect justice for sin, and to make a way for mankind to stand before God in holiness and purity. “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: *it is* the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast” (Ephesians 2:8-9). God made the plan, and God executed it (John 3:16) – there is nothing that we can do to enhance it; all that we can do is believe – to continually exercise faith, and keep that faith through obedience to Him to the very end (Hebrews 3:6).

Christ has redeemed us *from the curse of the law*. We’ve just read, “... as many as are of the works of the law are under [a] curse ...” (Galatians 3:10). Deuteronomy 28 is a passage that expresses the blessings and curses of the Law very clearly; the first fourteen verses spell out the blessings that God will shower upon Israel if they “observe ... to do all his commandments ...” (Deuteronomy 28:1). However, we read on: “... it shall come to pass, if thou wilt not hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to observe to do all his commandments and his statutes which I

²²⁷ Vine’s “redeem.”

²²⁸ These words are attributed to G. McSpadden.

²²⁹ Wikipedia, “drachma”

command thee this day; that all these curses shall come upon thee, and overtake thee ...” (Deuteronomy 28:15), and the next fifty-three verses outline those curses. The Israelites bore the burden of the Mosaic Law, and it was a burden, for the system of ordinances and sacrifices was very specific – there was a definite protocol to follow and a precise location where the sacrifices for sin were to be made. After all of that, these great efforts would only be effective if they were carried out in faith; we have already seen so clearly that no one is justified by the works of the Law – ever! The evidence of the faith of the Israelites of old was visible through their adherence to the ordinances and sacrifices as given through Moses (keeping in mind that if faith was not present, then the ordinances and sacrifices were of no spiritual value). Likewise, the evidence of our faith is our obedience to the commands of God’s Word to us (and the absence of obedience speaks of a dead faith [or no faith] – James 2:17). The Israelites received the Law of God on tablets of stone, yet the Psalmist David, a man after God’s own heart, declared: “I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law *is* within my heart” (Psalm 40:8), and again: “Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee” (Psalm 119:11). David believed the Lord’s promises, and sought to live righteously by working the Word of God into the essence of his being. With the New Covenant implemented through Jesus shed blood, the commands are now written by God upon the hearts of those who believe (Jeremiah 31:33), and the Spirit of God abides within so “that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us ...” (Romans 8:4). “For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?” (Hebrews 9:13-14). We must take heed lest a deceitful spirit of faithlessness cause us to depart from the living God (Hebrews 3:12).

Christ was *made a curse for us*, in accordance with Deuteronomy 21:23 – “... he that is hanged *is* accursed of God” Within the Jewish custom, hanging was not used as a method for killing a criminal, rather an idolater or blasphemer (provided they were not a woman) was hanged as an example after they had already been put to death.²³⁰ When Jesus was condemned by the Jewish leaders, the high priest said, “... ye have heard the blasphemy: what think ye? And they all condemned him to be guilty of death” (Mark 14:64). Within the Mosaic Law it was: “if a man have committed a sin worthy of death, and he be to be put to death [judgement is carried out and he is dead], and thou hang him on a tree ...” (Deuteronomy 21:22); notice that if he was found to be guilty of a sin worthy of death, he was first put to death and then suspended on a *tree* (probably a pole rather than a living tree).²³¹ The specific instruction for such cases was that they were not to be allowed to hang beyond their execution day (Deuteronomy 21:23). Therefore, within the Jewish custom, anyone who was hanged upon a tree had already been found guilty of a capital offense and felt the curse of the Law (death for their deeds).

Inasmuch as we are sinners who sin (it is who we are, not just what we do), we bear about with us the sentence of death before God. However, in the eternal plan of God (1 Peter 1:19-20), Christ came, the perfect Son of God and the eternal Word made flesh, in order to take upon Himself the sins of the world. He died, not for His own sins (for He remained sinless), but for the sins of mankind so that He might open the way for man to be permanently reconciled with God (2 Corinthians 5:21). When Christ died on the cross, He bore the curse of the Law within the Jewish context, for He hung on the cross as a public declaration that justice had been served. As the sinless

²³⁰ <http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/view.jsp?artid=128&letter=C> “Capital Punishment.”

²³¹ Brown, Driver, Briggs Hebrew Lexicon, Bibleworks 8.

Son of God, He took upon Himself the sin-burden of the world (from Adam to the end of time) and bore it on the cross – an open demonstration that the requirements of the Law had been fulfilled, to those who had faith in Him. Within the Jewish tradition, a blasphemer was to be publicly displayed after he had been stoned to death (Leviticus 24:16; Deuteronomy 21:22); Jesus was falsely accused of blaspheming (Matthew 26:65), faced death by crucifixion (the Roman method) rather than stoning, and was hung on public display. Truly, He became a “curse for us.”

14. That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.

Here is the reason why Jesus became a curse for us – it was so that the blessing promised to Abraham so long ago would come on “all families of the earth” (Genesis 12:3). The Judaizers sought to draw faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and the works of the Mosaic Law together to form a perfect blend of faith-and-works salvation with a Jewish flavor. The point that Paul is anxious for the Galatians to understand is that the faith of Jesus Christ reaches well beyond the Mosaic traditions and is anchored in the promise made by God to Abraham. There is no room for our works within God’s plan for salvation; He knows that our best efforts will only secure our condemnation (Isaiah 64:6). *Gentiles* (*ta ethnos*) specifically identifies the non-Jews within this context (hence, *Gentiles* or foreigners to the Jews). It is interesting to note that the Hebrew word translated as *families* in Genesis 12:3 means clans (people who hold something in common), or races (again, a common ancestor);²³² although that may well suggest a common blood line, it expresses a much broader application than what we think of as being *families* (all of humanity holds a common ancestor in Adam). This blessing of Abraham is meant for all of the *peoples* of the earth, and is forever linked to faith (that common element necessary for the blessing to be received personally): “they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham” (Galatians 3:9 and Romans 4:16).

The word *come* bears the subjunctive mood, but, being part of a purpose clause, it expresses the reality of what has come through the redemption that Christ accomplished; there is no uncertainty that Christ’s sacrifice has brought redemption to all of humanity! Jesus came as the perfect fulfillment of the promise made to Abraham, and, as promised, the salvation purchased is available to all of mankind (just as it was declared to Abraham). However, that does not mean that all of the Gentiles will receive this blessing any more than it guarantees that all of the members of the Jewish race will be recipients of this blessing – the promise is that the blessing will be to everyone in the world, but that does not mean that everyone will avail themselves of it. Abraham is called “the father of all them that believe” (Romans 4:11) – literally: *those who are believing* (*believe* is in the present tense).²³³ Here’s an interesting aside: because the blessing of Christ is anchored within the universal promise made by God to Abraham, the Calvinistic doctrine of limited atonement cannot stand (their teaching is that Christ only died for those whom God had chosen for salvation, yet God’s promise of blessing through Abraham was for all of mankind). As we have already noted, even though Christ’s sacrifice was made for all of humanity, not everyone will exercise the active, living faith required to make His redemption a personal reality. The word

²³² BDB; English and Hebrew Lexicon, Selig Newman (1832).

²³³ Stephanus 1550 NT.

all used in Genesis 12:3 means just that: the whole, all;²³⁴ what must not be missed in this simple, yet far-reaching promise from God to Abraham is that the promised blessing will be to *all peoples (families)* – no one has been left out. This is in keeping with Peter’s words that God is “not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9). God’s Word is cohesive; He does not change, and therefore, His Word, which is the expression of Jesus, the Logos (John 1:1), cannot change either. Man’s manipulation of the original language texts, as carried out in the production of documents like the modern Greek New Testament, is done at his own peril (Deuteronomy 4:2, 12:32; Proverbs 30:6). “There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof *are* the ways of death” (Proverbs 14:12, 16:25).

Having established that Jesus came as the fulfillment of the promise made to Abraham by God, Paul now doubles back to a point that he has already made. In chapter 3:2 he asked: “Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?” The evident response to this question is that they had received the Spirit of God through faith. Paul now draws this all together by explaining that Jesus not only came as Abraham’s promised blessing, but also so that the Spirit of God would be available through the same faith in Jesus that brings us salvation. Jesus said: “And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever [this is a purpose clause: the Father will give the Comforter with the intent for Him to remain with us forever – that is God’s purpose in sending the Spirit; however, the fulfillment of His intention will depend upon the one into whom the Spirit comes²³⁵] ... when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, *even* the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me” (John 14:16, 15:26).

What the Galatians had lost sight of was that they were part of the New Covenant. When Jesus met with His disciples before the cross, He declared that the cup symbolized the “new testament” in His blood (Luke 22:20). This was the fulfillment of the prophecy of Jeremiah: “... this *shall be* the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; after those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people” (Jeremiah 31:33). The Mosaic covenant has been fulfilled, completed and replaced through the sacrifice that was made by the Lord Jesus Christ; *abolished*, as applied to the Mosaic Law in Ephesians 2:15, means to be removed by replacement.²³⁶ Jesus was sinless; therefore, He was qualified before God to pay our debt of sin. He hung on the cross as a public declaration that the demands of the Mosaic Law had been met. Paul made this reality abundantly clear in his letter to the Ephesians (2:14-16), and again to the Colossians (2:16-17). What the Galatians were being reminded of was that they were under a New Covenant – not a grace-versus-law scenario, but rather where the Law of God was now written upon their hearts, and the Spirit of God was present within them through faith in Christ, in order to enable them to apply that written Law to their lives so that “the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit” (Romans 8:4). We are not freed from the Law of God, rather the Spirit of God abides within us in order to provide the enablement so that the righteousness of His “holy

Man has always been,
and always will be,
under God's Law!

²³⁴ BDB.

²³⁵ https://www.ntgreek.org/learn_nt_greek/subj-purpose.htm.

²³⁶ Friberg Lexicon.

law” might be lived out through us (Romans 7:12). Jesus said: “Abide [*meno*] in me, and I in you” (John 15:4a); the Spirit of God, through John, declared: “And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth [*meno*] in him, and he in him” (1 John 3:24). There is absolutely no room for a do-as-you-please grace within Biblical Christianity. Man has always been under God’s Law; even in the perfect Garden of Eden we read that “the LORD God commanded the man” (Genesis 2:16-17). The declaration of the Apostle John in his visions on the Isle of Patmos is: “Here is the patience [endurance] of the saints: here *are* they that keep [are carefully attending to (present tense)] the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus” (Revelation 14:12).²³⁷ From Genesis to Revelation, God’s people have always come to Him by faith, and that living faith has always been expressed through obedience to His commandments (James 2:26).

15. Brethren, I speak after the manner of men; Though *it be* but a man’s covenant, yet *if it be* confirmed, no man disannulleth, or addeth thereto.

Paul now draws an illustration from the traditions of men to help make his point – he will now speak according to what man does. The essence is that if someone makes a covenant, or contract, with someone else, and the contract is legally ratified, then no one will set it aside as being of no value, nor will anyone casually try to add anything to it. The point being emphasized here is that when a covenant has been established properly, then no one is able to make it of no effect, or to add anything to it – the agreement stands as it was made.

The analogy is appropriate and very clear. If we give such respect to the covenants that are made between men, would it not be understood that a covenant made by God should receive at least the same honor? God established His covenant with Abraham (He chose Abraham as the father through whom the promised Redeemer would come), and He included the promise that everyone (*all families of the earth*) would be blessed through him (Genesis 12:3). Therefore, as a legitimate covenant made by Jehovah (not mere man), no one is able to set it aside as being invalid, and, most appropriately for the Galatians’ situation, it is not possible for anyone to add anything to it. God’s way for man has always been by faith (Hebrews 11).

The Galatians were being convinced to add the traditions of Moses to their faith in Christ, which was causing them to fall from the truth (Galatians 3:1). In reality, they were seeking to add something of their own doing to the covenant that God had established – something that they wouldn’t try to do with a covenant made between men. The history of the Roman Catholic Church is a never-ending series of adding to what God has said, not only in doctrine but also in practice, to the point that today there is very little left within their theology that has not felt the manipulating touch of their hands. The doctrinal changes were made largely for establishing the authority of their central leadership, and the practical changes were directed toward bridging the gap between the pagan population and the religious “righteous.” In keeping with the words of Proverbs 14:12, they have produced a form of religion that leads to the death of all who walk in its pathway. Despite this blatant desecration of God’s truth, Evangelicals, who once held God’s truth in their hands, are bending over backwards in an attempt to build bridges of peace and understanding with this hotbed of heresy: “in the latter times some shall depart from the faith [apostatize], giving heed to seducing

²³⁷ Strong’s Online.

spirits, and the doctrines of devils” (1 Timothy 4:1).²³⁸ A more apt description for the activities and teachings of the Roman Catholic Church cannot be found.

Paul declares, unequivocally, that the Galatians were being removed from the Gospel of God unto a false gospel (Galatians 1:6-7). The Judaizers were zealous about adding the ordinances of Moses to their new found faith in Christ, yet by doing so they were corrupting the Fresh Covenant that Jesus implemented with His disciples through His shed blood (Luke 22:20). The word to the Galatians was that even adding the traditions of Moses to the faith of Christ was a destruction of that faith. Likewise, the Roman Catholics have been removed (past tense) from the truth of the Gospel of God to a false gospel of faith and works – faith in the leadership of the Roman Catholic Church and the works as prescribed by that same leadership. Unfortunately, with the dulled minds of Evangelicals today selectively acclaiming Catholic doctrine, they are rapidly falling prey to the same deadly faith-works teaching. We must recognize the exclusivity of God’s covenant – He has defined the terms, and any attempt that we make to add to or take away from those terms is the same as abandoning the covenant entirely. Unless this reality becomes deeply rooted within our hearts, and we are carefully guarding against a heart of faithlessness (through the enablement of the abiding Spirit of God, our only Hope), we will, in the same way as the Galatians, be tempted to relax our defenses and yield to a way of life that is less offensive to others and makes fewer demands upon us. “Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide *is* the gate, and broad *is* the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait *is* the gate, and narrow *is* the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it” (Matthew 7:13-14). By adding to, or taking away from God’s prescribed way to life, we will either miss the strait gate entirely or fail as we walk His narrow way – there are only two paths: one leads to life, the other to destruction.

16. Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ.

God confirmed to Abraham that He would establish His covenant with those who would follow him: “I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee” (Genesis 17:7). The covenant was God’s promise: “I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed” (Genesis 12:2-3). This promise was to find fulfillment through Abraham’s descendants.

If we pause to consider the descendants of Abraham, we will then very soon realize that this promise was not passed along through all of his subsequent family members. God was very specific in clarifying to Abraham who would carry His covenant forward: “And God said, Sarah thy wife shall bear thee a son indeed; and thou shalt call his name Isaac: and I will establish my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, *and* with his seed after him” (Genesis 17:19). This immediately excluded Ishmael, Abraham’s firstborn, and all of the sons of Abraham’s second wife, Keturah (Genesis 25:1-2). At the establishment of the promise with Abraham, God carefully defined the family line through which the promise would come – Isaac, but further consideration makes it very evident that there was a continual narrowing of the line through which the promised

²³⁸ Vine’s “depart.”

Seed would come. “But thou, Israel, *art* my servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, the seed of Abraham my friend” (Isaiah 41:8). From Abraham, the chosen line was through Isaac; from Isaac, it was through Jacob (Israel). When Israel blessed his sons at the end of his days, once again the line of the Blessed One was narrowed: “The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh [meaning: that which belongs to him] come; and unto him *shall* the gathering of the people *be*” (Genesis 49:10).²³⁹ The Lord, through Nathan the prophet, spoke unto King David: “And thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever” (2 Samuel 7:16); again, a lineage has been selected. Out of all of the sons of Jesse (of the tribe of Judah), God chose David (1 Samuel 16:12), and of the many sons of David, Solomon was chosen to bear the promise forward (2 Chronicles 1:8). Therefore, we have the genealogy from Abraham to Christ in Matthew chapter one passing through Isaac, Jacob, Judah, David, Solomon, etc. When Jesus was baptized by John, a voice from heaven broke forth: “Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased” (Luke 3:22). Here was the Seed Who had been promised to Abraham, and through Whom all the nations of the earth would be blessed (Genesis 12:3) – here was the promised “Shiloh” (Genesis 49:10). However, we can even look beyond Abraham, for here was the Seed Whom God promised would deal a bruise to Satan’s head (Genesis 3:15).

Paul’s purpose here is to establish in the minds of the Galatians that the promise of God to Abraham was singular in nature, and as you follow the lines of the promise down through the generations, it is evident that God never lost sight of the Promised One. Yes, there was a general promise that Abraham’s descendants would be as the sand of the sea and the stars of the heavens (Genesis 22:17), but the very specific promise of blessing for all of the *families of the earth* was focused on the promised Redeemer, Jesus. What this tells us is that even before the Law of Moses was instituted, God’s promise of redemption was alive and well (1 Peter 1:19-20). This is the truth that Paul really wants the Galatians to understand.

17. And this I say, *that* the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect.

Paul now goes on to elaborate just a little more on the central truth in God’s promise to Abraham that both the Judaizers and the Galatians had failed to comprehend. This covenant, established specifically with Abraham, was pre-established in Christ, the Messiah, the Promised One – encapsulated within the promise made by the Lord in the Garden (Genesis 3:15), and established in the mind of God before man was ever created (Revelation 13:8 – “... the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world”). “But thou, Bethlehem Ephrathah [ancient name for Bethlehem²⁴⁰], *though* thou be little among the thousands of Judah, *yet*



Bethlehem

²³⁹ BDB.

²⁴⁰ Easton’s.

out of thee shall he come forth unto me *that is* to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth *have been* from of old, from everlasting [or, from *eternity past*] (Micah 5:2).²⁴¹ “... according as he [God] hath chosen us in him [Christ] before the foundation of the world ...” (Ephesians 1:4); “... who hath saved us, and called *us* with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began ...” (2 Timothy 1:9); “... in hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began ...” (Titus 1:2). Clearly, this is not an obscure doctrine, although it may have been a little more hidden to those who did not have the writings of Paul. As we consider the plight of the Galatians, we can understand why the eternity of the promised Savior received such a great emphasis within the time of the Apostles. The Judaizers sought to focus the attention of the new believers on the beginnings within the Mosaic Covenant, rather than recognizing that the promise of God, fulfilled in Christ, went well beyond the Law of Moses to the mind of God in eternity past.

Paul identifies the Law as coming 430 years after the covenant, or promise, was confirmed with Abraham. When Joseph sent for his father to come to Egypt, God confirmed to Jacob that His hand was in it: “And God spake unto Israel in the visions of the night, and said, Jacob, Jacob. And he said, Here *am* I. And he said, I *am* God, the God of thy father: fear not to go down into Egypt; for I will there make of thee a great nation: I will go down with thee into Egypt; and I will also surely bring thee up *again*: and Joseph shall put his hand upon thine eyes” (Genesis 46:2-4). The promise that Abraham would become a great nation was confirmed with Jacob as he prepared to journey out of the land that the Lord had promised to Abraham and to Isaac, his forefathers. As they prepared to journey into Egypt, they went down as a family of sixty-six men (Genesis 46:26-27); yet the Lord confirmed His promise that He would make of them a great nation. This was the chosen line of the descendants of Abraham through which the promise was kept alive by God. Exodus 12:40-41 speaks of the end to this time: “Now the sojourning of the children of Israel, who dwelt in Egypt, *was* four hundred and thirty years. And it came to pass at the end of the four hundred and thirty years, even the selfsame day it came to pass, that all the hosts of the LORD went out from the land of Egypt.” The thrust of this is that Israel had remained without land ownership for the entire time that they were in Egypt; the reality is that the chosen descendants of Abraham, to this point, only owned two small pieces of land in Canaan. Abraham had purchased a small parcel of land for a burial site when Sarah died (Genesis 23:17-20), and Jacob had purchased a part of a field (Genesis 33:19-20). However, as Moses prepared the Israelites to keep the first Passover in preparation for their flight from Egypt, God introduces the new thought that He was going to redeem them from Egypt and give them the land to which they were going (Exodus 12:25). The promise, made to Abraham that he would own the land of Canaan as far as he could see in every direction, was not forgotten and took on new life at this point.

What Paul is emphasizing here is the large space of time between when the promise was confirmed with Jacob (before entering Egypt) and when Israel received the Law of Moses at Mt. Sinai. However, the coming of the Mosaic Law could not do away with the promise that was given to Abraham and confirmed with Isaac and Jacob; the Law did not impact the promise that God made to Abraham – not one iota. The word *disannul* means to “deprive of force and authority;”²⁴² God’s promise of the Seed of Abraham being a blessing to all of the families of the earth was not undermined in any way by the Law of Moses. The Law, given through Moses, could not render

²⁴¹ Strong’s Online.

²⁴² Ibid.

the promise of God of no effect, literally: “to cause to cease, put an end to, do away with, annul, abolish.”²⁴³

Elsewhere we read: “For he [Christ] is our peace, who hath made both [the Jew and the Gentile] one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition *between us*; Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, *even* the law of commandments *contained* in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, *so* making peace; And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby” (Ephesians 2:14-16). The Law of Moses had no effect (*katargeo*) on the promise that God made to Abraham (Galatians 3:17), but the Fulfillment of that promise *abolished* (*katargeo*) the ordinances of Moses (Ephesians 2:15). What the Law of Moses could not do to the promise, the Promised One did to the Law of Moses – He abolished it, rendered it obsolete!



Seder Plate

It is becoming increasingly popular within Evangelical circles to dabble in ancient liturgies, and many times this means drawing from the Roman Catholic traditions. However, there are those within Evangelicalism who are also looking to the liturgies of the Jews and incorporating these into their practices. The Jewish Seder is an example of a tradition that is being embraced by many Evangelicals today, and one that has been practiced by many Roman Catholics and mainline Protestants since well back into the 1960s;²⁴⁴ whether the Evangelical community is bringing this in from the Roman Catholics or independently from the Jews is open to debate. The elements of the Seder are: three thick unleavened cakes, parsley and a bowl of salt water (representing the hyssop and blood), watercress or horseradish tops (the bitter herbs), a mixture of nuts and apples (representing the clay that the Israelites made into bricks), a roasted bone (a memorial of the paschal lamb), “a roasted egg in memory of the free-will offering of the feast,” and several bottles of wine.²⁴⁵ What is immediately evident is that there is both much more and much less here than was present at the first Passover (Exodus 12:5-8; Numbers 9:11), which is a clear indication that the Jews have changed the elements of the meal, with the addition of the egg being most puzzling. From ancient times, the egg was accepted as the symbol of new life and, most noteworthy, of the pagan goddess, Astarte.²⁴⁶ However, that aside, the response today is: “Holding a Seder is a way to connect with the heritage of our religion and to see how the practices of the ancient world are still relevant to us as Christians today.”²⁴⁷ There is a tendency to look to the traditions of others in order to explain our own practices, and this can be both helpful and dangerous. In this case, I would suggest that the look into the Seder is a dangerous practice, as the Seder is filled with Jewish traditions that do not find their origin within the Scriptures. We know from the Gospels that the Lord found many of the traditions of the Pharisees to be stilted and dry – devoid of any spiritual significance. Just because something is practiced by the Jews does not make it Biblical, and we must exercise caution as we look at Jewish traditions; after all, we are looking into a letter written to a people who were adding Jewish traditions to their faith in Christ, and thereby falling from the truth (Galatians 3:1).

²⁴³ Strong’s Online.

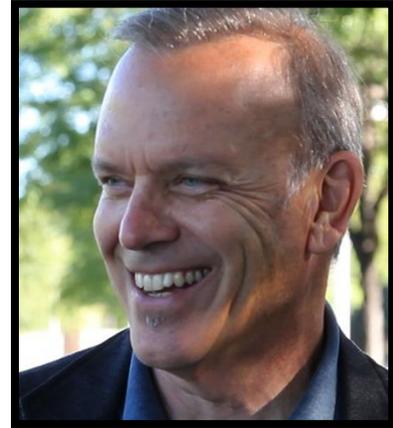
²⁴⁴ Zofia Smardz, “Some Jews see trespass in Christian Seders” <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/12295083/>

²⁴⁵ <http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/view.jsp?artid=427&letter=S>

²⁴⁶ <http://www.spiralgoddess.com/Astarte.html>

²⁴⁷ Smardz.

However, today it is not just Jewish practices to which Evangelicals are looking to add to their experience; there is a general movement to look backward in an effort to provide justification for modern practices. David Fitch writes concerning his church: "... the specific ways we sought to carry out these three commitments [community, transformation, and mission] represent, in some way, a renewal of some incredibly potent impulses found at the earliest origins of our denominational heritage."²⁴⁸ He goes on to say: "... we found that these were core gospel values that could be found, if we digged hard enough, within our own denominational history."²⁴⁹ Fitch is identifying the practices that he is cultivating within his own church with those who founded his particular denomination (if you look hard enough for them). What you can't see in his comments here is that he is drawing his people into the bosom of Emergent Church heresy, including "art, symbol, candles, silence, and ancient prayers,"²⁵⁰ and justifying his actions based on some strained interpretation from the beginnings of his denomination (the Christian and Missionary Alliance) and "gospel values." In typical modern fashion, Fitch is drawing those who follow his example into ancient practices – not so much from the Alliance traditions as from the Roman Catholic ancient mystics and heretical monastics. Whether we dabble in the Jewish Seder service, look into applying a new interpretation to what happened years ago within a particular denomination, or dredge up an ancient prayer used by some mystical heretic from the early years AD, we have stepped outside of the instructions of God's Word and are in danger of discovering the reality of Satan's charm. The Galatians were no exception in this regard; they reached back and added the traditions of Moses on the basis that this was the common practice of the Jews among them – a people who bore the promised Seed of Abraham. It matters not how far back we might reach – anytime that we add to or diminish from God's truth, we are in the same error as the Galatians. A common problem is the failure to look to the Scriptures to determine if the message being received is of God, or from the subtle adversary, the devil (1 John 4:1; 2 Corinthians 11:13-15).



David Fitch

18. For if the inheritance *be* of the law, *it is* no more of promise: but God gave *it* to Abraham by promise.

The promise made to Abraham was: "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee: And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed" (Genesis 12:1-3). This was the inheritance that Abraham passed on to his son Isaac, who, in turn, bestowed it upon his son Jacob. As a matter of fact, the primary inheritance, through several generations, was only the promise that God had first given to Abraham; the descendants

²⁴⁸ David Fitch, "On Being an Emerging Church in the Christian and Missionary Alliance," http://documents.fuller.edu/news/pubs/tnn/2008_Fall/8_cma.asp

²⁴⁹ Ibid.

²⁵⁰ Ibid.

of Abraham may have accumulated great wealth, but they had no homeland to call their own. Through the promise given to Abraham came the hope of a Redeemer through Whom all peoples would be blessed.

The inheritance promised by God, namely Christ, the Messiah, was not established through the Law that was given to Israel through Moses. The promise had already been in full effect for several generations prior to Mt. Sinai (see chart at right); therefore, it is very obvious that the Law of Moses did not initiate the promise of a Redeemer Who would be a blessing to all people. God promised the Messiah to Abraham, and confirmed it with Isaac and Jacob (three generations); we hear nothing further of the promise until Exodus 6:8, where it is affirmed to Moses and so declared to the children of Israel. God told Abraham that his descendants would be afflicted for four hundred years (Genesis 15:13), and in the fourth generation they would be brought out for the express purpose of bringing God's judgment on the Amorites (Genesis 15:16). Hezron, the grandson of Judah, would have been young when his family entered Egypt; likewise, Salmon, the fourth generation from Hezron, would have been young (less than twenty years of age – Numbers 14:28-30) when the children of Israel were brought out of Egypt. Not only did God make the promise of a Redeemer to Abraham, but He also gave him a glimpse into what his descendants would endure in the future – this was all promised and foretold eight generations before the Law was given at Mt. Sinai. There can be no doubt that the promise was in full effect long before the events of Moses.



The point that Paul is making is that the Messiah came by promise, not through the establishment of the Law of Moses. The significance of this is that if Jesus had come based solely upon the Mosaic Law, then the promise that God had made to Abraham would have been rendered of no effect. However, this is not how things unfolded, and so the universal promise made to Abraham was untouched by the Law of Moses, and Christ came in fulfillment of the promise made by God (He was the One promised), and, through His coming, an end was made of the Mosaic laws and ordinances (Ephesians 2:14-16).

19. Wherefore then *serveth* the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made; *and it was* ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator.

The focus now shifts slightly to look more closely at the Law, the reason that it was given, and its ultimate purpose. The question asked here is probably the one that would be screaming

through the minds of the Galatians by this time – “why, then, the law?”²⁵¹ If saving faith in Christ is the fulfillment of the promise given very specifically to Abraham generations before the Mosaic Law, then what was the purpose for giving the laws and ordinances to Moses?

Paul does not keep them waiting for the answer; his response is both clear and very applicable to the Galatian problem, and, if we have eyes to see, a very revealing explanation that most today seem to have missed. In providing this clarification, we receive the answer both as to why the Law of Moses came and how long it was to remain in effect.

As to why the Law was given, we are told that it was “added because of transgressions.” The word *transgression* within our English language means “a crime or any act that violates a law, command, or moral code.”²⁵² The Greek word so translated in the KJV means “a going aside ... an overstepping,”²⁵³ or “a violation”²⁵⁴ with respect to a law. Consider this very carefully – the Law of Moses was added because of violations to existing commands (the only way to have a *transgression*). God said of Abraham: “[he] obeyed my voice, and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws” (Genesis 26:5). Before the Law of Moses, Abraham understood and obeyed the Lord’s commands; man has NEVER been without an understanding of what the Lord requires of him. Even within the confines of the perfect Garden of Eden (before sin entered the picture), Adam heard these words from the Lord: “Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, **thou shalt not** eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die” (Genesis 2:16-17). The Law of God has always been present with man; he may well have ignored it, fought against it, or tried to exalt himself sufficiently so as to think that he was superior to it, but it has always been there. We read: “... for where no law is, *there is* no transgression” (Romans 4:15); in other words, if there is no law, there can be no violation of a law, for it does not exist. If there is no law that says you cannot own a dog, then you are not in violation of any law if you own a dog. However, if there is a law that requires your dog to be licensed, and you do not license your dog, then you are in violation of the law – you are a *transgressor* of a law that is in existence. The verse that we just considered in Romans confirms this simple understanding.

Romans 5:13-14 provides us with further clarification: “For until the law sin was in the world: but [*nevertheless*] sin [a violation of a law] is not imputed [taken into account] when there is no law. Nevertheless [*but*] death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam’s transgression”²⁵⁵ This is so important to understand: from Adam to Moses (the time before the Mosaic Law) sin was in the world; we know this because death (the just result of sin – Genesis 2:17; Romans 6:23) was applied to all of mankind from Adam to Moses. We are told that there is no transgression where there is no law (Romans 4:15), and sin is not charged where there is no law (Romans 5:13), therefore, this confirms that the Law of God was present from Adam to Moses (even as we are told in passages like Genesis 26:5). Romans chapter 5 tells us that from Adam to Moses, sin (a violation of the law) was being reckoned against the sinner, for death had the last word for all of mankind. Through all of these intervening years, only Enoch escaped death (Genesis 5:24). Therefore, when we read that Abraham obeyed the

²⁵¹ Young’s Literal Translation, *Bibleworks* 8.

²⁵² Encarta Dictionary, “transgression.”

²⁵³ Vine’s “transgression.”

²⁵⁴ Strong’s Dictionary.

²⁵⁵ Strong’s Online; Friberg Lexicon.

commands of the Lord, we should not be surprised, for the Lord did not leave the people who lived prior to Mt. Sinai without an understanding of His requirements.

Romans 7:8b tells us: “For without [or apart from] the law sin *was* dead [destitute of life].”²⁵⁶ What we have just looked at told us that sin was alive before Moses because it was chargeable to all of mankind (death, the penalty for sin, was present). Here we are told that apart from the Law, sin has no power – it is lifeless. Through ignorance of the requirements of God, man can often enjoy life – “For I was alive [to enjoy life] without [apart from] the law once [formerly]” (Romans 7:9).²⁵⁷ We see here the ability of man to rationalize that his actions are not only okay, but that he is really very spiritual. We not only see this in the people of the world, but we see this attitude increasingly evident within the Evangelical community (Proverbs 14:12). Today’s average Evangelical has swallowed the lie of Satan that they are under God’s grace, and that His law has been done away with entirely; they profess to be redeemed but live like the world in direct contravention of God’s commandments. Jesus said, “Abide [*meno*] in me ...” (John 15:4); the Spirit of God has declared: “... he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth [*meno*] in him ...” (1 John 3:24). Man will always be the object of God’s grace, but he will also always be under God’s Law – the two are not mutually exclusive as today’s Evangelical would have you believe. On the contrary, the two come together within the life of the one who has an active, living faith in the Lord Jesus Christ so “that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk [are walking (present tense)] not after the flesh, but after the Spirit” (Romans 8:4).²⁵⁸ “For as many as are led [*being led* (present tense)] by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God” (Romans 8:14).²⁵⁹ It is not a matter of law **or** grace (as many would have us believe); it is really law **and** grace!

Two things happened at Mt. Sinai: **1)** God wrote His ten Laws on stone tables with His own finger (Exodus 31:18; Deuteronomy 4:13) – unchangeable, unalterable and clearly identifiable (the Law of God), and **2)** God provided Moses with detailed instructions on how He wanted the people of Israel to live, which included very specific directives regarding sacrifices, the role of the priests to intercede for the people, and numerous other ordinances that the people were to observe in their daily living (the Law of Moses). However, none of these represented the beginning of the Law for mankind – it had been there from the creation of man. Paul’s words to the Galatians confirm this – the Law of Moses was added because of the sinfulness of mankind (the *transgression* of God’s Laws was already present); this is *why* the Mosaic Law came. Man can so easily talk himself into believing that he is such a wonderful person, but God brought the Law of Moses in so “that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful” for all who would have eyes to see and ears to hear (Romans 7:13). With the coming of the Law (both the Law of God and the Law of Moses were in written form), what was right and wrong was no longer left to the imaginations of the evil heart of man. “And GOD saw that the wickedness of man *was* great in the earth, and *that* every imagination of the thoughts of his heart *was* only evil continually” (Genesis 6:5). We know that not everyone had ears to hear of the grace of God; “But they hearkened not, nor inclined their ear, but walked in the counsels *and* in the imagination of their evil heart, and went backward, and not forward” (Jeremiah 7:24).

However, Paul goes on to clarify how long the Law of Moses was to remain. The Law was added until “the seed should come to whom the promise was made.” Paul has already proclaimed

²⁵⁶ Strong’s Online.

²⁵⁷ Ibid.

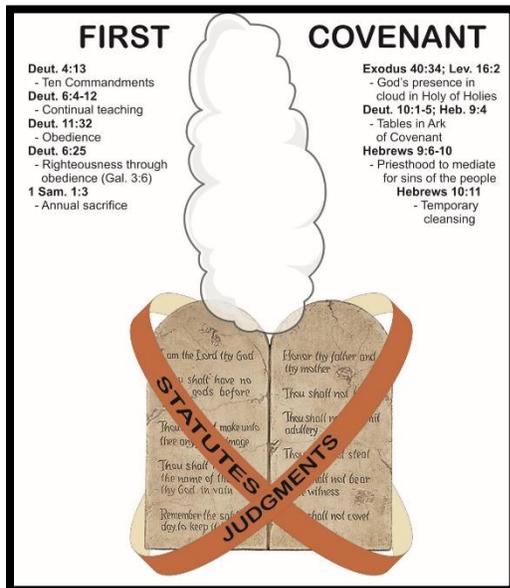
²⁵⁸ Ibid.

²⁵⁹ Ibid.

that Christ is the promised Seed of Abraham (Galatians 3:16). Therefore, the Mosaic Law, made up of all of the numerous statutes and ordinances, was determined to be in force until the promised Seed, Jesus Christ, should come. “For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition *between us*; **Having abolished in his flesh the enmity**, *even* the law of commandments *contained* in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, *so* making peace; And that he might reconcile **both unto God in one body** by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby ...” (Ephesians 2:14-16).

The Mosaic Law found its fulfillment and end at the cross; it foreshadowed the work of Christ, the eternal Word made flesh. “For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit” (Romans 8:3-4).

Here we have the answer to the difficulty of the Galatians: the Mosaic Law was added until the promised Messiah should come to make an end of the ordinances. As they sought to incorporate the ordinances of Moses into their faith in Christ, they were acting contrary to God’s determination – they were making a different gospel (Galatians 1:6-7) that was contrary to the truth (Galatians 3:1). The gospel of the average Evangelical today is: have faith in Christ, pray for salvation (to secure your place in heaven) and then you are free to live as you please – this, too, is a different gospel that bears no resemblance to the Message of God!



The final phrase in our verse is, “... *and it was* ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator.” At the time of the giving of the Mosaic Laws, we read:

And all the people saw the thunderings, and the lightnings, and the noise of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking: and when the people saw *it*, they

removed, and stood afar off. And they said unto Moses, Speak thou with us, and we will hear: but let not God speak with us, lest we die. And Moses said unto the people, Fear not: for God is come to prove you, and that his fear may be before your faces, that ye sin not. And the people stood afar off, and Moses drew near unto the thick darkness where God *was*. (Exodus 20:18-21)

Moses described this event in these words: “I stood between the LORD and you at that time, to shew you the word of the LORD: for ye were afraid by reason of the fire, and went not up into the mount” (Deuteronomy 5:5). As Jehovah proclaimed the statutes and ordinances, Moses filled the role of mediator between the Lord and the children of Israel.

Jeremiah foretold the establishment of a new covenant:

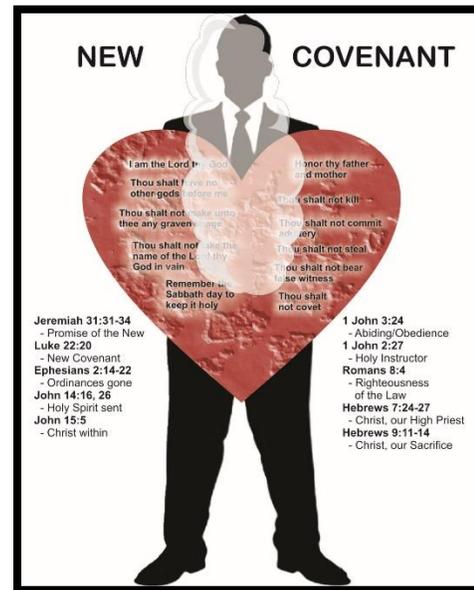
Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new [fresh] covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day *that* I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD: But this *shall be* the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in

their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. (Jeremiah 31:31-33)²⁶⁰

When Jesus met with His disciples the evening before His crucifixion, He declared: “This cup is the new testament [fresh or recently made covenant] in my blood ...” (Luke 22:20).²⁶¹ The shed blood of Jesus established the prophecied New Covenant with the house of Israel (Romans 11:17-22 confirms that all who are born anew through faith in Christ are grafted into the spiritual root of Israel and, consequently, made a participant in the New Covenant). Jesus is the Mediator of this New Covenant:

For ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest, And the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words; which voice they that heard intreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more ... But ye are come unto mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, And to **Jesus the mediator of the new** [recently born] **covenant**, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than *that of Abel*. (Hebrews 12:18-24)²⁶²

The writer of Hebrews spells out the parallels between the covenant mediated through Moses and the New Covenant facilitated through Jesus, and takes time to establish the superiority of the latter. Earlier, the writer declared that Christ “was counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as he who hath builded the house hath more honour than the house” (Hebrews 3:3). Moses is part of the house that Christ is building: “... Christ as a son over his own house; **whose house are we**, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end” (Hebrews 3:6). Moses received the Mosaic Covenant from the Lord at Mt. Sinai and brought it to the children of Israel; Christ has mediated a far superior Covenant through the work that He completed on the cross. Moses, a fallible man, provided the children of Israel with Jehovah’s instructions regarding sacrifices, the priesthood, the numerous ordinances and the pattern for the tabernacle – all set in order and placed in his hands by angels (*ordained by angels*, cp. Hebrews 2:2). Christ, the eternal Word made flesh, came to bring an end to the Mosaic covenant by fulfilling it, and He replaced it with a New Covenant through His personal sacrifice, a Covenant that is established in heaven itself and places the Law of God (the Ten Commandments) into our hearts by the eternal Spirit of God, Whom He promised to send after He was ascended to the Father (John 16:7) – the Spirit Who has been sent to remain with us forever (John 14:16).



²⁶⁰ Strong’s Online.

²⁶¹ Ibid.

²⁶² Ibid.

20. Now a mediator is not *a mediator* of one, but God is one.

A mediator is someone “who works with both sides in a dispute in an attempt to help them to reach an agreement.”²⁶³ This definition affirms what this verse declares; a mediator *is not of one*. However, the contrast declared is that *God is one*.

“For *there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus ...*” (1 Timothy 2:5). Here we have Christ established as the Mediator between God and man. As we ponder this, we might well be somewhat puzzled by the thrust of verse twenty. However, if we give it careful consideration, we will then understand what Paul is declaring to the Galatians. Jesus Christ is God come in the flesh; the eternal Word (John 1:1) took on the form of man, but remained no less God (John 10:30). Therefore, in reality we have God the Son mediating between man and God the Father, yet the Father and the Son are One. This is an exception to the normal definition of a mediator; God, taking on the form of man, is fulfilling the role of Mediator between mankind and Himself. Within the Mosaic traditions, the high priest would act as mediator between man and God; now, in Christ, we have a High Priest “who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens ...” (Hebrews 8:1), Who is also making intercession for us (Romans 8:34). Once again, we are reminded of the superiority of Christ’s representation of us over that of the Mosaic system.

21. *Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid: for if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law.*

We’ve seen that the Law of Moses had no impact upon the promises of God to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (the thrust of the Judaizer’s position was that the Law of Moses **did** impact God’s promise to Abraham); the question that is raised now asks whether the Law is actually in opposition to the promises made by God. We noted in verse 17 that the Law could not render the promise of God to Abraham of no effect – it was powerless to change His promise. We also saw that the Law was added because of the transgressions of mankind (verse 19) to ensure that man understood his sinfulness before a holy God. As Paul stated: “... I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet” (Romans 7:7). It’s not that man has not always been guilty of sin since the transgression of Adam, for the consequence of sin (death) has been ever present, but the ability of man to justify himself in his own eyes knows no bounds. The Law of Moses, brought into the earthly family to whom God promised the coming Redeemer, established beyond any doubt the sinfulness of mankind and the holiness of God. As the statutes and ordinances of the Mosaic Law became a part of the daily practice of the Israelites, they were continually reminded of their transgressions before God – if, by faith, they had eyes to see and ears to hear. The element of faith was essential in order to make the practices delineated in the Mosaic Law more than empty liturgy. However, as we look at the history of Israel after Mt. Sinai, we realize that the statutes and ordinances quickly became devoid of meaning. Speaking to Israel, the Lord said: “Hear the word of the LORD, ye rulers of Sodom; give ear unto the law of our God, ye people of Gomorrah [Israel is likened to Sodom and Gomorrah]. To what purpose *is* the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the LORD: I am full of [had enough of] the burnt offerings of

²⁶³ Encarta “mediator.”

rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he goats” (Isaiah 1:10-11).²⁶⁴ It was through faith that Israel of old had access to the grace of God; obedience to the Mosaic Laws was essential for them but unless it flowed out of a heart of faith in the God Who established their traditions, their rituals became nauseating to the Lord. The same holds true for us today; “... because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth” (Revelation 3:16). James understood and wrote of the necessity of obedience to the Lord being the vehicle through which our faith is to be demonstrated, yet what we find today among most Evangelicals is a head filled with religion and a heart filled with the world. When the king of Assyria replaced the exiled Israelites with people from elsewhere in his kingdom, the Lord sent lions among them. As a result, they desired to learn of the God of the land so that they would not be subject to these attacks (this is in keeping with the superstition that every culture had its gods and knew how to appease them). An exiled Israelite priest was sent back to teach them the ways of the Lord, and we read: “They feared the LORD, and served their own gods ...” (2 Kings 17:33) – an apt description of much of what we call “church” within Evangelicalism today. Actually, in many ways today’s Evangelicals are probably worse than these pagans, for they have also lost the fear of the Lord. By compromising the Word of God, the Evangelical community has produced a new gospel (which is not the Gospel) and, thereby, have lowered the standards of what they are prepared to accept as being Christian. The world has been welcomed into the churches and has learned a form of Evangelicalism, yet they have not left their gods behind; Evangelicals, in the name of tolerance and acceptance, have willingly made room for the new gods (for they found them to be very similar to their own gods). To compound the seriousness of the situation, the leaders of these churches have softened their approach to the Word of God so as to make the world more comfortable in their midst, and, consequently, the world will never hear the alarm sounded that they are on the broad road to destruction. In fact, the leaders, themselves, are often walking that same broad way to hell. They have a form of godliness but it is not sufficient to impact their lives (2 Timothy 3:5); they are blind guides leading the blind, and, truly, both have already landed in the ditch (Matthew 15:14).

The messenger (someone filling the role of overseer or bishop – 1 Timothy 3:1) of the *ekklesia* at Laodicea was both self-satisfied and self-deluded (Revelation 3:17), and did not have a heart for the things of God. He had “works” but they were not pleasing to the Lord; “Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven” (Matthew 7:21). Although the will of God is that we walk in obedience to His commands, unless our obedience is a product of our faith in Him, our efforts will prove to be unacceptable to a holy God (Romans 14:23; Hebrews 11:6; 1 John 2:3). This is not new – as we’ve already seen, the same held true for the Israelites; unless their compliance with the Mosaic Laws flowed out of their faith in God, the physical rituals were of no value. Today’s churches are filled with people who are content with their lives: they do not suffer want and they do not want to suffer. They are sufficiently religious to quiet their consciences, and the devil is quite willing to leave them alone, for he understands what they do not – namely, that their lives and religion will never provide them with access to heaven and God’s glory. The pathway that they are religiously navigating, will lead them to an eternity in the lake of fire prepared for the devil and his angels (Matthew 25:41). Unfortunately, these same churches are being led by men who are like unto the messenger of Laodicea – men who are filled with themselves and happy in their jobs but devoid

²⁶⁴ Strong’s Dictionary.

of godliness – men who are lukewarm and declare empty words that lead their listeners away from the truth (2 Timothy 4:4).

Even though the Law confirms the sinful condition of mankind, it is equally clear that “the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good” (Romans 7:12). Paul confirms this for the Galatians, too, by the phrase translated as “God forbid.” The Greek phrase is made up of two words: *me* (*may*), which means *no*, and a form of *ginomai* (*ghin'-om-ahee*), which means *to become*.²⁶⁵ The English phrase “God forbid” seems to have come from the translation that appears in The Latin Vulgate (*Dei absit*),²⁶⁶ and has been brought into the English translations as early as Wycliffe’s translation of 1395 (God forbede).²⁶⁷ Robert Young, on the other hand, translates the phrase as “let it not be,” which is much closer to the Greek text.²⁶⁸ What is evident is that it is out of the question that the Law and the promises of God are in opposition to one another; they are actually complementary – they work together (as we will see shortly).

Having established that the Law of Moses was not in opposition to the promises of God, Paul now states that IF there had been a Law that could have instilled spiritual life within a person, then righteousness would have come through the Law. However, spiritual life did not come through the Law (Galatians 2:16) but through faith in God’s promise of a Redeemer (foreshadowed and foretold to the OT people). The Law of God and the Law of Moses served to establish, beyond any doubt, the sinfulness of mankind: “there is none righteous, no, not one” (Romans 3:10; Psalm 14:3). The reality of a proper view of the Law is that “they that are in the flesh cannot please God” (Romans 8:8). Attempting to keep every detail of the Law will not bring spiritual life; “... when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died” (Romans 7:9). If there was a Law that could have instilled spiritual life when it was kept, then man would have discovered it and gloried in his achievement. All of the glorying done today in the level of spiritual acumen achieved by mankind is based upon “philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ” (Colossians 2:8). In his cleverness, man has set a standard for spirituality and then achieved it; yet this is but death before God, a righteousness that is paraded before God as filthy rags (Isaiah 64:6). What we must recognize, and accept, is that there is no true spiritual life apart from faith in God’s promise of redemption for mankind (whether looking forward, or backward, in hope). If there would have been any hope of man achieving spiritual life before God, then it would have been the most possible for Adam and Eve – yet it is clear that this was not a possibility; an expressed faith in God’s promise was immediately man’s only hope.

22. But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe.

The plain declaration made here is that the Word of God has *concluded* (shut-up completely) that all of mankind is under sin.²⁶⁹ When the Lord created man, He gave him this instruction: “Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die” (Genesis

²⁶⁵ Strong’s Online.

²⁶⁶ *The Vulgate, ESword.*

²⁶⁷ <https://studybible.info/Wycliffe/Galatians%203>.

²⁶⁸ YLT.

²⁶⁹ Strong’s Online.

2:16-17). While Adam and Eve were the only people on earth, they sinned (Genesis 3:6) and, consequently, they died spiritually and the death process began for them physically. Therefore, all of their descendants have inherited sin and death, which places all who are born of Adam (all of mankind) under sin (1 Corinthians 15:22). The Psalmist, many centuries later, confirmed this reality: “The LORD looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, *and* seek God. They are all gone aside, they are *all* together become filthy: *there is* none that doeth good, no, not one” (Psalm 14:2-3). Isaiah understood this inherent condition of man: “All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way ...” (Isaiah 53:6). This is the same word that Paul had for the Romans: “... as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned [on account of which all sin] ...” (Romans 5:12).²⁷⁰ Indeed, the Scriptures are clear about man’s condition. We are sinners – it is who we are, not what we do; we sin because we are sinners, we are not sinners because we sin. The prevalent view today is that we are all inherently good; it’s just that we do bad things that are really out of character for us. This is an incorrect view of our condition, which has led to the development of many paths “to God” as we seek to build upon that inherent goodness. The Mormons and New Age philosophy speak of a spark of the divine within. However, this concept is no longer the sole teaching of the cultic heretics; Evangelical heretics, not to be outdone, are now promoting it as well. Max Lucado, a very popular author within Evangelical circles, speaks of “a divine spark” that everyone has.²⁷¹

Lucado has served as a pastor for some twenty years, has received many accolades including being named “America’s Pastor” by *Christianity Today*, has authored more than fifty books that have sold some 28 million copies – and yet he stumbles on the simple doctrine of the inherent sinfulness of man.²⁷² Despite having the Scriptures in hand that speak clearly to the sinfulness of all of humanity, Evangelicals will gravitate toward heresies that seek to make them feel better about themselves – much to the delight of Satan. Unfortunately, men like Lucado have tremendous influence in the lives of the unwary (Romans 16:17-18). “Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ” (Colossians 2:8); this is as fitting for today as it was for the Colossians.



Max Lucado

With everyone *shut-up completely* unto sin, Paul again directs the Galatians to the promise: the promise of redemption was established before the earth was formed (Revelation 13:8), the promise that was voiced as God dealt with the sin of Adam (Genesis 3:15), the promise that God gave to Abraham that through him all of the families of the earth would be blessed (Genesis 12:3), and the promise that could not be impacted by the Law of Moses (Galatians 3:17). How is this promise received? It is received by faith in the Promised One, Jesus Christ, and it is given to all who are actively believing in Him. Romans 4:11

²⁷⁰ Friberg Lexicon.

²⁷¹ Max Lucado, *Cure for the Common Life*, p. 3.; his reference to a *divine spark* is footnoted to the writings of Martin Buber, a Jewish theologian, who sees the world as the *irradiation of God*, that there is a *divine spark* in everyone and everything, and “Only man can liberate it and re-join it with the Origin” (p. 215).

²⁷² http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Max_Lucado

confirms this: "... that he [Abraham] might be the father of all them that believe [*are believing* (present tense)] ...";²⁷³ "for they are not all Israel, which are of Israel" (Romans 9:6), for "though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, a remnant shall be saved" (Romans 9:27; Isaiah 10:20-21). There is only one Way out of the sin inheritance (John 14:6), and that is by an active and continuing faith in Jesus Christ. "For we are made partakers of Christ, if [on the condition that] we hold [subjunctive mood (identifying this as a possibility that requires our choice)] the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end" (Hebrews 3:14).²⁷⁴ "And hereby we do know [*are knowing* (present tense)] that we know him [God], if we keep [*are keeping* (present tense)] his commandments" (1 John 2:3).²⁷⁵ There is no provision for holding onto a past decision to believe in Jesus Christ; unless that belief is presently active, it is of no value. If our lives do not demonstrate an active obedience to the commandments of God, then we have no basis for claiming salvation through Jesus Christ. Jesus said: "Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits" (Matthew 7:15-16). If we are careful to observe the fruits of those about us, then we will begin to recognize the wolves that come masquerading as sheep. "For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit" (Romans 8:5); "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law" (Galatians 5:22-23). This is the fruit that must be evident – the product of the working Spirit of God, the One Whom Jesus promised to send (John 15:26), and through Whom obedience to the commands of Scripture is possible (John 14:15).

23. But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed.

Here is a statement that speaks specifically of the reality that faced everyone who lived prior to the installation of the New Covenant of God; before saving faith in Christ, all were under the guard of the Law. This does not refer to the faith of all ages by which man was saved, but to the specific faith referred to in the previous verse, namely, the "faith of Jesus Christ." As said before, man has always been under the Law of God – there has never been a time when the commands of the Lord were not known, and the grace of God has also always been available through faith. The word *kept* speaks of being confined or restrained, and so all were kept under the guard of the Law (though not necessarily under the condemnation of the Law).²⁷⁶

Although this bears a very specific application to the time of the Apostles, it can easily be applied to anyone today. Until an individual comes to saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, they are under the Law of God and the condemnation of the Law rests upon them. When we read of the last judgment day before God, we are told that all of the dead will stand before Him (those saved prior to the Millennium have already been resurrected, so they are not included with these "dead" – Revelation 20:4-5).

And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before

²⁷³ Strong's Online.

²⁷⁴ Strong's Online; Friberg Lexicon.

²⁷⁵ Strong's Online.

²⁷⁶ Friberg Lexicon.

God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is *the book of life*: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, **according to their works**. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and **they were judged every man according to their works**. . . . And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire (Revelation 20:11-15).

This speaks primarily of those who could not be bothered to walk by faith in God and in obedience to His commands, including those who professed to be following God but had simply fabricated a more pleasing path than the narrow way that leads to life; the exception will be the Millennial saints (who are born during the Millennium and come to the Lord) who will be among the *dead*, but will enter glory because their names are in the Book of Life. The rest of the *dead* will be made up of those who were “fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars” (Revelation 21:8), but will also include those who will say: “Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?” (Matthew 7:22). Jesus said, “... except your righteousness shall exceed *the righteousness* of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case [certainly not] enter into the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 5:20).²⁷⁷ By Jesus’ own words, the scribes and Pharisees were excluded from the kingdom of heaven – they, too, will stand before God at the end of the ages to be judged according to their works. Yet, within the Jewish community of Jesus’ day, the scribes and Pharisees were considered to be righteous, which proves that by works alone no one will enter into righteousness before God. What had Paul made clear to the Galatians? “... by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified” (Galatians 2:16). The reality of this statement will become painfully clear to the unrepentant who stand before God at the last judgment.

As Paul continues, we are given another indication of the purpose of the Law: we are *shut up* (enclosed or confined) unto the faith that *is destined to be revealed*.²⁷⁸ We are boxed in by the Law – the same Law that condemns us, and by which we cannot be justified before God. However, if we have eyes to see our condemnation under the Law, then it will bring us to cry out to God in faith. The Jews were bound by the yoke of the Mosaic Law, yet, if their eyes had not been blinded, then they could have seen the salvation that God offered to them through His grace – a salvation that was only available through faith. The Mosaic Law included very specific instructions concerning the sacrifices that were to be made for sin and the activities of the priests in providing the people with a temporary cleansing from sin (Leviticus). Yet the promise that remained untouched by the Mosaic Law, declared that the Seed of the woman would bruise the head of the serpent (Genesis 3:15), and there would come a blessing for all of mankind (Genesis 12:3). As Moses enumerated the demands of the ordinances and statutes to the children of Israel, the Lord included this promise: “I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him. And it shall come to pass, *that* whosoever will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require *it* of him” (Deuteronomy 18:18-19). For those among Israel who had eyes of faith, the Lord as their Savior and Redeemer was clearly portrayed. The Psalmist understood and declared this reality: “Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my strength, and **my redeemer**” (Psalm 19:14). David understood that salvation did not come from the slain lamb on the altar, but through faith in the

²⁷⁷ Strong’s Online.

²⁷⁸ Friberg Lexicon.

God Who had made a way for man to be redeemed from his sin (temporarily through the shed blood of the lamb). Psalm 78 is a lament against the people of Israel for their waywardness and their failure to follow the Lord with a pure heart; yet in the midst of the Psalm is this glimpse of truth: “When he slew them, then they sought him: and they returned and enquired early after God. And they remembered that God *was* their rock, and the high God their redeemer” (Psalm 78:34-35). When adversity came from the hand of the Lord because of their disobedience, then the people recalled that God was their Savior.

However, God’s grace was not lost on those who lived outside of, or before, the Jewish community: “For I know *that* my redeemer liveth, and *that* he shall stand at the latter *day* upon the earth ...” (Job 19:25). God is faithful: “Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened” (Matthew 7:7-8). James provides balance to these words of Jesus by clarifying: “Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume *it* upon your lusts” (James 4:3); there is no room for selfish motives in our petitions to God. John bears this out further: “And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us: And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him” (1 John 5:14-15). Hebrews 11 overflows with proof of the faithfulness of God toward those who exercise faith in Him.

24. Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster *to bring us* unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.

This now flows out of what just came before (*wherefore*); namely, the Jews were kept under the Law (specifically, in this case, the Mosaic Law) so that they might be directed toward faith in Christ, the Redeemer of mankind. Because of this, the Law then became their *schoolmaster*, literally, “a child-leader”²⁷⁹ to Christ. Here is what the Galatians (and the Judaizers before them – Acts 15:5) failed to comprehend: the Mosaic Law was installed, first of all, because of *transgressions* (verse 19), and now we see that it also served as a *schoolmaster*, or a tutor, to provide guidance and instruction regarding God’s requirements for the sole purpose of leading the Jews to spiritual life. The word *schoolmaster* “among the Greeks and the Romans ... was applied to trustworthy slaves who were charged with the duty of supervising the life and morals of boys belonging to the better class. The boys were not allowed so much as to step out of the house without them before arriving at the age of manhood.”²⁸⁰ The Mosaic Law was provided as a very specific guide to life; it was a means of instilling an acute awareness of the holiness of God and His requirements for mankind. However, even more than that, if anyone would look at the Mosaic traditions through the eyes of faith, he could see the coming of the One promised to bring blessings to all of the families of the earth (Genesis 12:3). The principle at work here is this: “... the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know *them*, because they are spiritually discerned” (1 Corinthians 2:14). Without an active faith, the Mosaic Laws were reduced to mere, empty rituals (Psalm 40:6; Isaiah 1:11-15; Hebrews 4:2). When Jesus walked this earth, we see this very same response from the religious rulers – they would have welcomed a political messiah, but they were not prepared to accept the promised

²⁷⁹ Vine’s “instructor.”

²⁸⁰ Strong’s Online.

Messiah Who had come to redeem their lost souls. They had much knowledge of the Scriptures, but it was visually based (as opposed to faith based) – i.e., the application of the Scriptures was always outward and never impacted their hearts. The religious Jews of that day, particularly the Pharisees, were zealous to keep the Mosaic Law with great precision (every ordinance and statute was meticulously kept) but they failed to comprehend the bigger picture. “Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier *matters* of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone” (Matthew 23:23). Jesus goes on to say: “Ye blind guides, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel” (Matthew 23:24); Jesus uses the example of drinking water to illustrate the error of the Pharisees. They would go through the meticulous process of straining the water to remove the gnat (a tiny annoyance, representing their meticulous tithing of herbs), even while they were drinking down a camel that they failed to see (an unclean animal, representing their failure in the more significant matters of justice and mercy). Unless they could understand the spiritual aspect of the Mosaic Law expressed through justice, mercy and faith, the tithing of their garden herbs was of absolutely no eternal value. Through the eyes of faith, the realization will dawn that justification before God comes only by faith.

The thrust of this verse is that if the Mosaic Law (the statutes and ordinances) was approached in faith, it would then lead that person to the reality of the promised Messiah. The ordinances and statutes that were given to the children of Israel, were designed to underline the holiness of God and the sinfulness of mankind. The entire sacrificial system and the priesthood emphasized the gulf that existed between God and man, but it also provided a way for man to receive the grace of God for the cleansing of his sin. Once again, we are faced with the reality of both law and grace. Unfortunately, within the Evangelical community, any thought of law (generally speaking) has been banished to the realms of a distant dispensation, well out of sight, lest it should lead to guilt within the worldly heart of today’s “Christian.” However, the reality is that we must hold law and grace together, or we will never be able to abide in Christ or walk the narrow way that leads to life. For the believer today, the Law of God, which is placed upon our hearts (Jeremiah 31:33), reminds us of our sinfulness and of our dependency upon the grace of God ministered through the Spirit of God Who is abiding within us. If we banish the Law from our lives, as the majority of Evangelicals have done, then we become careless, and presume upon God’s grace to somehow work our worldliness into righteousness. We would do well to carefully observe how the Lord directed the children of Israel to deal with such a person: “But the soul that doeth *ought* presumptuously [high handedly], *whether he be* born in the land, or a stranger, the same reproacheth [or blasphemes] the LORD; and that soul shall be cut off from among his people” (Numbers 15:30).²⁸¹ We must acknowledge the presence of the Law of God in our lives (not the Mosaic Law of statutes and ordinances, but the Ten Commandments), or we will be prone to become careless in our Christian walk – the evidence for such carelessness is rampant throughout Evangelicalism and Fundamentalism today.

The basis for such carelessness often springs from an incorrect understanding of Romans 6:14-15 – “For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace. What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid.” We’ve briefly considered this matter before, but let us look at it more carefully and seek to remove the stumbling block into which this passage has been made. First of all, we must recognize that this passage is used so many times as a feeble attempt at providing self-justification for something that

²⁸¹ Strong’s Online.

we should or should not do, most often in an area that we love to see as being gray (as opposed to black or white), but which God does not consider to be gray. Satan may confront us with an opportunity that might seem to be of great benefit to us, but it sounds an alarm in our heart of hearts; we remind ourselves that we are under grace and, so, as a perceived gray area, this is where

*We are not under
the law.*

I simply consider the outcome and take advantage of the opportunity. Most often, this is a step downward, perhaps a first step onto the slippery slope of compromise, or, perhaps, another step taken to quicken the slide downward. Perhaps we are faced with a matter that might require something of us and we would rather not pay the price; this is an opportunity to be

reminded that we are not under the law – we really don't have to do it. What this becomes, and has become among Evangelicals, is an excuse to permit pragmatism to be our guide; like the Israelites of old, we no longer hear the “thus saith the Lord.” The question simply becomes: is the anticipated end generally beneficial? When you combine this subjective evaluative process with a growing lack of understanding of the Scriptures, you have a deadly team that will keep Satan smiling and the average self-proclaimed Christian rapidly sliding down the slippery slope to destruction.

What is critically important in determining the thrust of any passage of Scripture, is its context, and this passage is no exception. If we step back to Romans 6:3, then we can lay the proper context and understanding of these verses that have become a real problem within the Christian community. “Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?” Baptism is our identification with Christ in His death: our “old man is crucified with *him*” (Romans 6:6). “Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him ...” (Romans 6:8); we not only identify with Christ in His death, but through His resurrection we anticipate a new life in Him. Because of this, we are to consider ourselves “to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Romans 6:11). Earlier, Paul declared, “... the law entered, that the offence [or sin] might abound” (Romans 5:20). With the entrance of the written Law of God and the Mosaic Law at Mt. Sinai, sin shone in all of its misery; there was no escaping the reality of the failure of mankind before God. However, when by a living faith we identify with Christ's death and resurrection, we are then dead to sin – the spotlight of the Law's condemnation is turned off; we now stand in the grace of God (Romans 5:1-2; 8:1). For the Israelite under the Old Covenant, this came when, by faith, he identified with the lamb that was slain for his sins (a God-instituted foreshadowing of the sacrifice that would be made by the Promised One); by this faith, he also stood in the grace of God. “*There is* therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit” (Romans 8:1). As we are in Christ, the condemnation of the Law has no power over us – we abide in God's grace by faith (Ephesians 2:8-9). No one is justified through the Law, yet God has declared that we are “justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus” (Romans 3:24). However, what we must not miss is that the Law of God has not been removed from our lives so that we should live unto ourselves. “And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him. And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us. Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world” (1 John 3:24-4:1). We are called to a life of obedience to God's commands – the Spirit of God working out the righteousness of the Law of God (the Ten Commandments) in our lives (Romans 8:3-4; James 1:25).

Reading on to complete the context: “Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants [*doulos* (slaves)] to obey, his servants [*doulos*] ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?” (Romans 6:16).²⁸² This is not advocating a salvation by works; on the contrary, it is calling us to a life of obedience to the Law of God as so clearly declared in 1 John 3:24: if we are keeping His commandments, we are then dwelling in Him. The reality is that we could not live a life of “obedience unto righteousness” without the enablement of the Spirit of God (Galatians 2:16; Romans 8:4). The question that we are faced with is this: “Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?” (Romans 6:1). In other words, because of God’s infinite grace, do we continue as we were so that we might behold the grace of God abounding to cover our sin? The answer is very clear: “How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?” (Romans 6:2). If we are *in Christ*, which means that we have died to sin, then it is impossible for us to carry on in a life of sin. Will we fail? Yes, for we carry our sin nature about with us (Romans 7:22-23), but a way has been made for dealing with our failures. “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9). What Paul is making abundantly clear is the importance of obedience to the commands of God (and this is corroborated by John in 1 John 3:24). When we are born anew by faith in Christ, we have accounted ourselves to be “dead indeed unto sin” (Romans 6:11); since we have identified with Christ in His death, how can we live any longer unto sin? If we continue in a lifestyle of sin, then we have not identified with Christ in His death and we remain in our sins. However, if by faith we have made that identification with Christ in what He has done for mankind, then we will yield to the Spirit of God so that we may be led in paths of righteousness (Psalm 23:3; Romans 8:4).

“We are not under the law” – through faith in Christ, we are no longer under the **condemnation** of the Law of God (Romans 8:1), and the Mosaic Law of statutes and ordinances has been nailed to the cross by Christ (Ephesians 2:15). However, to say that we are not under obligation to be obedient to the Law of God is to contradict Scripture; therefore, we must understand this to mean that we are no longer subject to the penalty of sin (the result of the Law on sinful man) as long as we continue in Christ (Hebrews 3:14). However, (and this is a caveat of which most Evangelicals today will not hear) if we should become faithless and turn away from Christ (Hebrews 3:12), then there is no way to be restored to faith in Him again for we have spurned the only Way to life (Hebrews 10:26; 2 Peter 2:20-21). If we abide in Christ (John 15:4) then we will obey His commandments (1 John 3:24) – beginning with the Ten Commandments that God has written upon our hearts (Jeremiah 31:33).

“We are under grace” – in truth, everyone who comes to God by faith in His Promised One, stands in His matchless grace. Whether we looked forward to the coming of the Fulfillment of God’s promise made in the Garden of Eden, or back on the redemption accomplished by Christ on the cross, it matters not, for we are equally recipients of God’s grace. God’s grace toward mankind did not begin at the cross – it began before the world was formed (Revelation 13:8), and found expression when Adam sinned. Salvation has always been the same – by faith in the grace of God. Today’s average Evangelical stumbles at this simple truth, and this same truth caused the Judaizers and the Galatians to falter; works have never played a role in the salvation of mankind, and this was the error of the Galatians. They were attempting to add the keeping of the ordinances of Moses as necessary to completing their faith in Christ, and Paul makes it very clear that thereby they were abandoning the Gospel (Galatians 1:6-7). The Law of Moses came to guide the children of Israel

²⁸² Strong’s Online.

to faith in the promised Redeemer, that they might be “justified by faith,” and it was never intended to be incorporated into the New Covenant (Galatians 3:19). Under the New Covenant, the wooing of God has taken on a different format. Jesus declared: “Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you. And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: Of sin, because they believe not on me; Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more; Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged” (John 16:7-11). One of the tasks of the Spirit of God is to bring conviction of sin, conviction of righteousness, and conviction of judgment to the world, and Jesus explains what this means. The world (the people of this world) will be convicted of sin because they are not believing (present tense) in the Son of God, they will be convicted of righteousness as they see the disciples of Jesus living righteously even though the physical presence of the Son of God is no longer evident, and they will be convicted of judgment because Satan’s promised judgment has been fulfilled (perfect tense, indicating an action completed in the past, once and for all, not needing to be repeated).²⁸³ The pronouncement of judgment, recorded in Genesis 3:15, was sealed through the death and resurrection of Christ, and God’s final judgment of Satan (and all who fall for his deceit) will one day be implemented (Revelation 20:10, 14-15).

We must not fail to grasp the reality of the Spirit of God working the righteousness of the Law of God into our lives (Romans 8:3-4). “The Law and the Spirit work together to conform us to the image of Christ. Without the Spirit we fall into legalism and bondage; without the Law we fall into mysticism and unbridled searchings, but are never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.”²⁸⁴ Today’s self-absorbed “Christian” may hold a form of godliness but it is without life; *always learning and never into the knowledge of the truth are they able to come* (2 Timothy 3:7).²⁸⁵

We are under grace

25. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster.

Here is confirmation of what we have just looked at. The purpose of the Law of Moses (the numerous statutes and ordinances given at Mt. Sinai) was to lead the individual to see the Promised One and, thereby, to find justification before God through faith in His promise. However, once Christ, the Promised One, came, the justifying faith that He brought into being saw an end to the role of the schoolmaster – the Law of Moses. With the installation of the New Covenant as promised by Jeremiah (Jeremiah 31:33), the Law of God (the Ten Commandments) is inscribed upon the heart of the individual believer and the Mosaic traditions having been brought to an end. No one is under the schoolmaster any longer, and there is “now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit” (Romans 8:1). Just as it has always been, faith in the Promised One is the key to no longer standing under the cloud of condemnation – not by anything that we have done or could do, but based solely upon the reality of Christ fulfilling the Mosaic Laws – the fulfillment of God’s purposes determined from before the world was set in place (Ephesians 1:4; 2 Timothy 1:9; Titus 1:2; 1 Peter 1:20; Revelation 13:8).

²⁸³ Strong’s Online.

²⁸⁴ Albert James Dager, *Vengeance is Ours*, p. 275.

²⁸⁵ Stephanus 1550 NT.

The seal for the New Covenant is the Holy Spirit, promised by the Lord Jesus before He left this earth (2 Corinthians 1:21-22; John 16:7-11).

Within the Jewish community, the child remained under a tutor's guidance until he came of age, and then he was freed from the tutor. Without faith, the Law of Moses was condemning; it left no doubt that man was a sinner before an infinitely holy God. Through faith, the individual came of age spiritually and was no longer under the condemning eye of the Tutor, but was freed into the grace of God. Would he continue to keep the Mosaic Laws? Yes! For him to obey the commands of the Lord meant that he would keep the statutes and ordinances of Moses, along with the Law of God (the Ten Commandments), but now he could see the grace of God expressed through the Mosaic Law, and could grow in his understanding of the spirit of the Law (judgment, mercy and faith – Matthew 23:23). By contrast, since Christ removed the Mosaic Law of ordinances and statutes, our faith in Him and the abiding presence of the Spirit of God lead us to follow the Law of God (the Ten Commandments) that has been written upon our hearts (Jeremiah 31:33). The numerous admonitions given within the writings of the Apostles provide us with practical ways for doing so. For those who are not “in Christ,” the Spirit of God will bring conviction of sin (the work of the Tutor prior to the implementation of the New Covenant), as Jesus promised (John 16:8-9).

The Psalmist understood the reality of looking beyond the ordinances and statutes:

The law of the LORD *is* perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the LORD *is* sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the LORD *are* right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the LORD *is* pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the LORD *is* clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the LORD *are* true *and* righteous altogether. More to be desired *are they* than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. Moreover by them is thy servant warned: *and* in keeping of them *there is* great reward. Who can understand *his* errors? cleanse thou me from secret *faults*. Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous *sins* [pride]; let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression [the downfall of Satan was pride]. Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my strength, and my redeemer (Psalm 19:7-14).²⁸⁶

Woven throughout this passage is the salvation of the soul and the uprightness of the Law (Romans 7:12). Not everyone who lived under the ordinances of Moses viewed them simply as things to do; the grace of God came to them through faith (just as it always has and always will) and they experienced freedom from the condemnation of the Law through God's grace as expressed through the Mosaic traditions.

The truth that Paul would have the Galatians understand is that when the faith spoken of comes (the New Covenant faith in the Lord Jesus Christ), then we are no longer under the condemnation of the Law – “*There is* therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit” (Romans 8:1). What we have already looked into, and what we must never forget, is that the Law of Moses has been done away with through Christ (Galatians 3:19, Ephesians 2:15), but the Law of God (the Ten Commandments) is alive and very applicable. “And the LORD said unto Moses, Come up to me into the mount, and be there: and I will give thee tables of stone, and a law, and commandments which I have written; that thou mayest teach them” (Exodus 24:12). “And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments” (1 John 2:3). However, the Lord has not left us to struggle to keep His commands

²⁸⁶ Strong's Online.

in our own strength – “For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit” (Romans 8:3-4). It is the reality of the Spirit of God living His righteousness through us that the Galatians failed to grasp; they sought to add to their righteousness by keeping the ordinances of Moses, even though God had provided a far better Way, and had abolished those ordinances at the same time.

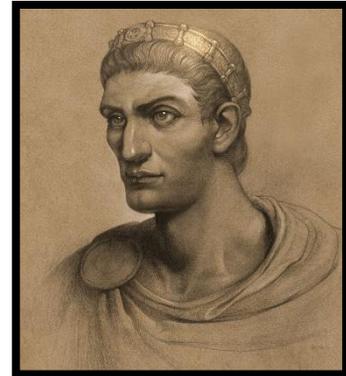
We have spoken much of keeping the commands of God, and there are those within the Evangelical community today who will agree that we need to keep the Ten Commandments yet they will stumble before they get half way through them. The Fourth Commandment seems to be largely ignored, either because of the traditions that we have inherited and never examined, or because the Evangelical and Fundamentalist theologians have devised explanations to deflect the reality of this Commandment. If we bring several passages of Scripture together, God’s desire for us should become very obvious. “And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested [*shabath*] on the seventh day from all his work which he had made. And God blessed [incomplete action] the seventh day, and sanctified [incomplete action] it: because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made” (Genesis 2:2-3).²⁸⁷ “Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: But the seventh day [exactly the same Hebrew words as used in Genesis 2:2-3] *is* the sabbath of the LORD thy God: *in it* thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that *is* within thy gates: For *in* six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them *is*, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it” (Exodus 20:8-11). “For ever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven” (Psalm 119:89); “Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away” (Matthew 24:35); “... the word of the Lord endureth for ever” (1 Peter 1:25). What could be more plain? Of all of the Ten Commandments, this is the only one that begins with the word *remember*, and it is the one that suffers the greatest neglect today. Keep three things in mind and it will be easier to have a proper understanding of this matter: **1)** the seventh-day Sabbath did not begin at Mt. Sinai (just like all of the other Ten Commandments); **2)** it is set within the Commandments that God wrote with His own finger upon tables of stone thereby emphasizing the permanency of these Commandments (Exodus 31:18; Deuteronomy 4:13); **3)** it is contained within the Law written by God upon our hearts (Jeremiah 31:33). There is nothing from Scripture that would indicate that the Fourth Commandment has ever been changed; the changes have come about through the manipulations of men as the Church of Rome became increasingly organized and exercised greater control over the lives of those who declared their allegiance to her. The finger can be pointed very specifically at Emperor Constantine, for in AD 321 he “forbade the sitting of courts and all secular labor in towns on ‘the venerable day of the sun.’”²⁸⁸ Within his declaration, Constantine made no attempt to base his decision upon any Christian doctrine, but only sought to accomplish two things: 1) to draw a distinct separation from anything Jewish, and 2) to draw the Christian and pagan cultures together through establishing a common day of rest. Paganism already kept the first day of the week in honor of the sun god, and now the Christians could join them through Constantine’s new law. Anti-Semitism grew rapidly within the Roman culture, and

²⁸⁷ Strong’s Online.

²⁸⁸ History of the Christian Church, Volume III, Chapter III, p. 75.

Constantine was not immune to its influence; what came together in Constantine was an apostate form of Christianity and anti-Semitism.

Ignatius (c. AD 100), in his epistle to the Philippians, expresses the attitude of the day: “If any one celebrates the passover along with the Jews, or receives the emblems of their feast, he is a partaker with those that killed the Lord and His apostles.”²⁸⁹ The animosity toward the Jews served as a guide in the early years of the organized, increasingly apostate church. By the time of Constantine, some 200 years later, this anti-Jewish sentiment had only grown and matured. The Roman Catholic Church (the product of Constantine’s combining Roman governmental power with religious control) has held strong anti-Semitic sentiments for centuries; it is only beginning to seemingly soften its attitude toward the Jews since Vatican II, as Ecumenism has become the focus of the Church – a one-world religion where they envision all religions brought together under their control. When Constantine melded the power of Rome with the Roman Church, the pattern was set for many years to come; his hybrid of paganism and Christianity was launched, and it continued to play a dominant role in the history of the world. As one historian put it: “From the days of Constantine, the corruption of the Christian profession proceeded with rapid progress.”²⁹⁰ Caught up in this corruption was the desecration of the Sabbath (instituted by God at the time of creation), and today that desecration is defended at every turn by heretics, Evangelicals and Fundamentalists alike.



Constantine

As Paul made very clear to the Galatians, the ordinances of Moses were done away with when the Promised One came; Jesus Christ took these regulations to the cross and made an end of them (Ephesians 2:15) – however, we must be careful not to include with them the Ten Commandments, the Law of God.

26. For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.

Here is a concise summary of the Christian’s position, and what is notable is that there is no reference to the ordinances of Moses (I wonder if the Galatians noticed). Earlier, Paul exhorted them that everyone who was of faith was the child of Abraham (Galatians 3:7), but now, after providing the evidence for the superiority of the promise over the Law of Moses, he declares that by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, we are all the children of God.

The Quakers believe that we (mankind in general) are all the children of God and, as such, have all inherited certain powers from God. “Each of us was given a measure of this power or light and in accordance with how we used it, so more would be given to us.”²⁹¹ They view this “inner light” as being Jesus Christ, and so “the Light of Christ has been given to all people everywhere”;²⁹² a gross misapplication of Jesus’ words in John 12:46 – “I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness.” This concept of the inner

²⁸⁹ Ignatius’ “Epistle to the Philippians,” Chapter XIV, The Apostolic Fathers, Philip Schaff, p. 167.

²⁹⁰ William Jones, The History of the Christian Church, p. 153.

²⁹¹ <http://www.quaker.org/friends.html>

²⁹² Ibid.

light or divine spark (as it is often called) within everyone has been the source of much heresy through the centuries. Mormonism includes this idea, as does the New Age movement, and, alas, as we have noted earlier, it is even seeping (or, sweeping?) into Evangelicalism through men like Max Lucado. Robert Schuller declared that he was immediately attracted to Pope John Paul II when “his published speeches invariably called attention to the need for recognizing the dignity of the human being as a child of God.”²⁹³ If we will no longer accept the Scripture’s clear portrayal



Pope John Paul II

of man as a sinner before God, then we must construct another philosophy that says that man is essentially good, and then use that as a basis for self-righteousness. It is true that unregenerate man does have some knowledge of good, which is not surprising since Adam ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Genesis 2:17; 3:5). Jesus acknowledged that those who were evil could give good gifts to their children (Luke 11:13), but that in no way provides a basis for placing a divine spark within the hearts of all of mankind. When man becomes a god unto himself, he then must find some way of justifying such an egocentric view of life, and he does that by declaring that if you look deep within, then you will find good. Then as you build on the good that you find (so the philosophy goes), you will then discover fulfillment and a spiritual experience that will confirm that you are right.

Paul clarifies that there is a qualification to being a child of God, but it has nothing to do with any supposed divinity that lies within man – it is simply faith in the Lord Christ Jesus. There is only one Way to God and that is through Christ (John 14:6), and that has not changed, nor will it ever change. What has been declared numerous times before, but always warrants repeating in our present Evangelical climate, is: our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ must be presently active. We cannot rest on the laurels of a past decision and hope that we are eternally secure because we prayed a prayer at one time or walked with God at one time. Unless our belief, or faith, is presently active and alive with the Spirit of God bearing witness (Romans 8:16), then we are simply deluding ourselves and falling prey to the devices of Satan. If we are not actively keeping the Commandments of God, then we absolutely cannot claim to be dwelling in Him (1 John 3:24), and if we are not dwelling in Him, then we will be cast off and burned (John 15:6). To claim faith when it is not actively present is to become a professor of faith but a doer of nothing (James 2:10, 17).

The marvel that Paul is expressing here is that through a living faith in the Lord Jesus Christ we not only become children of Abraham (Galatians 3:7) but we are also accounted as children of God. We are told that “Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God” (James 2:23). It is faith that found expression in obedience that made Abraham the “Friend of God”; it is that kind of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ that we must have in order to be accounted as children of God.

27. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

²⁹³ Schuller, *Self-Esteem*, p. 17.

Here is a simple statement of fact; whoever has been *baptized into Christ* has *put on Christ*. This might appear to be a declaration of an obvious truth, but for the Galatians it would have been much more. Remember, these people were in the process of abandoning faith alone in the work of Christ, and were embracing a faith-works gospel that Paul has made very clear is not the true Gospel (Galatians 1:6-7). Clearly, from this statement we know that there were many among the called-out ones of the region of Galatia who had been baptized; they were not mere hearers of the Gospel but had set out to make the truths of the Gospel of Christ a reality in their lives. These were not those who simply professed faith but had taken the significant step of identifying with Christ in the ordinance of baptism. Paul says to the Galatians that when they were baptized, they were identified with Christ – they had *put on Christ*. This was the reality of their relationship with Christ – they were not those who simply went forward at a huge crusade and prayed a prayer; they had heard the truth of the Gospel and responded. They were walking in the reality of faith in Christ when they were lured by the bleating of the Judaizers (wolves in sheep’s clothing), and now they were falling from this perfect relationship into error (Galatians 3:1).

“Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also **should walk** in newness of life” (Romans 6:4). This verse shows two things that relate to the Galatian problem. First, through baptism, we identify with Christ in His death (we are now dead to sin and must *reckon* this to be a reality, Romans 6:6-7, 11) and in His resurrection (Romans 6:8-11). The ordinance of baptism involves descending beneath the water (the death), but we do not stay there – we come up out of the water, thereby identifying with Christ’s resurrection, the putting on of the new man (Ephesians 4:24). The second thing that speaks directly to the error of the Galatians, is the two words, *should walk*. The Greek word for *walk* carries the subjunctive mood, which means that walking “in newness of life” is a possibility and a potentiality, but not necessarily a certainty – a choice must be made. In other words, this *walk* is a deliberate choice – no one has ever *happened* to fall into *newness of life*. The Galatians had set out on this pathway of *newness* – they had a correct and precise knowledge of the truth; nevertheless, Paul does not mince his words that they were in the process of removing themselves from God, Who had called them unto Christ, to a perverted gospel (Galatians 1:6-7). They were in danger of falling away from God; they were in the process of replacing God and His Gospel of grace through Christ with something that was outside of God’s way. The reality is that they were in the process of losing their hold of the Truth and were destined to become apostate. General understanding has it that the epistle to the Galatians is one of the earliest of the books that make up our New Testament (dates vary from AD 48 to 58²⁹⁴), and even at this early date, we find such significant error that Paul’s assessment is that they were on the brink of apostasy. It is a warning that error entered into the local gatherings very soon after the Apostles preached the Word of God, and Satan was crafty enough to not deny the message of faith in Christ – he simply added to it, knowing full well that to add to God’s truth is to depart from it (Deuteronomy 12:32).

28. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.

²⁹⁴ <http://www.errantskeptics.org/DatingNT.htm>

To understand the full impact of this statement, we must keep in mind the foundation that Paul has built before declaring this truth. Let's review some of the central truths that have been expounded up to this point:

1. The Galatians were in the process of replacing a relationship with the God of the Gospel of Christ with a perverted gospel (Galatians 1:6-7),
2. They (and we) are justified by the faith of Jesus Christ, not through any works of the Law of Moses (Galatians 2:16),
3. They were being deceived so as not to be obedient to the truth (Galatians 3:1),
4. All who are of the faith of Christ are the children of Abraham (Galatians 3:7),
5. Christ provided redemption through the cross so that the blessing promised to Abraham might come on the Gentiles as well (Galatians 3:13-14),
6. What God promised to Abraham could not be derailed by the coming of the Mosaic Law so many years later (Galatians 3:17),
7. The Mosaic Law was done away with at the cross (Galatians 3:19), and
8. The Mosaic Law was given so that all who had faith might be drawn to Christ (as foreshadowed in the ordinances) and justified by faith (Galatians 3:24).

Upon this foundation of tremendous teaching, Paul now declares that we “are all one in Christ Jesus.” The Galatians were being influenced to add Jewish ordinances to their faith, and were being convinced that they needed to live Jewish lives in order to be truly Christian. This is shattered by the clear declaration that being a Jew or a Greek is of little consequence within the Christian context, for we are simply one in Christ (1 Corinthians 12:12-14 and Ephesians 2:14-16 carry the same emphasis). There are no levels of importance within the Body of Christ – we are all one.

However, this verse can in no way be used to justify the confusion of roles within the Body of Christ. The emphasis used here is on being a part of the Body, with no thought given to the individual roles within that Body. First Corinthians 12:27 declares the Body of Christ and that each one is a part of the whole (“members in particular”),²⁹⁵ and that is the emphasis that Paul makes to the Galatians here – we are all part of the one Body. “*There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all*” (Ephesians 4:4-6). Having declared the oneness of faith in Christ, Paul goes on to speak to the roles within that unity, of the various giftings that God has given to the members of the Body so that we all might grow in Christ (Ephesians 4:11-16). There is such a profusion of confusion in this area within churches today: women are being awarded positions of authority (1 Timothy 2:12) and, increasingly within the mainline Protestant denominations, there is a validation of homosexuality, even within the leadership (Romans 1:26-32). God has not changed His mind about what sin is, nor has He softened His position regarding the roles of men and women; we may never know the full extent of the spiritual devastation that is being caused by ignoring God's clear direction in these matters. What we do know is this: “Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are *these*; Adultery, fornication [*porneia*], uncleanness, lasciviousness [unbridled lust], idolatry, witchcraft [potions, drugs],

²⁹⁵ Strong's Online.

hatred, variance [strife], emulations [jealousy], wrath, strife [rivalry – putting one’s self forward], seditions [divisions], heresies, Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told *you* in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God” (Galatians 5:19-21).²⁹⁶ How many of these find their place in the lives of Evangelicals today? How many church leaders are willing to turn a blind eye to these activities? Today’s professing Christian might well pride himself on being open-minded and tolerant, but there will come a day when he will come to recognize that God took no pleasure in his sin of rebellion. The lie of the devil, “ye shall not surely die,” has not changed (Genesis 3:4).

29. And if ye *be* Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.

Paul now places a capstone on what he has just related as being the product of faith in Jesus Christ: we are children of God (Galatians 3:26), we have put Christ on (v. 27), and we are all one in Christ (v. 28). If you belong to Christ, then you are of the seed (heritage) of Abraham (a restatement of verse seven) and heirs of the promise of God to Abraham. Once again, we must reflect on the position of the Galatians to understand the full impact of this statement. The Galatians were replacing the true Gospel of faith in the finished work of Christ with a false gospel of dependency upon their own ability to keep the traditions of Moses. Paul says that if you are truly Christ’s, then you are the children of Abraham by faith, which is far superior to being the children of Moses through works. Keep in mind that unless doing the works of Moses was coupled with faith, the works alone were of no value (Isaiah 1:11).

If we consider the declaration made here, we must quickly realize, then, that this refers to becoming Abraham’s seed through the common faith that we exercise; it is not that suddenly and magically through Christ you become a physical descendent of Abraham. Likewise, the inheritance spoken of is not physical but spiritual, realized through the living faith that we have in common with Abraham. “For the promise, that he should be the heir of the world, *was* not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith” (Romans 4:13). Remember Jesus’ words: “Blessed *are* the meek: for they shall inherit the earth” (Matthew 5:5). As we look around today, or even review history, it is very evident that those of mild disposition have not yet received the earth as their inheritance (the Greek word for *inherit* in Matthew 5:5 bears the same root as the Greek word translated as *heirs* in Galatians 3:29). However, as we look ahead, we see God’s plan continuing to unfold. “And I saw a new heaven and a new earth ... And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God *is* with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, *and be* their God” (Revelation 21:1-3). When sin and Satan have been dealt with for the final time, it will be the *meek* who will enjoy eternity in the presence of God.

The promise given to Abraham that shone through all of the years (including the years under the Mosaic Law), was that through him all peoples would be blessed. When Christ came to earth as the eternal God wrapped in the flesh of man, He came in fulfillment of the promises given to Abraham (as well as many other promises); for through Him all of the people of the world have been blessed (whether they recognize it or not). As we are *in Christ*, we are made inheritors in accordance with the promise given to Abraham. Jesus said, “Let your light so shine before men,

²⁹⁶ Strong’s Online.

that they may see your good works [product of active faith], and glorify your Father which is in heaven” (Matthew 5:16). Jesus’ instruction to His disciples before He was taken up into glory was that they were to go and “teach all nations ... to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you ...” (Matthew 28:19-20). The Apostle John declares, “... he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him” (1 John 3:24a). The words of James underline the importance of our obedience: “For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also” (James 2:26).



Harold J. Ockenga

The reality is that if we desire to have a living faith in the Lord Jesus Christ (presently and actively believing-in-Him), then we must live in obedience to His unchangeable commands (which includes the Ten Commandments and the many admonitions given within the Word of God, but excludes the statutes and ordinances of Moses that have been abolished, Ephesians 2:15). The decadent condition of Evangelical churches today speaks volumes about what happens when the Law of God is excluded from our thinking – compromise is inevitable because the foundation of how to live out our faith has been removed. The “thus saith the Lord” of the eternal Word of God has been replaced with the devil’s, “yea hath God said?” The mystical emergent thinking that is sweeping through the churches today is based upon faith alone (faith in the teachings and philosophies of the emergent leaders, not the Word of God), and it is luring millions into the clutches of Satan.

Experience has become the measure of success and the Bible is referred to only often enough to dupe the average, Biblically-illiterate Evangelical into complacency and compliance. Despite the many claims of revival throughout the world today, the reality is that it is not a revival of true faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, but a propagation of a pseudo-faith that has departed from the only true foundation, the Word of God. When Harold Ockenga announced the launch of New Evangelicalism over sixty years ago, did he fully realize that he, and those with him, had actually laid the groundwork for perhaps the greatest apostasy of all time? Shallow-thinking Evangelicals have accepted, at face value, the philosophies that have been carefully crafted and fed to them until emergent thinking has been able to sweep across the Evangelical landscape with little resistance. Satan has always had a ready philosophy that can make the forbidden fruit look like it is “good for food, and that it [is] pleasant to the eyes, and ... desired to make *one* wise” (Genesis 3:6; cp. 1 John 2:16). We must continually test the spirits that come our way, to determine if they are of God (1 John 4:1); this demands continual vigilance – we cannot let our guard down for a moment (Colossians 2:8).

Indeed, “*There is* therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.” (Romans 8:1-4). If we are *in Christ*, then, and only then, are we no longer under the condemnation of the Law of God, for we have been freed to have the Spirit of God live out the righteousness of God’s Law in us through obedience to His commands. This will see the

fulfillment of Jesus' words: "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 5:16).

Obedience to the Law of God, through the working of the Spirit of God, can never be legalism. As we look at the sacrifices made in the Old Testament Scriptures, we read that they were a *sweet savor* before God (Genesis 8:21; Exodus 29:18), they were a soothing aroma to the Lord.²⁹⁷ This does not speak of the physical odor that would have been produced, but of the fact that they were being carried out in obedience to what the Lord desired – they foreshadowed the day when Christ would come to offer His body, once, as a sacrifice for the sins of man. The key ingredient to make the sacrifice a *sweet savor* to God was faith; unless these sacrifices were made in faith, they were actually a stench in the nostrils of God (1 Samuel 15:22; Isaiah 66:1-4). What the Galatians failed to see was that, through faith in Christ, they had it all, but as they were in the process of casting their faith in Christ off (which is what they failed to recognize), they were teetering on the brink of spiritual disaster and were in danger of losing it all.

²⁹⁷ Strong's Online.

Chapter 4

1. Now I say, *That* the heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all;

Paul now picks up on the theme of the *heir* and begins to expand upon that thought. He does this by taking a step back in order to look at the situation familiar to the children of Israel prior to the coming of the New Covenant – while they were still under the Mosaic Law with all of its statutes and ordinances. You will recall that the New Covenant was unveiled by the Lord the night that He was betrayed, when He declared to His disciples: “This cup *is* the new testament [or covenant] in my blood, which is shed for you” (Luke 22:20).²⁹⁸ Moreover, this should not have come as a surprise to those who had eyes of faith, for they would have recalled what Jeremiah had prophesied:

Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day *that* I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD: But this *shall be* the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and **write** it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people (Jeremiah 31:31-33).

What is very interesting is that the Hebrew word translated as *write* in Jeremiah 31 is the same basic word as used in Exodus 31:18 – “And he [God] gave unto Moses, when he had made an end of communing with him upon mount Sinai, two tables of testimony, tables of stone, **written** with the finger of God.” Just as God wrote His Law upon tables of stone, so He will write His Law upon the hearts of those who participate in His New Covenant.

Our verse declares a reality that would have been understood within the culture of the day. Until the heir of an estate came of age, he had no more rights than a slave; even though he might well be the governor of the entire estate one day, as a child he had no authority over it. However, he would have had more hope than a slave (for he could well anticipate the day when he would be lord), nevertheless, as a child, he would have been without the freedoms, authority and responsibility of an adult. Within our culture, we have a child, a teenager, and then an adult; it seems that we attempt to delay accountability; within their culture, a child was an adult in training. *Teenager* is a term that only goes back to the early twentieth-century.²⁹⁹ “When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things” (1 Corinthians 13:11). This gives us a glimpse into the culture of Paul’s day – the transition was from a child to a responsible adult, thereby skipping the modern concept of a childish adult (a teenager).

²⁹⁸ Strong’s Online.

²⁹⁹ [Etymology Dictionary](#), “teenage.”

Before Christ established the New Covenant in His blood, the Jews were under the burden of the Mosaic Law – and it was a burden, for it placed many demands upon them. Even if viewed through the eyes of faith, there were still many, many minute details in the Law that had to be kept, for they were God’s specific commands. Being a child of God through faith would have instilled a profound meaning to the traditions of the Mosaic Law, but that would have done little to reduce the tremendous burden that it was to abide carefully by the endless rigors of Moses’ Law.

2. But is under tutors and governors until the time appointed of the father.

We learned (Galatians 3:24) that the Law of Moses served as a *schoolmaster*, or a *child-leader*, to bring the children of Israel unto faith in Christ; it foreshadowed the coming Redeemer for all who had eyes of faith to see. The Law served as an educator to instill growth in the life of the faithful doer of the Law, as well as a guide to keep the people of Israel faithful to the Lord Jehovah. When Moses ascended Mt. Sinai for the first time to meet with the Lord, God revealed His purposes to him and the children of Israel: “Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth *is* mine: And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These *are* the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel” (Exodus 19:5-6). It was God’s desire that Israel should be a light to the nations, revealing His holiness, mercy and grace to all who looked on. Throughout all of this, further revelation of the coming Messiah (the Promised One Who would be a *blessing* to everyone) was there for all who would look with the eyes of faith. The Law of Moses was not given without foundation and purpose, and God revealed His heart’s desire before giving the Israelites the statutes and ordinances of the Mosaic Law. Despite the children of Israel’s hearty acceptance of God’s desire for them, they failed to be that kingdom of priests to the Gentiles and that holy nation. The tutor (the Law of Moses), to which Israel became servant, was never able to bring the nation to spiritual maturity – only a remnant of individuals within that nation understood the need for faith.

Within the culture of that day, the wealthy would have trusted men (often slaves) who would be with their sons at all times, training them and educating them in all that they would need in order to be able to function as capable adults. The Law of Moses was given by God to train and educate the children of Israel, as individuals, so that they would be able to live responsibly when the inheritance was theirs. The training of the heir would continue until the day that the father had pre-determined, at which time the heir of all would take his place as a functioning adult within society.

3. Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world:

Paul now begins to make application of the illustration of the child-heir to the situation of the Jews of his day. Notice that he uses the word *we* to show that he is included within this application; after all, he was a Jew to the core.

The word *children* comes from a Greek word meaning “not-speaking,”³⁰⁰ and so it refers to an infant (one who cannot speak) or a minor whose words have no power (he is not unlike a slave who cannot speak with his own authority). The Jews, under the Mosaic Law, were children; they remained under the guidance of the *Schoolmaster*, and were in servitude to it.

The word *elements* speaks of those “first things from which others ... take their rise.”³⁰¹ For all of us, the first thing is physical life; the one thing that we all have in common is that of being alive. From this similarity flows many, many things that make us different from one another, but we do hold that one thing in common. Being under the Mosaic Law of statutes and ordinances was very physically demanding. There were sacrifices to be made, offerings to be prepared in a very specific manner, feast days to be kept in prescribed ways – all of these things required an expenditure of effort to accomplish. In a very real sense, the keeping of the Mosaic Law was very physical; obedience to the statutes and ordinances was definitely outward and could be kept meticulously with no response at all from the heart (although doing so rendered the keeping of the Law of no value before God – Isaiah 1:11; Hebrews 11:6). This was the situation that Jesus found when He dealt with the Pharisees – they had many outward manifestations of their righteousness but their hearts were not right before God (Matthew 15:8). Nevertheless, the Law was there to train and educate, to lead those to spiritual maturity who had eyes to see (Galatians 3:24). Yet even with all faith and maturity, obedience to the statutes and ordinances of the Law of Moses was still required – the physical demands of obedience never lessened; indeed, there was a strong element of bondage to the Mosaic Law.

4. But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law,

When the time appointed by the Father was come, Jesus came to this earth by being born of Mary. Israel was under the instruction of the Law of Moses until the time pre-determined by God the Father. Even as the son who grew up with tutors, came of age at a time that was determined by his father, so God had pre-determined the day when everything would change for the children of Israel. When that day arrived, God was ready to send His Son in fulfillment of the Mosaic traditions.

What we must not miss is that Jesus did not come too early or too late, but at precisely the right time as determined by God the Father. As we read of God having established the death of His Son in payment for the sins of mankind from before the world was spoken into existence (1 Peter 1:18-20), we see confirmation here of His unalterable sovereignty over His creation in keeping with His promise to Satan in Genesis 3:15 – when the time was right, Jesus came as the Seed of the woman Who would crush the serpent’s head. There is a precision to the plan of God that we will never be able to comprehend, and which Satan will never be able to thwart.

God, the Son (sent from glory – John 17:5), became a man and was *made of a woman*. The word *woman* used here is a general term that could be applied to a virgin, a married woman, or

³⁰⁰ Vine’s “children.”

³⁰¹ Vine’s “elements.”

someone who was betrothed.³⁰² Although it is very clear from other Scriptures that Jesus was born of a virgin (Luke 1:27, for example), the emphasis here is on the fact that He proceeded from God and entered this world by being made of a woman (John 1:1, 14). The promise made in Genesis 3:15 showed that the One Who would bring defeat to the devil would be the Seed of a woman. Jesus, quite literally, is God and Man brought together in a most unique manner.

However, further to being born of a woman, Jesus also entered the world subject to the statutes and ordinances of Moses (*under the law*). The Law of Moses remained in full effect until Jesus' death on the cross, at which time it was completed and removed (Ephesians 2:14-16). As Jesus grew (as a man) and throughout His ministry, He would have perfectly understood the fulfillment of those Mosaic ordinances; each Passover celebration was a reminder to Him as to why He had come to earth and what was ahead for Him. Through all of this time, Jesus kept the Law of Moses and the Law of God with perfection – as God, He would have understood the spirit of the Law that demanded far more than simply the outward expression of obedience, and He kept it without sin (Hebrews 4:15). The religious leaders of the Jews had turned the Law of Moses, that Schoolmaster intended to bring the faithful unto Christ (Galatians 3:24), into an empty form of works that served to magnify their position and keep the people dependent upon them (Matthew 23:13).

Little has changed, for we find the same situation today. Christianity has become big business, even within Evangelicalism and Fundamentalism, and pastors, who love to speak eloquently every Sunday morning and comfort the people with soft-sounding words, watch over it very carefully. Even when truth is proclaimed, it is most often couched within a framework that permits the pastor to maintain his superior position as the trained, spiritual professional. Jesus said, “Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant: Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many” (Matthew 20:25-28). The pastor may well speak of the service that he offers his congregation (the congregation is more surely *his* than the *Lord's*), but it is a service for which he is generally well paid and one that does not require him to abandon his position of pre-eminence. Carrying out his “service” to his people will in no way threaten his prominent position in the eyes of his congregants, but will actually enhance their dependence upon him to speak God's words unto them. Even as the Pharisees loved the adulation of the people who regarded them as being very spiritual and the purveyors of truth, so pastors today hold a very similar position in the minds of most who participate in the traditions of “church.” Spiritual ignorance was the blight of the common people of Jesus' day just as surely as it is today among Evangelicals; both the Pharisees and today's pastors use that blindness to secure their positions of authority.

Jesus entered this scene of domination in order to bring life to those who had eyes to see and ears to hear; yet, with only a few exceptions, it excluded most of the religious leadership of the day. Today, the Spirit of God works to bring a conviction of sin and righteousness on those who will see and hear (John 16:8). Once again, the “religious of the day,” for the most part, are excluded – they have the same problem as the Pharisees. “And Jesus said, For judgment I am come into this world, that they which see not might see; and that they which see might be made blind. And *some* of the Pharisees which were with him heard these words, and said unto him, Are we blind also? Jesus said unto them, If ye were blind, ye should have no sin: but now ye say, We see; therefore

³⁰² Strong's Online.

your sin remaineth” (John 9:39-41). The confident declaration of Evangelical leadership today is: “We see!” However, as they heap to themselves well-honed theologies and draw unto themselves blind admirers, they are the purveyors of the same self-righteous error as the Pharisees of Jesus’ day. Indeed, the leaders of both Evangelicalism and Fundamentalism (for the most part) have fallen into the very same pit as the Pharisees – they teach the traditions of men and call it God’s truth (Matthew 15:9). Yes, the Pharisees were under the Mosaic Law of statutes and ordinances, but they had created a whole additional layer of their own traditions and practices to which they held the people accountable; they had departed from the “thus saith the Lord,” and had replaced it with “thus saith our teachings” – something that is echoed among today’s Evangelicals.

5. To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.

In the same way that God did not give the Law of Moses without purpose, so He did not send His Son into this world without purpose. The eternal God took on the form of man, born under the Law of Moses and the Law of God, for the express purpose of redeeming those who are under the Law. Who is under the Law? – all of mankind!

Before God gave the children of Israel the statutes and ordinances of the Mosaic Law, He revealed His purpose to them: “... if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people ... ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation” (Exodus 19:5-6). God’s desire for Israel was that they should become a light to the nations; through them the holiness and grace of God would be evidenced for all to see, and in them the peoples of the world would find intercessors who could bring them to God. In essence, the whole world was brought under the Law of Moses, for it was a refinement of God’s revelation of the Redeemer Who would come to deal finally and fully with man’s sin. The essence of the Law of Moses was not new, but it was now in written form and included sacrifices, a structured priesthood and ceremonies outlined in minute detail. Abraham had lived in obedience to the commands and statutes of God (Genesis 26:5), but now, God wrote His Ten Commandments (the Law of God) on tables of stone for everyone to read, and prescribed the numerous statutes and ordinances (the Law of Moses) to instill faith in the hearts of the obedient. Within the Garden of Eden, God made His commands known to Adam, and from that time onward man has never been without a knowledge of what God requires.

Those who do not walk by faith in the Lord are, very truly, under the Law. “*There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit*” (Romans 8:1). Unless we are *in Christ Jesus* by faith, we are under the condemnation of the Law of God. Adam stood in *no condemnation* until he ate of the forbidden fruit of the tree, at which time he came under the condemnation of the Law and died spiritually. Yet God, in His mercy, provided a way for man to be redeemed from the penalty of the Law, and the key was faith in Him expressed through obedience to His commands. The OT saints lived by faith in God to keep His promise to provide a Redeemer; they lived in hope and anticipation of the Promised One. Today we live by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ – the One Who came in fulfillment of the promises made. However, as noted, unless we are *in Christ Jesus*, we remain under the condemnation of the Law of God; those who are not found in Christ will ultimately be judged by God according to their deeds (Revelation 20:13) and no one will be justified (Galatians 2:16).

Christ came for the express purpose of providing redemption for all of mankind. “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16). “... [God] will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth” (1 Timothy 2:4). Despite the best efforts of Calvinists to say that *whosoever* and *all men* do not mean everyone, the reality is that through Christ, God has established the Way for all of mankind to be reconciled to Himself. The desire of God for man, from Adam through to the coming of Jesus Christ, always included a mixture of faith and blood sacrifice for the temporary remission of sin – something that foreshadowed the time when the promised Redeemer would become the final Sacrifice for sins (Hebrews 11:6; Leviticus 17:11). With the progression of time, the prophets of God elaborated more and more on the coming of the Promised One, providing both general information and often very specific details that would be fulfilled by the Lord Jesus Christ. God, in His love and mercy, “sent the Son *to be* the Saviour of the world” (1 John 4:14); in Jesus’ day, the Samaritans of Sychar recognized and declared this truth (John 4:42). When Jesus said, “It is finished,” He declared that the final sacrifice for man’s sin had been made; access to the very presence of God was opened for all men (the veil of the temple was torn from top to bottom, indicating that God had opened the way – Matthew 27:51). Jesus is the “Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world” (John 1:29); nevertheless, Christ’s redemption of mankind remains ineffective unless it is personally appropriated by faith – “... I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me” (Galatians 2:20). Without that personal application of the work of Christ on the cross, we remain bound under the condemnation of the Law of God; it is only as we are *in Christ* by faith that we are freed from the Law’s condemnation.

Christ came to provide redemption for mankind so that we might be adopted by God. We must note that the pronoun *we* is used, thereby indicating that Paul is including himself within the adopted sons of God. What we must immediately recognize is that there is a difference between an adoptive relationship and a naturally born one. Jesus Christ is referred to as “the only begotten Son” of God (Psalm 2:7 [quoted further in Acts 13:33; Hebrews 1:5; 5:5]; John 1:18; 3:16, 18; 1 John 4:9). Jesus is the **only** Son of God Who was not adopted; He was born of the Spirit of God and woman (Luke 1:35), and being fully God in the form of man, “in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily” (Colossians 2:9). Therefore, it is by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ (through adoption) that everyone is brought into a living relationship with God.

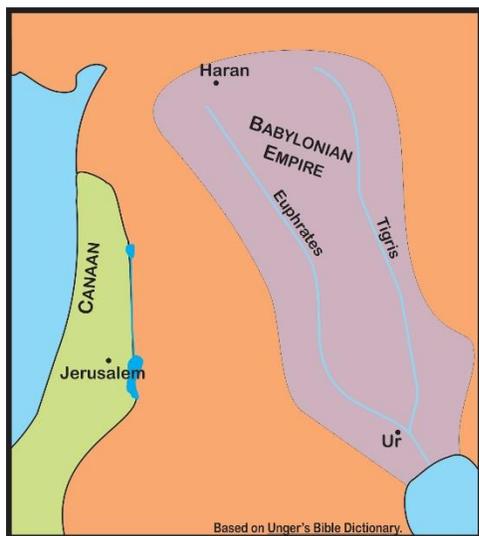
The words of Jesus to the woman of Samaria come to bear here: “God *is* a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship *him* in spirit and in truth” (John 4:24). When we speak of our adoption as children of God, we are referring to a spiritual adoption – it is by a living faith in Jesus Christ that we are declared to be the children of God (Galatians 3:26). We have been called to walk a spiritual walk with God: “*There is* therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after [according to] the flesh, but after [according to] the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after [according to] the flesh, but after [according to] the Spirit” (Romans 8:1-4).³⁰³ Jesus’ admonition is: “Abide [*meno*] in me ...” (John 15:4); John declared so clearly: “... he that keepeth [*is keeping* (present tense)] his [God’s] commandments dwelleth

³⁰³ Strong’s Online.

[*meno, is remaining* (present tense)] in him” (1 John 3:24).³⁰⁴ The reality is as evident as James makes it: “For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also” (James 2:26). We are not adopted into the spiritual family of God through praying a simple prayer, responding to an “altar call,” or by being raised in a godly home. Our adoption comes only through a personal, living faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, the sinless Son of God Who took the punishment for our sins upon Himself – unless that living faith remains continually active in our lives, we are on very slippery ground (this is the situation in which the Galatians found themselves – Galatians 1:6-7). Yet even more than simply a matter of faith (which is the Evangelical mantra of the day), our living faith must demonstrate its presence through obedience to the commandments of God; otherwise, as James declares, we cannot lay claim to having saving faith. As we permit the Spirit of God to lead us in paths of righteousness (which is the spiritual outworking of the Law of God – Romans 8:4; Psalm 23:3), we will live as the adopted, spiritual children of God.

However, we do find places where God refers to Israel as His son. “And thou shalt say unto Pharaoh, Thus saith the LORD, Israel *is* my son, *even* my firstborn ...” (Exodus 4:22). A moment’s consideration makes it clear that this could not be referring to a spiritual relationship between God and Israel, for Israel was a large group of people by this time, and God only establishes His spiritual relationship with individuals. A ready confirmation is the Law of God (the Ten Commandments – Exodus 20:1-17) which (in the KJV) all include the Middle English word *thou* or *thy*; this pronoun is second person singular, which means that these Commandments are directed toward the individual and do not have a group or national application (other than through many individuals). This is also clearly confirmed by looking to the final judgment of the wicked, “... and they were judged **every man** according to their works” (Revelation 20:13). These are those who have been excluded from the first resurrection of the righteous (Revelation 20:5-6), yet they will stand, individually, before God and receive His condemnation according to their works.

Furthermore, we recognize that the Lord is speaking metaphorically of Israel as His firstborn (in Exodus 4:22), for the physical ancestry of Israel is easily traced through the pages of Scripture. Abraham was chosen by God out of Ur of the Chaldees, yet he, too, had a delineated heritage. Moses, in his final song to the people of Israel, declared, “Do ye thus requite the LORD, O foolish people and unwise? *is* not he thy father *that* hath bought thee? hath he not made thee, and established thee?” (Deuteronomy 32:6). There is clear recognition that the nation of Israel owes its very existence to Jehovah, and the image of a father is used to demonstrate their utter dependence upon the Lord. However, even within his song, Moses spoke of the failure of the children of Israel to honor the God Who formed them (Deuteronomy 32:15); despite having an opportunity to live by faith in God and the promise of His redemption, they would forsake the Lord and follow falsehood (Deuteronomy 32:17-18).



³⁰⁴ Strong's Online.

We are told in Galatians 4:5 that the Son of God came in order to redeem those who were under the condemnation of the Law **and** the adoption that they would receive. Although the words *redeem* and *receive* are both in the subjunctive mood, because they are in a purpose clause, they do not express possibility but rather, provide an explanation as to why the Son of God came. Now we must understand that even though these are reasons for Jesus' coming, that does not mean that everyone will be redeemed and receive His adoption; what it does mean is that such redemption and adoption is available to everyone (the *whosoever* of John 3:16 applies). The reality is that God has done everything necessary to redeem all of mankind, but everyone still bears a will that has been corrupted by sin (the certainty of the purpose for the *Logos* becoming flesh can be availed only through faith in what the Lord has done, which requires a choice – the exercise of the will). Moses understood this reality: “I call heaven and earth to record [witness] this day against you, *that* I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live: That thou mayest love the LORD thy God, *and* that thou mayest obey his voice, and that thou mayest cleave unto him: for he *is* thy life, and the length of thy days: that thou mayest dwell in the land which the LORD sware unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them” (Deuteronomy 30:19-20).³⁰⁵ Moses set the “life and death, blessing and cursing” before the people of Israel (*you*), but the choice to be made was individual (*thou, thy*). Joshua also understood the reality of the will of man: “And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that *were* on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD” (Joshua 24:15). Elijah recognized the necessity of the people of Israel to exercise their will in determining whom they would follow: “And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? if the LORD *be* God, follow him: but if Baal, *then* follow him” (1 Kings 18:21a). Jesus, too, spoke of man's need to choose: “No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon” (Matthew 6:24). The truth that we must not miss is this: God has provided the Way of redemption for all of mankind, but every man must choose.

Among Evangelicals the choosing has been reduced to a momentary, isolated decision; as long as that decision was made at some point in time, then the eternal destiny of adoption as a child of God has been secured (the decision is all-important but the subsequent living is not). Unfortunately, there is no Biblical support for this doctrine. “But when the righteous turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, *and* doeth according to all the abominations that the wicked *man* doeth, shall he live? All his righteousness that he hath done shall not be mentioned: in his trespass that he hath trespassed, and in his sin that he hath sinned, in them shall he die” (Ezekiel 18:24). “For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins ...” (Hebrews 10:26). Jesus' words further support this: “No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God” (Luke 9:62); “And ye shall be hated of all *men* for my name's sake: but he that shall endure [*hupomeno* – to remain faithful through trials] unto the end, the same shall [this is the one who will] be saved” (Mark 13:13).³⁰⁶ Jesus calls us to count the cost of following Him before we commit to walking in His ways (Luke 14:25-33), lest we begin and fall away to our own eternal destruction (the parable of the soils confirms this reality as well – Luke 8:11-15). We must not

³⁰⁵ Strong's Online.

³⁰⁶ Strong's Online; Friberg Lexicon.

miss the promise that Paul wrote to Timothy: “Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution” (2 Timothy 3:12); this is what awaits the child of God who is faithfully living for Him, yet Jesus said plainly that this is what is required in order to be saved (Matthew 24:13).

Compounding the failure among Evangelicals in this matter of an isolated decision securing eternal life, is their position that the subsequent lifestyle does not really matter. Once again, this is not a doctrine that can be found in God’s Word. “Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy” (1 Peter 1:13-16; with reference to Leviticus 11:44). Paul understood this as well: “For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit” (Romans 8:3-4). The Spirit of God, the Comforter promised by the Lord before His ascension, comes to abide within us when we come to God by faith in what Jesus Christ did for us on Calvary. The Spirit residing in our lives is not to be without consequence; as we walk in obedience to the Spirit, the righteousness of the Law will be lived out through us – we will be living the holiness of God. The Apostle John declared, “And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments” (1 John 2:3). The writer of Hebrews confirms the necessity of continually walking by the Spirit of God in obedience to the commands of God: “For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end ...” (Hebrews 3:14; see also Matthew 24:13). What we must not miss is that God has done everything to keep us in our walk with Him (Romans 8:38-39); however, “Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God” (Hebrews 3:12; the same warning was given to Israel in Deuteronomy 11:16). We are called upon to exercise discernment lest we succumb to faithlessness, which would be to apostatize. Even though God has made every provision for our safe-keeping, what we are warned against is giving place to an evil heart of unbelief that will lead us into apostasy; God may well have protected us from all external attacks, but we are called on to exercise vigilance so that we do not fall away through our own doings. It is God’s desire that we remain faithful to Him (Matthew 10:22), that we be continually on guard against the temptations of the devil (1 Peter 5:8), that we test all things against His Word (Acts 17:11; 1 John 4:1), and that we stand fast in the faith of the Lord Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 16:13).

6. And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.

Here, again, we find confirmation that Paul did not see the Galatians as having already fallen away, but they were in the process of removing themselves from God’s light (Galatians 1:6 expresses this idea, indicating that the deed had not been clinched as yet); however, what must not be overlooked is that the road that they were on would lead them directly into apostasy. Paul confidently refers to them now as being *sons* of God (present tense – the thought brought forward from the previous verse). Paul’s confidence would have been founded upon what he saw at work within this group after he and Barnabas had ministered the truth of God to them. Clearly, there

was no question in Paul's mind that these people had genuinely made a commitment to follow the Gospel of God.

To confirm this further, he speaks of God having instilled the Spirit of Christ into their hearts. Jesus affirmed with His disciples that when He was ascended to heaven, He would have the Father send His Spirit to teach them (John 14:26). Paul declares here that these Galatians were recipients of the promised Spirit – there can be no doubt as to the genuineness of the faith of these people. However, we must also recognize that the reason for the Spirit of God being sent is based on these people being sons of God, genuinely embarked on the pathway of faith in Christ. What we must not lose sight of, living as we do in a day of casual spirituality, is that there is a prerequisite to the Spirit of God's presence in the life of an individual. It is because the Galatians were sons of God that God sent His Spirit to abide within them; this is an essential distinction that must be emphasized in our day of careless spirituality. Although we see the Spirit of God coming to abide within the individual at the time that he places his faith in the Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 8:9), it is also important to recognize is that the Spirit of God will not continue to abide with anyone who does not have a persistent, living faith in Jesus Christ. However, there is more to this relationship: "For as many as are led [*being led* (present tense)] by the Spirit of God, they are [present tense] the sons of God" (Romans 8:14).³⁰⁷ As we come to God by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, the Spirit of God comes to abide within us; as we are continually led by the Spirit of God, we will remain as sons of God. This reality is not given any credence within Evangelicalism today. "For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit [do mind] the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded [to have in mind the things of the flesh] *is* death; but to be spiritually minded [to be after the Spirit] *is* life and peace" (Romans 8:5-6).

Today, the "Spirit of God" is carelessly flaunted by the name-it-claim-it charismatic preachers, and is heralded as being part of their raucous and blasphemous dog-and-pony shows. When we recognize that the work of these men and women does not line up with the Word of God (that Standard by which we are to measure all things – 1 John 4:1), we can, with full assurance, conclude that the spirit that they are demonstrating is not the Spirit of God. Satan is a great lover of religion, for it has proven to be a very effective disguise for him to wreak havoc among those who profess to know God; he especially loves to use a professing Christian to accomplish his greatest wiles. We must be constantly vigilant – something that the Galatians were failing to do.

Abba, Father appears only three times in our Scriptures. The first time it is recorded by Mark in Jesus' petition in Gethsemane to His Father regarding the terrible punishment that He was about to bear on the cross (Mark 14:36). In his letter to the Romans, Paul includes the phrase in a manner very similar to what we find here in Galatians: "For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father" (Romans 8:15). The word *Abba* is of Chaldee or Aramaic origin and Jewish tradition limits its use to natural children – slave were not permitted to use the term for the head of the family; the only reason that we can use this term for God the Father is because He has adopted us as His own children through Christ, thereby making the use of the term to be, *my father*.³⁰⁸ In the passage in Mark, we have Jesus using the term to address His Father in Heaven. In Romans, the adopted recipients of the Spirit of God utter the cry of "My Father," expressing their new relationship with God. In our passage, it seems evident that it is the Spirit of God sent into our hearts Who is crying, "Abba,

³⁰⁷ Strong's Online.

³⁰⁸ Strong's Dictionary; [Vine's](#) "abba."

Father.” We are told in Romans: “... the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered” (8:26). The Spirit of God intercedes for us with sounds that cannot be expressed in words. The Greek word for *crying* (Galatians 3:6) means literally *to croak*,³⁰⁹ and is a “strong word, expressing deep emotion ... generally, *an inarticulate cry* ...”³¹⁰ Again, we see the Spirit interceding with the Father with “groanings which cannot be uttered,” and thereby expressing to our heavenly Father our marvel at calling Him our Father.

As we consider the work of the Spirit of God on our behalf, the question may arise: to Whom do we address our petitions? Are we to petition the Father only? Are we to appeal to Jesus, the Son of God? Are we to bring our requests to the Holy Spirit? Or, does it really matter?

If we begin with the model prayer that Jesus gave to His disciples, we read: “After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven ...” (Matthew 6:9); “When ye pray, say, Our Father which art in heaven” (Luke 11:2). The model prayer as it was prescribed by Jesus, is to be addressed to God the Father. Matthew records these additional guiding words of Jesus: “But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, **pray to thy Father** which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly” (Matthew 6:6). What would seem to be evident is that Jesus’ words on the matter are that we are to address our prayers to God the Father. However, are we sure that this hasn’t been changed? Evangelicals today can take a clear declaration of God’s will from the Scriptures and nullify its effect through the application of scholarly rationalism. They might well recognize and accept that God’s Word is eternally settled in heaven (Psalm 119:89), and that Jesus, the eternal Word made flesh, will never change (John 1:1,14; Hebrews 13:8), and yet they will casually change what God has very clearly declared into something that better fits with their traditions. Jesus made it very clear to the Pharisees of His day that this practice was unacceptable – they were nullifying the commands of God by adhering to their own traditions (Matthew 15:6). It is not uncommon to hear prayers addressed to either Jesus or the Holy Spirit, or both. Is this acceptable, or should we be concerned? If we are concerned with walking in obedience to the words of the Lord, then we must unhesitatingly say that we are to address our prayers to the Father.

Jesus did offer an additional bit of guidance in this matter. As He taught His disciples, He declared: “Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and *that* your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you” (John 15:16). Here is the admonition to ask of the Father in the name of the Son; hence, it is Biblical to make our prayers to the Father in the name of Jesus. However, lest the name-it-claim-it crowd use these words as a blank cheque from God, Jesus also said, “If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you” (John 15:7). James clarifies the matter as well: “Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume *it* upon your lusts” (James 4:3). The qualification of *abiding* places any requests that we might make of God, into the realm of being according to His will. Our focus must be on abiding in Him, not on our requests.

Jesus spoke concerning the Holy Spirit: “If ye love me, keep my commandments. And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another [*allos* – another of the same kind] Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever [Jesus had just spoken of leaving the disciples – vs. 1-4]; *Even* the

³⁰⁹ Strong’s Online.

³¹⁰ Marvin R. Vincent, Word Studies in the New Testament, Vol. IV, p. 137.

Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you [in the presence of Jesus amongst the disciples – John 1:32], and shall be in you [speaking of the day when the Spirit would come to abide within them]” (John 14:15-17).³¹¹ Jesus says that He will ask the Father to send the Spirit so that He might abide with us forever. In keeping with the model prayer that He taught the disciples, Jesus indicates that He will ask the Father to send the Spirit to abide within the disciples. Jesus goes on to provide further clarification on the coming of the Comforter: “... when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father ... he shall testify of me ...” (John 15:26). We notice that Jesus said that He would send the Spirit; we recognize that Jesus ascended to the Father prior to the coming of the Holy Spirit, and we see that the Spirit of God will bear witness of Jesus. Further to that, we are told that the Spirit, “when he is come [unto you (carrying the thought from the previous verse forward)], he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment ...” (John 16:8); the Spirit of God is actively convicting the world as He abides in those who belong to Christ. However, more importantly for those who place their faith in Christ, He “will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself ...” (John 16:13). We see the Spirit of God as the One Who is abiding within the believer, Who is heralding Jesus Christ, and providing guidance into all truth; considering the day in which we live, these are very significant and will clearly mark God’s faithful ones. Paul identified this reality in his letter to the Ephesians: “... after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise ...” (Ephesians 1:13); the Holy Spirit is the mark that we bear, for we have been stamped in order to be identified as His. The foundational understanding in all of this is that we will walk in obedience to the commands of the Lord (John 14:15) so that the righteousness of the Law of God might be manifested through us by the working of God’s Spirit (Romans 8:4).

As we view the Evangelical landscape today, we are only too painfully aware of the significant role that the will of man plays in determining his eternal destination. Sinful mankind still bears the image of God (Genesis 9:6), and part of that is his ability to exercise his will to choose. We recognize that the sinner can choose to go his own way, but we are less likely to be aware of the capability of someone who is presently faithful to choose a path that leads away from God. “Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God” (Hebrews 3:12); this warning is issued to *brethren*, not the ungodly, and warns of the very real possibility of apostasy (*departing*). “And the destruction of the transgressors and of the sinners *shall be* together, and they that forsake [abandon or apostatize] the LORD shall be consumed [destroyed]” (Isaiah 1:28);³¹² you cannot *forsake* that of which you were never a part, therefore, it must be understood that it is possible for the Lord’s faithful ones to apostatize. “For *it is* impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, If they shall fall away [*having fallen away*], to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put *him* to an open shame” (Hebrews 6:4-6).³¹³ The reality is that apostasy is eternal – it is impossible to recover from it. Jesus made only one sacrifice for sins, and if that Sacrifice has been appropriated and subsequently turned away from, then there is no longer a way of repentance available – the eternal destiny of that person is sealed.

³¹¹ Strong’s Online.

³¹² Ibid.

³¹³ Stephanus 1550 NT.

We have glimpsed some of the significance of the Holy Spirit in the life of the faithful believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, yet there is nothing to indicate that we are to address our prayers to the Holy Spirit. He is our intercessor with the Father, but we are not told to direct our petitions to Him. Yet how often we sing hymns that violate this teaching of the Scriptures; words like:

Spirit of God, descend upon my heart;
Wean it from earth; through all its pulses move;
Stoop to my weakness, mighty as Thou art;
And make me love Thee as I ought to love³¹⁴

or

Spirit divine, attend our prayer;
Make a lost world Thy home;
Descend with all thy gracious powers,
O come, great Spirit, come.³¹⁵

The latter of the two just quoted brings to mind the spiritism of the North American Indians who speak of worshipping the “great spirit.” “O Great Spirit, who art before all else and who dwells in every object, in every person and in every place, we cry unto Thee. We summon Thee from the far places into our present awareness.”³¹⁶ The Indians have no problem with praying to that spirit, but, rest assured, they are not praying to the God Who created them, only to a god of their own making whom they recognize as being spirit in form. Their panentheism³¹⁷ is very evident, but that is also becoming more acceptable among Evangelicals. As already noted, Max Lucado is now promoting the idea that everyone bears a spark of the divine within him – this is not arguing for the image of God still evident within sinful mankind, but rather that a small bit of God is within every one of us. What has formerly been readily recognized as paganism within the Indian culture has now begun to take root within Evangelical teaching. “God in everyone” is a form of panentheism that is becoming increasingly popular through the Emergent Church teachings; it is also the spirituality of which the world is so proud – look within to find the good that is common to everyone. Man is spiritually dead, and will die physically (the reality of being a son of Adam, 1 Corinthians 15:22), yet, even in this situation, God still acknowledged that man is made in His image (Genesis 9:6). Clearly, bearing the image of God has no impact on man’s fallen spiritual condition; without faith in Christ, we are all “dead in trespasses and sins” (Ephesians 2:1).

As the adopted children of God, we may well cry, “Abba, Father,” in the exhilaration of the relationship that we have with God (Romans 8:15); just as truly, the Spirit of God will cry, “Abba, Father” as He enters our being (our verse) and begins to intercede with God the Father on our behalf (Romans 8:26). Jesus said, “If ye love me, keep my commandments” (John 14:15). As we walk in obedience to the commands of God through the guiding work of His Spirit Who is now abiding within us, we will live out the righteousness of the Law of God (Romans 8:4). We are not adopted by God to live unto ourselves, but to live to bring glory to His name (Matthew 5:16; Ephesians 2:10). Paul’s desire was for the Galatians to realize their position in Christ before God, a position that is only achieved by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. The Spirit of God, Who was

³¹⁴ George Croly, “Spirit of God, Descend Upon My Heart.”

³¹⁵ Andrew Reed, “Spirit Divine, Attend Our Prayer.”

³¹⁶ <http://www.indigenouspeople.net/greatspi.htm>

³¹⁷ Panentheism – God exists and is part of everything (The whole is in God); pantheism – God is synonymous with all of nature (God is the whole); <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Panentheism>

abiding in them as sons, was in communion with God the Father – there was absolutely no need for them to step into the bondage of the Mosaic statutes and ordinances.

7. Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.

Continuing to build on the principle that, as believers, the Galatians had been adopted into a close relationship with God, Paul reiterates their position as sons, not servants. The Spirit of God is abiding within them; they are no longer under the tutelage of the Mosaic Law but have now entered into a full relationship with God as His adopted sons. If sons, then they are also declared to be inheritors of God; their adoption has brought them into a living relationship with God. The last two words, *through Christ*, form the critical factor in all of this, and it was the one thing that the Galatians were forgetting. This marvelous relationship with God, being adopted as God's sons and daughters and being made heirs, all comes through faith in Christ. The foundation of all that Paul has declared is faith in Christ, not obedience to the Law of Moses. Yet even as Paul was writing this letter of correction to the Galatians, they were in the process of replacing God, Who had called them into the grace of Christ, with a false gospel of faith and works (Galatians 1:6-7). Works are important (James makes that abundantly clear – James 2:26), however, they are never a part of salvation (Ephesians 2:8-9) but, rather, will flow out of our commitment to walk according to the Spirit of God Who lives in us (Romans 8:4).



“Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers ... for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in *them*; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean *thing*; and I will receive you, And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.” (2 Corinthians 6:14, 16-18). We must note the

qualification to being called the sons and daughters of God – we are to walk in holiness, separated from all that would defile us. This has not changed: “If ye walk in my statutes, and keep my commandments, and do them; ... [then] I will walk among you, and will be your God, and ye shall be my people” (Leviticus 26:3, 12). To walk by faith in the statutes and commandments that God gave to Moses (which foreshadowed the Messiah to come) would result in purity of life; one thing that the Mosaic Law (the statutes, judgments, priesthood and sacrificial system) emphasized was the holiness of God. Jesus said, “Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you. Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you” (John 15:14-15). Once again, the foundation for being called a friend by Jesus is our obedience to Him; there is no way to get away from this fundamental principle, for it is everywhere throughout God's Word. We come to God by faith (Hebrews 11:6), but then we must live out that faith through obedience to His commandments; remember, Jesus said, “Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls” (Matthew 11:29). It is notable that the yoke is an instrument for work – either to bring two animals together to accomplish a common task, or a bar that is suited for the shoulders of a man and used to carry a

load at each end. Either way, it is understood that idleness will not be the lot of the faithful in Christ. Could it be that through much repetition, God hopes that we will begin to understand His desire for us?

8. Howbeit then, when ye knew not God, ye did service unto them which by nature are no gods.

Paul now takes the Galatians back to the time before they placed their faith in Christ, to a time when they had no understanding of the true God. There are times when we need to look back to see where we have come from, not with longing for what has been left behind, but to see afresh the mercy and grace of God that has been at work in our lives. The word *knew* bears the idea of a full, or complete, knowledge; therefore, with the negative addition to this, it is clear that the Galatians previously had absolutely no knowledge of the true God.³¹⁸ This is an apt description of the state of mankind without Christ; even the religious fall into this category, for Jesus very plainly told the scribes and Pharisees of His day that they would die in their sins (John 8:21). These religious ones were no better or worse than the religious of our day, and their destination is the same; it matters not what religious stripe you want to wear – Evangelical, Fundamental, Pentecostal, or Reformed – there is no salvation within religion.³¹⁹ Jesus said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me” (John 14:6); unless our faith is in Jesus Christ, we have no hope. Paul now reminds the Galatians of where they once stood for the express purpose of helping them to see the contrast between where they were and where they are, all in an effort to get them to realize how they had failed to stand fast in their faith in Christ. If we look back, in this manner, we should see a difference between where we were and where we are – we should see growth in our understanding of God’s truth and His desire for us. However, if we are like the Galatians, we might well see a shift downward through compromise and/or neglect of God’s Word. Unless we are presently experiencing spiritual growth and an increasing desire for, and understanding of, what God desires of us, we are actually in decline. The only rest of which the Scriptures speak, is a future rest in glory and a present rest in the Lord Jesus Christ; neither of these involves inactivity, and it is clear from the Bible that we are presently involved in a struggle (John 16:33). Those who are actively engaged in standing firmly for the Lord cannot afford to sit-back, relax and listen to the harmonious bleating of the disguised wolves. We must be constantly vigilant (1 Peter 5:8) lest we succumb to the smooth words of those who would draw us into their net of deceit and error. The alluring voice of New Evangelical theology laid the groundwork of compromise for the devilish practices of the Emergent Church, which seeks to meld a form of Eastern mysticism with Christianity. God’s truth plus anything, is error, and we must carefully and deliberately avoid it (Romans 16:17-18) – this is the truth that Paul is trying to communicate to the Galatians.

Paul reminds them that they were servants to that which *by nature are no gods*. The insertion of the word *nature* not only emphasizes that what they served what were not gods (i.e., not deity), but that their service within this religion necessarily excluded them from any form of godliness.

³¹⁸ Vine’s “know.”

³¹⁹ By definition, religion is “**people's beliefs and opinions** concerning the existence, nature, and worship of a deity or deities, and divine involvement in the universe and human life” (Encarta Dictionary).

In his first letter to the Corinthians, Paul spoke of this as well: "... the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils [demons], and not to God ..." (1 Corinthians 10:20).³²⁰ Prior to coming to Christ, the service in which the Galatians had been involved was to Satan and his minions. Jesus declared very clearly: "He that is [present tense] not with me is against me; and he that gathereth [present tense] not with me scattereth abroad" (Matthew 12:30; Luke 11:23).³²¹ This is a significant dividing statement; there is no fence to straddle, only a decision to make as to whom we will serve. However, once again, we must be careful to recognize that the verbs in Jesus' statement are present tense – i.e., we must be *with* Him continually; it is not a decision that is made once and for all time, but rather a daily reality of consistently and persistently walking with Him. It was at this point that the Galatians were failing, and it is this failure that Paul is endeavoring to have them understand, so that they can return to their original commitment to the Lord.

9. But now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage?

Having just stated the spiritual reality of the Galatians prior to coming to Christ by faith, Paul again seeks to make them think about what they are doing by asking them a question. However, he precedes the question with a quick reminder of their relationship with God; it is really a parenthetical comment to stimulate serious consideration of his question.

He begins with *after that ye have known God*. The Greek word for *known* speaks of an understanding of God "not by mere intellectual activity, but by operation of the Holy Spirit consequent upon acceptance of Christ."³²² This is supported by the declaration made in verse six: "... God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts" As stated before, these people were not simply religious; they were truly born of the Spirit of God. They not only held an understanding of God, but the Spirit of God was present in their lives to guide them into all truth (John 16:13); they had truly experienced the reality of walking in the Spirit (Romans 8:4).

However, Paul goes on: *or rather are known of God*. *Rather* comes from a Greek word that means "to a greater degree," often translated as *more*.³²³ The word *known*, although the Greek word is similar to the one already used, carries the idea of approval as well. The concept presented here is this: yes, you have known God, but, to a greater degree, God has known and approved of you. This is a significant declaration – prior to their present brink-of-failure position, the Galatians had lived under God's approving knowledge of who they were in Christ.

Now comes the question, and the pivotal word in the question is *turn*. It carries the present tense, and therefore, it must be understood that the Galatians were in the process of turning,³²⁴ or *reverting* anew to a former condition.³²⁵ This stands in complete agreement with Paul's declaration that they were removing themselves from God Who had called them to Christ, unto a false gospel (Galatians 1:6-7); then he adds the thought that they were returning to something that they had

³²⁰ Strong's Dictionary.

³²¹ Strong's Online.

³²² Vine's "known."

³²³ Strong's Online.

³²⁴ Ibid.

³²⁵ Strong's Dictionary.

held once before (*again*). The reality of this is that it did not matter to what they turned, for whatever it might appear to be, it was still away from God.

The Galatians were reverting to the *weak and beggarly elements*; they were turning back to a physical form of religion that is *without strength* and *destitute*.³²⁶ They were turning to an adherence to the Mosaic Law of statutes and ordinances, all of which had been ended at Calvary through the work of Christ (Galatians 3:19). Having been abolished by God through Christ (Ephesians 2:15), the keeping of these traditions was not only an effort in futility, but an affront to the Lord Jesus Christ – He had removed them. They no longer held any spiritual significance; as important as these practices had been before the coming of Christ, they no longer held any value – the One Whom they foreshadowed had come; their purpose had been fulfilled. Consider this: many of these Galatians would have been Gentiles, and what is striking here is that Paul makes no differentiation between the futility of paganism and holding to the Mosaic traditions. Both are considered to be of no value in our relationship with God through Christ – a strong statement against what the Judaizers were determined to implement. It is important that we understand this in our present day as well, for there are a growing number of groups who advocate keeping the feasts and some of the traditions of the Mosaic Law; the Seventh-Day Adventists are opening this door (it was not approved by Ellen G. White, but the sense is that she would have if she had had time to study the matter) and they are not alone.³²⁷

Earlier, in verse three, it became clear that the Mosaic Law was a bondage to the children of Israel – it was very physically demanding, and that did not change even with a heart of faith to see what God would provide through its fulfillment. It is this concept that fleshes out the final phrase of Paul’s question – are you Galatians desiring to be in bondage once again? It is a question with a great deal of incredulity in it. Why, when you have known God and been known and approved by Him, would you desire to be enslaved again under physical demands; whether of paganism or the traditions of Moses, it matters little.

10. Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years.

There are two things that we need to note about the word *observe*. First of all, it is in the present tense, indicating that this was something that the Galatians were doing. Secondly, the Greek word, *paratereo*, means “to watch assiduously, observe carefully,” or to “keep scrupulously.”³²⁸ This was not a casual observance of festivities whenever the mood might hit – intensive attention is being given to the details of the Mosaic demands so that nothing was omitted or left undone. Under the Mosaic Covenant, there were special days to be observed (for example, Leviticus 23:5-6 [the Passover and first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread], Leviticus 23:34 [first day of the Feast of Tabernacles]). With the beginning of each month, there were special activities that had to be kept (Numbers 28:11-14). The word *times* speaks of a clearly defined period of time; for example, the Feast of Unleavened Bread was held for seven days, and there were different offerings that had to be made during that time (Numbers 28:17-25). Within the Mosaic tradition,

³²⁶ Strong’s Dictionary; Strong’s Online.

³²⁷ <https://yrm.org/seventh-day-adventist-church/>; <https://www.washingtonpost.com/outlook/2019/08/19/why-many-evangelical-christians-now-celebrate-jewish-holidays/>

³²⁸ Strong’s Online.

every seventh year was a time of rest for the land when nothing was to be planted (Leviticus 25:4), and every fiftieth year was when everyone was restored to his original property, a time of new beginnings for those who had not fared well (Leviticus 25:10) – again, a year when nothing was to be planted or reaped. This list of days, months, times and years might seem of little consequence to us but to those who were endeavoring to follow the traditions of the Mosaic Law, this would have highlighted their perpetual need to keep meticulous records so that they would always be prepared for the next feast, festival or special observation. After coming to Christ by faith, this was what the Galatians were now settling for: from freedom in Christ to live out the righteousness of the Law through the enablement of the Spirit of God, to bondage in keeping strict, physical regiments (something that had been done away with by Christ).

Jesus said, “If ye love me, keep my commandments” (John 14:15). Undoubtedly, they would have said that they loved the Lord, yet they were endeavoring to keep something that the Lord had removed. Jesus also said: “... when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth ...” (John 16:13). We’ve already seen that these Galatians had received the Spirit of God; they knew what it meant to walk in the righteousness of the Law of God through the working of the Spirit, and yet they were falling prey to the Judaizers. In essence, they were failing to give heed to the Spirit’s guidance. We might be highly critical of them – after all, they had the Apostle Paul teaching them what it meant to be a Christian; yet how often do we fail to apply the clear Word of God to our own situations? We might rationalize that it is common practice, perhaps even among those whom we might consider to be wonderful Christians. However, our faith is to be in the Lord Jesus Christ and not in the words or examples of men; our standard must always be the Word of God, and never polished theologies. The Bereans received commendation for their diligence (Acts 17:11); the Galatians were receiving Paul’s disapproval for their willingness to turn away from the Gospel of God. Consider Paul’s instruction to Timothy: “Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue [present tense] in them: for in doing [present tense] this thou shalt both save [future tense] thyself, and them that hear [present tense] thee” (1 Timothy 4:16).³²⁹

11. I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain.

Paul is not saying that he is scared of the Galatians, as we might interpret this first phrase; rather, he is afraid, or alarmed, concerning them.³³⁰ Based upon what we have looked at so far, Paul’s fear is for their spiritual wellbeing; it is their departure from the truth (Galatians 3:1), and their replacement of God (Who called them to Christ) with a false gospel (Galatians 1:6-7) that has given rise to Paul’s deep anxiety for their spiritual welfare. His concern is even to the point that he fears that he might well have expended such exhausting toil (*labour*) upon them for no purpose.

What we cannot overlook is that these people were true Christians; the Spirit of God had been sent to abide within them (Galatians 3:6). However, they were being conned into believing that they could complete (or, perhaps, improve) their faith through their own righteous acts (Galatians 3:3), and they were being convinced to set aside their saving faith in Christ for a system of works, by which no one will ever be justified (Galatians 2:16). The subtlety of the allurements was that they did not recognize that they were setting their faith in Christ aside, but thought that they were

³²⁹ Strong’s Online.

³³⁰ Strong’s Dictionary.

actually enhancing their faith. When the devil came to Eve with his charming, “Yea, hath God said,” he brought the same two realities that were facing the Galatians: there was an underlying contravention of God’s truth, while superficially there appeared to be a benefit or a positive result. For Eve, the devil’s “Ye shall not surely die” (Genesis 3:4) was a direct denial of God’s word (Genesis 2:17), but that was quickly masked with the obvious benefit of knowing both good and evil (Genesis 3:5). For the Galatians, the contravention was contaminating faith in Christ with fleshly works (Galatians 1:6-7 makes it clear that this is impossible), and the supposed benefit was a form of righteous living by keeping the long-standing Mosaic traditions. Today we see the all-pervasive Ecumenical mindset that loudly proclaims the need to love one another (and the seemingly undeniable benefit of this way of thinking), even while they depart from the clear teaching of God’s Word that we are to separate from everyone who does not live according to His Truth (Romans 16:17). Eve’s failure to discern led to man’s fall into sin; the Galatians were on the brink of apostasy for endeavoring to add the Mosaic traditions to their faith in Christ; Evangelicals today have become largely apostate (or religiously pagan) for relinquishing their grasp on the truths of God’s Word and falling from a life of purity in the Spirit of God. Paul, indeed, feared that the labor that he had expended upon these Galatians would be so much wasted effort (if they fell away, his work would have been in vain); evidence would seem to indicate that his warnings that were written to the Galatians, are falling on deaf ears today.

12. Brethren, I beseech you, be as I *am*; for I *am* as ye *are*: ye have not injured me at all.

Once again, Paul addresses the Galatians as *brethren*; this is further confirmation of their present state as believers – something from which they were in jeopardy of falling away. To call them back from the brink of spiritual disaster, Paul begs them to be as he is (to follow his example, see also 1 Corinthians 4:16; 11:1; Philippians 4:9). Within the context of what has been written up to this point, this can mean nothing other than being free from the burden and demands of the Mosaic Law of statutes and ordinances. What the Galatians were falling into, Paul, as a religious Jew, had been freed from through faith in Christ.

Paul then goes on to identify with them: *I am as ye are*. This cannot mean that Paul was on the brink of returning to the traditions of Moses, but that he had identified himself with the Gentiles; he had set aside all of the advantages that he had as a Jew. “If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more: Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ” (Philippians 3:4b-7). Paul held none of those things that had made him a Jew of the Jews as being of any spiritual value; among the Corinthians, he determined “not to know any thing ... save Jesus Christ, and him crucified” (1 Corinthians 2:2). There was no perpetuating the traditions of the Mosaic Law within Paul’s Message; in his faith in Christ, he became as a Gentile – no longer holding onto his Jewish traditions, and his Jewish traditions had no hold on him.

The last phrase, *ye have not injured me at all*, would appear to be an opening statement of fact for what is following, and does not speak to the present situation with the Galatians. Undoubtedly Paul had been hurt by their present state of potential apostasy, for he has just declared that he

feared lest he should have labored among them in vain (Galatians 3:11). It would seem that this phrase applies to his first time with these people when they gave heed to his Message and demonstrated grace toward his needs. The thought has been laid out as, “Ye did not injure me then, do not do so now.”³³¹

13. Ye know how through infirmity of the flesh I preached the gospel unto you at the first.

As Paul takes a moment to speak of his first time with the Galatians, it would seem that he is trying to remind them of it and their attitude toward him. He reminds them that when he was first among them, he declared the Good News (*preached the gospel*) to them in weakness.³³² In his first letter to the Corinthians, Paul expresses this same thought: “I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling” (1 Corinthians 2:3). *Infirmity* and *weakness* are the same word in the Greek, and speak to the lack of strength for the task at hand. The *trembling* speaks of his coming to them “with fear and trembling, used to describe the anxiety of one who distrusts his ability completely to meet all requirements, but religiously does his utmost to fulfil his duty.”³³³ This was Paul, the man who had received direct revelation from God concerning the Gospel that he was to bring to the Gentiles, yet it seems clear that God placed a physical weakness within him that served to keep him humble (2 Corinthians 12:7). As Paul sought the Lord to free him from this *infirmity*, the Lord provided clarification of His working even through this: “For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ’s sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong” (2 Corinthians 12:8-10).

14. And my temptation which was in my flesh ye despised not, nor rejected; but received me as an angel of God, *even* as Christ Jesus.

Paul includes another reminder here that his *infirmity* was physical, perhaps emphasized to make it clear that this weakness was not spiritual or mental.

There are three words used here that are stronger than they might appear in our English translation. *Temptation* speaks of a trial – in this case a physical weakness “of such a kind as to arouse feelings of natural repugnance.”³³⁴ Despite this, Paul says that the Galatians did not *despise* him; they did not regard him as nothing or treat him with contempt,³³⁵ nor did they *reject* him – literally, “to spit out.”³³⁶ Paul is endeavoring to instill, within the minds of the Galatians, a

³³¹ [Vincent’s Word Studies](#), *ESword*.

³³² [Strong’s Online](#).

³³³ *Ibid*.

³³⁴ [Vine’s](#) “temptation.”

³³⁵ [Vine’s](#) “despise.”

³³⁶ [Vine’s](#) “reject.”

recollection of the time when he first came to them, when he bore in his body that *infirmity* – a weakness that could have caused them to turn away from him.

However, the Galatians received, or accepted, Paul into their midst despite his weakness, and he describes his reception as if he were an angel, or messenger, from God; they received him as if he were the Lord Himself. Paul uses strong language to describe his physical infirmity, but he uses language equally as strong to describe how they accepted him into their community. The implication in all of this is that their reception of the Message that Paul brought was both open and strong.

15. Where is then the blessedness ye spake of? for I bear you record, that, if *it had been* possible, ye would have plucked out your own eyes, and have given them to me.

Robert Young translates the question as: “what then was your happiness?”³³⁷ Paul came to the Galatians preaching the Gospel of Christ, and they openly received him and his Message. Since they embraced him and the truth that he brought to them with such gladness of heart, Paul’s question is meant to have them call to mind the basis for their happiness.

It is from this verse that many speculate that Paul’s infirmity was an eye disease of some sort. However, the emphasis within the Greek evidently does not permit such a direct application of the words used, but rather underscores the attitude of the Galatians to Paul; “their devotion prompted a readiness to part with their most treasured possession on his behalf.”³³⁸ They would have done anything to be of help to Paul; anything, within their ability to perform, would have been done with gladness. Such was his reception among these people when he first came to them.

16. Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?

Paul now turns a corner. After reminding them of how they had received him when he first came to them, he asks now if he has become their enemy – odious in their sight and hated by them.³³⁹ We have seen so clearly, the error into which the Galatians had fallen, and Paul’s disapproval of what was taking place would have seemed even sharper to those who were falling prey to the Judaizers. Considering the reception that these people had originally given to Paul, he is wondering if they will now hate him because of the truth that he is telling them (present tense) in this letter. Would their attitude towards him change because of the message of correction that he was writing to them (and which they would be reading)?

The reality is that the truth often times will not win many friends; it is decidedly exclusive and narrow, which is not a popular thing within our inclusive society. Jesus said of the Jews who followed Him: “... because I tell *you* the truth, ye believe me not” (John 8:45). The words of Jesus, the Truth, became a barrier to them, and they refused to accept Him for Who He was. It is because

³³⁷ YLT.

³³⁸ Vine’s “pluck.”

³³⁹ Strong’s Online.

of an unwillingness to receive the truth that the Antichrist will receive such a broad acceptance (2 Thessalonians 2:10-12). Truth can be very uncomfortable, for it will often require us to change what we have become accustomed to doing. As Paul expounded his position in contradiction to the Galatians' error, his question is very understandable. Despite the grand reception that he had received when he first brought the words of life and truth to them, would they now turn their backs on him because he sought, with great earnestness, to turn them from the error that was about to cost them their spiritual lives?

We read Jesus' words: "Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you, Nay; but rather division ..." (Luke 12:51), and we also read: "So there was a division among the people because of him" (John 7:43). Jesus, the eternal Truth (John 14:6 and 17:17), brought division while on earth, and the same is to be the case today (Romans 16:17-18). However, what must not be overlooked is that the Truth, the Word of God, is eternally settled in the heavens (Psalm 119:89), and it cannot, nor will it ever, change or be changed! Therefore, when a teaching, thought, or action does not align itself with the pure Word of God, there is automatically a separation from the Truth, for God's truth is eternally the same. When Evangelicals and Fundamentalists tenaciously hold to doctrines that do not find support from the eternally established Word of Truth, they have separated themselves from that which has been eternally established by God. This is the reason why we are to diligently weigh all that we hear and read against the perfect Standard of God's Word (1 John 4:1), lest we inadvertently align ourselves with those who have separated themselves from God by fiercely holding onto doctrines that do not agree with Scripture. This is also the reason why we are to separate ourselves from those whom we recognize as having departed from the truth of God. Biblical separation is an essential doctrine for the preservation of the saints of God; the antithesis of this is the Ecumenical unity that is rife among Evangelicals today, a unity that comes through compromise and acceptance of all kinds of teachings.

Elijah recognized this important truth as he dealt with King Ahab. After there had been drought in the land of Israel for three and a half years, Elijah came to Ahab. "And it came to pass, when Ahab saw Elijah, that Ahab said unto him, *Art* thou he that troubleth Israel? And he answered, I have not troubled Israel; but thou, and thy father's house, in that ye have forsaken the commandments of the LORD, and thou hast followed Baalim" (1 Kings 18:17-18). Ahab had forsaken the truth of God and had aligned himself with the gods of the heathen, and Elijah makes it very clear that this was the cause of the trouble in Israel. Even though the drought had come at the word of Elijah (God working through him), it was due to Ahab's failure to follow the Lord. Elijah then led the children of Israel to Mt. Carmel where he called on them to decide whom they would follow – God or Baal (1 Kings 18:21); here was a call to choose, for they could not dabble in both and be accepted by God. God is exclusive, and will not abide a mixture of righteousness and evil (Revelation 3:16). The Ecumenical unity of Evangelicalism seeks to do that very thing – downplay the truth in favor of love and acceptance; this is a lukewarm mixture that God says that He will vomit (*spue*) out of His mouth.

A recent visit with an Evangelical friend showed the reality of this compromised, lukewarm understanding. What he emphasized, above all else, was that God loves us. Yes, God does love us, for it was through the expression of His love that He gave Jesus to die for the sins of mankind (John 3:16). However, it was the holiness and justice of God that required that ultimate sacrifice to be made for us. God is first, and foremost, a holy God; His holiness is emphasized in the Scriptures and He is declared to be holy by the heavenly creatures (Isaiah 6:3; Revelation 4:8). When God created man in His image (Genesis 1:26), His desire was to have fellowship with him

(Genesis 3:8). When Adam sinned, he immediately died spiritually (his fellowship with his Creator was broken), just as God had warned him (Genesis 2:17); we read: “*Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity ...*” (Habakkuk 1:13a). If a holy God was to have fellowship with sinful man, something had to be done to atone for man’s sinfulness. Even while still in the Garden of Eden, God made coverings for Adam and Eve through the shedding of blood (Genesis 3:21), and this foreshadowed the One Who would come to make the final sacrifice for sins on Calvary. The love of God desires fellowship with man (unfortunately, it seems that Evangelicals stop there), the holiness of God cannot abide the sin that is now a part of man, the justice of God demands payment for man’s sinfulness, and the mercy of God finds expression through Jesus Christ. Jesus came to earth (the expression of God’s love – John 3:16) and lived a life of purity (the perfect expression of God’s holiness – Hebrews 4:15), and, as the perfect Lamb of God, He provided redemption for man through His death and resurrection (He opened the way of salvation by fulfilling the required justice for sin – John 3:17). God is love – it cannot be denied, because the Scriptures make it very clear: “He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love” (1 John 4:8). What is marvelous to behold is the holiness, the justice and the love of God all working together to make a way for man to have fellowship with Him again. “Jesus saith ..., I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me” (John 14:6). “Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide *is* the gate, and broad *is* the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait *is* the gate, and narrow *is* the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it” (Matthew 7:13-14). Jesus describes Himself as being the Way, and explains that the Way is *narrow*, or tightly compressed. The Evangelical emphasis on love has resulted in a message of openness and tolerance, but this does not align with the pure, unalterable Word of God, and we who are in Christ, must reject it completely.

The concept of truth has taken a real beating in our day. In recent years, a poll taken of “born-again” adults in America showed that only 44% believed in “the existence of absolute moral truth.”³⁴⁰ Clearly, those who are supposed to be handling the Word of God have given in to pleasant homilies and smooth words of encouragement that appeal to the itching ears of their hearers (2 Timothy 4:3-4). There is no longer a compulsion among Evangelical preachers to teach the Word of God and proclaim it with clarity and fervency; they realize the loss of popularity that would be theirs, and have opted instead for soft-sounding messages that leave their hearers feeling comforted rather than convicted. The devil has succeeded in twisting the concept of truth into a subjective pretzel that bears no resemblance to the truth that is expounded in the Word of God. Unfortunately, there is too little discernment within the body of church-goers today to recognize the handiwork of the devil.

17. They zealously affect you, *but* not well; yea, they would exclude you, that ye might affect them.

Zealously affect is one word in the Greek and means “to desire one earnestly, to strive after.”³⁴¹ The Judaizers had a passionate desire to convince the Galatians of their philosophy; after all, they were sure that they were correct in their understanding (Acts 15:5). Evangelization is not

³⁴⁰ <http://www.crossroad.to/charts/church-statistics.html>

³⁴¹ Strong’s Online.

limited to believers in Christ; those who come under the spell of Satan's philosophies will also seek to convince others of the truth of their position – Satan would not have it any other way. He began his program of evangelism right in the Garden of Eden, and began his first message to mankind with the words, “Yea, hath God said ...?” (Genesis 3:1). Although the context of his luring message has changed many times, the words have varied little; his methodology is typically to cast doubt on the words of God. When Harold Ockenga announced the New Evangelicalism in 1948, one of the platforms for this new way of thinking was to revisit some of the fundamental doctrines of Scripture in light of the position of the religious Liberals. Do you recognize the “Yea, hath God said” of the devil in that? If Satan can bring us to question even one clear statement of the Word of God, he has then established a toe-hold in our thinking. “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour ...” (1 Peter 5:8); we must be ever on guard against the wiles of the devil. Paul makes it evident here that the Judaizers' earnest desire for the Galatians was not right; they had a passion, but it was not Biblically based. The people of this world can be very passionate about their concept of spirituality, but that does not make it good, only more dangerous to those who hear.

The caution for the Christian is this: when the Scriptures are clear on a matter, be inflexible because your position is founded firmly upon the word of the eternal God. However, on those things that are not addressed by the Scriptures, we must be more tolerant, yet we must still examine all positions and their foundations against the one true Standard (1 John 4:1). Unfortunately, today most Evangelicals have set God's Word aside in favor of the well-crafted theologies of men (and there is a difference), so that most today will defer to their favorite preacher or author. Throughout the Dark Ages, the Roman Catholic priests withheld the Bible from the people on the premise that they would fall into error if allowed to read it for themselves; today, church-goers have voluntarily forfeited God's Word in favor of the opinions and philosophies of scholarly theologians, and we are rapidly entering a new age of darkness.

Paul now seeks to expose the works of the Judaizers. He states that their desire is to *exclude you*, [*ekkleio*] i.e., it is their intent to shut out.³⁴² Based on what Paul has already declared, this can only mean that they sought to shut these people out of salvation that only comes through faith in Christ – the Judaizers may not have understood this, for frequently those who are deceiving are also being deceived (2 Timothy 3:13). Jesus' words to the Pharisees fit well here: “... woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees [and Judaizers], hypocrites! for ye shut up [*kleio*] the kingdom of heaven against [in front of] men: for ye neither go in *yourselves*, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in” (Matthew 23:13).³⁴³ The message of the Judaizers was a perverted gospel of works and faith that Paul has already clearly condemned (Galatians 1:7); therefore, it is very safe to say that the Judaizers were not on the pathway that leads to life – they were not entering into faith in Christ. However, they were not satisfied to keep such a corrupted message to themselves but sought to convince those who had accepted Christ by faith, those who were the sons of God, that the works of the Law of Moses were integral to faith in Christ. We may be assured that Satan will never keep his perversions of the Gospel message to himself. “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: Whom resist stedfast in the faith ...” (1 Peter 5:8-9). Satan is a master at making evil appear to be good (Isaiah 5:20), and

³⁴² Strong's Online.

³⁴³ Ibid.

disobedience as something desirable (Genesis 3:5-6), yet his end purpose is always to destroy (*devour*).

The motive of the Judaizers is revealed here: “that ye might affect them”; literally: *in order that you being zealous for them*.³⁴⁴ This is a purpose clause, and thereby expresses why the Judaizers are zealously trying to persuade the Galatians to follow them – they want to increase their following. Many years earlier, Paul and Barnabas had experienced this attitude from the Jews in this very region (Acts 13:45) – the size of the apostles following became their motivation for persecution. The Judaizers sought to have the Galatians earnestly desire them, to look to them as their mentors and teachers; this was their motivation, but this would only take place if the Galatian believers decided to accept their teachings. Paul is intent on providing the Galatians with all of the reasons that they need to dismiss the Judaizers’ teachings – if only they will have eyes to see the truth that Paul is presenting.

18. But *it is* good to be zealously affected always in a good *thing*, and not only when I am present with you.

Paul says here that it is good to be earnestly desired (*zealously affected*), but only in that which is good. In essence, he did not have a problem with the zeal of the Judaizers (for he was also a man of great zeal – Galatians 1:14), the difficulty was that the Judaizers were not grounded in the truth of the Gospel message; they had polluted and perverted the Word of Truth and therefore, their zeal was ill founded and to be avoided.

When Paul began his defense before the Jews of Jerusalem, he said: “I am verily a man *which am* a Jew, born in Tarsus, *a city* in Cilicia, yet brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, *and* taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers, and was zealous toward God, as ye all are this day” (Acts 22:3). He describes himself as being *zealous toward God*, and attributes to his hearers the same passion for God. However, clearly zeal alone is insufficient and can be either positive or negative; unless it is founded upon a proper understanding of God’s Message to mankind, it is of little value. The world today might well be enthusiastic in the declaration of their inclusive form of spirituality, but that will accomplish nothing in light of eternity; there is still only one Way to God (John 14:6). Rick Warren may speak very eloquently and with great enthusiasm as he garners the support and assistance of the Muslim community, but he, nonetheless, walks in disobedience to God’s Word. As the Judaizers came to the Galatians, they came with well-polished arguments and made their case with great passion, yet the basis for their position was contrary to the message of the Gospel, and therein they failed. The latter part of this verse tells us that Paul was not possessive of the Galatians; he did not claim them as his own, thereby making the Judaizers wrong. No, the Judaizers were wrong because the basis of their teaching was in falsehood, and not because they were approaching those whom Paul had taught and established in the Lord.

When Paul was with the Galatians, he was zealous, earnestly desiring to impart to them the truths of God; he longed to draw them into a fuller understanding of faith in Christ. Yet he did not hoard this for himself; as he declared to the Corinthians: “I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase” (1 Corinthians 3:6). Paul’s overwhelming concern for the Galatians was

³⁴⁴ Stephanus 1550 NT.

that those who would seek to impart some truth to them would do so upon the foundation of Truth, *in a good* thing. It mattered not to him who desired the attention of the Galatians, as long as the message that they brought was the Truth of God.

19. My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you,

The Greek word correctly translated here as *little children*,³⁴⁵ is a “term of affection [used] by a teacher to his disciples under circumstances requiring a tender appeal.”³⁴⁶ As Paul has opened his heart to the Galatians, it has been with a burning desire to have them understand that they are standing on the brink of spiritual disaster. Even as he would have taught them during his first journey through their area, he now appeals to them as their teacher.

We can catch a glimpse of the zeal and passion that Paul had for these people. The phrase *travail in birth* is one word in the Greek and means “to *experience* the *pains* of parturition” or giving birth.³⁴⁷ Paul is in childbirth for these people, *again!* When he first came into this region, he would have found these people serving pagan gods (Galatians 4:8), and, evidently, he went through this same intense expenditure of labor to see Christ instilled in them. Now, as the Judaizers wreak their havoc among the Galatian Christians, Paul says that he is in travail again, and will continue in such pain until Christ might be formed in them. We must not miss the intensity of this situation. Paul was in *travail* when he first preached the Gospel to these people, so that they might come to faith in Christ; he *travails again* as they are in the process of embracing the error of the Judaizers, and longs that they might regain their hold on the truth of the Gospel. The anguish of soul that Paul felt when they first came out of paganism is the same as his desire to see them come out of the error of the Judaizers. This gives us a glimpse into the attitude that Paul held toward these who taught a false gospel of faith and works; they were as the heathen! We saw Paul equating the message of the Judaizers with paganism in Galatians 4:9 – even though they were turning to the works of the Mosaic Law, the result is the same as the paganism out of which they came during Paul and Barnabas’ first journey through this area. The Gospel plus anything does two things: 1) it destroys the Gospel, for it is no longer pure (Galatians 1:7), and 2) whatever it may appear to be, it is no better than dead paganism (Galatians 4:9).

Probably the primary example today of those who cling to a faith and works message is the Roman Catholics (although they are certainly not the only ones). Salvation, within their religion, comes by faith in the working of their sacraments. “The Council of Trent solemnly defined that there are seven sacraments ... truly and properly so called, viz., Baptism, Confirmation, Holy Eucharist, Penance, Extreme Unction, Orders, and Matrimony.”³⁴⁸ Salvation within the Catholic teaching is somewhat convoluted, but begins with this: “children and those permanently deprived of their use of reason are saved by the Sacrament of Baptism.”³⁴⁹ Upon this foundation are built the various sacraments, which, if kept religiously according to Catholic tradition, will instill an element of sanctifying grace in the life of the participant. Although the Catholics will speak of

³⁴⁵ Strong’s Online.

³⁴⁶ Vine’s “children.”

³⁴⁷ Strong’s Dictionary.

³⁴⁸ <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/13295a.htm#IV>

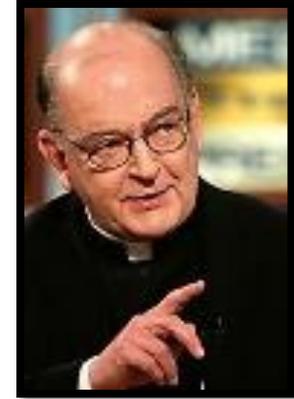
³⁴⁹ <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/13407a.htm>



Chuck Colson

works flowing from their faith, their practices contradict their words, for it is through faithfully keeping the seven Church-prescribed sacraments that they offer any hope of salvation – and that only if they are kept to the death. Yet what is the attitude of today’s Evangelical toward those who hold tenaciously to the Catholic faith? Chuck Colson has been a strong advocate for having Evangelicals join together with the Roman Catholics, and has zealously promoted the need to reduce our doctrines to a few that are held in common with them. Colson makes this statement: “The Scripture is clear on this; unity is a matter of obedience,”³⁵⁰ and uses Ephesians 4:4-5 as his only

defense. However, this passage speaks against Colson, for the Catholics do not hold to the same faith or baptism as the true believer in the Lord. Not to be dissuaded, Colson quickly declares: “True unity is not sought by pretending that there are no differences, as modern Ecumenists have done, but by recognizing and respecting those differences, while focusing on the great orthodox truth all Christians share.”³⁵¹ Paul would have been in great agony over Colson’s words, yet Evangelicals today, for the most part, have come to accept that many Catholics are their brothers and sisters in the Lord. “Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them” (Romans 16:17). With the New Evangelical repudiation of Biblical separation, it was only a matter of time before *Evangelicals and Catholics Together* (the document drafted by Colson [a Baptist] and Richard Neuhaus [a Catholic]) became a reality.



Richard Neuhaus

Paul’s agony for the Galatians was that Christ might *be formed in you*. Even while being in agony over the error that these people were beginning to embrace, Paul recognizes that he cannot force them to be in Christ and Christ in them. Once again, we are faced with the unknown factor of the will of man – God has done everything necessary for man to walk faithfully in Christ, yet that does not mean that he will do so. The word *formed* is in the subjunctive mood in the Greek, and so it is “as many as are led [*being led* (present tense)] by the Spirit of God, they are [indicative mood – a statement of fact] the sons of God” (Romans 8:14);³⁵² the reality is that unless we are being led by the Spirit of God, we are **not** considered to be the sons of God.

20. I desire to be present with you now, and to change my voice; for I stand in doubt of you.

In his agony of heart over the failure of the Galatians to remain true to the commitment that they had made to Christ, Paul expresses his deep longing to be with them at this time. He is endeavoring to express his heart and longing for them through the words of this letter, but he would

³⁵⁰ Colson, *Body*, p. 102.

³⁵¹ *Ibid*, p. 104.

³⁵² Strong’s Online.

much rather have been with them in person. If, perhaps, he was with them, he could change his tone, for he would be able to reason with them and to respond to their arguments for doing what they were. The essence of this is that because he is limited to writing to them, he is trying to make them understand the error that they were about to embrace, and doing so in the strongest and clearest terms that he can find. Is he overstating his case? No, but he is laying it out methodically and in terms that they will not misunderstand, with the realization that this is probably his only opportunity to prevent them from falling into apostasy.

Paul declares, *I stand in doubt* – this is one word in Greek, and means that he is at a loss or is perplexed by their situation.³⁵³ “And when they had preached the gospel to that city [Derbe], and had taught many, they returned again to Lystra, and to Iconium, and Antioch, Confirming [to strengthen more] the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue [remain] in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God. And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed” (Acts 14:21-23).³⁵⁴ When Paul and Barnabas left the area of Galatia, the people were strengthened in their understanding of the Gospel and had been challenged to persevere in the faith. Paul and Barnabas had provided them with leadership to watch over them, and had entrusted them to the Lord in Whom they had believed – there was no doubt as to their spiritual standing with the Lord. Yet Paul expresses that he is now puzzled by their present actions that don’t fit with what he recalls when he and Barnabas left them. It is this doubt that compels him to express his concern as clearly and forcefully as possible so as to avert their inevitable apostasy if they continue with their error – their spiritual disaster of falling from faith in the Lord Jesus Christ (Galatians 1:6-7).

21. Tell me, ye that desire to be under the law, do ye not hear the law?

Here is a shift in focus. Up to this point, Paul has addressed his letter to all of the Galatians, but in this next section he is addressing specifically to those who are being convinced of the necessity to keep the Mosaic traditions. The word *hear* is more than simply perceiving the sound of something, but also includes the thought of understanding what is being said – it is always more than simply hearing (or reading) the Word of God, which, in itself, holds little value unless we understand what is being spoken or read. This is so evident in those who read the Scriptures regularly, yet never grow in their comprehension of what God is saying in His Word. Modern theologians of all stripes continually exemplify this – they might well study and teach the Scriptures, but they do so through the grid of their own man-made understanding of what God is saying. Unless we are prepared to permit the Spirit of God to speak through the Word of God, we will be left with only man’s slant on what God is saying. In dealing with such controversial matters as eternal security, church structure, and a proper understanding of the seventh-day Sabbath, there is a great reluctance to permit the Bible to speak for itself. We are called to test all things according to the Word of God (1 John 4:1) – the only basis for dismissing something must be that it does not agree with the Scriptures, not that it simply does not align with our theology or opinion on a matter.

³⁵³ Friberg Lexicon.

³⁵⁴ Strong’s Online.

Paul is saying to those who insist on being under the Mosaic Law, “Don’t you understand what the Law is saying to you?” He has already made it very clear that the Mosaic Law was set in place to bring them “unto Christ, [so] that [they] might be justified by faith” (Galatians 3:24). The end, or purpose, of the Mosaic Law was saving faith in God’s provision for man’s sin; yet when the Galatians had arrived at faith in Christ (the *end* of the Mosaic Law), they were now being convinced to pollute it with that which Christ had removed at great cost (Ephesians 2:15). It’s perhaps a little like buying a brand new car, having the pleasure of its use, but then deciding to use a horse to pull it around because that is a long-standing tradition known to our forefathers for many generations. There is nothing spiritual about elevating the traditions of man – even traditions that had been established by God for a season.

While communicating with a Calvinist acquaintance, what became apparent very early on was that he was totally dependent upon Reformed theology and the ancient creeds that he had accepted as truth – they were his sole basis for “salvation.” His faith was founded on the belief that these theologies and creeds accurately represented the truths of the Word of God, but he would not examine them in the light of Scripture. Whenever he opened the Bible, what he saw was viewed through the prism of Reformed theology, and, after doing this long enough, he was convinced that what he saw was right-side up when in reality it was upside down. Paul is advocating that the Galatians have faith in Christ only – not in a theology, not in a creed, not even in the Mosaic Law, which was established by God for a time and an expressed purpose (and is now fulfilled in Christ). The Way to life is narrow (Matthew 7:14; John 14:6), and there is no room to carry the baggage of man-made theologies; it is a faith-only Way, all else must be left behind.

As we look around at the Evangelical landscape today, what is amazing to consider is that numerous individuals, who spend their whole lives studying the Word of God, never come to a



How a deceived wolf sees himself.

knowledge of the truth (2 Timothy 3:7). Like the Judaizers who were luring the Galatians away from the truth, Evangelicalism today has produced many who with “good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple” (Romans 16:18). The *simple* are those who are unsuspecting, or who distrust no one – those who in reality are either unwilling or unable to hold what they hear and see up to the light of the Scriptures (1 John 4:1). As the Evangelical community at large becomes increasingly ignorant of the Word of God, this is an apt description of who they are before their chosen, bleating wolves who love to speak “sheep.” Indeed, the time has come when Evangelicals “will not endure sound doctrine,” but draw unto themselves teachers who bring to them carefully crafted homilies that leave them

feeling justified and secure. When those who are in positions of leadership refuse to acknowledge sound doctrine, what hope is there for those who sit week-by-week under their teaching? Paul warns us that there will come a day when the wicked, and those who practice deceit, shall prosper in their evil, “deceiving and being deceived” (2 Timothy 3:13). The wolf, who thinks that he is a sheep or tries to appear to be one, will deceive others, but this also tells us that at the same time that he thinks that he is a sheep, he is also being deceived – both will take place at the same time, thereby digging the pit of deception ever deeper. Jesus said, “Beware of false prophets, which

come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves" (Matthew 7:15). Satan will ensure that the false prophet bears a veneer of righteousness in order to disguise his true nature. However, that false prophet might well think that he is one of God's own. Robert Schuller is a classic example of such a wolf; he not only fooled many Evangelicals into thinking that he was a wonderful purveyor of God's truth, but he vigorously attacked any suggestion that he was not a true Christian. Even though he denied the reality of sin (saying that it's only poor self-esteem), which is the foundation for accepting Christ's redemption by faith, he didn't recognize that he had abandoned the Lord Jesus Christ for a faith of his own making. Unless we are prepared to take the messages that we hear and hold them against the pure Word of God, we should not be surprised to be taken in by every charlatan who comes along.

22. For it is written, that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondmaid, the other by a freewoman.

Paul begins to draw an interesting example from the life of Abraham in order to bring clarity to what the Galatians were doing as they turned to the statutes and ordinances of the Mosaic Law. Although Abraham had many children (Genesis 25:1-2), it is his first two sons who are the primary ones within Scripture. The children whom Abraham fathered after Ishmael and Isaac were all sent away so as not to interfere with his two firstborn (Genesis 25:6), indeed, even Ishmael was sent away with his mother that he might not be an heir with Isaac (Genesis 21:10-14). The other children of Abraham are of so little consequence, that Paul does not even acknowledge them here. When Abraham died, it was only Ishmael and Isaac who attended to his burial (Genesis 25:9), and it was only Isaac who was his beneficiary (Genesis 25:5).

As we know, Ishmael was born of Hagar who was the Egyptian servant of Sarah – he was born of a slave; Isaac, on the other hand, was born in fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham and Sarah – born of a freewoman. A glimmer of the contrast is evident, a contrast that was clearly understood by Sarah (Genesis 21:10).

23. But he *who was* of the bondwoman was born after the flesh; but he of the freewoman *was* by promise.

The contrast between these two deepens; Paul continues to use *bondwoman* and *freewoman* to emphasize the dichotomy that existed between these two mothers who both bore children to Abraham. Even though Hagar gave Abraham a son, that did not change her position as a slave – she continued to be Sarah's servant (Genesis 16:6, 8). Ishmael was born *after the flesh*, or according to the flesh.

As the years passed and Abraham and Sarah still had no children, rationalization began to creep in (Genesis 16:2). According to the custom of the day, what Sarah proposed was an acceptable means of obtaining an heir, yet it obviously compromised the promise that God had made to Abraham. After Ishmael was born, God met with Abraham and specifically promised a son through Sarah (Genesis 17:16-19); it would be through this son that the promises of God would be carried

forward. Ishmael, although receiving the promise to be the father of a great nation (Genesis 16:10; 17:20), also bore the promise of being wild (Genesis 16:12). Islamic tradition holds that Mohammed was a descendant of Ishmael, and, in keeping with the promise given to Hagar, the Muslims are a people who are against every man.

Rationalization is the bane of mankind; we see the negative evidence of Sarah's rationalization every day in the Arab-Israeli conflict. Eve heard the words of the devil in the Garden and began to see how the forbidden fruit was good for food, it was pleasant to the eyes, and it would actually make one wise – she couldn't resist (Genesis 3:6). Our minds are powerful to change how things appear; we live in a day when that which is evil has become something desirable. Evangelicals live like the world, and justify their worldliness by believing that they are saved because they prayed a prayer, and that it really doesn't matter how they live – it's what's on the inside that matters. The principle with which Jesus confronted the Pharisees also applies to the Evangelical error of today: "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess. *Thou* blind Pharisee, cleanse first that *which is* within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also" (Matthew 23:25-26). The Pharisees worked on the premise that if they were outwardly righteous, then they were okay. Today, Evangelicals are not so concerned about the outward; as long as they have prayed a prayer, they think that they are set for eternity. Jesus cuts through both of these errors by focusing on the relationship between the inward and the outward – cleaning the inside first, so that out of a cleansed heart may come righteous living. The Pharisees appeared to be righteous but, in reality, were unholy; Evangelicals say that they are holy, but their lives contradict their words. Jesus said that you need both – for a heart cleansed by the Spirit of God will produce a holy life. We are called to faith in Christ, but a life without righteous living is contrary to the faith that we might claim (Romans 8:4); "shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works" (James 2:18).

24. Which things are an allegory: for these are the two covenants; the one from the mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is Agar.

Paul now launches into the application of what he has just outlined, which, in turn, is built upon what he has been emphasizing up to this point. Paul has declared: "They which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham" (Galatians 3:7); he further stressed that the coming of the Law could not change the promise that God had made to Abraham (3:17) – the promise remained. Paul has used the stories of Ishmael and Isaac as an allegory to drive a deeper truth home that the Galatians were failing to comprehend.

The way that Abraham received his two sons represents two covenants; the first one (which produced Ishmael), is represented by Hagar, and speaks of the covenant that was received at Mt. Sinai – a covenant that gives birth to, or results in, slavery (*bondage*).

"And the LORD spake unto you out of the midst of the fire: ye heard the voice of the words, but saw no similitude; only *ye heard* a voice. And he declared unto you his covenant, which he commanded you to perform, *even* ten commandments; and he wrote them upon two tables of stone. And the LORD commanded me at that time to teach you statutes and judgments, that ye might do them in the land whither ye go over to possess it." (Deuteronomy 4:12-14). The summation of the

Lord's covenant with mankind is the Ten Commandments, written by His finger upon tables of stone. These are the unchangeable words of the Lord – they were written upon stone (thereby indicating permanency), and these were kept within the Ark of the Covenant in the Holy of Holies in the Tabernacle (1 Kings 8:6, 9). Subsequent to receiving these commands at Mt. Sinai, Moses also received the supplemental ordinances and statutes that provided Israel with specific requirements for sacrifices, feast celebrations, and general daily living (Exodus 21 ff.). Due to the significant contrast between these two, I refer to the former as the Law of God (Ten Commandments, written by the finger of God upon tables of stone), and the latter as the Law of Moses (also from God, but carrying the idea of less permanency, as indeed we see in Galatians 3:19). The former provided the framework for the latter; however, the written Law of God was kept in the holiest part of the Tabernacle, where the high priest went only once each year. The Law of Moses placed upon the Israelites stringent demands in order to teach them of God's holiness, His justice, and His mercy; the Israelites faced it every day. Their salvation was secured by faith in God to fulfill what these demands foreshadowed, yet the physical demands of the Law of Moses would have been like unto slavery. This is after the pattern of Abraham receiving Ishmael through the slave-girl, Hagar.

Ishmael was born as a result of Abraham and Sarah taking the matter of an heir into their own hands; true, what they did was in accordance with the custom of the day, but they failed to wait on the fulfillment of the promise of God for an heir.

25. For this Agar is mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children.

Paul now closes the allegory as it applies to Hagar, lest there be any misunderstanding on the part of the Galatians. First of all, Hagar is Mt. Sinai where Israel received the written Law of God and the Law of Moses, and where the physical demands upon Israel, as God's people, were delineated. Secondly, Paul extends the allegory to include Jerusalem, which speaks of the center of Judaism. The word *answereth* (present tense) means "to stand or march in the same row"³⁵⁵ or "to correspond to."³⁵⁶ In other words, Hagar and Mt. Sinai (the bondwoman representing the physical demands of the Law of Moses) is the same as Judaism that was still solidly in place in Jerusalem. Ishmael, born according to the flesh, represents the Jews who were still in bondage (present tense) under the Law of Moses.

By drawing this parallel, Paul strikes at the heart of the Galatian problem: namely, the Jews who had come from Jerusalem (aligned with Mt. Sinai) seeking to impose their hybrid of Judaism and Christianity upon these believers. It is important to understand that these Judaizers would not have been appreciated by the traditional Jews either. They were peddling a mixed doctrine that was neither traditional Judaism nor the Gospel of Christ; it was a unique theology that sought to bring the two together. What these Judaizers were seeking to do was to retain the Law of Moses, to cling to the pattern of Hagar – born into bondage, even while they professed to have faith in Christ. The existing Jerusalem symbolized the demand to hold onto the Law of Moses. Paul has

³⁵⁵ Strong's Online.

³⁵⁶ Strong's Dictionary.

already made it clear that such a melding is heresy – a perverted gospel that is not the Gospel (Galatians 1:6-7).

This is the error of many Evangelicals today – the Gospel of God is mixed with many and varied things, and they still consider it to be the truth. Paul would vigorously disagree. My wife and I have personally experienced the generally accepted situation with the North American Indians; many of their traditional religious items and rituals are brought into their form of “Christianity,” and we are supposed to accept this perverted form of God’s truth. Rick Warren mixes the world’s marketing techniques with the Gospel in order to fill a huge auditorium each week with people coming to hear a perversion of the truth that permits them to feel comfortable within their lost condition. Evangelicals have succumbed to the god of pragmatism that permits the inclusion of anything with the Gospel in order to produce the desired results – the end justifies the means.

26. But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all.

Here is a contrasting Jerusalem; we just read of a Jerusalem that is in bondage, and now Paul speaks of a Jerusalem that is above and free.

And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. ... And there came unto me one of the seven angels which had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues, and talked with me, saying, Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb’s wife. And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God ... (Revelation 21:2, 9-10).

This New Jerusalem is identified as the wife of the Lamb of God. “Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; ... That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish” (Ephesians 5:25,27). The New Jerusalem, which is heavenly, is made up of those who have been redeemed by the Lamb of God – they are free! They are free from the condemnation of the Law (Romans 8:1), and free to live out the righteousness of the Law through the power of the Spirit of God working within them (Romans 6:18; 8:4). This is not a freedom to do as you please, but a freedom to live in obedience to the commands of the Lord, the Creator of all things Who never changes. It is the freedom to live according to what God has prepared for us in Christ (Ephesians 2:10).

The Jerusalem above is “the mother of us all” – *mother* is used metaphorically to indicate the source of all who believe, both Jew and Gentile. The Jerusalem of Judea was the hub of Jewish traditions, the place where the Mosaic Law ruled and was enforced with rigor; the Jerusalem above, made up of all who have been redeemed by the Lord Jesus Christ, stands in contrast to this. Our Redeemer is presently in heaven building the redeemed New Jerusalem, the promised *ekklesia*, and we are to look for His return to complete our salvation (Hebrews 9:24-28). Hebrews 12:18-29 draws a parallel between the children of Israel coming before Mt. Sinai and our coming unto Mt. Zion, to the dwelling place of God, the heavenly Jerusalem. “And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb *is* the light thereof”

(Revelation 21:22-23). At Mt. Sinai, the children of Israel heard a voice from heaven, saw the lightning, heard the thunder, and felt the trembling of the earth (Exodus 19:16-19). When Jesus began His ministry, a voice was heard from heaven (Matthew 3:17); when Jesus died, the sun was darkened and there was an earthquake (Matthew 27:45, 51). However, Mt. Sinai brought bondage, for the children of Israel were required to keep the Law of Moses meticulously, which, if they had eyes to see, would bring them to faith in the Promised One. Coming to Mt. Zion, by contrast, is coming to the fulfillment of Mt. Sinai, to the Promised One Who has completed all that is necessary for salvation through His shed blood. Mt. Sinai demanded living according to the standards expressed by God through Moses, which would bring those to faith who could see the promise of redemption imbedded within the sacrificial system. Mt. Zion can only be approached by faith in the completed work of Christ, and out of this will flow a life of righteousness through the Spirit of God living within (Romans 8:4). The heavenly Jerusalem is made up of those who have exercised faith in Christ – the saints of all ages have been brought together into one Body, Christ having removed the barrier forever (Ephesians 2:11-22). There is only one heavenly Jerusalem comprised of all of the redeemed from all ages.

27. For it is written, Rejoice, *thou* barren that bearest not; break forth and cry, thou that travailest not: for the desolate hath many more children than she which hath an husband.

Paul quotes here from Isaiah 54:1 – “Sing, O barren, thou *that* didst not bear; break forth into singing, and cry aloud, thou *that* didst not travail with child: for more *are* the children of the desolate than the children of the married wife, saith the LORD.” This comes on the heels of a significant Messianic passage that speaks of the Messiah bearing the iniquities and the sin of many (Isaiah 53:11-12). Out of the completed redemptive work of Promised One would come a mushrooming of the children of God that would include the Gentiles as the inheritance or possession of Israel (Isaiah 54:3). Up to this time, Israel had not grown much, and now that they had been taken into captivity, their growth was even less; but faithful Israel, through all of this time, would have been so much smaller than the nation as a whole – merely a remnant. However, Isaiah is speaking of the faithful here – although they had been left desolate, they would flourish through the work of Messiah; they would be brought into a close relationship with Jehovah, their Husband and Redeemer (Isaiah 54:5). “For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body” (Ephesians 5:23). The unity of the Godhead is again demonstrated – Jehovah and Christ, the Messiah, both fill the role of Husband to the faithful, and both fill the role of Redeemer.

What is unmistakable within the OT Scriptures is the inclusion of the Gentiles within the family of God (Isaiah 11:10). Paul did not miss this reality, and provided the Roman Christians with specific instructions in this regard. Using the analogy of the horticultural practice of grafting, he provides a clear picture of the relationship that the Gentile believers have with the faithful of Israel in Romans 11. His foundational statement is this: “For if the firstfruit *be* holy, the lump *is* also *holy*: and if the root *be* holy, so *are* the branches” (Romans 11:16) – the latter speaking directly to the word picture that Paul is about to unfold. What must be firmly in mind before proceeding is that if the Root (the Source) is holy, then so will be that which grows out of it – namely, the branches. Isaiah prophesied of the coming Messiah and referred to Him as the *root of Jesse* (Isaiah 11:10), an interesting term that fits so well with the analogy that Paul is making in Romans 11.

The life of a branch is dependent upon the root, for the life-giving sap flows from the root into the branches, and when a branch is grafted into the root, that same life-giving sap will then flow into the grafted branch. Jesus used this very same picture: “Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye *are* the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast *them* into the fire, and they are burned [literally, *it is burning*]” (John 15:4-6).³⁵⁷ Notice the relationship of the Vine to the branches; unless the branches continue to abide in the Vine, they will die – life for the branch is dependent upon a continual connection to the Vine, its source of life.

“And if some of the branches be broken off, and thou, being a wild olive tree, wert grafted in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree; Boast not against the branches. But if thou boast, thou bearest not the root, but the root thee” (Romans 11:17-18). The Gentiles, referred to as the *wild olive tree*, have been grafted by faith into the root of faithful Israel. “And there shall come forth a rod [a branch] out of the stem [stump, it carries the sense of a tree which has been cut down – speaking of the house of David, which had fallen due to the unfaithfulness of David’s descendants] of Jesse, and a Branch [a sprout] shall grow [bear fruit] out of his roots ...” (Isaiah 11:1);³⁵⁸ this is speaking of the Messiah Who would come, the Promised One of the family line of David. He would grow out of a stump – all that remained of the royalty of David. “And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek: and his rest shall be glorious” (Isaiah 11:10). “I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, *and* the bright and morning star” (Revelation 22:16). Jesus is the *root* of David – David found his spiritual life from the pre-incarnate Lord Jesus Christ; Jesus is the *offspring* of David – a descendant of his family line (Matthew 1:2-16). Jesus used this same thought to silence the Jews (Matthew 22:41-46); they had little difficulty with the Christ (the Messiah) being the descendant of David, but for David to also call Him Lord strained their understanding of Who the Messiah really was.

“Wherefore remember, that ye *being* in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; that at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ” (Ephesians 2:11-13). The Gentiles, those wild olive branches who were steeped in paganism, come to faith in Christ, and are grafted, thereby, into the spiritual root of Israel – namely the Lord Jesus Christ. Israel is not the root. “And if some of the branches be broken off ... Boast not against the branches. ... because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not highminded, but fear: for if God spared not the natural branches, *take heed* lest he also spare not thee” (Romans 11:17-21). The people of Israel, the physical descendants of Abraham, were the branches that were broken off because of unbelief; the reality is that we, as grafted branches, could face the same demise for the very same reason (Romans 11:21). We have been grafted into the spiritual Root (Christ) by faith, yet through unbelief, or faithlessness, we, too, could lose our connection to the life that flows from

³⁵⁷ Stephanus 1550 NT.

³⁵⁸ Strong’s Online.

Christ. “Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God” (Hebrews 3:12).

It is very important to notice as well, that Paul uses the singular pronoun *thou* in Romans 11 – “thou, being a wild olive tree” (v.17). We are grafted individually; this is not a group or community grafting. Jesus referred to *a man* as being *a branch* (John 15:6) – again clarifying the individuality of the relationship of abiding in Christ. Unlike the Emergent Church concept that salvation can be experienced as a group, Christ is building His *ekklēsia* one faithful believer at a time.

What is equally important to understand is that this is a spiritual grafting; faith in Christ does not make anyone a Jew, a physical descendent of Abraham. “Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham” (Galatians 3:7). Paul clarified this for the Romans as well, clearly demonstrating that not everyone born of the lineage of Abraham was a child of God – but only the one born through promise (Romans 9:6-7); Abraham had many children (Genesis 25:1-2), but only one son according to the promise. As we come to Christ through faith, we become children of the Promised One. What we must recognize is the critical importance of faith in God – not all of the children born to Isaac, the child of promise, were accepted either. So, going forward, not everyone born within the family line of Abraham, Isaac and Israel were children of faith. You are not born a child of faith; you must be spiritually born again to become a child of faith in the Promised One (Christ) – that is the essence of the salvation that God has offered to mankind from the time of the fall (Hebrews 11).

28. Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise.

Once again, Paul addresses the Galatians as *brethren*. Even though they were standing on the brink of spiritual apostasy, Paul appeals to them as brethren, and he unfolds for them a marvelous truth – we *are the children of promise*. The promise began here: “And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel” (Genesis 3:15). This is a marvelous promise made by Jehovah at the time that sin entered into the heart of man, albeit a promise addressed to Satan. God said that there would be *enmity between Satan and the woman*. “For thy Maker *is* thine husband; the LORD of hosts *is* his name; and thy Redeemer the Holy One of Israel; The God of the whole earth shall he be called. For the LORD hath called thee as a woman forsaken ...” (Isaiah 54:5-6a); the faithful of Israel are the wife (the woman – *wife* and *woman* are the same word in Hebrew) of Jehovah. “For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body” (Ephesians 5:23); the correlation is clear, the *woman* speaks of those who are faithful. Peter’s warning to the faithful is: “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour” (1 Peter 5:8). Satan has always been set against those who would walk faithfully with the Lord; he deceived Eve in the Garden, and he will use every device at his disposal to destroy those who desire to walk the narrow Way of life.

However, the enmity would also be between the *seed* of Satan and *her seed*. The seed of Satan is all of his demons (the fallen angels), and the wicked among men who are doing his bidding. The Seed of the woman refers, first of all, to the Savior to come, the Messiah (Galatians 3:16), but also included are those who by faith live according to the righteousness of God (Ephesians 5:30, cp. Acts 9:5). Among Evangelicals today, there is a willingness to acknowledge the enmity that exists

between Satan and Jesus Christ, but there is a wholesale neglect of the enmity that also exists between God's faithful ones and the wicked. Therefore, when Rick Warren seeks to embrace the Muslims in his ventures to bring his P.E.A.C.E. plan to the world, he is actually in direct contravention of this earliest promise of God. What God has clearly declared, Warren seeks to ignore. "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (2 Timothy 3:12); here is a direct reiteration of God's promise to Satan in Genesis 3:15. There will be conflict between the redeemed and the wicked – it is guaranteed.

The last part of God's promise is that Satan will receive a *bruise* to the head, and the Seed of the woman would be dealt a *bruise* to the heel (Genesis 3:15). A deathblow for a serpent (the creature used by Satan against Eve) is a blow to the head, so the promise of God to Satan here is that he will be completely defeated. However, there will also be a *bruise* on the heel of the Seed of the woman. This is readily acknowledged to be the punishment that Jesus received at the time of His crucifixion (and this is correct), but what is less likely to be accepted is that this also speaks of the persecution that will be received by the Body of Christ, His *ekklesia*. When Paul set about heaping persecution upon the new Christians of Judea, Jesus made it very clear that this was being directed at Him (Acts 9:5); therefore, it follows that as the heel of the Lord was bruised in bringing about Satan's defeat, this would include the persecution promised to His followers. "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy" (1 Peter 4:12-13). "For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake ..." (Philippians 1:29). Contained within the promise of God to Satan (Genesis 3:15), is the assurance that Satan will be dealt a death blow, but, just as surely, we will experience persecution and suffering until his death blow will render him helpless before God. Do we suffer persecution? There is promised suffering for being a child of God who is living righteously; the consequences for doing wrong or living contemptibly is not persecution. "For what glory *is it*, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer *for it*, ye take it patiently, this *is* acceptable with God" (1 Peter 2:20). Harassment can come to anyone who lives in annoyance to his neighbor – there is no glory in enduring this, for it flows as natural retribution for being irritating. However, a persecution that comes from living a life that is righteous before God, will come without provocation; it will be an automatic result of following the Lord (2 Timothy 3:12).

"And if ye *be* Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (Galatians 3:29). "Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham" (Galatians 3:7). The promise of redemption was first made in the Garden, and, subsequently, it was reiterated to Abraham (Genesis 12:3), to Isaac (Genesis 26:4), to Moses (Deuteronomy 18:15), and through the many prophets of Israel. We, all who are faithful in the Lord, are included as the children of the promise that God made in the Garden of Eden; a promise that was confirmed and clarified through Abraham and the prophets of Israel – a promise that has always included the Gentiles, along with the promise of suffering for the Lord.

29. But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him *that was born* after the Spirit, even so *it is* now.

“**A**nd the child grew, and was weaned: and Abraham made a great feast the *same* day that Isaac was weaned. And Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, which she had born unto Abraham, mocking” (Genesis 21:8-9). Here is the occasion to which Paul refers – Ishmael, who would have been at least 15 years old by this time, made light of the celebration for Isaac. The one who was born according to the flesh (Ishmael) harassed the one born after the Spirit, the one born by promise. Undoubtedly, by this time, Ishmael was fully aware that he would not be the primary beneficiary of his father’s wealth. Paul identifies this as a pattern that was still active at the time that he wrote this letter; the righteous will be persecuted by the unrighteous. This will be standard fare for those who have been born of the Spirit of God – those who are walking in accordance with the Spirit and demonstrating the righteousness of the Law of God through their daily living (Romans 8:4). These are those who are walking worthy of the calling that they have received of God (Ephesians 4:1; Colossians 1:10).

For the Galatians, the Judaizers had come from Jerusalem to convince them to adopt their gospel message of faith plus works, to live according to their doctrines. To this point, the Galatians were in Christ by faith; they were walking according to the Spirit of God, but the Judaizers were pressuring them to add the Mosaic traditions to their faith in order to complete their salvation. Satan is the one who roams the earth looking for those whom he might destroy (1 Peter 5:8). If we determine to walk the narrow path to which God has called us (Matthew 7:13-14), we do not have to do anything else to draw the persecution of those who are not walking that pathway to life. Isaac (the son according to promise) was an infant, too young to be an aggressor, and yet he was mocked by Ishmael (the son according to the flesh). If we will live godly lives, walking in obedience to the commandments of God’s Word (1 John 5:3), then the persecution will come (2 Timothy 3:12). Unfortunately, Evangelicals seem to be of the opinion that you can be “saved” in the inside, yet live like the world on the outside; however, you cannot profess to walk the narrow pathway to life while cavorting in the ways of the world – the broad way that leads to destruction. Jesus said, “He that is not with me is against me: and he that gathereth not with me scattereth” (Luke 11:23); the devil has convinced Evangelicals that the forbidden fruit of the world is really quite desirable, and holiness of life is unattainable, so why even bother trying.

When Paul left these Galatians, they heard that “we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God” (Acts 14:22b); Paul now writes to them that this very thing has taken place – persecution has come! Unfortunately, even if they were prepared to face it, they evidently didn’t recognize it when it came. The devil, in his craftiness, brought persecution to the Galatians in the form of false doctrine from a people who should have known the truth – after all, they came from Jerusalem. Little wonder that Paul takes the bulk of the first two chapters of this letter to expound the error made by the leadership in Jerusalem. The failure of the Galatians was that they did not weigh the gospel of the Judaizers against what they had already heard and obeyed. Paul is adamant that there is only one Gospel: “But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed” (Galatians 1:8). We must ever be on guard against those who would promote teachings other than what we find in the Scriptures, and we must be students of the Word of God, strengthening our understanding of His truth (Colossians 1:10). The enemy of our souls will come to us with a message that sounds good, and it will be delivered in a very gracious and appealing manner (Romans 16:18) – our responsibility is to measure it against the truth of God’s Word (1 John 4:1). A knowledge of theology will not suffice; we must grow in our knowledge of the Scriptures; many times theology will be the very tool that Satan will use to drive a wedge of doubt into our thinking.

30. Nevertheless what saith the scripture? Cast out the bondwoman and her son: for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman.

Paul quotes Sarah's words to Abraham as recorded in Genesis 21:10 – "Wherefore she said unto Abraham, Cast out this bondwoman and her son: for the son of this bondwoman shall not be heir with my son, *even* with Isaac." Contained here is Paul's application of this piece of Jewish history to the Galatian situation.

Ishmael and Hagar have been identified with Mt. Sinai and the Mosaic Law that was a burden to Israel, and Jerusalem of Judea has been identified as the center for this bondage (Galatians 4:25). Having made the association, Paul now quotes Sarah's words to provide the Galatians with the instruction that he has for them in the matter of the Judaizers, namely: cast out the bondwoman and her son. In other words, cast the keeping of the Mosaic Law out of your lives! The legalistic keeping of the Law of Moses is to have no part with salvation by faith in Christ. Don't be snared into adding the keeping of the Mosaic Law to your faith in Christ; cast out that which will only lead to bondage – a very different, yet strangely similar bondage to what they had experienced while under paganism (Galatians 4:9).

The latter portion of Sarah's words finds a very definitive application for the Galatians. Those who are held in bondage to the keeping of the Law of Moses (likened to the bondwoman, Hagar and her son, Ishmael), will never share the inheritance with those who have been made heirs through faith in Christ. Once again we must face the reality that if these Galatians followed the teachings of the Judaizers, they would then no longer be heirs with those who walk according to the Spirit of God through faith. To accept the doctrine of the Judaizers would be to accept a different, perverted gospel, and to relinquish the true Gospel of faith in Christ (Galatians 1:6-7). There can be no doubt; the Galatians were on the brink of apostasy, which simply means that they were on the threshold of losing the inheritance of the promise. Despite having begun in the Spirit of God (Galatians 3:3), they were about to forfeit everything that they had in Christ. The inheritance of the faithful is to abide in the presence of God for eternity (Revelation 22:3-5); yet it is very clear here that those who were falling for the error of the Judaizers were in jeopardy of losing that inheritance. Anything less would be a contravention of the analogy that Paul has so carefully unfolded, and, more specifically, of the statement that Paul makes in this verse.

31. So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman, but of the free.

As Paul concludes the use of Sarah and Hagar as his historical illustration, his summation is very clear, and is a reiteration of 3:29 – "And if ye *be* Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."

Undoubtedly, the Judaizers would have considered themselves to be children of the *freewoman* as well, yet the application of the illustration makes it abundantly clear that they were not – and this is the message that Paul desired these Galatians to hear and heed. The Judaizers were no longer functioning under the banner of faith in Christ; they had added the Mosaic Law and had succumbed

to the flesh in an effort to complete their salvation. “Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?” (Galatians 3:3) – Paul’s question is completely applicable to this situation, and points directly to the reality of what the Judaizers had done, and that which the Galatians were being convinced to do. Paul has very carefully, through the use of the examples of Hagar (Ishmael) and Sarah (Isaac), outlined the dramatic separation that exists between the children of promise (the faithful in Christ Jesus) and the children of the flesh (those who will freely add to or subtract from the Gospel message). The way of promise is narrow. “Jesus saith unto him [Thomas], I am **the way**, the truth, and the life: **no man cometh unto the Father, but by me**” (John 14:6). “Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide *is* the gate, and broad *is* the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait *is* the gate, and **narrow is the way**, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it” (Matthew 7:13-14). Paul calls adding the Mosaic Law to the Gospel of Christ a perversion (Galatians 1:7); we must do no less as we observe the travesty of the message of Evangelicals today. God help us to stand, wearing His truth and righteousness (Ephesians 6:14).

Chapter 5

1. Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.

Stand fast – this is an admonition that Paul frequently used in his writings. It means to stand firm, with the idea of persistence or perseverance.³⁵⁹ It is most often in the imperative mood (four of the six times), which simply means that this is a command that enjoins our obedience to the directive to remain established despite what may come our way.

“Watch ye, **stand fast** in the faith, quit you like men, be strong” (1 Corinthians 16:13). Here the charge is to stand persistently *in the faith*. Paul precedes this with the command, *watch ye!* It is a call to be alert and vigilant lest through complacency or being distracted we should be overtaken by some destructive force. The image is that of the watchman of a city who bore the responsibility of being attentive to the approach of an enemy; the Lord charged Ezekiel with the responsibilities of a watchman to alert the exiles in Babylon to His words (Ezekiel 3:17). *Stand fast* is not an idle challenge to heed – it is a warning to be alert lest you fall from the faith. As we have seen so far in our study of Galatians, it is very possible not to *stand fast* in the faith – the Galatians were on the verge of losing their faith to a perverted gospel of faith and works.

“Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye **stand fast** in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel ...” (Philippians 1:27). Although not in the imperative mood (it’s not a command), the focus here is very similar to Paul’s charge to the Corinthians – he wants to hear that the Philippians are being persistently steadfast in the faith of the Gospel. Yes, they are to be of *one spirit* and of *one mind*, but it is to be directed toward the *faith of the gospel*. This is not the Ecumenical unity that is



Chuck Colson & Pope John Paul II

promoted by men like the late Chuck Colson; such unity is merely an outward appearance that is based upon a stripped-down understanding of the Word of God. Colson declared: “The church is, by definition, one.”³⁶⁰ The words that he used are acceptable but they have been redefined – and therein is the hook of the devil. In an effort to defend his statement, Colson presented this quotation: “God is one, and all who are God’s are one. The church is a communal articulation of that truth.”³⁶¹ Once again, the words may not strike us as being particularly offensive until we realize that they came from the pen of Richard

Neuhaus, a Roman Catholic and good friend of Colson’s; then we can begin to understand what he meant by *church*. When Colson pushed for unity, he did so at the expense of the clear teachings

³⁵⁹ Strong’s Online.

³⁶⁰ Colson, *Body*, p. 102.

³⁶¹ *Ibid.*

of the Word of God; it is the united front that matters most, the joining-together with those who profess some acceptance of God. However, the same Scriptures that Colson claimed to uphold, and even believed to be inerrant,³⁶² also warn about avoiding all those who promote teachings that are contrary to God's Word (Romans 16:17). Through the valiant efforts of men like Colson, unity among denominations is no longer a battleground issue – it is virtually taken for granted and accepted. No longer does anyone raise a question or concern when the Charismatics, Evangelicals and Catholics all work together in a local ministerial. These may well stand together in unity, and perhaps even in one spirit, but they do not stand in the Spirit of God, nor are they united in the unalterable truth of the Gospel. The error of the Galatians (compromising true faith in Christ) has flooded the hearts and minds of Evangelicals to the extent that today, for the most part, they are either apostate (having departed from the truth of Christ) or religious pagans (having never known the truth of the Gospel); they have fully embraced the perverted gospel of unity and, therefore, do not stand fast in the faith of Christ.

“Therefore, my brethren dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, so **stand fast** in the Lord, *my* dearly beloved” (Philippians 4:1). Paul had just spoken of our hope that Christ will change our mortality to be like unto His glorious body, from whence comes the admonition to remain steadfast in the Lord! The hope of the glory to come should be an encouragement to remain firmly established in the Lord. The Apostle John echoed this thought: “Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure” (1 John 3:2-3).

“For now we live, if ye **stand fast** in the Lord” (1 Thessalonians 3:8). Although this phrase is the second of the two that are not in the imperative mood, it provides an important balance to the commandments given. Paul had received a good report of the Thessalonians from Timothy, and now says, *we live*, or we are strengthened and invigorated by this positive report. However, he then places a condition on this state of invigoration – *if ye stand fast in the Lord*. *Stand fast* is in the present tense (demanding a present and ongoing state of remaining firm) and the subjunctive mood (which simply means that it is possible for them to either stand firm or to fall away – a choice must be made). We are called to be alert to our position in Christ and to hold that position with perseverance. We must recognize that “the heart *is* deceitful above all *things*, and desperately wicked: who can know it?” (Jeremiah 17:9); clearly, there is no room for complacency! “Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God” (Hebrews 3:12). To fail to stand fast means to fall away (to become apostate) – the very thing that the Galatians were in the process of doing (Galatians 1:6).

“Therefore, brethren, **stand fast**, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle” (2 Thessalonians 2:15). Both the phrase *stand fast* and the word *hold* are in the imperative mood (they are commands). The two are drawn together here so that we find an elaboration of what it means to *stand fast*. The word *traditions* speaks of a giving over, or, more specifically within this context, a transmission of instructions from God – in other words, the Message that Paul brought to the Thessalonians was not his own, but was the Gospel from God. Therefore, to *stand fast* means to hold without wavering, the truth of God's Word. God is the Source of the instruction that we find in the Bible, therefore we must handle it as we would the Lord Jesus Christ (John 1:1, 14). We must not add to the Scriptures, nor take away from them

³⁶² Colson, p. 109.

(Deuteronomy 4:2; Proverbs 30:6); although this primarily refers to the actual words (which is a problem for all of the modern translations), we must also guard against imposing our thinking upon the words of the Scriptures in an effort to make them say something that they do not. We are to hold the words of Scripture with great tenacity, but too often we err by desperately clinging to a favored theology rather than to God's Word. We recognize that cults create their own reality through re-defining words, but those who are professing Evangelicals are also very proficient at the same distortion.

There must be no mistaking the importance of this charge to *stand fast*. Coming on the heels of the analogy of Hagar (the Mt. Sinai of bondage) and Sarah (the heavenly Jerusalem of promise), Paul now commands the Galatians to be standing firm in the liberty of Christ (*stand fast* is in the present tense).³⁶³ The Greek word for liberty is *eleutheria* (*el-yoo-ther-ee'-ah*) meaning freedom, and comes from the word *eleutheros* (*el-yoo'-ther-os*) which means freeborn,³⁶⁴ what an excellent fit with the analogy that Paul has just used. The word *free*, in turn, is another form of the very same Greek word meaning to make free³⁶⁵ – *liberty* and *free* (as translated here) come from the same root word in Greek. Through the use of very similar words, Paul is hereby emphasizing the freedom that we have in Christ. “*There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit*” (Romans 8:1); in Christ, we have freedom from the condemnation of the Law, a freedom by which we can live out the righteousness of the Law through the Spirit of God (Romans 8:4). This is not a freedom to do as we please, but the freedom to do as we ought.

Paul concludes this verse with a subtle reference back to Hagar, Mt. Sinai and the Jerusalem of Judea. The command is issued: *be not entangled again*; in other words, Galatians, don't be held captive or ensnared by slavery again! Do not become yoked together with bondage again – the Galatians had come out of paganism. “Howbeit then, when ye knew not God, ye did service [in Greek this is the verb form of our word *bondage*] unto them which by nature are no gods” (Galatians 4:8);³⁶⁶ these people had formerly been in bondage to the impotent gods of paganism. Even though they were being persuaded to add the Mosaic Law to their faith in Christ, God having implemented the Law of Moses for a season (Galatians 3:19), their action is equated to returning to their pagan traditions (cp. Galatians 4:9)! The essence is that it matters not what we add to the Gospel, it will result in fruitless bondage – slavery to a creed of man. Religion and theology, which are people's opinions about God, can take many forms – some may be Biblically more accurate than others, but religion will never bring freedom in Christ and theologies will vary considerably according to their sources. “So then faith *cometh* by hearing [there is a Message to be heard], and hearing by [or through] the word of God” (Romans 10:17); saving faith will never come through the words of men, only God's Word.

2. Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing.

³⁶³ Strong's Online.

³⁶⁴ Ibid.

³⁶⁵ Ibid.

³⁶⁶ Ibid.

Now the Galatians are reminded of who is speaking to them through this letter. It is Paul, the Apostle to the Gentiles, who is calling these things to their minds; it is Paul, the one who was given the Gospel message from God to bring to all people (Galatians 1:15-16) – the one whom they had entertained in their midst some years earlier and who had imparted to them the truth of God (Acts 14:21-23).

You will recall that when Paul made his defense before the Apostles in Jerusalem, it was because of those from Jerusalem who had come to Antioch teaching that, unless the Gentile Christians were circumcised, they could not be saved (Acts 15:1). Even at the time of Paul's defense, there were those who promoted the same heresy for which the Galatians were now falling: "But there rose up certain of the sect of the Pharisees which believed, saying, That it was needful to circumcise them, and to command *them* to keep the law of Moses" (Acts 15:5). The error that the Galatians were facing was nothing new; Paul faced it in Jerusalem while with the other Apostles. What seems evident is that the Apostles in Jerusalem failed to squelch this error when it first showed itself. So Paul now strikes at the essence of the Judaizers' message – circumcision.

Paul makes a very strong statement: *if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing*. First of all, this does not mean that the act of circumcision renders Christ of no value to you. After all, Paul was a circumcised Jew, and Christ was of utmost value to him. It is important to consider the context in order to determine the proper interpretation of a statement, whether it is meant to be taken literally or figuratively. The reality here is that if the Galatians accepted the rite of circumcision as the Judaizers were seeking to foist it upon them, then that would indicate that they had submitted to the teaching of the Judaizers that said that they must be circumcised and keep the Law of Moses in order to be saved. The circumcision, within this context, would be a religious procedure, not a medical one. In other words, Paul makes it clear that if they accepted the doctrine of the Judaizers (which focused firstly on circumcision), then Christ would no longer hold even one advantage for them.³⁶⁷ "For if we sin wilfully [voluntarily] after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more [no further] sacrifice for sins ..." (Hebrews 10:26; cp. Galatians 3:2-3). This is precisely what Paul is telling the Galatians: if they embrace the teachings of the Judaizers (which is a perverted gospel – Galatians 1:7), then they will lose everything that Christ would have been to them. This sobering reality places the *stand fast* of the previous verse in a much more significant light; Paul is imploring these people to not make the spiritually fatal mistake of accepting the Judaizers' doctrine, but to stand immovable in the doctrine of Christ that they had received and understood.

3. For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law.

Paul declares: *I am testifying again*; *testify* is in the present tense, and is an emphatic affirmation (*testify*) that he is making one more time.³⁶⁸ The strength of the term in Greek adds an element of solemnity to what follows,³⁶⁹ particularly in light of the fact that this is not the first time that he has made this point.

³⁶⁷ Strong's Dictionary.

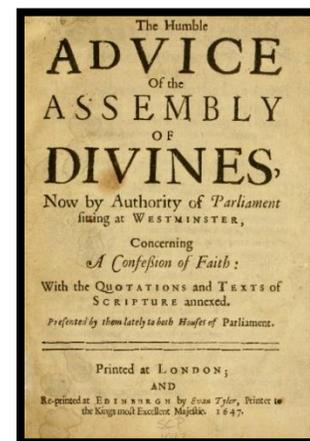
³⁶⁸ Stephanus 1550 NT; Friberg Lexicon.

³⁶⁹ Strong's Online.

Once again, as we look at this, we must recognize that it is not speaking of circumcision as a medical procedure but as a religious ceremony that was central to the Judaizers' message (Acts 15:1). It is so important to consider the context of a verse before creating a teaching from what a particular verse might appear to be saying; failure to exercise this simple rule has resulted in numerous false teachings and many cults. However, equally important is the overall teaching of the Word of God; we must guard against building a doctrine upon an obscure passage when many other passages of Scripture clearly negate such a teaching.

The thrust of Paul's declaration here is that if a man has accepted the religious ceremonial rite of circumcision, then he has placed himself under an obligation to keep the whole Law of Moses. The rite of circumcision actually began with Abraham, and was to be a sign of God's everlasting covenant with his descendants (Genesis 17:11). When God met with Abraham, He began with: "I am the Almighty God [*El Shaddai* – God most powerful]; walk before me, and be thou perfect" (Genesis 17:1) – He opened with a command to Abraham concerning how he was to live: *live constantly in My presence and so be perfect*.³⁷⁰ However, even though the rite originated with Abraham, Jesus readily declared: "Moses therefore gave unto you circumcision ...," and John inserts the explanation: "not because it is of Moses, but of the fathers ..." (John 7:22). The ceremonial practice of circumcision was incorporated into the Mosaic Law and was to be carried out on all boys on the eighth day after birth (Leviticus 12:3); it also became a prerequisite to participating in the Passover celebration, even for proselytes who were brought into the community from outside of Israel (Exodus 12:48). As time passed by, circumcision became the central criteria for "who was in" and "who was out" of the fold of Israel, to the extent that when Paul faced the Judaizers in Jerusalem, they were advocating that "except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved" (Acts 15:1). What they had lost sight of was that this ceremonial practice was the sign of the covenant that God had made with Abraham, a covenant that was based upon walking in a godly manner, and focused on the promise of the coming Redeemer.

There is a common misconception among some Evangelicals that circumcision within the Israelite community has been replaced by baptism within "the church." From my investigations, this misconception originates within the tradition of infant baptism as practiced by the Catholic Church and most of the Reformation Protestant churches. For the Jews, circumcision became a rite of entrance; because the Law of Moses dictated that it was to be carried out on infants, the entrance into the Jewish community was established very early in life. For the Catholics and Protestants of Reformed persuasion, infant baptism is also a rite of entrance. Within the Catholic tradition, "Holy Baptism holds the first place among the sacraments, because it is the door of the spiritual life [i.e., it is the entrance into the keeping of the other six Sacraments, and together they form the basis of salvation for Catholics]; for **by it we are made members of Christ and incorporated with the Church**" (emphasis added).³⁷¹ This thinking is one of the errors carried forward by the Reformers, and still finds its place within the denominations of Reformed affiliation. The



³⁷⁰ Strong's Online; BDB.

³⁷¹ <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/02258b.htm#III>

Westminster Confession (a Reformed confession of their faith) does not depart far from this Catholic doctrine:

I. Baptism is a sacrament of the New Testament ... not only for the solemn **admission of the party baptized into the visible Church**; but also to be unto him a sign and seal of the covenant of grace, **of his ingrafting into Christ**, ... of remission of sins ...

IV. Not only those that do actually profess faith in and obedience unto Christ, but also the infants of one, or both, believing parents, are to be baptized (emphasis added).³⁷²

Infant baptism is an entrance into the denomination (whether Catholic or Reformed), and to fail to comply with this is considered to be a serious matter because of the saving aspect that they attribute to this rite. Believer's baptism, as taught in the Scriptures, is another matter altogether and has no correlation with the teachings related to baptism within the Reformed and Catholic traditions, and, equally, no correlation at all with the Jewish rite of circumcision.

Paul faced those from Jerusalem who were not unlike today's Catholics (they were steeped in tradition and obedient to ceremonial laws). When Paul made his defense before the apostles in Jerusalem, "there rose up certain of the sect of the Pharisees which believed, saying, That it was needful to circumcise them, and to command *them* to keep the law of Moses" (Acts 15:5). These Pharisees believed that Jesus died for the sins of man, and that, through faith in His sacrifice, the Spirit of God would instill new life. However, what they were unwilling to leave behind were the traditions of the Mosaic Law and the rite of circumcision – after all, both of these had been instituted by God Himself! As we have noted before, the Apostles in Jerusalem were clearly failing to teach that these had been ended at the cross, and even after Paul's defense before them, it seems clear that they continued to maintain their Jewish practices; otherwise, the Judaizers who were causing havoc within the Galatian community, would undoubtedly have learned differently.

Earlier, Paul reminded the Galatians: "For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed *is* every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them" (Galatians 3:10; cp. Deuteronomy 27:26). He now says that if you accept the rite of circumcision, then you are under obligation to keep the whole Law of Moses. Just as faith is the key that opens the freedom of redemption in Christ, even so ceremonial circumcision was the key to entering into the Law of Moses. However, the previous verse (Galatians 5:2) makes it clear that entrance into the obligation of the Mosaic Law is, in fact, a departure from the redemption that is in Christ.

4. Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace.

Speaking specifically to those who were convinced that circumcision was necessary to complete their salvation (the position of the Judaizers – Acts 15:1), Paul boldly declares that Christ is of *no effect unto you*. When Paul wrote to the Ephesians, one thing that he made very clear was that the ceremonial Laws of Moses had been *abolished* (*katargesas* from the root *katargeo*; to cause to be useless) at the cross (Ephesians 2:15); *no effect* (*katergethete*, also from the root *katargeo*) bears

³⁷² http://www.reformed.org/documents/wcf_with_proofs/

the same thought as the Ephesians passage.³⁷³ In Ephesians, where Paul is describing how Jesus *abolished* the Mosaic ordinances at the cross, the word is singular and in the active voice (Jesus did the *abolishing*); here in Galatians, the word is plural (it applies to all who are accepting this strange doctrine) and in the passive voice (it comes to them as a result of choosing the teachings of the Judaizers).³⁷⁴ The thrust of Paul's words is very clear: if you step from faith in Christ alone into the faith-plus-works hybrid of the Judaizers, then your relationship with Christ is ended – it has been done away with. Man's ability to lose the way to life is not a new concept; Ezekiel wrote of this very thing: "... when the righteous turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, and doeth according to all the abominations that the wicked man doeth, shall he live? All his righteousness that he hath done shall not be mentioned [remembered]: in his trespass that he hath trespassed, and in his sin that he hath sinned, in them shall he die" (Ezekiel 18:24).³⁷⁵ Paul had already declared to the Galatians: "Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham" (Galatians 3:7), thereby clarifying for them that the children of Abraham are such because of their faith (not because of their ancestry). His concluding comment on this was: "And if ye *be* Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (Galatians 3:29). It is faith in Christ that makes someone an heir according to the promise, and not the keeping of Mosaic traditions. To the Romans Paul declared: "For if they which are of the law *be* heirs, faith is made void, and the promise made of none effect [same Greek word as in Galatians 5:4] ..." (Romans 4:14). What Paul is saying is that if those who adhere to the Law of Moses are made heirs of the promise that God made to Abraham, then faith has become hollow, or empty (of no significance), and the promise has been destroyed.³⁷⁶ He is making a similar statement here: those of you who think that you are justified by keeping the Law of Moses (this is addressed to the Galatian situation, but would be equally applicable to anyone who has embraced a faith-works gospel), the work of Christ on your behalf has been rendered of no value. Paul has already instructed them that "a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ" (Galatians 2:16); very clearly, then, the phrase "whosoever of you are justified by the law" cannot be taken to refer to those who in reality are justified by the Law, but rather to those who **think** that they are justified by keeping the Law, which is everyone who accepts a faith-works gospel (including that of the Judaizers). The truth is that those who hold to a faith-works teaching will not be heirs with those who hold to faith in Christ alone: "the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman" (Galatians 4:30).

Paul makes a simple statement of fact here: if you are justified by the law, then *ye are fallen from grace*. Although he has already made it clear that no one is justified by keeping the Law (2:16), he makes this statement because anyone who was convinced that circumcision was necessary in order to complete their salvation, was thereby declaring that the Law was needed for justification (which was the position of the Judaizers – Acts 15:1). Even though such justification is not possible, nevertheless that would be their declaration upon accepting the perverted gospel of the Judaizers. To these Paul declares that they have lost the grace of Christ.

"And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth. John bare witness of him, and cried, saying, This was he of whom I spake, He that cometh after me is preferred before me: for he was

³⁷³ Stephanus 1550 NT; Friberg Lexicon.

³⁷⁴ Strong's Online.

³⁷⁵ Ibid.

³⁷⁶ Ibid.

before me. And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace. For the law was given by Moses, *but* grace and truth came by Jesus Christ” (John 1:14-17). Jesus came *full of grace and truth* (John 14:6; 17:17), and *of his fullness* we have all been given; i.e., we (as faithful believers) have all laid hold of His grace and truth through faith. *Grace for (in the place of) grace* refers to the Law of Moses, on the one hand, which contained the grace of God (to those who had eyes of faith to see it) and, on the other hand, to Jesus Christ, the ultimate and pure expression of God’s grace to mankind.³⁷⁷ So the grace that was available through the Mosaic Law, has been replaced by the grace that brings complete redemption in Christ. John declares that *the* grace and *the* truth are come by Jesus (the Greek includes the definite articles³⁷⁸); this is not just any grace and truth that have come but that which can bring reconciliation with God. When Jesus came out of the water after being baptized, God declared from heaven: “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased” (Matthew 3:17); on the Mount of Transfiguration God spoke again: “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him” (Matthew 17:5). God’s grace (His pleasure) toward mankind is wrapped up in the Lord Jesus Christ (foretold through the Law of Moses and the prophets and fully realized when the eternal Word became flesh), and so we must recognize the eternal importance of how we approach God’s expression of Grace and Truth. John wrote the book that bears his name so “that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name” (John 20:31). Salvation is through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ (both believing and obeying) that He, as the fullness of God’s grace, can impart life; it is through faith that we are joined to the Vine Who will impart His life into our lifelessness (Romans 11:17; John 15:4).

Paul’s very blunt statement to those who add works to faith in Christ is: *ye have fallen from grace*. *Fallen (ekipto)* means to have fallen from a thing, to no longer experience it.³⁷⁹ The Greek text includes the definite article with the word *grace*, which means that they have fallen from *the* *grace*. We might be tempted to think that they have only fallen from the grace of Christ into the grace that exists within the Law of Moses (John 1:16-17) – from the grace of the New Covenant to the grace of God that was apparent in the Old Covenant. However, Paul explained the place of the Old Covenant very carefully to the Ephesians: “he [Jesus] is our peace, who hath made both one [the context tells us that this is the Jew and the Gentile], and hath broken down the middle wall of partition *between us*; Having **abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances**; for to make in himself of twain one new man, *so* making peace ...” (Ephesians 2:14-15). Paul had already clarified for the Galatians that the Law of Moses was added until “the seed should come to whom the promise was made” (Galatians 3:19), namely Jesus Christ (Romans 10:4). The Law of Moses has been fulfilled – ended (Hebrews 8:13), and replaced by the New Covenant; the Old Covenant is no longer active as a means of grace – it was instituted by God for a season, and that season has passed. Therefore, when Paul declared these people to have *fallen from the* *grace*, they were fallen from Christ – they were now apostate, and the Mosaic Law was not a safety net! To their eternal detriment, they had rejected the only means of salvation: Christ alone!

This very clear consideration of Paul’s teaching to the Ephesians finds no place within those who advocate a dispensational view of the Scriptures. This view (defined by one of its own) “refers to **the fact** that Bible history can be divided into **distinct periods** of time during which God works

³⁷⁷ Friberg Lexicon.

³⁷⁸ Strong’s Online.

³⁷⁹ Strong’s Online; Friberg Lexicon.

out His purposes ... [it] is based on a literal interpretation of the Bible and a clear distinction between Israel and the Church.”³⁸⁰ Despite this *view* purportedly being based upon *fact* and *distinct* time periods of history, this same supporter admits that “the exact number of dispensations or ages is not what is important ... The important point is that there HAVE been various periods during which God has worked out His purposes” (emphasis included in the original).³⁸¹ Clearly, the *distinct* periods are really not that distinct, for how many you recognize is entirely up to you – just so long as you have some because it is this view of the Scriptures that draws a definite line of separation between the “Church” and Israel. Isn’t it interesting that what forms a fundamental part of the *dispensational view* is something that Paul clearly taught as having been removed at the cross by the Lord Jesus Christ? As with any interpretive *view* that is applied to the Scriptures, dispensationalism has far-reaching influences, particularly when it comes to Biblical eschatology. We must be wary of theological systems (all of which have been developed by men) that are used to interpret God’s Word – typically there will be Scriptures that do not fit well, and they will either force them to fit or ignore them altogether.

A favored word within the Evangelical vocabulary is *backslide*, or variations thereof, a term that means “to fall back into wrongdoing or a bad habit after an attempt to act in a better way.”³⁸² It is used with little or no embarrassment, and is often considered to be part of a normal pattern for the modern Christian; it is deemed to be something from which recovery is possible at any time, no matter how long the condition has prevailed. We do not find the English word, *backslide*, in our NT Scriptures, but we do find it used several times in the prophetic OT books. For example: “Thine own wickedness shall correct [chastise] thee, and thy backslidings [*m^eshuwbah*; apostasies] shall reprove [judge] thee: know therefore and see that *it is* an evil *thing* and bitter, that thou hast forsaken [abandoned] the LORD thy God, and that my fear [awe or dread] *is* not in thee, saith the Lord GOD of hosts” (Jeremiah 2:19).³⁸³ Jehovah is addressing the nation of Israel as an individual (hence the singular pronouns), even though Israel is now a great many people. Israel, generally speaking, had forsaken the Lord, yet the nation included individuals who continued to exercise faith in God, the apostate (those who had fallen from faith) and the pagan (those who had never believed). Israel had been redeemed from Egypt by the Lord God, yet as a nation they had fallen from following the Lord – hence the word *backslidings* is applied to Israel. In the same way, Canada and the USA are often referred to as “Christian” nations, which are rapidly becoming pagan, yet within these nations there will be those of the three possible categories: the faithful, the fallen, and the pagan.

The meaning of the Hebrew word (*m^eshuwbah*) translated as *backsliding* is “turning away, turning back, apostasy.”³⁸⁴ The Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures (the Septuagint) uses *apostasia* for this word (Jeremiah 2:19).³⁸⁵ What is immediately evident is the correlation between the Greek word (*apostasia*) and our English *apostasy*; also apparent is its superior translation of the meaning of the Hebrew word. Clearly, this word is significant and speaks of more than a lapse in spiritual judgment or a stumble along the pathway of life. This is not unintentional but deliberate; *apostasy* is defined as “the renunciation of a religious belief”;³⁸⁶ you cannot accidentally

³⁸⁰ https://www.wayoflife.org/database/study_bible_dispensationally.html

³⁸¹ Ibid.

³⁸² Encarta, “backslide.”

³⁸³ Strong’s Online; BDB.

³⁸⁴ Ibid.

³⁸⁵ Septuagint, *Bibleworks* 8.

³⁸⁶ Encarta, “apostasy.”

renounce something – it is an act of the will. Our English word *backsliding* does not do justice to what Jeremiah is saying; it creates the idea that you have been moving forward, but for some reason you begin to slide backward; even though you are still trying to move forward, you are losing ground. That is how the Evangelical mind would like to think of it – no matter how long you have been unfaithful to the Lord, you are only sliding backward. Jeremiah says, “NO!” Your apostasy will judge you! You are no longer walking in faithfulness to God; you have turned around and are walking (not sliding) in the opposite direction!

Keep in mind that there were three categories of people within Israel (or any nation): the faithful to God, the apostate (those who have fallen from faithfulness to God) and the pagan (those who have never exercised faith). By Jeremiah’s time, it would be safe to say that there were probably few who were apostate in Israel (those who had been faithful, but had fallen away); there would have been a remnant of faithful ones (who undoubtedly were under duress to go along with the faithless), but most would have been those who had never believed in the Lord (despite maintaining appearances) – pagans at heart. The Lord had made provision for Israel to deal with those who turned from Him, but it is very evident that they did not practice this commandment:

And if any soul sin through ignorance, then he shall bring a she goat of the first year for a sin offering. And the priest shall make an atonement for the soul that sinneth ignorantly, when he sinneth by ignorance before the LORD, to make an atonement for him; and it shall be forgiven him. ... But the soul that doeth *ought* presumptuously [with a high hand; in pride], *whether he be* born in the land, or a stranger, the same reproacheth [blasphemes] the LORD; and that soul shall be cut off [destroyed] from among his people. Because he hath despised the word of the LORD, and hath broken his commandment, that soul shall utterly be cut off; his iniquity *shall be* upon him (Numbers 15:27-31).³⁸⁷

Lest we misunderstand the phrase *cut off* that is used, here it is again: “And the man that will do presumptuously [in arrogance], and will not hearken unto the priest that standeth to minister there before the LORD thy God, or unto the judge, even **that man shall die**: and thou shalt put away the evil from Israel” (Deuteronomy 17:12).³⁸⁸ There were very clear instructions in place to preserve the purity of God’s people, yet it is very evident that there was no will to obey God’s commandment in this regard. Even though Israel failed to practice this commandment of the Lord in order to keep their walk holy before Him, it must not be construed that God did not apply this principle to His people – He did not close His eyes to the sin of rebellious pride. To those who sinned willfully (with a high hand), God says, “... his iniquity *shall be* upon him” (Numbers 15:31); in other words, he will bear his sin – it will not be forgiven.

Just in case we should think that this is an Old Testament teaching that has been done away with, consider the words that Peter penned by the Spirit of God: “For if after they have escaped the pollutions [defilement] of the world through the knowledge [a full or precise and correct knowledge] of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein [again involved in the world], and overcome [are being defeated], the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known [to be thoroughly acquainted with] the way of righteousness, than, after they have known *it*, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them” (2 Peter 2:20-21).³⁸⁹ This speaks of those who have been influenced by false teachers, against whom Peter is warning. “For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of

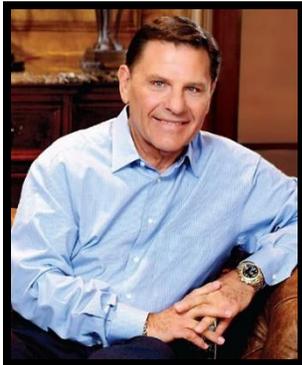
³⁸⁷ Strong’s Dictionary.

³⁸⁸ Strong’s Online.

³⁸⁹ Strong’s Online; Friberg Lexicon.

man: but holy men of God spake *as they were* moved by the Holy Ghost. But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction” (2 Peter 1:21-2:1; the *swift destruction* is explained in Hebrews 10:26). Just as there were false prophets among the people of Israel, so there are false teachers among the people of God today. These have “forsaken the right way” (2 Peter 2:15) and “speak great swelling words of vanity” so as to draw those in who have departed from sin, those who have “clean [truly] escaped from them who live in error” (2:18).³⁹⁰ “For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly [desires or appetites³⁹¹]; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple” (Romans 16:18). What is unmistakable is that there will be those who have begun to walk by faith in Christ through the power of the indwelling Spirit of God, who will fall for the persuasive words and grand claims of these false teachers (Matthew 24:24). Peter says: “... it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known *it*, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them” (2 Peter 2:21). Let’s consider this for a moment more.

Today, we might readily identify men like Benny Hinn and Kenneth Copeland as these false



Kenneth Copeland

teachers who speak great words, promising liberty to all who follow their teachings and send them their money; however, what we must not miss is that anyone who teaches a gospel other than the pure Gospel of the Word of God is a false teacher, and we are to note him and then avoid him (Romans 16:17). This could very well be the Evangelical next door who ignores the Biblical admonition to separate from those who do not believe in salvation by faith alone. A violation of Biblical separation includes participation in Ecumenical gatherings like Billy Graham crusades (now Franklin Graham’s festivals) that bring together Catholics, Protestants of all stripes and Evangelicals. Another example would be involvement in a local ministerial association where Catholics, Evangelicals, Protestants and

Charismatics all work together. Even more subtle is the Fundamental Baptist church that exalts their “pastor” beyond anything that the Scriptures describe, and makes him a virtual “pope” within their circle of influence (something that they have learned from the Catholics, even if they vehemently deny it). Unless we are familiar with the Bible’s teachings on such matters and are prepared to weigh everything that comes our way by that Standard, we are in danger of falling. So we can see that the Judaizers, of whom Paul was warning the Galatians, fall into this category; even though they believed in the necessity of faith in Christ, they added to that the requirement of keeping the Law of Moses, thereby creating a gospel that was perverted, and to be avoided (Galatians 1:7; Romans 16:17). Peter boldly declares that it would have been better for those who succumb to these false teachings (and those who promote these teachings) to never have fully known the truth and walked in the paths of righteousness (2 Peter 2:21). The principle at work here is this: “the soul that doeth *ought* presumptuously ... that



Franklin Graham

³⁹⁰ Strong’s Online; Friberg Lexicon.

³⁹¹ Friberg Lexicon.

soul shall utterly be cut off; his iniquity [punishment for iniquity] *shall be* upon him” (Numbers 15:30-31).³⁹² To put it another way: “if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge [a precise and correct knowledge] of the truth, there remaineth no more [no further] sacrifice for sins” (Hebrews 10:26).³⁹³ The teaching of Scripture is very plain: if you walk the pathway of righteousness by faith in Christ and then turn from it, there is no longer any hope for you; it would have been better for you to have never known the truth, for then there would still be hope of salvation.

Paul says to the Galatians, if you think that you are justified by the Law of Moses (you who have accepted the teachings of the Judaizers), then you are fallen from the grace; i.e., the liberty that we have in Christ has been lost and replaced with a yoke of bondage that brings death. If we turn away from the truth of God’s Word, then there is no longer a sacrifice available for our sins – we have despised the only Sacrifice and we must bear the punishment for our sins without a Savior (Hebrews 10:26 and Numbers 15:31). “For *it is* impossible for those who were once enlightened [imbued (saturated) with saving knowledge] ... [*having fallen away*], to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put *him* to an open shame” (Hebrews 6:4, 6).³⁹⁴ Jesus died only once (1 Peter 3:18), and we can appropriate His sacrifice for our sins only once; if we turn away from our faith in Him, then there is no longer a sacrifice available for us – we have despised the only Sacrifice that there ever will be.

There are two things that we must accept for Paul’s admonition, which was made through the Spirit of God to the Galatians, to make sense: 1) it is possible to fall from a position of salvation in Christ and of walking in the Spirit of God, and 2) to fall from salvation requires a deliberate act of the will – apostasy is not something that you will accidentally fall into but, if we are not alert, it is possible to be led astray (Matthew 24:5). We must continually weigh all that comes our way (whether written or spoken) to be sure that the message presented is truly His (1 John 4:1). Provision has been made for our failures along the way: “If we confess [are agreeing with God as to] our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9).³⁹⁵ It is a serious matter to turn away from, or fall from, the true Gospel of faith in Christ – the consequences are eternal (there is *swift destruction* – 2 Peter 2:1).

Evangelicals today have bought into the deadly combination of “pray this prayer and you are saved” and God will then keep you no matter how you live. The theologians and teachers within Evangelicalism (whether liberal or conservative) are, for the most part, selective in their application of the Scriptures and will typically avoid, or gloss over, those passages that might call their theologies into question. Their blind followers either no longer believe that they bear any responsibility before God or they are simply too apathetic to bother to check all things according to the Word of God (1 John 4:1), and so they are duped into believing lies and half-truths (a more deadly form of lie) to their own spiritual demise. Paul warns the Galatians that if they accept the doctrine of the Judaizers, then they *are fallen from the grace*. This is not backsliding (as the margin of my Bible says) but **apostasy**; they were not sliding away from the truth, but were willfully turning their backs on it.

³⁹² Strong’s Online.

³⁹³ Ibid.

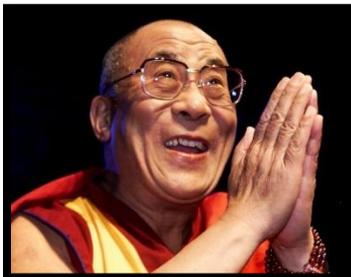
³⁹⁴ Strong’s Online; Stephanus 1550 NT.

³⁹⁵ Ibid.

5. For we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith.

Paul now seeks to provide a contrast for the Galatians. He has very pointedly identified the position of those who submit to the doctrine of the Judaizers – *ye are fallen from [the] grace* (apostate, not backslidden!). The contrast that Paul now lays out is made increasingly significant by his use of the phrase, *through the Spirit*. Earlier Paul asked, “Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?” (Galatians 3:3). What he emphasizes here is the clear dichotomy that exists between living the Christian life according to the Spirit of God, and accepting the compromised gospel of works from the Judaizers. Paul has just declared that those who will follow the leading of the Judaizers (using the second person plural pronoun *ye*) are *fallen from grace* – they are apostate; he now switches to the personal plural pronoun *we* and declares that *we* are functioning through the Spirit of God. The contrast is clear: the Spirit of God is no longer working within the lives of the Judaizers; in their fall from grace, the Spirit of God has departed – they began *in the Spirit*, but that is not how they are ending.

The word *wait* means to “await or expect eagerly.”³⁹⁶ There is an eager anticipation of the righteousness that comes through faith (Romans 8:1-4). Paul asked the Galatians if they expected to be made perfect through the works of the flesh (Galatians 3:3); in other words, were they convinced that keeping the Mosaic traditions would yield righteousness in their lives? In the previous three verses (5:2-4), he made it abundantly clear that to take that step would be to fall away from Christ Who is our only hope for justification before God. Isaiah understood the frame



Dalai Lama

of man and declared: “... we are all as an unclean *thing*, and all our righteousnesses *are* as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away” (Isaiah 64:6). If we anticipate that righteousness will come from within us, then we are waiting in vain – for “in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing” (Romans 7:18). This stands in sharp contrast to the spirituality of which the world today speaks in glowing terms – a spirituality built upon those filthy rags of “goodness” that they find within. “The Dalai Lama told a peace summit in Vancouver [BC] on Sunday that people must look within themselves for peace and compassion.”³⁹⁷ This perfectly expresses the spirituality that is in the world today; yet we see the same spirituality being promoted by those of the Emergent Church persuasion. They practice *centering prayer* where, through meditation and silence, they go deep within themselves to find god (and they are convinced that it is the God of the Bible).³⁹⁸ The Psalmist knew no such heresy; he said: “Lead me, O LORD, in thy righteousness because of mine enemies; make thy way straight before my face” (Psalm 5:8); “Lead me in thy truth, and teach me: for thou *art* the God of my salvation; on thee do I wait all the day” (Psalm 25:5). The Psalmist had the same expectant anticipation for the Lord as Paul speaks of here. The *hope of righteousness* for us can rest in no one but God, for there is no hope within us; Jesus Christ bore the sins of the world so “that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit” (Romans 8:4). It is only through the indwelling Spirit of God that we can hope to live a life of

³⁹⁶ Vine’s “wait.”

³⁹⁷ Amy O’Brian, “Look within yourself for peace: Dalai Lama,” (November 15, 2009)

<http://www.canada.com/life/Look+within+yourself+peace+Dalai+Lama/2046581/story.html>

³⁹⁸ <https://www.contemplativeoutreach.org/>

righteousness before God. "... Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour ..." (Titus 3:5-6). It is not by anything that we have done, or ever could do, that we are saved; we are saved by faith alone in Christ alone (Ephesians 2:8-9), and the Spirit of God is freely given so that we might live out His righteousness (Romans 8:4).

There is nothing of which we can boast. The marvelous gift of salvation that we receive does not provide us with a claim to fame – it is “not of works, lest any man should boast” (Ephesians 2:9). Here is the error of the Judaizers, and all those who today propound a gospel message that includes works: they strive to insert works into the message of the Gospel and thereby provide an element of participation **with** God in their salvation. The message of the Jews who came to Antioch was very simple: “Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved” (Acts 15:1); unless you DO something, you will not be truly saved. The message of the Gospel is simply faith (active believing, which is not a *work*), but “not of works”; there is no room for works within the saving message of faith in Christ alone – the *works of righteousness* and *holiness* come as we live in obedience to the Spirit of God within (John 14:15; Ephesians 4:24; Philippians 2:12).

6. For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love.

The Apostle carries on with that critically important phrase, *in Jesus Christ*. Jesus commanded: “Abide in me ... for without me ye can do nothing [no, not even one thing]” (John 15:4-5).³⁹⁹ “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: *it is* the gift of God ...” (Ephesians 2:8). It is faith that brings us into salvation: faith in the work of the Lord Jesus Christ on our behalf. Paul expressed this truth to the Galatians earlier in his letter: “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me” (Galatians 2:20). We are to live each day by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, a belief (faith) that is strengthened by the presence of the Spirit of God. The words of the father of the child possessed by demons come to mind: “Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief” (Mark 9:24); he believed, yet recognized his own weakness and cried out to the Lord to have his faith strengthened. “Therefore if any man *be* in Christ, *he is* a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new” (2 Corinthians 5:17); being *in Christ* means being a *new creature*. The essence of the Christian life is abiding in Christ and Christ abiding in us through the Spirit; the result is a new creation, a new life of righteousness (Romans 8:4). The Judaizers did not recognize this truth, the Galatians were beginning to lose their grip on this truth, and Evangelicals today have lost sight of this glorious truth. “... be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind ...” (Romans 12:2); therein is the essence of the “new creation,” but that *transformation* can only come through the working of the presence of the Spirit of God abiding within. *Transformed* (*metamorphoo*) means to be changed inwardly (it is also translated as *transfigured* – an outward change), and it is in the present tense and passive voice: it is to take place continuously, and it must

³⁹⁹ Strong’s Online.

be done by the Lord – living in yielded, obedient submission to the Spirit of God.⁴⁰⁰ There is nothing within us by which we could ever hope to be changed, yet the New Age lie of the devil that is flooding into Evangelical thinking is that we must look within to discover who we are and our purpose in life – that is nothing other than the inadequate fig leaves of Adam and Eve.

Within this essential relationship of being *in Christ*, circumcision and uncircumcision are nothing, for neither one holds any meaning (*availeth*) in Him (cp. Colossians 3:11).⁴⁰¹ This declaration strikes at the very heart of the false message that was being brought to the Galatians – namely, circumcision is necessary for salvation (Acts 15:1). Paul summarily declares that neither condition has any merit *in Jesus Christ* – one is no better than the other. Once again, we are squarely faced with the reality that there are no variations to the Gospel message; it is faith in Christ and nothing more or less. Nothing else has any bearing on the truth of this certainty – not the Mosaic Law (as effective as it was within the time that God allotted for it), nor the rite of circumcision that signified God’s promise to Abraham; it is faith alone in Christ alone. It is so simple, yet the Gospel message of Christ crucified is “unto the Jews a stumblingblock [an offense], and unto the Greeks foolishness [nonsense] ...” (1 Corinthians 1:23);⁴⁰² the Jews had great difficulty accepting that the crucified and resurrected Jesus was their Messiah, and the Greeks struggled with the whole idea of someone rising from the dead (Acts 17:32).

It is not circumcision or uncircumcision, but, in Jesus Christ, it is *faith which worketh by love*. As Paul declared earlier: “the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me” (Galatians 2:20). It is a faith that is presently active and being made effective (*worketh*) through love.⁴⁰³ “For God so loved the world that He gave ... the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world” (John 3:16 and Revelation 13:8). God’s love for mankind was shown in the Garden of Eden: “And the LORD God said unto the serpent ... I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it [He] shall bruise thy head [the promise of the coming Savior], and thou shalt bruise his heel [evidence that the Savior would suffer in order to defeat Satan]” (Genesis 3:14-15). By his act of sin, Adam rejected God as his Sovereign and submitted to Satan, thereby bringing all of future humanity and the rest of creation under the control of Satan. God’s immediate promise to defeat the devil opened His plan for the redemption of mankind; the Lamb of God would come as the supreme Sacrifice to bring cleansing from sin to those who would look to Him in faith.

7. Ye did run well; who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth?

The Galatians are reminded again that prior to their present *removing* of themselves from the Gospel of Christ (Galatians 1:6), their progress in the Christian life had been commendable; there was no room for blame (*ye did run well*).⁴⁰⁴ The tense of the verb *run* is a past continual action (imperfect tense), not a present continual action (as Paul would desire it to be); i.e., in the past they did *run well*, but presently that is not the case. The word *run* is used metaphorically and

⁴⁰⁰ Strong’s Online.

⁴⁰¹ Gingrich Lexicon.

⁴⁰² Friberg Lexicon.

⁴⁰³ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁴ Strong’s Online.

is “taken from runners in a race, [meaning] to exert one’s self, [to] strive hard.”⁴⁰⁵ We do not fall into the Christian life and then coast into the glories of the New Heaven. Jesus said: “Strive [*agonizomai* – be striving (present tense; imperative mood – a command)] to enter in at the strait [*narrow*] gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able” (Luke 13:24); “Enter [imperative mood] ye in at the strait [*narrow*] gate ... Because strait [*narrow*] *is* the gate, and narrow [*restricted*] *is* the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it” (Matthew 7:13-14).⁴⁰⁶ *Enter* comes from the same Greek word in both cases; Luke includes the command to *strive* to enter, whereas Matthew shows *enter* in the imperative mood – clearly, we are to expend energy in entering through the *narrow gate*; it is a matter of eternal importance, for the *Narrow Gate* is Jesus, the only Way to life (John 14:6).

Using the metaphor of a race where effort is being expended to run well, Paul asks: *who did hinder you*; i.e., who beat you back or stepped in your way that you should no longer run well?⁴⁰⁷ Who was it who came into your path and turned you away from the Pathway to life; who is it who is stopping you in the midst of a well-run race? Why are you “so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel” (Galatians 1:6)? “O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth ...” (Galatians 3:1)? There is a recurring expression of Paul’s incredulity that they have been drawn from the way of truth so quickly; they understood the Message of truth and had been walking in it – *ye did run well*. The evidence is overwhelming that the Galatians were truly born again, and had been walking by faith in Christ (Galatians 3:3).

The result of this hindrance was that the Galatians were failing in their obedience to the truth. The word *obey* is the same Greek word as used in Galatians 3:1 (*peitho*), and its primary meaning is that of being persuaded.⁴⁰⁸ However, both words are also in the passive voice and, therefore, means to be obedient, which is the result of being persuaded. We cannot be persuaded passively (we must choose to be convinced of something), but we cannot claim to have a conviction (a persuasion) unless we are living in accordance with it – in this case, we are convinced that Jesus alone is the Savior, and our obedience to Him flows out of that conviction. Our English word, *obey*, means to follow instructions, to do as you’re told,⁴⁰⁹ which is applicable when we choose to obey. We might hear of blind obedience, meaning that someone does what they are told without even thinking about what it is that they are doing or the consequences of their actions; not so here. Paul is asking about who had thwarted their progress in the Lord that they should no longer be obedient to the truth – their convictions have turned away from the truth. The Judaizers came from Jerusalem and were presenting them with seemingly sound arguments to add circumcision and the Law of Moses to their faith in Christ, and they were being convinced that this perverted gospel was the truth (Galatians 1:7). Do not miss the fact that the Galatians were being persuaded; as already stated, apostasy requires a personal decision: you cannot stumble into apostasy – you have to choose to go there. The Greek word translated as *obey* (*peitho*) provides that precise meaning. With this understanding, it only follows that Paul would declare those who were being so persuaded as being *fallen from* [the] *grace* (Galatians 5:4); they were being drawn away from the

⁴⁰⁵ Strong’s Online.

⁴⁰⁶ Strong’s Online; Friberg Lexicon.

⁴⁰⁷ Strong’s Dictionary.

⁴⁰⁸ Strong’s Online.

⁴⁰⁹ [Encarta](#), “obey.”

Truth – Jesus said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me” (John 14:6).

As we consider the Evangelical landscape of today, we can only echo these words of Paul to the Galatians. There is now open cooperation among Evangelicals, Charismatics and Catholics; anyone who raises a question or concern about this is considered to be divisive and narrow-minded. Despite the Word of God, that eternal Word of Truth (John 17:17), clearly declaring that we are to have no company with those who proclaim a message that is not in keeping with the Scriptures (Romans 16:17), the general Evangelical community has been convinced by the smooth words of their theologians that more can be accomplished through cooperation and unity than through standing alone upon God’s Word. Truly, much may be accomplished socially through such cooperation, but it rings hollow in light of eternity because God is not in it. Jesus warned of this possibility when He said: “Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity” (Matthew 7:21-23). Paul’s question would be very appropriate for today: Evangelical or Baptist, who hinders you from obeying the truth? Sadly, in many cases, Paul’s earlier summation would also be appropriate: *ye are fallen from the grace* (Galatians 5:4)!

8. This persuasion *cometh* not of him that calleth you.

This builds directly on the words of the previous verse. The word *obey* is from the Greek word *peitho*, and speaks of obedience from being persuaded or convinced. *Persuasion* is from *peismone* (*pice-mon-ay*) and refers to the means of being persuaded.⁴¹⁰ The influence (*this persuasion*) that was drawing the Galatians away from the truth did not come from the One Who is calling them (Galatians 1:6 makes this abundantly clear). Those, who were causing them to *not* obey the truth (v. 7) were absolutely *not* from God (v. 8); in the Greek, we have two different words translated as *not*: the former is a simple negative while the latter is an absolute negative. Strong emphasis is used to remove any confusion that might still remain in the minds of the Galatians; this perverted gospel is **NOT** from God.

“I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel ...” (Galatians 1:6). In those opening comments, Paul made it abundantly clear to the Galatians that they were in the process of substituting a false message for the Gospel that brought them into the grace of Christ. What cannot be missed is that this doctrine of the Judaizers, which they were being persuaded to accept, had absolutely nothing to do with what God had for them. If they followed this teaching, then they would not be obeying the truth but would have been persuaded to turn away from it (Galatians 3:1; 5:7). In other words, if they embraced this teaching they would then be turning to something that was not of God, or they would be turning away from God; they would have fallen from the grace (5:4) and apostatized! This is the reality at which Paul is striking with increasing intensity.

⁴¹⁰ Friberg Lexicon.

Today what Evangelicals are completely missing is that the doctrine of unity, into which they are being drawn, is absolutely not of God! The holiness of God requires separation from sin. However, the siren songs of the Evangelical leaders carry these words: “Don’t be so narrow, rejoice in the liberty that we have as believers, and embrace all those who profess to *believe* in God.” That is a favored term used by the Ecumenical crowd; they refer to people whom they really want to accept as Christians, as being *believers*, which leaves the door wide open as to what that might really mean. In their enthusiasm to join together, all reverence is gone for the holy God Who has provided redemption for all of mankind. Most today are happy with a profession of belief in God; “Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble” (James 2:19). Evangelicals might well be content with a profession of belief in God, but the devils demonstrate a greater respect for God, for they tremble at the thought of His power. Out of this chameleon-like qualifier for being a “Christian” flows the fabled notions that the God of the Bible is the same as the god of the Muslims, that unity is “the essence of the church,”⁴¹¹ and that the pathway to heaven is a broad road that includes those who have never heard of Jesus, but know in their hearts that they need something.⁴¹² Through this shallow, unbiblical, and deliberately undefined *believing*, saint and infidel are drawn together, only to soon become apostate and infidel (the saint having *fallen from the grace*). There was a reason that the Spirit of God declared through Paul: “... what part hath he that believeth with an infidel [the unbelieving]? ... Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord ...” (2 Corinthians 6:15, 17).⁴¹³ Once our eyes have been drawn away from the truth of God’s Word, there is no end to the error, accommodation and compromise that can take place under the banner of what is now considered to be “Christian.” A strong commitment to stand fast in the faith of Christ will keep us away from such compromise (Galatians 5:1). Our loyalty must be to the eternally established Word of God (Psalm 119:89), not to a denomination, creed, systematized theology, or anyone who is a purveyor of anything that stands alongside of the teachings of Scripture, no matter how eloquent or well-educated they might be. “For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly [desires, appetites]; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple [unsuspecting, naïve]” (Romans 16:18).⁴¹⁴

9. A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump.

Contained here, within the metaphor of leaven and the bread-baking process, is a warning to the Galatians of the effect that the heresy of the Judaizers will have within their assembly. It might well begin on a small scale, but it will permeate completely unless it is stopped. Leaven is an ingredient that, if left unchecked, will actually destroy the dough – the fermentation process (introduced by the leaven) is halted by the heat used to bake the bread.

Paul used the same analogy to make a point with the Corinthians. Hearing that they were not only tolerant, but proud of their expressed “freedom” to overlook the fornication of one in their midst, Paul declares: “Your glorying *is* not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the

⁴¹¹ Colson, p. 102.

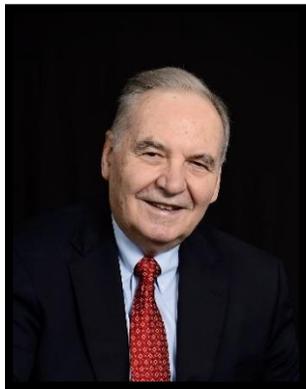
⁴¹² This heresy was part of Billy Graham’s response to Robert Schuller’s question, “What do you think is the future of Christianity?” Cathy Burns, *Billy Graham and His Friends*, p. 19.

⁴¹³ Friberg Lexicon.

⁴¹⁴ Ibid.

whole lump?” (1 Corinthians 5:6). The application is that a little evil, if left unchecked, will invade everyone within an assembly and, therefore, specific instruction is given to deal with the matter. “Purge out [clean thoroughly] therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us: Therefore let us keep the feast [i.e., so that we may celebrate], not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened *bread* of sincerity [purity] and truth” (1 Corinthians 5:7-8).⁴¹⁵ Paul’s word to the Corinthians is that we must work to completely remove the old leaven – namely, their compromised thinking that permitted the sin of fornication to be tolerated in their midst. Christ’s sacrifice for us allows us to celebrate our new life in Him, not with the *leaven* of compromise and tolerance, nor with the sins of the old life, but with purity and truth. The warning to the Galatians is that even the small leaven of the Judaizers (adding the traditions of Moses to faith in Christ) will compromise, contaminate and pervert the pure Gospel (Galatians 1:7).

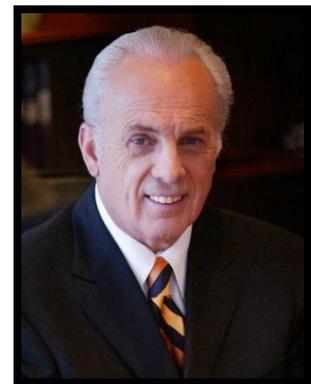
Jesus warned His disciples: “Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the



Norman Geisler

Sadducees ... [which is] the doctrine of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees” (Matthew 16:6, 12). He also declared: “Beware ye of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy” (Luke 12:1). These people, about whom Jesus warned His disciples, were the religious elite of the day; they would have been the Billy Grahams, Norman Geislers or John MacArthurs of that time. Yet Jesus warned His disciples to be wary of their teachings, because they were hypocrites. It was to the Pharisees that Jesus said: “If ye were blind, ye should have no sin: but now ye say, We see; therefore your sin remaineth” (John 9:41). As the religious elite, the Pharisees boasted that they had spiritual insight (*we see!*), but because they were blind to their own sinfulness, they remained in their sin (their spiritual insight was darkness – Matthew 6:23). Jesus came to call sinners to repentance,

but the one who is self-righteous cannot see his own sinfulness and, therefore, sees no need to repent. Despite their blindness, the Pharisees still presented themselves as the righteous ones and everyone else as sinners. Jesus told this story: “Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with [or, to⁴¹⁶] himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men *are*, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as *his* eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. I tell you, this man went down to his house justified *rather* than the other ...” (Luke 18:10-14a). The Pharisees feigned a godly righteousness before men, but Jesus knew their hearts and declared: “Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell [Gehenna; the Lake of Fire] than yourselves” (Matthew 23:15).⁴¹⁷ Although Graham, Geisler and MacArthur (even as the Pharisees)



John MacArthur

⁴¹⁵ Strong’s Online.

⁴¹⁶ Gingrich Lexicon.

⁴¹⁷ Strong’s Online.

might well say many fine things that stand in line with God’s Word, they have each compromised (to varying degrees) the very Scriptures that they claim to uphold. One failure that they all have in common is that they have no qualms about joining with those who do not hold to the pure Word of God.⁴¹⁸ This is not to say that God will not use His Word as spoken correctly by these men. Even Paul experienced those who would preach Christ in a way that would add to his tribulation, but his attitude was that “... notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretence, or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice” (Philippians 1:18). “So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper *in the thing* whereto I sent it” (Isaiah 55:11). Even though God will use His Word to accomplish His purposes, those who depart from the purity of the Truth do so “unto their own destruction” (2 Peter 3:16).

Consider, for example, John MacArthur – probably the most conservative of the three names mentioned and noted for his expository preaching. In 2007, he was a speaker at Moody Bible Institute’s Founder’s Week! Moody Bible Institute at one time stood opposed to the Ecumenism of men like Billy Graham, refusing to participate in Graham’s crusades when they came to the Chicago area. However, by 1986 this position was forsaken as they welcomed Billy as a Founder’s Week speaker, along with John MacArthur. Moody’s leadership has followed the trend of Evangelicals toward a more open and tolerant attitude toward those who are Liberal (a kind word for being either apostate or pagan). They have also embraced the spread of New Evangelicalism (modifying their curriculum and implementing degree programs to meet the increasing educational demands), and have continued to adopt modern heresies, so that today they promote the latest forms of Emergent spirituality. Moody, like other formerly solid Christian institutions, has followed the pattern away from the truth of the Bible into apostasy. However, despite this spiritually downward spiral, John MacArthur continues to join them for Founder’s Week, thereby aligning himself not only with Moody Bible Institute’s Ecumenical position, but also with those faltering Evangelicals who join him on the conference platform.



Michael Easley

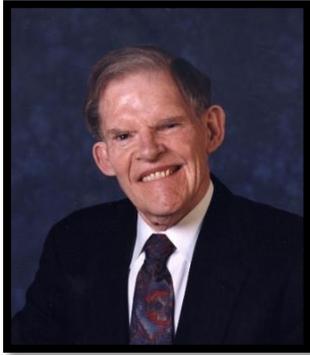
By participating in Founder’s Week 2007, MacArthur placed himself alongside of men like Michael Easley, who is the “lead pastor” of Fellowship Bible Church, Brentwood, Tennessee,⁴¹⁹ and a former president of Moody Bible Institute.⁴²⁰ Easley’s church has a well-rounded ministry focus that includes the Fellowship School of Dance, where they teach “Ballet, Hip-Hop, Jazz, Stretch/Flex, Tap, Modern, and Ballet/Tap/Jazz Combo!”⁴²¹ This appears on their website under the *ministries* that they have in their church! “Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God” (James 4:4). As much as they might like to spiritualize their dancing, it is simply another way of gaining the favor of the world, a marketing technique that seriously compromises whatever message they might have. MacArthur, by standing shoulder-to-shoulder

⁴¹⁸ Graham departed so far from the Scriptures that he could very well be considered an apostate; Geisler has joined with Rick Warren (a proven Biblical failure), and MacArthur has been part of Moody Bible Institute’s Founder’s Week years after the school had embraced New Evangelicalism (as recently as 2007). All stand in contravention of God’s Word.

⁴¹⁹ <http://www.fellowshippnashville.org/content/contact/staff.aspx#pastoral>

⁴²⁰ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Michael_J._Easley

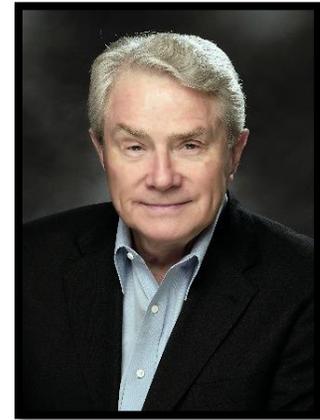
⁴²¹ <http://www.fellowshippnashville.org/content/ministries/dance.aspx>



Haddon Robinson

with Easley at Founder's Week, is approving of what Easley represents, or, at the very least, he is saying that it doesn't matter.

At this conference, he also joined men like Haddon Robinson, who is with Radio Bible Class Ministries that has become sufficiently Ecumenical that they will no longer teach against the errors of Catholicism. The Ecumenical Louis Palau, the Latin American version of Billy Graham, also spoke at Founder's Week 2007. There are many who hold MacArthur in very high esteem, yet it is so obvious that he has no regard for Biblical separation from error – Palau, Robinson and Easley all represent serious compromise with error through worldliness and Ecumenism. Paul's word of warning to MacArthur would be: "a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump"; you cannot participate with compromisers (those who embrace error, even if they still hold to some shreds of truth) without compromise entering your own life. Biblically, the moment that you participate with them, you have already compromised!



Louis Palau

Has this principle held true within the life and ministry of John MacArthur – has compromise entered? Perhaps there is nothing more telling of a person's spiritual position than the music that he enjoys or accepts. Today there is an obsession with rock music that is all built upon the foundation of rock and roll; whatever it's label (there are over 250 genres of rock music, including five that include the word *Christian*⁴²²), and even though its debut came as an expression of rebellion, it has become generally accepted by most everyone as the new normal for music – even among "Christians." Before we go further, let's consider the words of Jimi Hendrix (a confirmed rocker) on the matter of rock music: "We're making our music into electric church music – **a new kind of Bible**, not like in a hotel, but a Bible you carry in your hearts, one that will give you a physical feeling. We try to make our music so loose and hard-hitting so that it hits your soul hard enough to make it open. It's like shock therapy or a can opener ... **Rock is like a young dragon** ..." (emphasis added);⁴²³ this *new kind of Bible* must come from the *young dragon*, the devil himself (Revelation 12:9), for God's Word is unchanging (Psalm 119:89). It is also significant that this *new Bible* will generate a *physical feeling*; we are to hold God's Word in our hearts so that we might live before Him in righteousness (Psalm 119:11) – this *Bible* penetrates the eternal soul of man with an appeal to the sensual. Hendrix went on: "We want them [this would be those who are outside of the rock culture] to realize that our music is just as **spiritual** as going to church ... The soul must rule, not money or drugs. If you can do your own thing, just do it properly ... You should rule yourself and give God a chance" (some of what he expresses seems to be contradictory).⁴²⁴ Rock music is considered to be a *spiritual* experience, but it is with the *young dragon* (the devil), **not** with God! "Neither John Lennon [a member of the Beatles] nor his legacy is ethically attractive"; "... it was rock music that set the cultural climate

⁴²² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_rock_genres

⁴²³ David Henderson, *'Scuse Me While I Kiss the Sky*, p. 214.

⁴²⁴ Henderson, p. 215.

for drugs, degradation, and social irresponsibility ...”⁴²⁵ – from the seeds of rebellion comes a harvest of decadence.



John Lennon

Having provided just a glimpse into the world of rock music (and it is undoubtedly worse now), let’s return to the matter at hand. Have John MacArthur’s compromises impacted his own life and judgments on matters? In a sermon that MacArthur gave on alcohol, he included this: “So, you give up your liberties, so as not to ever offend another brother; one who hasn’t yet matured to understand those liberties [is he really saying that you give up your freedom to drink alcohol so that you are not an offense to a *brother* who is not mature enough to enjoy this freedom?]... You know, **I think the same thing about music**, a lot; is there anything more **demonic**, is there anything more **ungodly**, is there anything more **raw**, is there anything more **lustful**, is there anything more **drunken** than a rock concert? ... it’s a horrible thing, and yet they try and reproduce it in the church. True believers – I don’t know how true believers who came out of that background could experience all of the same stuff and not have their conscience wracked, because it’s that that they have been delivered from – and **I’m not talking about the style of music**, I’m talking about the **whole created experience** [the *rock concert*] – it’s endeavored to be mimicked” (emphasis added).⁴²⁶ Notice that his venom is poured out upon the *rock concert* experience as being so *horrible*, but he very carefully exempts such condemnation for the genre of rock music, which is the reason for the *demonic* concert. “It’s not just an exaggeration to say that **rebellion** is more than just an occasional theme in rock, it **is its very heart and soul**” (emphasis added).⁴²⁷ Why would MacArthur protect the genre of rock music?

In his commentary on Ephesians (1986), MacArthur made this observation: “The association of hard rock with violence, blasphemy, sadomasochism, sexual immorality and perversion, alcohol and drugs, and Eastern mysticism and the occult are not accidental. They are fed from the same ungodly stream. A leading rock singer once said, ‘Rock has always been the devil’s music. It lets in the baser elements.’ **Putting a Christian message in such a musical form [rock style] does not elevate the form but degrades the message** to the level already established in the culture by that form” (emphasis added).⁴²⁸ What happened between 1986 and 2012 that would make MacArthur flip 180° on the matter of rock music?

The answer is really quite simple: rock music is now a part of his *ministry*. For a number of years Grace Community Church (MacArthur’s church) sponsored youth conferences called Resolved; included in a number of these was the group Enfield, a band that plays routinely for Grace Community Church in their college ministries.⁴²⁹ At the 2008 Resolved conference, Enfield released an album of their music that is described as being *indie-rock* – in other words, this is an album of rock music produced by an independent (hence, *indie*) label.⁴³⁰ MacArthur’s protection

⁴²⁵ David Noebel, *The Legacy of John Lennon*, pp. 15, 113.

⁴²⁶ <https://www.gty.org/library/sermons-library/80-381> [From a sermon, January 29, 2012]

⁴²⁷ A quote from *Rolling Stone* magazine; https://amazingdiscoveries.org/S-deception_music_rock_industry_quotes

⁴²⁸ <https://middletownbiblechurch.org/separate/macrock.htm>

⁴²⁹ [https://en.everybodywiki.com/Enfield_\(band\)](https://en.everybodywiki.com/Enfield_(band))

⁴³⁰ [https://en.everybodywiki.com/Enfield_\(band\)](https://en.everybodywiki.com/Enfield_(band)); <https://mentallitch.com/the-history-of-indie-rock/>.

of rock music is one of expediency – rock music is present and active within his own church!⁴³¹ His presence as a speaker at Resolved conferences placed his stamp of approval upon them, including their rock music! In the same way, his participation at Moody’s Founder’s Week conference demonstrated his endorsement of Moody Bible Institute’s position, as well as the other Ecumenical speakers that filled the conference roster.

Evangelical compromise has so often begun as a small grain of leaven called rock music, or with the devil’s soothing whisper, “It’s okay to preach at that conference; after all, you can preach the truth.” It seems evident that Evangelicals have been deceived into thinking that music is neutral, and that speaking a few words of truth in the midst of disobedience is acceptable with God. Nonetheless, both are the leaven of Satan used to permeate many hearts today with a godless element – including the Grace Community Church through John MacArthur, who prides himself on knowing and teaching the Word of God. How much did MacArthur’s compromise with Moody Bible Institute influence his failure in the area of music? Undoubtedly, the two worked together as leaven to provide Satan with a toehold in MacArthur’s life and ministry. Paul’s warning is to watch out for that seemingly innocent piece of leaven that will infiltrate and destroy the individual and the whole assembly, unless it is identified and stopped. For the Galatians, the issue at hand was the doctrine of the Judaizers.

10. I have confidence in you through the Lord, that ye will be none otherwise minded: but he that troubleth you shall bear his judgment, whosoever he be.

Paul now expresses his *confidence* that the Galatians will return to the truth. In verse seven, we noted that the word *obey* (*peitho*) carries the root meaning of being persuaded (and within that context, obedience was the result); the same Greek word is translated as *confidence* here (the persuasion leads to a surety).⁴³² Young’s Literal Translation shows this first phrase as: “I have confidence in regard to you in the Lord ...”; what may not be obvious at first glance, but Robert Young brought to light in his literal translation, is that Paul’s confidence is not in the Galatians but in the Lord. That is an important distinction to make; since the Galatians were being swayed to accept the skewed doctrine of the Judaizers (they were being persuaded to be disobedient to the truth – 3:1), there would be little basis for anticipating a complete forsaking of that error of which some were being persuaded – too often the longer that error is contemplated, the greater the surety of its acceptance. However, Paul expresses confidence that the Lord will use this letter, written under the inspiration of the Spirit of God, to draw them back from the brink of spiritual ruin.

Paul’s confidence is that the Lord will see that the Galatians will again be *none otherwise minded*. That is a somewhat awkward English phrase for three Greek words that are literally *nothing other to think*.⁴³³ Paul is convinced that the Lord will open the eyes of the Galatians so that their minds will be filled with nothing other than the Gospel that he has given to them, and

⁴³¹ The associates of King Saul recognized that music was not neutral, and that David could sooth Saul’s spirit by playing for him (1 Samuel 16:23); if music was neutral, David’s playing would have had no effect.

⁴³² Friberg Lexicon.

⁴³³ Stephanus 1550 NT.

that the perversion of the Judaizers will be forsaken (Galatians 1:7). There is no room for anything else but the truth of the Gospel.

The end of the one who is *troubling* (present tense) the Galatians is identified; he shall *bear his judgment*. Whoever he is, he will bear his condemnation; *judgment* is from the Greek word *krima* (*kree'-mah*) and speaks of condemnation or punishment.⁴³⁴ This is not a favorable but a condemning judgment, and those who are bringing this falsehood to the Galatians are assured here of their condemnation. “*It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor any thing whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended [impeded], or is made weak*” (Romans 14:21).⁴³⁵ We are called to guard against doing anything that would provide occasion for a fellow Christian to stumble, or to be made weak, in their walk with the Lord – the Judaizers, who would have considered themselves to be Christians, were not only causing the Galatians to stumble, but were actually seeking to draw them into their own apostasy (which they did not recognize). Some take this to mean that we must contextualize the Gospel message so as not to offend anyone – nothing could be further from the truth.

Paul’s specific instruction to Timothy was: “Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus” (2 Timothy 1:13). The truths of Scripture are not to be compromised – ever! However, within the truth of the Word of God, there is a “stumbling” for the one who does not hold the words of Scripture in all purity:

Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious [held in honor]: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded [will absolutely not be shamed (a very strong negative; Greek double negative with subjunctive mood⁴³⁶)]. Unto you therefore which believe [*are believing*] *he is* precious [valuable]: but unto them which be disobedient [refusing to believe], the stone which the builders disallowed [rejected], the same is made the head of the corner, And a stone [*lithos* – small, used in building] of stumbling [something to trip over], and a rock [*petra* – large, immovable] of offence [that which causes a fall or opposition], *even to them* which stumble at [taking offense, rejecting] the word, being disobedient [refusing to believe]: whereunto also they were appointed (1 Peter 2:6-8).⁴³⁷

Christ is described here as a *stone of stumbling*, i.e., He is likened to a small building stone (*lithos*) that can cause someone to stumble, or trip, as they walk along; however, He is also compared to a *rock of offence*, a huge, immovable rock (*petra*) that will bring condemnation to those who refuse to believe. We must carefully hold to the Word of Truth lest unbelief should enter our hearts, and, thereby, some part of the eternal Logos should become a scorned Stone that causes us to stumble, or, even worse, a rejected Rock that affirms our apostasy from the Lord (Hebrews 3:12; cp. Revelation 19:13).

There have been many who have built whole teachings on a part of Scripture that they “wrest [twist, misinterpret] ... unto their own destruction” (2 Peter 3:16).⁴³⁸ What we must be very careful to recognize is that “... no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake *as they were* moved by the Holy Ghost” (2 Peter 1:20-21). The same Spirit of God Who moved the OT prophets to

⁴³⁴ Friberg Lexicon.

⁴³⁵ Strong’s Online.

⁴³⁶ https://www.ntgreek.org/learn_nt_greek/subj-negation.htm

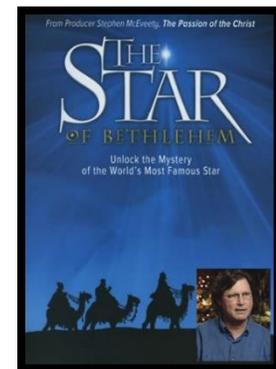
⁴³⁷ Strong’s Online; Friberg Lexicon.

⁴³⁸ Friberg Lexicon.

speaking the truths of God, now lives within Christ's faithful ones, and the promise that Jesus gave is that "when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth ..." (John 16:13). It is not a matter of applying my personal opinions or theologies to the Scriptures, but it is very much a matter of permitting the Spirit of God to guide me into His truth, even to the setting aside of my opinions and theologies. The truths of God do not stand in isolation but are supported by the rest of Scripture – God is the Author Who has ensured a coherence to the Message of Jesus Christ; texts viewed in isolation have proven to be the fuel for many cults and perversions. Paul charged Timothy to *hold fast the form of sound words* (2 Timothy 1:13) – to be holding firmly to the example (*form*) of accurate (*sound*) teaching (*words*) that he had received from Paul.⁴³⁹ We must be careful to believe ALL of the Word of God and hold the Scripture in higher regard than our own theologies – something that many "Christian" leaders are unwilling to do. If there is one area of teaching where I am unwilling to accept the clear voice of Scripture because of what I have always believed (or some other *reason*), then in that area I have stumbled at God's Word. The eternal Logos, Jesus, has at that point become a stone of stumbling for me; therein I have become an unbeliever and disobedient, someone who is not fully persuaded of the truth. Remember, a *little leaven leaveneth the whole lump*; if I am unwilling to accept God's Word in that one area, then you can be sure that Satan will use every opportunity to spread the poison of unbelief until it ends in apostasy.

The Galatians might well have understood many things concerning the Christian life, but they were failing to hold to the doctrine of faith alone in Christ's atonement for salvation. Their failure in this one area was about to cause them to *fall* from the grace of Christ (Galatians 5:4); it mattered not how much they held accurately, because they were failing in this one area, they were standing on the brink of spiritual disaster.

Evangelicals today are not convinced of the unalterable veracity of God's Word. Some time ago we were given a DVD called *The Star of Bethlehem*. It had become quite popular within many circles even though the author, Rick Larson, openly claims to hold greater faith in his reverse calculations of the swirling universe than he does in the Word of God. For example: Jesus clearly stated that He would be three days and three nights in the earth (Matthew 12:40); however, the author's calculations require Jesus to be crucified on Friday and raised up on Sunday (clearly not three days and three nights, no matter how you calculate it). Larson is fine with that, indicating that the astronomical mathematic calculations that he has done are correct (thereby stating that Jesus did not speak the truth). The Creator of time is being accused by a product of His creation of not knowing the period of time that He would be buried! At that point of doctrine, the author has become disobedient and harbors unbelief in his heart (the leaven of doubt as to the truth of God's Word), and does so to the jeopardy of his own soul. What pride to say that personal research and calculations are more accurate and dependable than the Word of eternal God! Once more we can hear the whisper of the devil, "Yea, hath God said?" (Genesis 3:1). The Galatians failed to hold to the doctrine of faith in Christ alone; this became their point of disobedience (Galatians 3:1) and the hinge in turning aside to the bondage of error again (Galatians 4:9).



Rick Larson

⁴³⁹ Friberg Lexicon.

11. And I, brethren, if I yet preach circumcision, why do I yet suffer persecution? then is the offence of the cross ceased.

Paul now draws an illustration from his own life to demonstrate that he has not in any way accepted the perverted gospel of these troublesome Jews, and also that he has forsaken that to which he had at one time held (Philippians 3:4-8). He includes the word *brethren*, a reminder that he still considers the Galatians to be part of the household of faith; although they were in the process of falling into error, he is expressing confidence that they will turn from it.

Paul asks the Galatians the question: “If I am still preaching (present tense) circumcision, why am I being persecuted (present tense) by the Jews?” The reality is that Paul, as a devout Pharisee, at one time preached the message of circumcision and the necessity of keeping the Law of Moses. To the Corinthians Paul declared: “But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock ...” (1 Corinthians 1:23). What is evident is that the Jews had difficulty with the Gospel that Paul had been given by God (Galatians 1:15-17). Paul preached Christ as Redeemer, Savior, and Messiah. It was the Jewish religious leaders who cried out: “His blood *be* on us, and on our children” (Matthew 27:25) as they sought to have Jesus crucified. Now Paul is teaching that, through the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus Christ, salvation is readily accessible for all of mankind (both the Jew and the Gentile). Messiah, crucified? Therein was the stumbling block for the Jews; even though their sacrificial system foreshadowed this reality and Isaiah foretold it with great clarity, they found it very difficult to accept. Compounding the problem for them was that the Law of Moses had been given to them by God at Mt. Sinai; it was the one thing that made them unique in the world and special before God, so that even those who had accepted Jesus as their Messiah and Redeemer still wanted to cling to those traditions (Acts 15:1, 5). Paul clarifies for the Galatians that he was not walking in the way of the Judaizers, for if he had retained the rite of circumcision in his Gospel message, then the Jews would certainly have refrained from persecuting him. The reality was that Paul’s life was filled with persecution from his fellow Jews – because his Message did not meet with their approval. From the very beginning of his ministry, the Jews sought to kill him (Acts 9:22-23), and the last interaction of which we read is of the Jews still seeking to remove Paul from their midst (Acts 23:12-13). Paul understood, first hand, the problem that faith alone in Christ alone was for the Jews, yet he wholeheartedly accepted and committed himself to the Message that God had given him for the world. The Jews, on the other hand, struggled to accept the fact that their traditions had been ended at the cross of Christ (Ephesians 2:14-16).

Paul declares that if he had added circumcision to the Message that he proclaimed, then that which gave rise to such strong opposition from the Jews (*offence* – same Greek word as for *rock of offence* – 1 Peter 2:8) would have been removed. *Ceased* is from the same Greek word as used in Galatians 5:4 (*no effect*) and Ephesians 2:15 (*abolished*). If Paul had compromised the Message that had been given to him by God, then two things would have taken place: 1) his message would no longer have brought him persecution, and 2) his message would have been empty. The Message of the cross is that we can do nothing to merit salvation; it is all of Christ and what He has done for us. “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: *it is* the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast” (Ephesians 2:8-9). God, in His infinite mercy, provided salvation for all of mankind through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ (1 Timothy 2:3-4); this ultimate sacrifice is completely of God – we have no part in it, except for being the reason that God was willing to give His Son to die (John 3:16). Adding anything to what God has done says

that His work was not adequate. Even though the Judaizers, by faith, had accepted what Christ had done, they insisted upon the necessity of adding circumcision to their faith, and so they showed to God that the salvation that He had determined before the foundation of the world, was inadequate. All of the religions of the world have man doing something to gain the approval of the gods; by contrast, the Gospel of God declares that there is nothing that we can do to gain His favor. Like the father of the demon-possessed child, our cry should be: “Lord, I believe [am believing]; help thou mine [be helping my] unbelief [weakness of faith]” (Mark 9:24).⁴⁴⁰

It seems that modern Evangelicals have given a slight twist to the Message that says that man can do nothing to inherit eternal life, and have added the thought that once you have been persuaded (you believe) that there are no further demands placed upon you (you neither have to retain that persuasion nor live righteously). Nothing could be further from the truth. Paul reminded Timothy that it is God “who hath saved us, and called *us* with an holy calling ...” (2 Timothy 1:9). Peter declared: “... But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy” (1 Peter 1:15-16). This is not a call to a life of religiosity but, rather, to a life lived through the power of the Spirit of God Who abides within us. “... God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit” (Romans 8:3-4). Evangelicals have essentially misunderstood the Message of truth; it is not enough to say, “I believe,” and be baptized – unless we hold fast to the words of truth (2 Timothy 1:13), even in the face of opposition, and endure unto the end (Hebrews 3:6), we will have missed life eternal (Matthew 24:13). We must never lose sight of Jesus’ sobering words: “Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity” (Matthew 7:21-23). It is the will of God that we “put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness” (Ephesians 4:24); as we abide in the Vine (John 15:4), we are called to show forth the fruit of the Spirit of God (Galatians 5:22-23) in the face of opposition (2 Timothy 3:12). We must guard against the leaven of Evangelicalism lest it permeate our beings and cause us to fall from the grace of Christ (Galatians 5:4, 9).

12. I would they were even cut off which trouble you.

Paul expresses here his desire for the Judaizers (those who were promoting a perverted gospel and swaying the hearts of some): that they would be *cut off*.⁴⁴¹ These people were causing trouble by convincing some that they needed to add circumcision to the exclusive message of the Gospel in order to be truly saved. This was a serious matter, and Paul’s wish was that they would be amputated and removed from their midst.

“Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them” (Romans 16:17). Paul’s words to the Galatians are much more direct, but the message is the same: do not entertain those who promote a message

⁴⁴⁰ Strong’s Online.

⁴⁴¹ Ibid.

other than what has been given in God's Word. The Evangelical landscape today is a direct product of the compromise that New Evangelicalism made on the narrow teachings of Scripture. Harold Ockenga, and the other leaders of this movement, determined to dialogue with the Liberal (apostate) theologians for the stated hope of drawing them back to the Word of God. However, the result was that these well-intentioned men were drawn into the Liberal compromise and confusion. Pragmatism is never a substitute for obedience! The road to hell is paved with good intentions.⁴⁴² There will be those who will come before God and say, "Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?," and they will hear from the Lord: "I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity" (Matthew 7:22-23). The Judaizers proclaimed a message of faith and works thinking that they had the winning combination that would reap God's approval, yet of them God will say, "I never knew you." So we read Paul's vehement desire that these peddlers of a false gospel should be *cut off* and removed from their midst. We must be careful to hold the same attitude toward those who cling to the fallacies of modern Evangelicalism, so that we might protect ourselves from their error, and set a Biblical example of separation for those who are looking on.

13. For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only *use* not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another.

Here the Galatians are reminded that they have been called unto *liberty*; they have been called by God into the liberty of Christ (wherein they have already been charged to *stand fast* – 5:1). *Liberty* is from the Greek word *eleutheria* that means *freeborn*⁴⁴³ – there is a freedom from the bondage of the Law of Moses, a freedom to live under the tutelage and guidance of the Spirit of God, and a freedom to live in obedience to our Lord and Master. "Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants [*doulos* – slaves] to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? ... Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants [*douloo* – became slaves] of righteousness" (Romans 6:16, 18).⁴⁴⁴ There is a change in our allegiance; we no longer go through life doing what we want or what serves our desires, rather we gauge our actions and reactions according to God's Standard – according to His holy calling (2 Timothy 1:9) and our new man that we have donned (Ephesians 4:24). As we walk according to the leading of the Spirit, His righteousness will become evident through us (Romans 8:4); we have been freed from the destruction of sin.

The Greek word translated as *occasion* means a starting point,⁴⁴⁵ or a base of operations.⁴⁴⁶ The liberty to which we have been called is not to provide us with a means of fulfilling our own fleshly desires. How could this be, since this liberty is in Christ? The reality is that the mind of man is capable of many things – when God viewed the busyness of man at the Tower of Babel, He said: "Behold, the people *is* one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do" (Genesis 11:6). Within man's very capable mind is an almost inexhaustible ability to justify his actions. The Galatian

⁴⁴² First appeared in this form in Hand-book of Proverbs by H.G. Bohn (1855).

⁴⁴³ Strong's Online; Friberg Lexicon.

⁴⁴⁴ Strong's Online.

⁴⁴⁵ Vine's "occasion."

⁴⁴⁶ Strong's Online.

believers were being convinced to accept the arguments of the Judaizers; after all, what could possibly be wrong with practicing the sign of the covenant that God made with Abraham, or how could keeping the traditions of the Law of Moses ever be construed as anything other than doing what God had commanded? After all, these were practices given to them by God! Yet, as Paul has so ably declared already, such practices are fleshly and have absolutely no bearing on God's promise to Abraham (Genesis 12:3; Romans 4:11, 16; Galatians 3:16-17, 19). The lesson must be this: what God has ended, let no man perpetuate. The Judaizers accepted the liberty of faith in Christ but were teaching that this liberty could only be properly attained through practicing the rite of circumcision and keeping the traditions of Moses (Acts 15:1, 5) – i.e., take the Message of freedom in Christ and subject it to the bondage of Judaism. Paul says that our faith in Christ must stand alone; anything added to this faith is of the flesh (Galatians 3:3) and serves only to twist or pervert the Gospel (1:7).

For the Galatians, it was holding to the traditions of Jewish heritage that caused problems – an improper focus on something other than the Gospel message that Paul had delivered to them. Today, the distraction would more likely be something like Ecumenical unity; after all, it can be



George W. Bush

reasoned, Paul declared that there is "... one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all ..." (Ephesians 4:5-6); surely, that speaks of our need for unity. Whether expressed innocently, at a local level, by participation in a ministerial group of all "Christian" faiths, more blatantly through the efforts of men, like Rick Warren, who seek to draw Muslims and Christians together into a common goal, or through the decidedly overt efforts of the Roman Catholic Church to become the mother church for all religions, what is commonly set aside is the Message that God wants us to live before Him in purity. We are not to join together with those who do not hold to the clear teachings of Scripture (Romans 16:17), much less those who are adherents to a faith that is totally foreign to the Word of God (2 Corinthians 6:14).

In our pro-Islamic society, you do not have to look far to find those who are considered to be a part of the Evangelical community who declare that the Muslim Allah is the God of the Bible. President George W. Bush has stated many times that the Muslims and Christians worship the same God. Daniel Pipes of the *New York Sun* might well provide reasoned thinking that would seek to draw the two together,⁴⁴⁷ a rationalizing that many Evangelicals would undoubtedly find acceptable. The well-known, late Robert Schuller, while he still held ownership of the Crystal Cathedral, had rented space in his *glass house* to "Christians and Muslims for Peace" and told Imam Alfred Mohammed, of the Muslim American Society, that "if he [Schuller] came back in 100 years and found his descendants Muslims, it wouldn't bother him"⁴⁴⁸ Schuller had very evidently merged the two concepts of god into one and, in his Biblical ignorance, had certainly become a stumbling block for many; he had stripped the God of the Bible of His exclusive right as the only true God and reduced Him to the level of the gods of the pagans. Lest we consider Schuller to be unique within Evangelical circles, Billy Graham is quoted as saying on public television: "... Mohammed has a



Daniel Pipes

⁴⁴⁷ <http://www.danielpipes.org/2714/is-allah-god>

⁴⁴⁸ <http://www.theberean.org/node/5806>

great respect for Jesus, and he called Jesus greatest of the prophets except himself. And I think we're closer to Islam than we really think we are."⁴⁴⁹ This man, who has held massive crusades all over the world, and who faithfully sent all of those who came forward back to their own denominations (no matter how apostate), described the message of Islam and the Gospel to be *close*. How close Billy Graham and Teresa of Calcutta are in their philosophy of ministry; Teresa is quoted: "If in coming face to face with God we accept Him in our lives, then we are converting. We become a better Hindu, a better Muslim, a better Catholic, a better whatever we are."⁴⁵⁰ Is that not a clear enunciation of Billy's philosophy – become a better Catholic, or Anglican, or Muslim; now that you have come forward at my crusade, go back to your dead form of religion and be better at it – be more religious!

Mainstream Evangelical Rick Warren was invited to speak at the main session of the Islamic Society of North America convention held July 4, 2009, where "he called on the members of the two largest faith communities in the world [meaning Christian and Muslim] ... to find a way to work together for the greater good without compromising each group's convictions."⁴⁵¹ Here are three prominent leaders within Evangelicalism (Schuller, Graham and Warren) who have abused their "liberty in Christ" by reaching out to Islam, not to present the exclusive truth of God's Word,



Teresa of Calcutta

but to embrace it as being an acceptable faith. As these men have increasingly lost sight of Christ's narrow way to life, they have been more than willing to equate their faith with the dead faith of Islam. As the eyes of faith in Christ grow dim, the pathway of life appears to become increasingly broad; the dulled vision of the apostate no longer recognizes that "broad *is* the way, that leadeth to destruction" (Matthew 7:13). What Schuller, Graham, Warren, and all of those who follow their teachings have failed to see is that they are contravening the very Scriptures that they profess to uphold – they are defiling the name of Christ. Like Israel of old, they have rejected the commandments of God, and "they followed vanity, and became vain, and went after the heathen that *were* round about them, *concerning*

whom the LORD had charged them, that they should not do like them" (2 Kings 17:15). God warned Israel against following the ways of the heathen (Deuteronomy 18:9-13; Jeremiah 10:2-3) and His warnings are the same for us; Paul's question to the Corinthians still rings true today: "what communion hath light with darkness?" (2 Corinthians 6:14). The broad path of compromise is entered by losing sight of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. We, who have expressed faith in Jesus Christ, are called to walk in holiness (1 Peter 1:15) – we are called to walk the Narrow Way to life eternal (John 14:6 and Matthew 7:14). The blindness of Schuller, Graham and Warren is nothing new; the Israelites turned away from the Lord in the very same way, and the Galatians were about to make a similar error – being on the verge of embracing a perverted gospel that held no life at all (Galatians 1:7; 4:9). Although the object of the apostasy may vary, common to all is the turning away from God; the devil is not concerned about what lures us into apostasy (what we *turn to* is of no consequence) – he will ensure that there will always be something to entice us to turn our eyes away from God's desire for us (Hebrews 12:2).

⁴⁴⁹ Cathy Burns, *Billy Graham and His Friends*, p. 118.

⁴⁵⁰ <https://ocoy.org/mother-teresa-a-different-kind-of-christian/>

⁴⁵¹ <http://www.christianpost.com/article/20090705/rick-warren-to-muslims-talk-is-cheap-let-s-work-together/index.html>

Paul ends with a command to *serve* or to be in bondage to *one another*, not in bondage to an empty gospel (4:9). This is a re-statement of Romans 6:18 – “Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness.” The reality of life is that “to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness” (Romans 6:16). The freedom that we have in Christ is what permits the Spirit of God to work His righteousness in us (Romans 8:4). We are not made free from sin to live unto ourselves but, rather, unto the glory of God (Matthew 5:16); as our focus becomes the Biblical edification and strengthening of those around us, so God will be glorified through us. The reality is that not everyone within a group will jump into error at the same time; there will generally be some who are impulsive and will be ready to make the plunge, but there will also be others who will be more thoughtful and want to weigh the matter more carefully. Hence we read: “And I myself also am persuaded of you, my brethren, that ye also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish [warn or exhort] one another” (Romans 15:14).⁴⁵² Although this command to serve one another might appear to be somewhat out of place here (Galatians 5:13), it is in essence an admonition to the Galatians to look out for the spiritual welfare of each other, and an indication that this was not being done or else they might not be in the mess in which they now find themselves.

14. For all the law is fulfilled in one word, *even* in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

Word, as it used here, does not refer to what we might commonly think of as a single word, but rather it means an expression or statement.⁴⁵³ Here we have an expression that fulfills, or satisfies, *all the law*.⁴⁵⁴

When questioned by the lawyer as to the greatest commandment, “Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second *is* like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets” (Matthew 22:37-40). Jesus said that there are two statements upon which the Law and the prophets hang; has Paul missed something here? Jesus said this second commandment is *like unto* the first; they are similar and are intrinsically tied together. The link is the command to *love*, and this is the key to understanding what Paul is laying out. What we cannot miss is that these two statements are not equal; Jesus specifically states that the one that Paul quotes here is *second*, i.e., second in order. The reality is that the *second* will not happen unless the *first* is already in place; Paul specifically points to the *second* commandment with the understanding that obedience to the *first* commandment is already a present reality. These two commandments can neither be separated nor reversed; they only flow from the *first* into the *second*.

Within the Greek, there are two words for our English word *love*. *Agape* speaks of a love that is the product of judgment or the will; hence, it is completely fitting to be commanded to *love the Lord thy God*. This is *agape* and, therefore, is something that can be directed by the will. *Phileo*

⁴⁵² Strong’s Online.

⁴⁵³ Vine’s “word.”

⁴⁵⁴ Strong’s Dictionary.

(*fil-eh'-o*), on the other hand, relates to the love engendered by the emotions – we are favorably disposed toward someone or something because they meet with our approval; this is not something that can be commanded – it happens reactively. The word that Paul uses in this instance is *agape* – the same word as used by the Lord – and it speaks of a love that is directed by the will, not the emotions.

Since this command is the second in order of the two that Jesus said support the Law and the prophets, it is understood that the first command is already established. Paul is not advocating a departure from what the Lord commanded, but merely picks up on the second, dependent commandment that fits with what he has just said. We have been called to liberty in Christ, but we are not to use that liberty to be self-serving, but rather to love our neighbor as ourselves. “Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love *is* the fulfilling of the law” (Romans 13:10). The *love* spoken of here is also *agape*, and *fulfilling* bears the same root as the word *fulfilled* in our verse.⁴⁵⁵ Our response to our neighbors is not to be governed by our emotions, but by our will.

15. But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another.

This must be understood within the context of the command just written: “love thy neighbour as thyself.” Paul warns that if the Galatians do not practice *agape* (a love that is directed by the will), then they will be subject to the love (or its opposite) that is guided by the emotions. It would seem that dissension among those within the Galatian community was either already evident, or Paul foresees that it could become a reality.

Bite and *devour* derive from those Greek words that are typically used for the normal process of eating; in this case, they are used metaphorically to speak of being cutting and hurtful toward one another to the point of causing serious harm or actual destruction.⁴⁵⁶ What this indicates is the controlling presence of *phileo* – the love that is governed and guided by the emotions. As the Judaizers spread their philosophy among the people, a polarization is taking place between those who were easily convinced and those who would never be convinced (with everyone else being in between). Emotions would run high between the extreme poles, and the expression of those emotions would lead to the *biting* and *devouring*.

As already indicated, the word *devour* speaks of eating up (literally, as in eating food). First Peter 5:8 says that the devil walks about throughout the earth “seeking whom he may devour.” We have the same English word here, but the underlying Greek is very different; the Greek word, in this case, means to drink down, and speaks metaphorically of destruction.⁴⁵⁷ Although the metaphorical end of both words is the same (destruction), note that the devil spends less time with the process. Paul warns the Galatians not to eat one another up (a time consuming act) lest they be destroyed; the devil, on the other hand, simply swallows those down whom he targets to the same end. The devil will not play with his prey – he simply destroys them.

⁴⁵⁵ Strong’s Online.

⁴⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁷ Ibid.

Paul's warning is that they will be *consumed*, used up or destroyed by each other.⁴⁵⁸ There is a similarity between *devour* (as used here) and the word *consumed* – both speak of destruction. However, the former (*devour*) speaks more of the process, while the latter points more to the end result. Paul has portrayed, in stark contrast, the difference between *agape* and *phileo*; “thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself” and “bite and devour.” The former finds its basis in the love that we have for God, and is demonstrated by standing fast in the faith of Christ. As the Galatians would descend into the pit of deception (accepting the perverted gospel of the Judaizers) their love would increasingly become *phileo*. The simplicity of the matter is that we cannot live with God-based *agape* when we are no longer walking according to the Spirit's leading (Galatians 3:3). With the Spirit of God departing from the lives of those present, there would be a corresponding increase in the expression of *love* under the influence of emotions (*phileo*). Could this be why there is infighting in so many modern churches? Paul warns the Galatians to guard against this failure.

16. *This* I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.

Paul has just presented two contrasting situations, and now he provides a summary of what is expected of the godly follower of Christ.

The primary phrase is *walk in the Spirit*. Paul expanded on this thought in his letter to the Romans:

There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after [according to] the flesh, but after [according to] the Spirit. ... God sending his own Son ... condemned sin in the flesh: That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled [realized or cause to abound] in us, who walk not after [according to] the flesh, but after [according to] the Spirit. For they that are [walking – carrying the thought forward] after [according to] the flesh do mind [to strive for] the things of the flesh; but they that are [walking] after [according to] the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded [to have a mind focused on the flesh, i.e., walking according to the flesh] is death; but to be spiritually minded [walking according to the Spirit] is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity [hostility] against God: for it is [absolutely] not subject [obedient] to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh [absolutely] cannot please God (Romans 8:1-8).⁴⁵⁹

When Paul speaks of being *spiritually minded*, he does not have in mind the spirituality on which the world of today thrives; they have a form of spirituality, but it is founded upon a wrong spirit. Modern spirituality is based upon looking deep within one's self, where one will find nothing other than the carnal mind to build upon – a mind that is hostile toward God.

We might well recognize that the spirituality of false religions is contrary to God, yet we must also realize that there is a growing willingness, even among Evangelicals, to identify almost anything as being of God. How many times have we heard someone say: “God gave me this” or “God showed this to me”? Yet when you look at “this” in the light of Scripture, the contradiction is obvious; perhaps someone gave them whatever “this” is, but it could not be from God. Too often it seems that by ascribing God to be the author of whatever “this” is, places “this” (and the messenger) above criticism – how can you criticize something if it is from God? Unfortunately,

⁴⁵⁸ Strong's Online.

⁴⁵⁹ Strong's Online; Friberg Lexicon.

most Evangelicals no longer hold the Biblical knowledge necessary to assess such professions; furthermore, among many Evangelicals, to evaluate anything is to invite accusations of being judgmental and narrow-minded. Christians have become careless in their life-walk and have lost sight of their holy calling from God (2 Timothy 1:9); in fact, our holy calling by a holy God is not a common topic for preachers today, and so most Evangelicals are left woefully uninformed and comfortable in their complacency.

Rick Warren (a living example of a professing, woefully ignorant “Christian”) is doing his utmost to build bridges to the Muslims – visiting their countries and leadership, speaking at their conferences, and doing his best to include them in his P.E.A.C.E. program for the world.⁴⁶⁰ However, the Muslims do not believe that Jesus is the Son of God, and they say that He did not die on a cross; He is simply a messenger, or prophet, of Allah. “And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true [God], and we are in him that is true, *even* in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life” (1 John 5:20). This simple statement by the Apostle John forever makes Islam a false religion, despite the declarations of men like Robert Schuller, Billy Graham and Pope John Paul II (who have all professed that Allah and the God of the Bible are one and the same). Muslims practice a carnal form of spirituality that is hostility against the God of the Bible. We are warned not to partner with such as these – “Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? ... Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord ...” (2 Corinthians 6:14, 17). Warren is proving himself to be a false messenger of God; or, perhaps, he is simply a messenger of the false god, Allah. In his zeal to do good for all men, Warren has lost sight of the commands of God in Scripture like *walk in the Spirit*; he has fallen for the devil’s age-old ploy of pragmatism. “And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil. And when the woman saw that the tree *was* good for food, and that it *was* pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make *one* wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat” (Genesis 3:4-6). The devil provided Eve with compelling unsubstantiated evidence of the benefits to be realized by eating from the tree, just like he has provided Rick Warren with convincing proof of the advantages to be gained by joining together with infidels to accomplish his goals. Rick (like Eve before him) has failed to recognize that he has been conned by the devil into acting in opposition to what God has explicitly commanded. Today the devil loves to use those who are perishing, especially while they profess to be born-again, as his mouthpiece; “... because they received not the love [*agape* – guided by the will] of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong [working, energized⁴⁶¹] delusion [wandering, straying], that they should believe a lie ...” (2 Thessalonians 2:10b-11).⁴⁶² Rick Warren is not demonstrating an *agape* for God’s truth by his many compromises; consequently, Satan will make full use of his disobedience to sow confusion and delusion within the Biblically-ignorant, Evangelical mind. It may not always be convenient or comfortable to accept the truth of God’s Word; therefore, unless we have made a commitment to His truth (love guided by the will), we will be easily swayed by the smooth words of false teachers.

⁴⁶⁰ Warren’s endeavor is, **P** – plant churches or partner with existing ones (now alternately presented as *promote reconciliation*), **E** – equip local leaders, **A** – assist the poor, **C** – care for the sick, and **E** – educate the next generation.

⁴⁶¹ *Vine’s* “work.”

⁴⁶² Strong’s Online.

We have been warned: “Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world” (1 John 4:1).

Paul wrote of men like Rick Warren and warned Timothy about them: “Now the Spirit speaketh expressly [distinctly⁴⁶³], that in the latter times some shall depart [withdraw, fall away] from the faith, giving heed to seducing [misleading – the Greek noun form (*delusion*) is used in 2 Thessalonians 2:11] spirits, and doctrines of devils; Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron ...” (1 Timothy 4:1-2).⁴⁶⁴ Paul describes these people (who are fallen from the faith – Matthew 24:24) as *speaking lies in hypocrisy*; Jesus said: “Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep’s clothing ...” (Matthew 7:15). Jesus calls them *false prophets* (*pseudoprophetes*), and Paul says that they will be *speaking lies* (*pseudologos*);⁴⁶⁵ it is only fitting that false prophets should use false words. A prophet is “one who speaks forth,” a “proclaimer of a divine message.”⁴⁶⁶ We often limit the word *prophet* to those who speak of things to come, but the application is really much broader than that. Those of whom Jesus warned will come disguised as fellow believers, but you will only have to lift the sheepskins to discover the wolves beneath (*try the spirits* – 1 John 4:1). Some say that we should read or listen to what these men say and then take the good and leave the bad – eat the meat and spit out the bones. However, that would be like sifting through a garbage dump looking for good food when there’s a gourmet meal already laid out. The false prophets will make their fair-sounding, false speeches even while professing to be of the flock of God – they will come doing their best to appear as sheep, and will do their utmost to speak *sheep*. Many of their words may well sound familiar to the child of God, but they will always bear a wolfish accent; they will speak lies in *hypocrisy* – their lies will come forth under the guise of truth. Paul goes on to describe these hypocritical liars as *having their conscience seared with a hot iron*. The phrase *seared with a hot iron* is one word in Greek from which we get our word *cauterize*, and the word is in the perfect tense describing an action that has taken place in the past, once for all time with ongoing consequences.⁴⁶⁷ The desensitized, or deadened, conscience of these apostate teachers and leaders (Paul says that they have departed *from the faith* – 1 Timothy 4:1) is a completed reality; once again, we must recognize that there is no hope for those who have apostatized – they cannot be restored to faith in God. “For *it is impossible* [unable to be done] for those who were once enlightened (imbued or saturated with saving knowledge) ... If they shall fall away [*having fallen away* (no *if* in the Greek)], to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put *him* to an open shame” (Hebrews 6:4, 6).⁴⁶⁸ This is someone who has had their conscience *cauterized* and who is fallen away from the faith (apostate). Peter warned that there would be those among us who would seek to destroy others even as they themselves have been destroyed. “But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies [sneak in destructive doctrines leading to separation (Romans 16:17)], even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction” (2 Peter 2:1). Their destruction is sealed and irrevocable even though they might still continue to physically live and teach their lies. We must take heed, for their speeches may well be alluring (Romans 16:18); we must continually test all things by the Word of God (1 John 4:1). What the

⁴⁶³ Strong’s Dictionary.

⁴⁶⁴ Strong’s Online.

⁴⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶⁶ Vine’s “prophet.”

⁴⁶⁷ https://www.ntgreek.org/learn_nt_greek/verbs1.htm.

⁴⁶⁸ Strong’s Online; Friberg Lexicon.

Galatians failed to do was to identify these men from Jerusalem as false teachers – wolves in sheep’s clothing – and avoid them.

Paul commands the Galatians to *be walking in the Spirit* (it is a present tense command), and the result will be: *ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh*, or literally: *the passions of the flesh ye will absolutely not carry out*.⁴⁶⁹ Once again, we have an aorist, subjunctive verb and two Greek negatives (*ou* and *me*) that form a very strong negative.⁴⁷⁰ As long as we are actively walking in the Spirit, we will not fulfill the fleshly desires; however, the Scriptures warn us to guard against unbelief entering into our hearts and causing us to depart from God and cease walking according to the Spirit (Hebrews 3:12). Paul identifies the same propensity within the Galatians – “... having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?” (Galatians 3:3). We must be continually vigilant lest we fall away from walking with the Spirit of God; the Lord has promised to protect us from anything that would seek to remove us from His hand (John 10:28-29; Romans 8:38-39), but we must determine to be attentive in guarding against internal failure. Paul’s word to the Galatians is simply this: You must be walking in the Spirit, and then you will certainly not perform the fleshly desire to cling to the Jewish traditions. These two (walking in the Spirit and living by Jewish traditions) stand as polar opposites: they are mutually exclusive and there is no common ground between them. “There be some that ... would pervert [transform into something of an opposite character⁴⁷¹] the gospel of Christ” (Galatians 1:7); the Judaizers were making the Gospel of life into a yoke of death! These false teachers were “denying the Lord that bought them” (2 Peter 2:1) by turning His Message of salvation by faith into a heresy of salvation by works (yes, they believed in salvation by faith, but that was not enough to be truly saved; they held that the works of the Mosaic Law were an essential part of gaining salvation – Acts 15:1). We must guard our hearts lest we be deceived by the “good words” of false teachers (Romans 16:18).

17. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.

When Paul’s admonition to *walk in the Spirit* is followed, conflict will result. Romans 7 is the passage most often referred to regarding this conflict: doing what you don’t want, and not doing what you want. The essence of the conflict that Paul outlined for the Romans is summarized here.

The Greek word translated as *lusteth*, unlike our English *lust*, simply means *desire*, and not specifically a bad desire.⁴⁷² What is being made abundantly clear is this: not only are the desires of the flesh and the desires of the Spirit not the same, but they are actually in strong opposition to one another. “The carnal mind [the way of thinking that is in keeping with the flesh] is enmity against God: for it is [absolutely] not subject to the law of God ...” (Romans 8:7).⁴⁷³ There is no wiggle room here; the reality is very clear. If the Spirit of God is white, then the flesh is black; if the Spirit leads us east, then the flesh will long to go west. The Psalmist understood this exclusivity:

⁴⁶⁹ Stephanus 1550 NT.

⁴⁷⁰ https://www.ntgreek.org/learn_nt_greek/subj-negation.htm.

⁴⁷¹ Vine’s “pervert.”

⁴⁷² Vine’s “lust.”

⁴⁷³ Friberg Lexicon; Strong’s Online.

“As far as the east is from the west, *so* far hath he removed our transgressions from us” (Psalm 103:12). However, this is not to be a cause for Evangelical laxity; you must not think: “I’ve prayed a prayer and so God has forever removed my sins from me as far as the east is from the west!” The Psalmist goes on: “But the mercy of the LORD *is* from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children’s children; To such as keep [the form of the Hebrew verb identifies this as being an unbroken continuity] his covenant, and to those that remember [unbroken continuity] his commandments to do them” (Psalm 103:17-18).⁴⁷⁴ God’s mercy is not extended to those who ignore His commands, to those who turn away from doing His righteousness, nor to those who walk after the flesh. His mercy has always been offered to those who continually walk in obedience to His commands (which is walking according to the Spirit of God); moreover, He requires perseverance (that *unbroken continuity*) in our faithfulness to Him (Matthew 24:13). The Lord may well have removed our sins from us as far as the east is from the west but, rest assured, the flesh will desire to return to those transgressions. “And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back [present tense – contemplatively], is fit for the kingdom of God” (Luke 9:62) – an example is Israel’s longing for the leeks and the garlic of Egypt (Numbers 11:5).⁴⁷⁵ “Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast [*to be strong*; lay hold on] *our* profession [*to speak the same thing*; confession; acknowledgment of the truth]” (Hebrews 4:14).⁴⁷⁶

The children of Israel had the same struggle with this as we do today. Ezekiel faced the questioning of God’s ways by the people of Israel. God said: “Yet the children of thy people say, The way of the Lord is not equal [not fair]: but as for them, their way is not equal. When the righteous turneth from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, he shall even die thereby. But if the wicked turn from his wickedness, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall live thereby. Yet ye say, The way of the Lord is not equal. O ye house of Israel, I will judge you every one after his ways” (Ezekiel 33:17-20).⁴⁷⁷ If the one who is living righteously turns away from his righteous living (this requires a conscious decision, and is apostasy), he is a dead man (the word *die* bears the perfect tense; it is a past completed action). If the wicked turns from his wickedness (again, a conscious decision, hence repentance), then he must continue to live righteously (*live* bears the imperfect tense that speaks of an action that is incomplete – continuance is required).⁴⁷⁸ The reality of apostasy is not only acknowledged by Ezekiel, but the consequences of such a deliberate action are clearly laid out. Today, many Christians are not willing to acknowledge that God’s judgment has not changed (Malachi 3:6); i.e., what He decreed through Ezekiel to Israel of old is still applicable today. Even though many may well proclaim the unchangeable nature of God (His immutability), their unwillingness to accept His teaching through Ezekiel regarding apostasy serves to prove that they really do not hold to His eternal consistency (they are saying, by their example, that God has changed). It seems that they make this exception in order to make room for their carefully crafted doctrine of eternal security.

Paul declared, “... let God be true, but every man a liar ...” (Romans 3:4); in other words, if there is a conflict between the doctrines formulated by man and the Word of God – God’s Word

⁴⁷⁴ Strong’s Online.

⁴⁷⁵ Ibid.

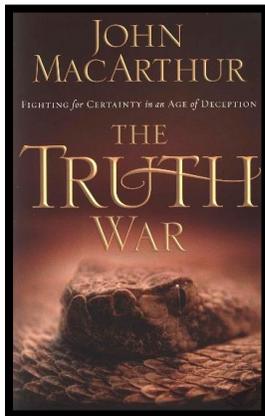
⁴⁷⁶ Vine’s “hold,” “profess,” “profession.”

⁴⁷⁷ Holladay Lexicon.

⁴⁷⁸ Strong’s Online.

must be given the preeminence. “For if we sin wilfully [voluntarily, deliberately] after that we have received the knowledge [a precise and correct knowledge; a full knowledge] of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, But a certain fearful looking for [a terrible expectation] of judgment [in this case, condemnation] and fiery indignation [fierceness of fire], which shall devour [is about to be eating (present tense)] the adversaries” (Hebrews 10:26-27).⁴⁷⁹ *We*, in this case, is confirmed as being “holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling” (Hebrews 3:1) and those who have been made holy through the blood of Christ (Hebrews 10:29), and the writer applies the consequences of sinning wilfully to himself as well. This is not a popular concept among Evangelicals today; as a matter of fact, it is largely rejected, and theologians will go to great lengths in an effort to make their case for doing so.

The Truth War, a book that bears John MacArthur’s name, is a case in point. In defining the word *apostasy*, MacArthur says that it “is closely related to the Greek word for ‘divorce.’ It speaks of abandonment, a separation, a defection”⁴⁸⁰ This is a good definition of the term, and its similarity to the word for the bill of divorce is, indeed, an interesting parallel.⁴⁸¹ However, he no sooner made this clear definition when he makes this statement: “Can a genuine Christian fall away from the faith and become apostate? No. ... Those who do depart from the faith ... simply demonstrate that they never had true faith to begin with.”⁴⁸² His definition and this statement do not fit together – they are obviously contradictory. Consider that a divorce can only be issued when a man and a woman are married (in Bible times this included the time of betrothal or engagement). Today, if a couple date and then break up, there is no divorce – they have not entered into a marriage relationship and so they simply go their separate ways. For a divorce to take place, the two people must be married. Yet when MacArthur applies this parallel principle within the



Christian realm, he reverses himself; he does so by saying that divorce takes place (*apostasy*) even though the two (God and that individual) were not married; even though “they never had true faith to begin with” (i.e., they were not in a spiritual marriage relationship), he calls this *apostasy*! This does not fit with the term, even as he has defined it.

MacArthur also appeals to the parable of the soils for support of his position, and says that the “greatest threat of all [for *apostasy*] comes from the shallow-soil hearers.”⁴⁸³ “They on the rock *are they*, which, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away” (Luke 8:13). The word *believe* is in the present tense – **they are believing!** Consider John’s words: “But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, *even* to them that believe [*are believing* (present tense)] on his name ...” (John 1:12). *Believe* is from the same Greek word in both cases, yet there would be no question that John is referring to those who are truly Christian as they are called “the sons of God.” Jesus said of the “shallow-soil hearers” that for a time they *are believing*, but, when a trial comes their way, they

⁴⁷⁹ Strong’s Online; Friberg Lexicon.

⁴⁸⁰ John MacArthur, *The Truth War*, p. 43.

⁴⁸¹ *Apostasy* is from the Greek word *apostasia*, often translated as *falling away* (2Thessalonians 2:3); the Greek word for *divorced* is *apoloio*, often translated as *put away* (Matthew 5:32); the Greek word for bill or writing of divorcement is *apostasion*, which is much closer to *apostasy*.

⁴⁸² MacArthur, *Truth*, p.43.

⁴⁸³ *Ibid*, p. 63.

fall away, or withdraw⁴⁸⁴, or become apostate.⁴⁸⁵ Using MacArthur’s definition, their falling away speaks of *abandonment, separation, and defection* (in each case you cannot abandon, separate or defect from something of which you have never been a part). As MacArthur tries to build his case he says: “They give the appearance of genuine life and viability.”⁴⁸⁶ However, an illusion is not the same as the real thing. Two people might live together and “appear” to be married, but if they split up, there is no divorce – they simply go their separate ways. Jesus said that they *are believing, the Word of God produced life* (not an *appearance* of life); at this point, MacArthur makes the choice to contradict the Lord. “Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God” (Hebrews 3:12). *Departing* is from the same Greek word that is translated as *fall away* in Jesus’ parable of the soils – it means to *become apostate*.⁴⁸⁷

Endeavoring to explain away the clear teachings of Scripture does nothing to change the reality of God’s Word – *let God be true* and all theologians liars. “For the time will come when they will not endure [accept] sound doctrine; but ... shall [*certainly* – an additional word in Greek] turn away *their ears* from [*apostrepho* – turn away, stop listening to] the truth, and shall be turned [*ektrepo* – turn aside] unto fables [myths (lies)]” (2 Timothy 4:3-4).⁴⁸⁸ Paul is not referring to the godless, but to Christians who, because of a lack of Biblical reproof, rebuke, and exhortation (2 Timothy 4:2), develop appetites for the smooth words and fair speeches of those who do not teach the truth (Romans 16:18). If there is anything lacking within Evangelical circles today, it has to be Biblical reproof, rebuke and exhortation; most often, they will direct such corrective actions against those who desire to live godly lives with the hope of scaring them back onto their comfortable, broad road to hell.

The conflict of the flesh and the Spirit is the very battle that the Galatians faced. “Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh? [by keeping the rite of circumcision and the traditions and ordinances of Moses]” (Galatians 3:3). They had entered into the Christian life by faith and had lived under the direction of the Spirit of God (they believed and grew spiritually – Galatians 4:9); yet now they were being swayed to add Jewish traditions to their faith, supposedly to complete their salvation (they were faced with a spiritual trial). Paul makes it clear that if they believe that they are justified by the Law of Moses, then they have fallen out of the grace of God (Galatians 5:4). There can be no missing the fact that the walk of the Spirit and the walk of the flesh are contrary to each other; “the carnal mind [intents of the flesh – the mind that adds circumcision and the keeping of the traditions of Moses to faith in Christ] *is* enmity [hostility, hatred; *the opposite of agape*⁴⁸⁹] against God ...” (Romans 8:7).⁴⁹⁰

Paul now includes a statement that is reminiscent of Romans 7: “ye cannot do the things that ye would”; a more literal translation: *so that whatever things you are not desiring, these you are doing*.⁴⁹¹ The English word *cannot* is a bit too strong in this case. This expresses the result of the conflict that is raging within: the Spirit against the flesh. As noted, this is also reflected in Romans: “For that which I do I allow [learn to know] not: for what I would [intend], that do I not; but what

⁴⁸⁴ Strong’s Online.

⁴⁸⁵ Friberg Lexicon.

⁴⁸⁶ MacArthur, *Truth*, p. 63.

⁴⁸⁷ Friberg Lexicon; interestingly, Luke 8:13 and Hebrews 3:12 are specifically drawn together.

⁴⁸⁸ Strong’s Online; Friberg Lexicon.

⁴⁸⁹ *Vine’s* “enmity.”

⁴⁹⁰ Strong’s Online.

⁴⁹¹ Stephanus 1550 NT.

I hate, that do I” (Romans 7:15).⁴⁹² There is an undeniable struggle raging within the one who has exercised faith in Christ; **note:** the Spirit of God must be present in order to give rise to this conflict. There is no denying the clash, but Paul’s exhortation to the Galatians and us, is: “stand fast ... in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free ...” (Galatians 5:1). “Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold [seize – to use strength] the traditions [transmissions – thereby signifying that what he taught was not of his own design but received from God] which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle” (2 Thessalonians 2:15). This is God’s Word to us; these are commands that we are to keep with the enablement of the Spirit of God – however, we must permit the Spirit to lead us.

18. But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law.

Here is a statement that Evangelicals have stretched, pummeled and twisted in order to make it say what they want: “ye are not under the law.” It has been interpreted to mean that we are free to live in any way that we desire without judgment – we are no longer under God’s Law (those Ten Commandments). The favored, related text that bears the most scars from being brutally ripped out of context, is Romans 6:14 – “for ye are not under the law, but under grace.” We must permit the text of Scripture to speak for itself and not be taken in by Evangelical, wishful thinking.

First of all, we must recognize that the latter phrase of our verse is conditional on the first phrase being actively in place (*led* is present tense).⁴⁹³ Once again, Paul brings before the Galatians the real need to permit the Spirit of God to lead them. What we must not lose sight of is that this spiritual position was not unfamiliar to these people: “... having begun in the Spirit ...” (Galatians 3:3) clearly shows that these people were born-again Christians who had been walking in accordance with the Spirit of God before they faced the false doctrine of the Judaizers. They had received the Message of truth from Paul and Barnabas, they had been strengthened and exhorted in that truth (Acts 14:22), and they had received elders who were to watch over them (Acts 14:23); yet, despite all of this, they still failed to discern the error of these Jerusalem Jews. Paul is writing to these *brethren* (Galatians 5:13) in an effort to snatch them back from the brink of spiritual ruin, and to provide them with the spiritual insight necessary to weather this trial and emerge victoriously. The leading of the Spirit of God is not a foregone conclusion for everyone who has placed their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; the word *if* provides a conditional element to this statement.

If the leading of the Spirit of God is actively in place, *then* you are “not under the law.” Which *law* is being referred to here? Clearly the law that is central to this letter, the law that is proving to be the downfall of these Galatians who were giving heed to the teachings of the Judaizers – namely, the Law of Moses. There is such a cloud of confusion surrounding references to *the Law* in Scripture and, if not confusion, then a tendency to ignore what is being said because it has nothing to do with us, which is a lie from the devil. Probably the most common error, after ignoring altogether any mention to the Law, is to think that all Biblical references to the Law point to only one. To help alleviate confusion, I like to refer to the Ten Commandments as the Law of God (uniquely written by the finger of God upon tables of stone – Deuteronomy 4:13) and the statutes

⁴⁹² Strong’s Online.

⁴⁹³ Ibid.

and ordinances given to Moses as the Law of Moses (that which was set in place for all men from Sinai to the cross of Christ – Ephesians 2:14-16). Let me briefly review my understanding of this matter. The Ten Commandments were written by the finger of God upon tables of stone, which sets them apart from the Law of Moses that was given to Moses by angels (Galatians 3:19). The permanency of the Law of God (the Ten Commandments) is underscored by several things: 1) they were written on stone (Deuteronomy 4:13), 2) they were written by the finger of God Who does not change (Exodus 31:18; Malachi 3:6), 3) they were kept within the Ark of the Covenant in the Holy of Holies (1 Kings 8:9), and 4) the Lord declared through Jeremiah that under the New Covenant, the Law of God would be written upon the heart (Jeremiah 31:31-33). The **only** Laws that God has written are the Ten Commandments; therefore, under the New Covenant He will write His Ten Laws upon our hearts (certainly not the Law of Moses, which was ended at the cross). The message of the Judaizers was that it “was needful to circumcise them [the new believers], and to command *them* to keep the law of Moses” (Acts 15:5); as we’ve just seen, the Law of Moses ended at the cross of Christ but the Law of God remains intact – therefore, these Jerusalem Jews were seeking to revive something that God had ended. This is what Paul’s Message was to all men, and it was at this point that many of the Jews were stumbling. Paul is openly declaring that if we are led by the Spirit of God, then we are not under the Law of Moses, which stands in clear contradiction to the message that the Galatians were receiving from these Jews. In the preceding text of this letter, Paul carefully laid out the basis for the error of the Judaizers, and he now makes a plain statement that contradicts these Jews but is substantiated by all that he has written up to this point.

What we cannot (and must not) construe from this verse is that we are free from the Law of God – those permanent Ten Commandments. One of the great accomplishments of Christ was “that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us who walk ... after the Spirit” (Romans 8:4). Christ’s sacrifice not only saves us **from** our sins but also saves us **to** His righteousness! Do we live perfectly in His righteousness? The Apostle Paul openly bemoaned the fact that those things that he so desired to do weren’t there, but those things that he hated he saw in his own life (Romans 7:19). However, he also said: “Not as though I had already attained [received or obtained], either were already perfect [complete]: but I follow after [to run after], if that I may apprehend [lay hold of] that for which also I am apprehended of [by] Christ Jesus” (Philippians 3:12).⁴⁹⁴ We are in process; we are yet running after what Christ has for us: “I press [to run after – same Greek word translated as *follow after*] toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 3:14). We are still pursuing the high and holy calling of God that we have received by faith in Christ (2 Timothy 1:9); we must not fail in our pursuit of holiness – we are called to persevere (Hebrews 3:6) and to not lose hope in the face of trials and tribulations (James 1:2).

Jesus said to His disciples: “This cup *is* the new testament [covenant] in my blood, which is shed for you” (Luke 22:20).⁴⁹⁵ Jeremiah spoke of this day when he declared:

Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day *that* I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD: But this *shall be* the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law

⁴⁹⁴ Strong’s Online.

⁴⁹⁵ Ibid.

[completed action only done once] in their inward parts [seat of thoughts and emotions], and [continually] write it in their hearts [mind or will]; and will be their God, and they shall be my people (Jeremiah 31:31-33).⁴⁹⁶

When we place our faith in Christ, there is no escaping the Law of God. He places it where our thoughts have continual access to it, and He promised to continually write it upon our hearts where it can influence our thinking and our decisions. As we live in obedience to His commands in Scripture, we will grow in our understanding of His Word and be stronger in our walk with His Spirit. By faith in Christ, we are no longer under the condemnation of the Law of God (Romans 8:1), but we are under God's grace, which is expressed by the presence of the Spirit of God abiding within us and enabling us to live out the righteousness of the Law of God (Romans 8:4, 26). As we walk according to the Spirit of God, we are no longer under the confines of the Law of Moses (it was forever done away with at the cross – Ephesians 2:15), but we will walk in the righteousness of the Law of God. Being freeborn in Christ, the expression of our liberty is to walk in the holiness of our calling (Galatians 5:1; 2 Timothy 1:9; Ephesians 4:24) according to the Spirit of God (Romans 8:4). Paul has made it very clear that we are not to use our liberty in Christ as a basis for fleshly living (Galatians 5:13) but as an opportunity to serve one another.

19. Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are *these*, Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness,

Paul now launches into delineating the characteristics of the flesh and the Spirit. Lest there be any confusion in the minds of the Galatians as to what the fleshly life produces and what life in the Spirit produces, Paul draws up two lists (not meant to be exhaustive, but indicative). He begins with the evidences of the flesh.

Adultery, conjugal infidelity, generally speaks of voluntary sexual activity between a man and “a married or a betrothed woman, and such a woman was [called] an adulteress.”⁴⁹⁷ However, in Mark 10:11-12, Jesus applies the term (*adultery*) to both a man and a woman who marries after being divorced. What adultery represents is a violation of God's perfect plan: “Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh” (Genesis 2:24), and a breaking of the seventh commandment, “Thou shalt not commit adultery” (Exodus 20:14). Within the Law of Moses, adultery was dealt with by death for both parties: “And the man that committeth adultery with *another* man's wife, *even he* that committeth adultery with his neighbour's wife, the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death” (Leviticus 20:10; Deuteronomy 22:22). When the scribes and Pharisees brought the woman whom they had caught in adultery to Jesus for judgment (John 8:3-11), they did so in violation of their own Law, which called for both the man and the woman to be brought for judgment! Clearly, they were not as concerned about purity as they were about finding fault with Jesus. Jeremiah speaks of spiritually-apostate Israel and failing Judah as being adulterous (Jeremiah 3:8-9); the key is the violation of the marriage vows by either a man or a woman (in this case Israel and Judah, being spiritually married to God, were pursuing the false gods of the nations around them). Paul describes the union of a man and a woman in marriage as a great mystery, and that it is also a picture of the relationship

⁴⁹⁶ Strong's Online.

⁴⁹⁷ Easton's, “adultery.”

that Christ has with His *ekklesia* (His assembly of called-out ones – Ephesians 5:31-32). Adultery not only transgresses the Law of God but also damages (or may even destroy) the mystery of the marriage model – the two becoming one; the visible manifestation of Christ and His *ekklesia* is stained. On the spiritual plane, this would be the error into which the Galatians were falling – they had been spiritually united with the Lord, but were now being persuaded to pursue a tainted version of the Gospel (Galatians 1:7): they were following the pattern of Israel of old. Even though we might consider the perverted gospel of the Judaizers as being much more sanctified than paganism, Paul likens the failure of the Galatians to falling back into the paganism that they had left behind (Galatians 4:9); error comes in all colors and flavors but it matters not what dressing it receives – it is still error! Paul’s warning is that if they are persuaded, they will then have fallen from the grace (Galatians 5:4) – they will have turned away from God and committed spiritual adultery.

Fornication bears a much broader application than *adultery* and comes from the Greek word *porneia*. Although it may at times be used to include adultery, the word speaks more generally of any prohibited sexual activity – whether homosexuality, lesbianism, bestiality, incest or today’s more socially accepted “shacking up.” Paul warned the Corinthians against sexual sin: “What? know ye not that he which is joined [*kollao*; *firmly joined* – the Greek root word (*kolla*) means *glue*] to an harlot [*porne* – prostitute] is one body? for two, saith he, shall be one flesh [the principle of Genesis 2:24].⁴⁹⁸ But he that is joined [*kollao*] unto the Lord is one spirit. Flee fornication [*porneia*]. Every sin that a man doeth is without [outside of] the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body” (1 Corinthians 6:16-18).⁴⁹⁹ In the midst of the warning against fornication, Paul inserts the spiritual parallel to marriage – the one who is “glued” to the Lord is one in Spirit with Him. Fornication (of whatever sort) strikes at the very heart of what God has intended for mankind (the mystery of marriage being an illustration of our spiritual marriage to Him) and, therefore, Paul’s command to *flee* from it is so appropriate.

Uncleanness speaks of impurity. Paul writes of those who would not give proper honor to God: “Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through [or by] the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between [or among] themselves ...” (Romans 1:24).⁵⁰⁰ Man is sinful (Romans 3:23); “For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders ... All these evil things come from within, and defile [make common or unclean] the man” (Mark 7:21-23).⁵⁰¹ Uncleanness is a natural product of man without God; even the good things that man might do, are nothing more than filthy rags before a holy God (Isaiah 64:6). No matter how good the deeds might be, within the natural man they flow out of an unclean heart and, therefore, are tainted by sin.

Lasciviousness literally means *no restraint*.⁵⁰² This would be a whatever-your-heart-desires lifestyle, a life of excess in whatever catches your fancy, and a life of self-indulgence – truly a life lived to pamper the flesh. Many televangelists today would not appreciate the proper application of this word, for many live extravagantly on the money from their supporters. They feign godliness, but practice fleshliness – living examples of wolves masquerading as sheep.

⁴⁹⁸ Strong’s Online.

⁴⁹⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰⁰ Ibid.

⁵⁰¹ Ibid.

⁵⁰² Vine’s “lasciviousness.”

20. Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies,

*I*dolatry is from a Greek word that means image worship.⁵⁰³ As a work of the flesh, idolatry stands in violation of the Second Commandment: “Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God ...” (Exodus 20:4-5). It is noteworthy that the Catholics, who have many statues and icons, roll this commandment into the First (thou shalt have no other gods before Me), thereby seeking to de-emphasize the charge not to make any images of worship. It is interesting that this Second Commandment comes in two parts: 1) do not make any image, not of anything in the heavens above, in the earth, beneath the earth or in the waters, and 2) do not bow to them or serve them. Inasmuch as these two concepts are drawn together, it is clear that the image was made for more than simply decoration – it is crafted for spiritual purposes. The thrust of the



Sun-disk in art, in Monstrance

command is: don’t make an image and don’t bow down to it (perhaps you wouldn’t commission the construction of your own image, but you might be drawn to bow down to someone else’s). Despite the best efforts of the Catholics to avoid violation of this commandment, including it in the First Commandment does not detract from its strength; their veneration of the statues of Mary and the many saints demonstrates their transgression of this command.

If we consider Catholic art, for a moment, we will recognize that it is renowned for having circles or disks behind the heads of those whom they consider to be saintly. It is so common that it hardly draws our eyes anymore.

However, this is a remnant from the ancient, pagan cultures’ veneration of the sun-god that was often symbolized as a disk. Within these cultures, the sun-god was probably the most acclaimed of all of the gods, which is why the chief celebrations centered on the winter solstice – their pagan efforts to bring the sun back for another year of life. A circle or disk, sometimes with rays radiating out from it, came to represent the sun-god and, therefore, the blessing of the sun-god would rest on the one on whom it shone. Mithra (Persian), Sol, Apollo (Roman), Moloch (Canaanite), and Ra (Egyptian) are but a few of the more recognizable names of the sun-god from various civilizations.⁵⁰⁴ The Catholic monstrance that is used to display the Eucharistic wafer (said to be the body and blood of Christ) also bears the likeness of the sun-disk (namely, a circle, where the wafer is placed, with rays emanating from it). The monstrance is put on display so that people may come and worship before it; within the Catholic mind, it is Jesus Christ contained within the showcase of the monstrance, and so they claim to be worshipping the Lord. This is only one small glimpse into the idolatry within the Roman Catholic Church, which is actually replete with idolatry.

However, lest we become comfortable pointing at the failure of the Roman Catholic Church, we must remind ourselves that *idolatry* is defined as the “excessive admiration or love shown for

⁵⁰³ Strong’s Dictionary.

⁵⁰⁴ <http://www.lowchensaustralia.com/names/solar.htm>

somebody or something.”⁵⁰⁵ We might not commission the construction of an icon or image, and we may not worship a wafer contained in a likeness of the ancient sun-god symbol, but we might well have many things that draw our love away from God – those things are idols. Concerning the leadership of Israel, God said: “Son of man, these men have set up their idols in their heart, and put the stumblingblock of their iniquity before their face: should I be enquired of at all by them?” (Ezekiel 14:3). We may not have an idol on display in a shrine nor worship before an image of someone else’s creation, but we might harbor idolatry in our hearts – something that takes a higher priority than obedience to God and His Word. Herein is one of the errors of the Judaizers – within their hearts, they had made an idol out of the Jewish traditions of circumcision and the ordinances and statutes of Moses. This idol, of their own making, stood in the way of a proper understanding of what God desired of them; however, of greater concern, was their zeal to persuade others to follow them in their pattern of idolatry.

Witchcraft comes from the word *pharmakeia* and is most often translated as *sorcerer* – “one who prepares or uses magical remedies.”⁵⁰⁶ Its relationship to our modern *pharmacy* is evident; it is related to the preparation and administration of drugs or potions. These would not be medications, but rather would be touted as magical – and therein is the problem. The purveyors of these products would claim to be able to influence events, which, if they were successful, would come through intervention by demonic forces. It was this relationship that would have influenced the translators to select the term *witchcraft*; within Old English, the *craft* that a *witch* practiced was the sorceries related to the word *pharmakeia*. New Age holistic practices frequently fall into this category. One medicine man told me that he will “dowse [a process like water-witching] using a pendulum which allows the subconscious mind to research at the energetic level, in the energetic field that everything springs out of The subconscious mind can control the movement of the pendulum to give yes and no answers”⁵⁰⁷ What has become commonly accepted practice in our society (it is often marketed as natural medicine), could more accurately be called *sorcery* and/or *witchcraft*.

Hatred is from the Greek word *echthra*, and it is also used to describe the relationship of the carnal mind to God (Romans 8:7, *enmity*). This word is described as being the opposite of *agape*,⁵⁰⁸ a love that is directed by the will, not the emotions; therefore, this would be a hatred that is an act of the will. This word is used to describe the reality of the ordinances of the Law of Moses – that which Christ did away with on the cross (Ephesians 2:15-16, *enmity*) and is also used to describe how God views friendship with the world (James 4:4, *enmity*). The other Greek word translated as *hate* in the NT is *miseo*, which is based more in the realm of feelings and would be contrasted with *phileo* (a love that springs from the emotions).⁵⁰⁹

Variance is best described as contention, strife⁵¹⁰ or a quarrel,⁵¹¹ and the Greek word from which it comes is most often translated as *strife*. This could very well be an expression of enmity (*hatred*).

⁵⁰⁵ Encarta, “idolatry.”

⁵⁰⁶ Strong’s Online.

⁵⁰⁷ Personal correspondence from Robert Harrison (February 6, 2010), www.getthehealthyagain.com

⁵⁰⁸ Vine’s “enmity.”

⁵⁰⁹ Vine’s “hate.”

⁵¹⁰ Strong’s Online.

⁵¹¹ Strong’s Dictionary.

Emulations is from the Greek word *zelos* (*dzay'-los*), and is zeal. Obviously, zeal can be either a good or a bad thing depending upon the situation. Since context determines its specific flavor, within this verse it would be best described as jealousy – “an envious and contentious rivalry.”⁵¹² When Paul wrote to the Corinthians that “I am jealous over you with godly jealousy ...” (2 Corinthians 11:2), he was ensuring that they understood him correctly – he was zealous for them with a godly zeal. The negative use of the word often bears the thought of anger, and would be more closely aligned with our English word *jealous*.

Wrath (*thumos*) is described as passion that finds its expression in anger that boils up quickly and soon fades away.⁵¹³ This would be used of someone who has a short fuse; they blow up suddenly, and then the outburst is over (although the damage caused might well be significant and long lasting); this would be a response from aroused feelings. The other Greek word for *wrath* is *orge*, and is anger that comes from a determination of the mind, often with a view to vengeance.⁵¹⁴ The former is a flash in the pan, while the latter is a slow, simmering anger that is prepared to bide its time. It might well be the volatile expression of anger that found itself listed here, but both are forbidden to the child of God. “Let all bitterness, and wrath (*thumos*), and anger (*orge*), and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you ...” (Ephesians 4:31); “But now ye also put off all these; anger (*orge*), wrath (*thumos*) ...” (Colossians 3:8).⁵¹⁵

We might be reminded of Ephesians 4:26: “Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath.” Here we have two commands joined tightly together: be angry (*orge*), but don’t sin. This is closely followed by a third command – don’t let the sun set on your wrath (*parorgismos* – a word that focuses more on the provocation to anger than the anger itself). The Psalmist declared: “O LORD God, to whom vengeance belongeth; O God, to whom vengeance belongeth, shew thyself” (Psalm 94:1). Here is why anger (*orge*) is not to be part of our lives – vengeance, often a part of the slow simmering *orge* is not ours, but the Lord’s. If we seek retribution, then we have placed ourselves in God’s rightful position in that situation (that’s the devil’s trick); as we relinquish the vengeance into the Lord’s hands (where it belongs), our reason for remaining angry will suddenly disappear. We may still bear the burden of being wronged, but our response will be more like the Psalmist, “O God, to whom vengeance belongs, shine forth [*shew thyself*]!” (Psalm 94:1).⁵¹⁶

Strife speaks of selfishness, self-promotion, self-ambition – in general, self-absorption. In the day of the writing of the Scriptures, it was used to describe “a self-seeking pursuit of political office by unfair means.”⁵¹⁷ There is a striking similarity between the Greek behind this word (*eritheia* – *er-ith-i'-ah*) and *variance* (*eris* – *er'-is*) – the key differentiation is the self-focus within *eritheia* (*strife*). *Eritheia* (*strife*) also includes the thought of intrigue,⁵¹⁸ which incorporates the idea of manipulation and deception – there is a dishonesty that makes it unique.

Seditions (*dichostasia*), strictly speaking, means standing apart,⁵¹⁹ and so division or disunity. This Greek word is used in Romans 16:17, “... mark them which cause divisions [*dichostasia*] and

⁵¹² Strong’s Online.

⁵¹³ Ibid.

⁵¹⁴ Vine’s “anger.”

⁵¹⁵ Strong’s Online.

⁵¹⁶ Ibid.

⁵¹⁷ Ibid.

⁵¹⁸ Strong’s Dictionary.

⁵¹⁹ Friberg Lexicon.

offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid [literally, bend away; turn away, shun] them,”⁵²⁰ and the same word is also used to describe the disunity of the Corinthian *ekklesia* (1 Corinthians 3:3). This term applies to those who step away from others (whether through holding a different doctrine or unhealthy allegiances). This is not the separation that God calls us to exercise when it comes to those who promote error; Jesus said: “Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you, Nay; but rather division [*diemerismos*]” (Luke 12:51).⁵²¹ Jesus is speaking of a parting, or a breaking up, that will occur as you hold fast to sound doctrine, for there will be those who will not put up with such (2 Timothy 4:3); in which case, by holding firmly to the Truth you are **not** causing the division – others will separate from you because you are aligned with the Truth. Jesus does not work with shades of gray – things are black or white; you are either with Him or you are against Him (Luke 11:23). We are not to be *seditions* and stand apart from those who hold to the Truth; however, we are to part from those who do not hold to the Truth (in which case it is not being seditious but obedient). On the other hand, if someone parts from us because we hold to the truth of God’s Word, then they are being seditious – defined here as a work of the flesh.

Heresies (*haireisis*) flows out of the idea of choosing and, hence, an opinion – in particular, a self-willed opinion that is not in submission to the truth.⁵²² The Greek word is often translated as *sect*, which is merely the product of a self-willed opinion taken to an extreme. A natural outcome of *seditions* (a self-willed separation from the truth) will be heresies. “But there rose up certain of the sect [same Greek word] of the Pharisees which believed [past action], saying [present action], That it was needful to circumcise them, and to command *them* to keep the law of Moses” (Acts 15:5).⁵²³ Here is the essence and root of the Judaizer’s doctrine: they **had believed** the Truth but were **now declaring a lie**. They formulated an opinion, made a wrong choice, and now they sought to impose that opinion on others. Paul stood opposed to their choice and identified them as “false brethren” (Galatians 2:4), but the rest of the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem failed to take such a stand, and so the problem spread into the region of Galatia.

21. Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told *you* in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.

Envyings speaks of “the feeling of displeasure produced by witnessing or hearing of the advantage or prosperity of others,”⁵²⁴ or, ill will.⁵²⁵ Although there are strong similarities between this and the word for jealousy (*emulations* – using the negative context for defining zeal), there is also a significant difference. Envy desires to deprive the other person of their prosperity

⁵²⁰ Strong’s Online.

⁵²¹ Ibid.

⁵²² *Vines*’ “heresy.”

⁵²³ Strong’s Online.

⁵²⁴ *Vine*’s “envy.”

⁵²⁵ Strong’s Dictionary.

or advantage; jealousy simply wants the same thing for itself.⁵²⁶ The latter provides incentive to keep up with the Joneses; the former would rather see the Joneses lose what they have.

Murders is probably the result of one or more of the other works of the flesh. Jesus identified this within the Ten Commandments (Matthew 19:18), and Barabbas was described by this word (Mark 15:7). This **does not** describe the administration of justice by a court.

Drunkenness speaks of habitual intoxication,⁵²⁷ a lifestyle rather than a momentary failure. Paul's warning to the Ephesians was: "And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit ..." (Ephesians 5:18). The warning is to not even enter onto the pathway of intoxication (the focus being on the process more than the end), but to be filled with the Holy Spirit. What is so difficult to comprehend is that modern-day Charismatics speak of the filling of the Spirit of God in terms of being drunk. Rodney Howard-Browne of Tampa, Florida openly describes himself as a "Holy Ghost bartender" and equates the filling of the Spirit of God with behaving in a drunken manner.⁵²⁸ Even though Rodney may say some very sound things, we must avoid him for his excesses and failure to be obedient to the Lord in all things. We are to obey the commands of the Lord, something that we cannot do if we are out of our minds with drink or under the control of a foreign spirit.

Revellings are late night parties of food and drink to excess.

As we see, this is not an exhaustive list of the works of the flesh, but representative. The list ends with a generalized, *and such like*, or things like these.⁵²⁹ All of these flow out of a high regard



Rodney Howard-Browne

for experiencing personal pleasures in the moment, with no regard for anyone else. Each stands in contravention of "love thy neighbor as thyself" (Galatians 5:14), that commandment of God that flows out of a love (*agape*) for God with all our heart, soul and mind (Matthew 22:37). The works of the flesh stand outside of what God desires for us; they are contrary to the walk of the Spirit – they are hostility toward God (Romans 8:7).

Paul ends with a summarizing statement, but not one that the Galatians have not heard before. In essence, he says: *I am saying beforehand to you even as I have said before*,⁵³⁰ "... they which do [continually practice – present tense] such things shall [absolutely] not inherit [become a partaker of] the kingdom of God."⁵³¹ The kingdom of God is closed to those who practice the works of the flesh; as God declared to Ezekiel: "The righteousness of the righteous shall not deliver [rescue] him in the day of his transgression [rebellion] ..." (Ezekiel 33:12).⁵³² This is the warning that Paul has for the Galatians; faith in Christ must be continuous; it is not sufficient to begin well, you must also end well (Galatians 5:7; Matthew 24:13). We read of the Judaizers: "there rose up certain of the sect of the Pharisees which believed [*having believed*,

⁵²⁶ Vine's "envy."

⁵²⁷ Vine's "drunk."

⁵²⁸ <https://pulpitandpen.org/2017/11/13/who-is-rodney-howard-browne/>

⁵²⁹ Friberg Lexicon.

⁵³⁰ Stephanus 1550 NT.

⁵³¹ Strong's Online.

⁵³² Ibid.

(perfect tense) a past completed action; unlike those who are *in Christ* who *are believing* (present tense)], saying, That it was needful [necessary] to circumcise them, and to command *them* to keep the law of Moses” (Acts 15:5).⁵³³ These Jews had believed, but as they now continued to practice that which was rebellion against the Message of God, their former righteousness held no value – because they practiced the works of the flesh, they were not partakers in the kingdom of God (they were fallen from the grace – Galatians 5:4). By keeping the traditions of Moses, they were committing spiritual adultery against the Lord; they had been spiritually one with the Lord (joined together in a spiritual marriage relationship – Ephesians 5:31-32), but had broken this covenant and were now committed to a false gospel of works (Galatians 1:7). Through an evil heart of unbelief, they had departed from the Lord (Hebrews 3:12) and turned unto empty fables (2 Timothy 4:3-4). They had fashioned to themselves idols of self-righteousness and not only worshiped them, but sought to persuade the Galatians to bow to them as well. “... having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?” (Galatians 3:3) – Paul recognized that the works of the flesh were active in the doctrine of the Judaizers, and also that these people were now outside of the kingdom of God (they were fallen from the grace – Galatians 5:4) and their practices are likened to paganism (Galatians 4:9); his desire was to prevent the Galatians from coming to such an end.

22. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith,

Jesus tells us that there are only two paths through life – the narrow path that leads to life eternal, and the broad way that leads to destruction (Matthew 7:13-14). Paul has just outlined some evidences of someone who is walking the broad way to destruction, and he now looks at the life lived according to the Spirit that will exemplify the righteousness of the Law of God (Romans 8:4).

There is a significant difference between what Paul has just described and what he is about to explain. The contrast is so evident: “For to be carnally minded *is* death; but to be spiritually minded *is* life and peace” (Romans 8:6) – what could be more opposite than *death* and *life*? Paul declares the “works of the flesh ... are” (Galatians 5:19) and then lists several evidences of these fleshly works. Notice that the works are plural; there are many works of which only a few are listed. By contrast we are about to look at the *fruit* (singular) *of the Spirit*; the list that follows is what Paul presents in trying to describe the spiritual fruit that will be ours if we walk according to the Spirit. It is not a matter of saying, “I have the fruit of gentleness, but really don’t seem to have the fruit of peace.” These are not many fruits, but one fruit that is actively presenting itself in many different ways through us (*is* is both singular and in the present tense). As we look at each descriptive word, we must keep in mind that these are differing aspects of the one fruit, or result, of the Spirit of God abiding within us.

Love is the Greek word *agape*. “And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might” (Deuteronomy 6:5). “Jesus said unto him [a Pharisee and a lawyer], Thou shalt love [*agape*] the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second *is* like unto it, Thou shalt love [*agape*] thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets” (Matthew 22:37-40). Jesus came so that the righteousness of the Law of God

⁵³³ Strong’s Online.

might be made complete in us who are walking according to the Spirit of God (Romans 8:3-4). As we have already noted in our study, the love described here is the product of choice and an act of our will – it is not a feeling of our natural affinity for someone, and so it is appropriate for the Lord to command us to love Him. It is also important to recall that our *agape* of God is the foundation for our *agape* of our neighbor. Now Paul says that this *agape* (that we are to have for God and man) is one aspect of the fruit of the Spirit of God. We might well be commanded to make the commitment to love God and mankind, but it is through the Spirit of God abiding within us that we will be able to exemplify this untainted *agape*. It is as we continually walk by the Spirit of God that we will be able to show forth this *agape*; it is one aspect of the fruit of the Spirit, but it will be made manifest through us. As we abide in Christ and He abides in us through His Spirit (John 15:6), the *agape* of God will be in us and shine forth through us; it is only as we continue to abide in Him that our *agape* for God and mankind will be as it should (yet, mysteriously, we must will it to be so).

We read: “And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth [*meno* – abides or remains⁵³⁴] in love dwelleth in God, and God in him” (1 John 4:16). Jesus said: “Abide [*meno*] in me, and I in you. As the branch [absolutely] cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide [*meno*] in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide [*meno*] in me” (John 15:4).⁵³⁵ This is the intimate relationship that must exist between the individual and God in order to receive that life-giving flow that will produce the fruit of the Spirit. If that *abiding* no longer exists, the fruit will disappear. What is apostasy? It is turning away, or departing from, God (2 Timothy 4:4; Hebrews 3:12), thereby ending this abiding relationship.

Joy is described as a “feeling of inner happiness.”⁵³⁶ However, we must not forget that this is an aspect of the fruit of the Spirit (we’re not looking at personal emotions). This is not a happiness that springs from something that brings us delight, nor from events that we find pleasing – this is joy of heart that flows out of the Spirit of God being our continual Guide as we abide in Christ. It is also described as a *calm delight*,⁵³⁷ not coming from ecstatic feelings, but from a heart that is right with God. James used this word to describe what our attitude is to be in the face of trials – “My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations ...” (James 1:2). The only way that this is possible is through the abiding presence of the Spirit of God.

Peace is seen as “a state of reconciliation with God,”⁵³⁸ and “the tranquil state of a soul assured of its salvation through Christ.”⁵³⁹ Keep in mind, this aspect of the evidence of the Spirit of God will only show itself as we continually abide in Christ. However, the same Greek word is used to describe the *peace* that the world may experience from time-to-time. “For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape” (1 Thessalonians 5:3). The peace of the world does not flow out of the eternal wellspring of the Spirit of God; it is a physical tranquility (an absence of turmoil), not a product of the branch abiding in the Vine. The peace that flows from an abiding relationship with Christ will not diminish in the face of tumultuous circumstances because it is not founded upon external tranquility. “For to be carnally minded *is* death [a mind focused only on the externals of

⁵³⁴ Strong’s Online.

⁵³⁵ Ibid.

⁵³⁶ Friberg Lexicon.

⁵³⁷ Strong’s Dictionary.

⁵³⁸ Friberg Lexicon.

⁵³⁹ Strong’s Online.

life]; but to be spiritually minded *is* life and peace [a mind joined to and remaining in the life-giving Vine]” (Romans 8:6).

Longsuffering has been described as “patience, endurance, constancy, steadfastness, perseverance”;⁵⁴⁰ or as “a state of emotional quietness in the face of unfavorable circumstances.”⁵⁴¹ As Moses interceded for the children of Israel with God, he declared: “The LORD *is* longsuffering [literally, slow to anger], and of great mercy, forgiving iniquity [guilt] and transgression, and by no means clearing [acquitting] *the guilty*, visiting [assigning] the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth *generation*” (Numbers 14:18).⁵⁴² We have here a description of the longsuffering nature of the Lord; He is slow to anger, He extends great mercy to His people and removes guilt and sin. However, He will not acquit. His justice will not permit the penalty for our sins to be acquitted; unless we turn to Him in faith for His forgiveness through the application of the blood of Jesus Christ, which His mercy graciously permits Him to do, the guilt and sin will remain – His justice must be met, there will be no acquittal. When we look back at the past 2000 years and see the steady decline that has characterized those who claim to be His people, we catch just a glimpse of the longsuffering nature of God. Although we read that God is “not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance,” we must not fail to read on: “But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night ...” (2 Peter 3:9-10). We must not presume upon God’s longsuffering nature: “behold, now *is* the accepted time; behold, now *is* the day of salvation” (2 Corinthians 6:2). Here is an aspect of the very nature of God that will be shown through us by His Spirit.

The Greek word for *gentleness* is most often translated as goodness or kindness, and speaks of goodness of heart,⁵⁴³ or integrity.⁵⁴⁴ The root word of this term is found in Jesus’ words: “For my yoke *is* easy [manageable or good], and my burden is light” (Matthew 11:30).⁵⁴⁵ As we have seen, Paul is concerned that the Galatians are about to revert to a form of religion that will see them in bondage once again (Galatians 4:9). Paul describes the condition of all mankind: “They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good [same Greek word as *gentleness*], no, not one” (Romans 3:12). *Gentleness* is not what we are by nature (and, therefore, definitely a part of the fruit of the Spirit), but what we must become through the working of the Spirit of God.

Goodness speaks of uprightness of heart and life.⁵⁴⁶ It is said to find its expression in relationships with others through a willingness to give or share, a generosity.⁵⁴⁷ “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16); this speaks of the infinite generosity (*goodness*) of God – He *gave* His Son. It is the Spirit of God Who will work this *goodness* into our lives. “And I myself also am persuaded of you, my brethren, that ye also are full of goodness [same as the aspect of the fruit of the Spirit], filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another” (Romans 15:14). Out of this *goodness* will flow the ability to warn and exhort (*admonish*) others along the way.

⁵⁴⁰ Strong’s Online.

⁵⁴¹ Friberg Lexicon.

⁵⁴² Strong’s Online.

⁵⁴³ *Vine’s* “kindness.”

⁵⁴⁴ Strong’s Online.

⁵⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴⁷ Friberg Lexicon.

Faith is a conviction of the truth of something, whether that faith is well founded depends upon its object. There are many faiths in the world today, but each one, excepting faith in Christ, will prove to be of little value in the face of eternity. Those who will fall for the delusion of the Antichrist will do so “because they received not [absolutely would not accept] the love [*agape*] of the truth, that they might be saved” (2 Thessalonians 2:10).⁵⁴⁸ In our world today, we are being pressured into accepting a subjective view of truth – truth is no longer considered to be an eternal absolute, but is personally defined and subject to change. Truth may not yet be considered to be fluid, but it is definitely malleable. Today, a claim of absolute truth will move even the strongest advocate of tolerance to become intolerant. Within the worldly understanding (and this is becoming increasingly common within Christianity), ten people may hold ten differing forms of truth (as it is now defined), and all must be considered to be equally acceptable. Not one of the ten is permitted to insist that their truth supersedes any of the others. When Paul writes that people will be deceived by the Antichrist because they do not love the truth, he is speaking about God’s eternal, unchangeable, and absolute Truth. Since the world has no room for such truth today, and Evangelicals are rapidly falling in with this worldly philosophy, it quickly exposes the widespread influence of the spirit of Antichrist. George Barna recently updated his statistics concerning those in America who held a Biblical worldview.⁵⁴⁹ In 2009, those in America holding a Biblical worldview was 9% – of those who claimed to be born again, it was 19%.⁵⁵⁰ Within those who claimed to be born again, only 46% believed “moral truth is absolute and unaffected by the [sic] circumstances”⁵⁵¹ – in other words, over half of those who professed to be Christians did not hold any affection for God’s absolute truth (much less *agape*). “This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with *their* lips; but their heart is far from me” (Matthew 15:8). Today there is a dwindling *agape* for the truth of God, even among those who claim to have placed their faith in Christ for salvation. However, the two (faith and truth) are inextricably linked; if we have faith in the wrong “truth,” then we are lost, and if we have no faith in the right truth, then we are equally lost. Barna’s survey would indicate that, today, faith in God’s absolute truth is in rapid decline. Jesus declared: “Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven” (Matthew 7:21); based upon Barna’s statistics, clearly a majority of those today who claim to call Jesus *Lord* are already outside of the kingdom of heaven and are poised to accept the delusions of the Antichrist spirit that is already among us (1 John 4:3). True faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is becoming increasingly rare – therefore, we must diligently heed the warnings of God’s Word to hold fast to what we have in Christ.

⁵⁴⁸ Strong’s Online.

⁵⁴⁹ A Biblical worldview was defined as holding ALL of the following: “absolute moral truth exists; the Bible is totally accurate in all of the principles it teaches; Satan is considered to be a real being or force, not merely symbolic; a person cannot earn their way into Heaven by trying to be good or do good works; Jesus Christ lived a sinless life on earth; and God is the all-knowing, all-powerful creator of the world who still rules the universe today” (<http://www.barna.org/barna-update/article/21-transformation/252-barna-survey-examines-changes-in-worldview-among-christians-over-the-past-13-years>).

⁵⁵⁰ For the purposes of the survey, *born again* was defined as “those who said they have made a personal to [sic] commitment to Jesus Christ that is important in their life today and that they are certain that they will go to Heaven after they die only because they confessed their sins and accepted Christ as their savior” (Ibid.).

⁵⁵¹ Ibid.

23. Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.

Meekness is translated from the Greek word *praotes* (*prah-ot'-ace*) and does not translate well into English.⁵⁵² Within our society, it is often thought of as weakness and door-mattishness, but this is far from reality. Jesus described Himself as being “meek and lowly in heart” (Matthew 11:29). Writing of Jesus, Matthew draws on the prophecy of Zechariah: “... behold, thy King cometh unto thee: ... lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass” (Zechariah 9:9; Matthew 21:5). The eternal, omnipotent Creator of all things is described as being *meek*; clearly *weak* is not an appropriate synonym. The foundation of this word is built upon the concept of humility, thinking little of one’s self; out of this comes a mindset and behavior that permits one to receive what comes one’s way without undue reaction.⁵⁵³ Isaiah wrote of the meekness of the coming Messiah: “He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth” (Isaiah 53:7). Christ came for the purpose of providing salvation for mankind and, even while in agony upon the cross, His words concerning his executioners were: “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do” (Luke 23:34). As we consider this significant basis for this characteristic, and its ultimate demonstration by Christ, we can begin to realize that it flows out of great power (how appropriate for another aspect of the fruit of the Spirit of God).

The Psalmist draws a contrast: “The LORD lifteth up the meek: he casteth the wicked down to the ground” (Psalm 147:6), thereby showing the Lord’s favor upon the *meek* as opposed to the *wicked*. Jesus said: “Blessed *are* the meek: for they shall inherit the earth” (Matthew 5:5). Modern thinking would scoff at this, for leadership training largely provides people with the tools and techniques to advance their careers, and focuses on how to develop strategies that will bring success. Even though some of the better programs will provide techniques on how to build up those around you as well (grow the team), there is no emphasis placed upon humility – it is all about how to make yourself into a successful leader. However, if we recognize that it is the meek who will be lifted up by the Lord, it is not difficult to realize that the meek will inherit the new earth and live forever in the presence of God. We are reminded that *meekness* is another aspect of the fruit of the Spirit of God – only those indwelt by His Spirit will show forth the true *meekness* that will lead to inheriting the new earth.

Temperance is, very simply, self-control. Romans chapter 7 reminds us of the truly limited power of self-control that we have; another indication is the devastating addictions to which many people today are subject. Hence the grandiose efforts of the psychology community to turn these addictions (lack of self-control) into diseases (that for which we are not personally responsible) is a misguided attempt to make man appear to be more than he is.

Against characteristics as delineated here, there is absolutely no law; we all appreciate seeing these things in those with whom we deal, yet they are so frequently not a part of our own daily walk. These are nine aspects to the evidence of the Spirit of God – nine specific things that will flow from us as we walk according to the Spirit and exemplify the righteousness of the Law of God (Romans 8:4). We must do is focus on submitting to the guidance of the Spirit of God and abiding in Christ – not looking in the mirror to try to determine if these characteristics are evident.

⁵⁵² Strong’s Online.

⁵⁵³ Ibid.

“Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience [different from longsuffering; endurance] the race that is set before *us*, Looking [with undivided attention] unto Jesus the author and finisher of *our* faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God” (Hebrews 12:1-2).⁵⁵⁴

24. And they that are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.

After identifying many works of the flesh and the many aspects to the singular fruit of the Spirit of God, Paul summarizes with a statement of fact. Those, who have placed their faith in Christ, have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. Earlier Paul declared: “I am crucified with Christ ...” (Galatians 2:20); he now states that whoever belongs to Christ will have crucified the flesh; there is no question – it has already been done. If you are Christ’s, then the flesh has been crucified; if your fleshly nature has not been crucified, then you do not belong to Christ: “So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God” (Romans 8:8).

“Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any *man* will come after me, let him deny [a strengthened or intensified word meaning to deny utterly] himself, and take up [to lift up] his cross, and follow me” (Matthew 16:24).⁵⁵⁵ This runs contrary to the modern philosophy of learning to love yourself, and once you have accomplished that, then you are ready to move on with life. For example, there is a website called “Love Yourself Coaching” where the author boldly declares: “You are Fantastic Just the Way You Are!”⁵⁵⁶ The credentials of Helen Burton are meant to be impressive: “I am a Certified Empowerment Coach (CEC) and graduate of the Institute of Professional Empowerment Coaching (iPEC).”⁵⁵⁷ Her alma mater (iPEC) states that their “methodology is based on the scientific application of energy and consciousness ... we built upon the very best of other paradigms, such as consulting, psychotherapy, hypnotherapy, Neuro Linguistic Programming (NLP), mentoring, quantum physics, metaphysics, adult and accelerated learning theories, emotional intelligence, and leadership development.”⁵⁵⁸ Incredibly, the word *scientific* is tossed around today with little regard as to how it is being applied. They refer to the “scientific application of ... consciousness” – that is a contradiction of terms. *Consciousness* is an abstract term that does not permit examination or experimentation with replication; yet the term *scientific* is used to provide an element of credibility for something that is completely subjective and metaphysical (abstract). The “other paradigms” from which they draw, expose just how unscientific this whole empowerment coaching really is. This pattern of thinking is not unique in the world today – as a matter of fact, it is very common, particularly among those who view themselves as being somewhat enlightened (i.e., having a higher opinion of themselves than they ought).



Helen Burton

⁵⁵⁴ Strong’s Online; Friberg Lexicon.

⁵⁵⁵ *Vine’s* “deny,” “take.”

⁵⁵⁶ <http://loveyourselfcoaching.com/>

⁵⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁵⁸ <http://www.ipeccoaching.com/about-coach-training-schools.htm>

By contrast, Jesus says that if anyone has a desire to come behind Him (to follow after Him), then there are three things that that person must do (Matthew 16:24), and these three things are progressive, i.e., they must be done in the order in which Jesus gave them – they are not random. First on this list is the utter denial of one’s self. Before we can do anything in our walk with the Lord, we must shift our focus away from ourselves. Psychotherapists and empowerment coaches seek to do the opposite – they turn the focus inward; they say that we must learn to love ourselves and build up our self-esteem. The late Robert Schuller (held by many as being a good Evangelical) embraced this lie of the devil – he declared sin to be “any act or thought that robs myself [sic] or another human being of his or her self-esteem.”⁵⁵⁹ What is clearly evident is that you cannot hold to Schuller’s concept of sin and follow the Lord – the two are mutually exclusive. Rather than protect and build ourselves up so as to think more highly of ourselves than we ought, we are to “lose sight of one’s self and one’s own interests” (*deny*).⁵⁶⁰ The modern philosophy (of which Schuller was a participant) would have us focus inwardly in order to discover the good within (often spelled: *god*); the eternal Word of God would have us look “unto Jesus the author and finisher of *our* faith ...” (Hebrews 12:2). The inward focus is self-defeating: “for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23), and “there is none righteous, no not one” (Romans 3:10; Psalm 14:2-3). Anything that we find within will be shot-through with sin, for we are sinners, not because of what we do, but because of who we are. Jesus said: “Abide [a command] in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear [present tense] fruit of itself, except [unless] it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except [unless] ye abide in me” (John 15:4).⁵⁶¹ It is through denying ourselves that we can turn our undivided attention to the Lord and abide in Him, and then learn to *agape* our neighbor (Galatians 5:14).

Jesus then calls us to take up our cross – “be prepared to suffer to the point of death.”⁵⁶² The cross was an instrument of death, and so we read: “our old man is crucified with *him*, that the body of sin might be destroyed [the same Greek word as used in Ephesians 2:15 and translated *abolish*], that henceforth we should not serve sin” (Romans 6:6). As we lift up our cross, it is with full recognition that through the work of Christ upon the cross our sinful nature **might be** destroyed, abolished, and rendered inactive.⁵⁶³ We are told to “put off ... the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; And ... put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness” (Ephesians 4:22-24). As we raise our cross (we must count the cost; see Luke 14:25-33; Romans 8:17; Philippians 1:29; 2 Timothy 3:12; 1 Peter 3:14), it is a reminder to us that our old sin-nature has been crucified with Christ (Who bore the cross for our sins) – a sin-nature that we are still carrying with us and must account as being dead so that we might serve Christ in newness of life through His Spirit (Romans 6:11).

Jesus said: “For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. And a man’s foes *shall be* they of his own household ... And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me” (Matthew 10:35-38). His message is simply that if you are worthy to follow Him, then tribulation will find you, and it will come from within your own family – that is a part of the *cross*

⁵⁵⁹ Schuller, *Self-Esteem*, p. 14.

⁵⁶⁰ Strong’s Online.

⁵⁶¹ Strong’s Online; Friberg Lexicon.

⁵⁶² Friberg Lexicon.

⁵⁶³ Strong’s Online.

that He calls us to bear. Jesus also made it very clear that we must have Him as our highest priority: “If any *man* come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple” (Luke 14:26-27). Notice again, only making all of our family relationships and our own life less important than God, makes us worthy to be His disciple – whoever does not bear this *cross* cannot be His disciple. We are called upon to carefully count the cost of following Him before we make that commitment – this is something that is virtually unheard of in today’s sermons, yet it is so important to understand the *cross* that we are called upon to bear if we would follow the Lord.

Finally, after denying ourselves and bearing our cross, Jesus says, “... follow me.” All three of these are commands: the first two are actions taken with abiding results (we have denied ourselves and taken up our cross), the last is a continuous action – unless the first two commands have been obeyed (with an enduring result), the last command (demanding a continuous action) will not happen.⁵⁶⁴ This means that unless we have denied ourselves (changed our focus) and have taken up our cross, not simply as a past action but one that continues to impact our present living, we will not be following the Lord. It is not enough to say, “On June 23, 1963 I accepted from Scripture that I must deny myself in order to follow the Lord.” Unless that understanding bears fruit in the present (a presently continuous denial of self), it is of no value. This is the hollow ring of Evangelical salvation: “believe and pray this prayer, and you are set for eternity, then go and live as you please”; Evangelicals might not be this forthright, but their lack of concern for how they now live says the same thing. What is evident in the Greek can be so easily missed in our English translation; Jesus’ words “deny himself, and take up his cross” describe specific actions to be taken, but ones that must bear a continuous effect. The word *crucified* in our verse (Galatians 5:24) bears the same tense – we have crucified the flesh at a point in time, but out of that flows a perpetual result. If we belong to Christ, then we will have crucified the flesh with the abiding consequence that it remains crucified, and that we walk according to the Spirit of God (Romans 6:11; 8:4).

25. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.

Walk, as it is used here, differs from that in verse 16 where it referred to all things that make up our lives; in other words, in everything that we do in life, we are to do it all in the Spirit; we are to *walk* in the Spirit. The Greek word for *walk*, as used here, carries the more military concept of marching in a row, with a particular emphasis on being under the specific guidance of the Spirit of God. This Greek word (*stoicheo*) is found only five times in the NT, and it demands a walk that is in conformity to very specific restrictions (in this context, *the Spirit*).⁵⁶⁵ What may be permissible under the less restrictive term (*peripateo*) will not be permitted here; in much the same way, a tourist might well explore an area (*peripateo*), whereas a military man on a march through the same area is required to march in rank (*stoicheo*), and to fail to do so would result in discipline.

“Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk [*stoicheo*] by the same rule, let us mind the same thing” (Philippians 3:16). Here Paul is challenging the Philippians to *walk* in military fashion according to the principle of living that he has just outlined – namely, forget what

⁵⁶⁴ Strong’s Online.

⁵⁶⁵ Ibid.

is behind and run after the high calling of God. This is not referring to a general way of living, but to a very specific, focused living in accordance with the guiding principle that Paul has laid out.

The word *walk* in our verse is present tense and in the subjunctive mood. The reality that is presented here is that if we live in the Spirit, we may or may not walk in keeping with the Spirit; however, even though we may choose to walk according to the Spirit or not, we do not get to choose the consequences of our decision. What Paul has written up to this point, supports this position: the Galatians had begun well with the Spirit (Galatians 3:3; 5:7), but they were being enticed by the Judaizers to cast all of this aside for a perverted gospel (Galatians 1:7) that would lead them into a form of paganism (Galatians 4:9). “Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God” (Hebrews 3:12). The correlation is this: the *departing* that is warned against is in the active voice; it would be the *brethren* who would be *departing from the living God*. The subjunctive mood of the word *walk* as used in Galatians 5:25 says that the individual could well decide to step out of rank with the Spirit of God and go their own way – even as the Judaizers began well. “There rose up certain of the sect of the Pharisees which believed, saying ...” (Acts 15:5). Note that these Judaizers *believed* (perfect tense – it happened in the past, once), but now they are *saying* (present tense), and it goes on to outline the error that they were propagating (what they were saying now stands in contradiction to what they had believed in the past). Ezekiel understood this reality well: “When the righteous turneth [apostasy⁵⁶⁶] from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, he shall even die thereby” (Ezekiel 33:18). As Paul seeks to open the understanding of the Galatians, his charge is to walk carefully in line with the Spirit of God. The reality is that Jesus said that the way to life is *narrow* (Matthew 7:14) – there is no room for cavorting wherever we like, we must be alert to abiding in Christ and walking through life according to the leading of His Spirit.

26. Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another.

The phrase *desirous of vain glory* is one word in Greek – *kenodoxos*, which literally means eager for empty glory, or conceited.⁵⁶⁷ The admonition is not to become high-minded, or lofty, in our opinion of ourselves so that we would seek or revel in the glory that is heaped upon us by mankind – “being proud without any good reason for it.”⁵⁶⁸ The work of the flesh, identified as *strife* (Galatians 5:20), included the idea of self-absorption that would lead to a false sense of personal aggrandizement, even so this empty glory is founded upon the sand of fleshly works. We need the mindset of John the Baptist: “He [Jesus] must increase, but I *must* decrease” (John 3:20). We must remind ourselves that we have all “sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23); who we are before God should prevent us from falling into the pit of self-glorification.

Provoking means to call forth, particularly to a contest or challenge, to irritate⁵⁶⁹ with the thought “to stir up what is evil in another.”⁵⁷⁰ This is the first of two examples of how this conceit, or lust for empty accolades, can spring forth. The sense of this word is that it comes from a feeling

⁵⁶⁶ Strong’s Online.

⁵⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁶⁸ Friberg Lexicon.

⁵⁶⁹ Strong’s Online.

⁵⁷⁰ Vine’s “provoke.”

of superiority. Someone who puts a challenge forward generally does so through a sense of personal confidence, and its reception is most often like sandpaper on a rash – irritating to say the least. “*Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory [kenodoxia]; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves*” (Philippians 2:3). Within the child of God, there is to be no place for an inflated self-esteem (despite the teachings of Robert Schuller), particularly in light of what has just been presented regarding the fruit of the Spirit of God.

Envy is a verb form of the word used in verse 21 to describe another of the works of the flesh. You will recall that this word speaks of a sense of displeasure at hearing of the prosperity of others; this is the work that desires to see others lose what they have because you can’t have it. A king-of-the-pile mentality will maintain their lofty stance by putting others down; an exaggerated self-confidence will hold little regard for others, except where they serve to bolster the ego.

Paul has detailed the works of the flesh and sketched the wonder of the fruit of the Spirit; he has declared the flesh to be crucified (if we belong to Christ), has challenged us to walk in that narrowly-defined pathway of the Spirit of God, and he now concludes that we are to be on the alert against self-glorifying vanity. Do we see another perspective of the Judaizers in this summarizing statement? They were failing to walk that narrowly defined way with the Spirit of God, and it seems that they set themselves up as being superior to the Galatians. They were Jews, after all, of the persuasion of the Pharisees who had come to faith in Christ, but, in their far greater understanding of the Jewish ways, they moved on to invoke the necessity of keeping the Mosaic Law (Acts 15:5). They came into the midst of the Galatian believers and, in their feigned superiority, challenged the faith of these converts to the true Gospel of Jesus Christ – they *provoked* them. Could it be that they also *envied* them? Did a part of their hearts recognize the liberty that these Galatians had in Christ, and then seek to destroy it? These Judaizers clearly had lost their liberty in Christ, for they were once again bearing the yoke of Mosaic bondage (Galatians 5:1), which Paul likens to paganism (Galatians 4:9). Since they no longer had such freedom in Christ, were they now intent on sharing their bondage with others (Romans 1:32)? This would be in keeping with the Pharisaical traditions as Jesus uncovered them: “Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves” (Matthew 23:15). This is an apt description of the work of these Judaizers – they sought to impose their theology upon the Galatian Christians, which would have resulted in the Galatians falling from the grace (Galatians 5:4) and being brought into bondage again (Galatians 4:9; 5:1). “Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free ...” (Galatians 5:1)!

Chapter 6

1. Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.

This begins a section presenting principles for Christian living, but not specifically focused on the problems that the Galatians were having with the Judaizers. Once more, Paul appeals to the Galatians as *brethren*; they were being enticed to walk a road that was outside of the guidance of the Spirit of God, but Paul still holds out hope that he can draw them back from the brink of apostasy – he is appealing to them as brothers in Christ.

It is important that we fully grasp the intent of the phrase *overtaken in a fault* since it forms the basis for what follows. The Greek word for *overtaken* is *prolambano*, which literally means “to take before” (*pro* – before, *lambano* – to take).⁵⁷¹ The thought is of surprise,⁵⁷² or to be caught unawares.⁵⁷³

Fault is translated from the Greek word *paraptoma*, which means to fall beside, or a lapse or deviation from truth and uprightness.⁵⁷⁴ It is often translated as *trespass* or *offence*, and is used to describe the failure of Adam: “Therefore as by the offence [same Greek word] of one *judgment came* upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one *the free gift came* upon all men unto justification of life” (Romans 5:18). The essence of this word is that it speaks of an action taken, albeit a sinful one. The Greek word that is primarily translated as *sin* is *hamartia*; despite being given the superficial meaning of *missing of the mark*,⁵⁷⁵ it actually speaks more comprehensively to our essential state of being (opposed to God) and less consideration for what we have done – i.e., it is more about who we are than what we have done.⁵⁷⁶ Herein is a problem with much of modern theological thinking: there is a tendency to view all sin as *paraptoma* (a *fault* or a failure in what we do) with no regard for *hamartia* (the bigger picture of who we are). If man limits his understanding of his trespass against God to what he does, it provides him with a great deal of latitude, the opportunity to feel good about himself, and even feel justified in embracing a works-oriented salvation. This is the failure of men like Robert Schuller who defined sin as “an innate inability to adequately value ourselves. Label it a ‘negative self-image,’ but do not say that the central core of the human soul is wickedness. ... the core of sin is a lack of self-esteem.”⁵⁷⁷ There is an instinctive anathema to recognize that sin has taken up residence in the very core of our being (we are born in sin, Psalm 51:5); our actions are merely a product of this central characteristic of sinfulness. Despite Schuller’s blatant departure from the teaching of the Word of God on this matter, *Christianity Today* in 1984 declared that he “believes all the ‘fundamental’

⁵⁷¹ Strong’s Online.

⁵⁷² Strong’s Dictionary.

⁵⁷³ Friberg Lexicon.

⁵⁷⁴ Strong’s Online.

⁵⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁷⁶ Friberg Lexicon.

⁵⁷⁷ Schuller, *Self-Esteem*, p. 67.

doctrines of traditional fundamentalism.”⁵⁷⁸ Evangelicals have been separated from Biblical Christianity for so long that they are no longer able to discern error; *Christianity Today* clearly exposed their own compromise of the truth by using the term “fundamental” to describe Schuller. Man never ceases to display a great propensity to discount sin, and so it is not surprising that, even within Christianity, there is a tendency to downplay sin and even to redefine it altogether.

As we bring these two words together (*overtaken* and *fault*), we find Paul speaking of someone who inadvertently finds himself in sin – he did not make the choice to sin but sinned anyway. “Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me” (Romans 7:20). This is the reality of someone who is caught by surprise by the sin that they have committed. Notice that it is the one who sinned who is surprised by his own sin; it is not someone who is caught red-handed in the midst of a sin. This is not a lifestyle, nor a pattern of hidden transgressions, but rather a lapse, or stumble, on the pathway of life. Even though we have crucified the flesh (Galatians 5:24), the ever present reminder is that we are not yet perfectly holy in our living. “Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with *him*, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin” (Romans 6:6). This is a fascinating verse. Our old man is crucified with Christ (a fact confirmed by Galatians 5:24), in order for the body of sin (the *old man*) **to be replaced** (*katargeo*; made of *no effect*, *brought to an end*, by having been replaced by the *new man* of Ephesians 4:24).⁵⁷⁹ Our old man is crucified along with Christ so that we are no longer serving sin but the righteousness of God (Romans 6:18). Paul goes on to say: “Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof” (Romans 6:12); the command is: don’t let sin rule in your life – don’t give sin the upper hand (what it doesn’t say is that you will no longer sin). In our verse, Paul is describing someone who has sinned but it is not the pattern of his life.

John wrote: “Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not” (1 John 3:6a), which, at first glance, would seem to contradict what we have just laid out. However, what is not well expressed in our English translation is the verb tenses. A more literal translation is: *everyone who is in Him abiding, is not sinning*.⁵⁸⁰ The reality that John identifies is that if we are abiding in the Lord Jesus, then we will not be in a state of continual sin; he goes on: “whosoever sinneth [continually sinning (present tense)] hath not seen [perfect tense (a past action that requires ongoing evidence)] him, neither known [perfect tense] him” (1 John 3:6b).⁵⁸¹ Rather than contradicting Paul’s words to the Romans, John supports the fact that if we are in Christ, then we cannot live a life of perpetual sin; it is because we are in Christ that we will know when we have sinned, and can then confess and be restored. Despite *hamartia* being a part of who we are, by accounting our body of sin as crucified with Christ, we can overcome a life of *paraptoma* and live in victory.

Paul calls on those who are spiritual (those who have an active, living relationship with the Lord through the agency of the Spirit of God) to restore, or to render sound or complete, the one who has stumbled in their walk.⁵⁸² This is someone who has been caught by sin; he did not choose to sin, nor is this his normal practice. Paul’s instruction for those who are abiding in Christ (he used the plural pronoun *ye*) is to lift the one who has stumbled and bring him back into full fellowship with the Lord and his fellow saints. Inasmuch as this is dealing with a failure in walk,

⁵⁷⁸ <https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/1984/august-10/theologian-looks-at-schuller.html>

⁵⁷⁹ Strong’s Online; Friberg Lexicon.

⁵⁸⁰ Stephanus 1550 NT.

⁵⁸¹ https://www.ntgreek.org/learn_nt_greek/verbs1.htm

⁵⁸² Strong’s Online.

and not a failure in faith, the one who has sinned will be of a repentant mind. “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves [fall away from the truth], and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:8-9).⁵⁸³ John has encapsulated the formula for restoration: namely, confession (which will flow from a heart of contrition and repentance), and the Lord’s forgiveness and cleansing.

However, the efforts of assisting someone in spiritual restoration are to be carried out with *meekness*. This is that aspect of the fruit of the Spirit that finds its roots deeply embedded within humility. There is no room for pride or arrogance, for obviously such things are sin; it would be impossible to restore someone spiritually while displaying an attitude that flows out of the works of the flesh. A spiritual restoration can only be accomplished through the active leadership of the Spirit of God.

To this spiritual responsibility, Paul adds a warning. The charge of restoration is given to all who are spiritual; however, the warning we are to take personally. He begins, *considering thyself* – i.e., to look to, take heed to thyself.⁵⁸⁴ The Greek word used here (*skopeo*) is also found in Romans 16:17 – “Now I beseech you, brethren, mark [same Greek word] them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them.” The warning is that I must take heed lest I may be tried, or tested, by what this fellow believer has faced, or is facing. Clearly, Paul has more in mind than administering an admonition to buck up and carry on; this would involve coming alongside of and working with the individual in a process of restoration, and not simply a curt cliché and a “fare-thee-well.”

By way of illustration, consider Peter:

And they that had laid hold on Jesus led *him* away to Caiaphas the high priest, where the scribes and the elders were assembled. But Peter followed him afar off unto the high priest’s palace, and went in, and sat with the servants, to see the end. ... Now Peter sat without in the palace: and a damsel came unto him, saying, Thou also wast with Jesus of Galilee. But he denied before *them* all, saying, I know not what thou sayest. And when he was gone out into the porch, another *maid* saw him, and said unto them that were there, This *fellow* was also with Jesus of Nazareth. And again he denied with an oath, I do not know the man. And after a while came unto *him* they that stood by, and said to Peter, Surely thou also art one of them; for thy speech bewrayeth thee. Then began he to curse and to swear, *saying*, I know not the man. And immediately the cock crew. And Peter remembered the word of Jesus, which said unto him, Before the cock crew, thou shalt deny me thrice. And he went out, and wept bitterly (Matthew 26:57-58, 69-75).

Peter was *overtaken in a fault*. Just a few hours before, Peter had vehemently declared that he was prepared to die with the Lord (Matthew 26:35), and yet when the possibility of those circumstances presented themselves, denial came from his lips. This is a classic example of what Paul wrote to the Romans: “For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do” (Romans 7:19). It was Jesus Who, after His resurrection, came alongside of Peter and reassured him that He understood his weakness (John 21:15-17), and brought him to a place where, on the day of Pentecost, he boldly declared the truth of Who Jesus was (Acts 2:14, 32). It is for this kind of failure that Paul is instructing the spiritual Galatians to minister restoration.

By way of contrast, consider Judas. He chose to betray the Lord into the hands of His enemies (Matthew 26:14-16); he deliberately turned away from the Lord. Judas was not *overtaken in a*

⁵⁸³ Strong’s Online.

⁵⁸⁴ Ibid.

fault; his failure was intentional, an act of his will. He began well, participating in the tours of ministry that Jesus assigned to His disciples (Matthew 10:2-5), yet he was overcome by his lust for money, and for thirty pieces of silver he betrayed the One Whom he had followed for three years. Inasmuch as the silver came from the religious rulers, it is commonly held that it would have been the temple shekel. If you converted the actual silver weight into today's value, you would get something in the vicinity of \$200. However, the buying power was much greater than that, and probably would have been in the \$8 - \$10,000 range.⁵⁸⁵ Judas showed his appetite for money earlier on when he grumbled about Mary anointing Jesus' feet with expensive perfume (John 12:4-6). It seems evident that Judas' heart had turned away from Jesus well before he conspired with the priests to betray Him into their hands. Although Judas sorely regretted what he had done (Matthew 27:3-5), he had sinned willfully and there was no more sacrifice available for him (Numbers 15:30; Ezekiel 33:18; Hebrews 10:26). He is an illustration of the seed (the Word of God) falling among the weeds; the life that was produced by God's living Word was choked out (Luke 8:7, 14); he began well, he ministered along with the other disciples, but his love for money turned his heart away from the Lord. "If any man see his brother sin a sin *which is* not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it" (1 John 5:16). We must be discerning and seek the Spirit's guidance in order to recognize the heart of the sinner; was it a sin of failure, or evidence of a heart that has turned away from the Lord?

2. Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.

The first phrase is a command in the present tense; *bear* means that we are to take up so as to carry.⁵⁸⁶ The load that we are called to carry is the burden under which a fellow believer may be struggling. The word *burden* (*baros*) speaks of heaviness, weight or trouble.⁵⁸⁷ This is the heavy weight that another person is attempting to carry, and the command given here is that we are to help him to bear that burden.

This is the reality of life within the Body of Christ. Paul explained to the Corinthians how not everyone in the Body has the same gifting, even as a human body is made up of many parts that have their particular functions, and all work together for the wellbeing and proper functioning of the body. "And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it. Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular [or, each a part of the whole]" (1 Corinthians 12:26-27). As a member of the Body, we are to work together with those who are having a hard time. It is said that if you physically lose one of your senses, the other senses will be sharpened to help compensate for what has been lost. John Donne aptly stated: "No man is an island entire of itself"⁵⁸⁸ This is equally true within the *ekklesia* –

⁵⁸⁵ The \$200 is based on silver at \$16.70 per ounce (Cdn), and 11.34 grams per shekel; a denarius was generally considered to be a day's wage, 30 shekels would be about 88 denarii; a current day's wage would be \$100-\$150.

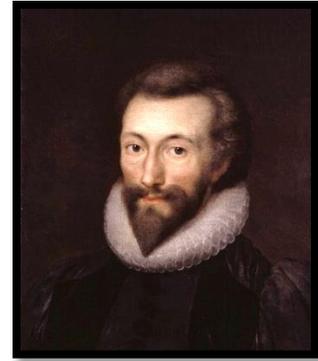
⁵⁸⁶ Strong's Online.

⁵⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸⁸ <http://torch.cs.dal.ca/~johnston/poetry/island.html>

that Body of called-out ones who are individually joined unto Christ, its Head (Ephesians 4:16), each functioning uniquely, yet in concert, to His glory.

Perhaps as Paul observed the struggles that the Galatians were facing in light of the imposing threat by the Judaizers, he noted a specific need for them to be more considerate of what their fellow believers were individually bearing. “*Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others*” (Philippians 2:3-4). Out of a heart of humility (the basis for the spiritual evidence of meekness) there needs to be an awareness of the needs of those around us. Of Jesus, our primary Example, we read: “But Jesus called them [His disciples] *unto him*, and said, Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant [*doulos* – slave]: Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister [to be a servant; verb form of the Greek word translated as *deacon*], and to give his life a ransom for many” (Matthew 20:25-28).⁵⁸⁹ Jesus set the example of looking to the needs of others. For the Galatians, it might well have meant that the ones who were more spiritually minded should have sought to draw those who were being swayed by the Judaizers, back into a proper walk in the Spirit (even as Paul and Barnabas had originally exhorted them to *continue in the faith* – Acts 14:22). Being aware of where others are spiritually cannot be done through introspection, but through the guidance of the Spirit of God.



John Donne

The Galatians are a clear example of why the Calvinistic doctrine of the preservation of the saints (they call it *perseverance*) is ill founded (this is the “P” of the TULIP of Calvinism). According to this teaching, because “the Father has elected, the Son has redeemed, and the Holy Spirit has applied salvation,” it is impossible for those who are saved ever to be lost.⁵⁹⁰ By the same premise, it is impossible to know if you are saved or simply deluded. If this were the case, Paul would never have written this letter of correction to the Galatian believers – there would have been no need, for those who were saved could never be lost, and it wouldn’t have mattered if they fell for the Judaizers’ doctrine; even if they did accept the false doctrine, they could not have fallen from the grace (Galatians 5:4). However, Paul, in his opening comments, shreds this concept by recognizing that there were some among the Galatian Christians who were being *removed* (transported from one place to another) from God Who had called them into faith in Christ (Galatians 1:6); and Paul goes on to state that if they should follow the Judaizers’ error, then they are *fallen from grace* (Galatians 5:4). It is the reality that you can fall away that makes this exhortation, to bear one another’s burdens, more significant.

This extended care for others is said to *fulfil* (literally, fill up) *the law of Christ*. What is the *law of Christ*? Jesus identified the two primary pillars of the Law: “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second *is* like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these

⁵⁸⁹ Strong’s Online.

⁵⁹⁰ **T** – Total depravity, **U** – Unconditional election, **L** – Limited atonement, **I** – Irresistible grace, **P** – Perseverance of the saints; <http://www.calvinistcorner.com/tulip.htm>

two commandments hang all the law and the prophets” (Matthew 22:37-40). As we have already noted, the second of these (*agape* thy neighbor) flows out of a proper *agape* of God. Paul, in Galatians 5:14, identified the second of these commands as that which will fulfill the Law (since it flows out of the first commandment). Through bearing one another’s burdens, there will come a proper fulfilling of this command to *agape* our neighbor – again, this is based on the premise that our *agape* of God is already in place.

3. For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself.

*F*or if someone is thinking that he is something, being no one, he is deceiving himself.⁵⁹¹ If there is anything that would stand in the way of bearing another’s burdens, it would be a high opinion of ourselves. Jesus said that the pagans love to lord it over one another, but, within His *ekklesia*, this was not to be – we are to serve one another (Matthew 20:25-28). Paul’s challenge, after listing nine aspects of the fruit of the Spirit, was to not desire empty praise (Galatians 5:26), and what could be more empty than self-praise? The Greek is a little more clear as to the exact state of this man – the phrase *when he is nothing* is literally *being no one*.⁵⁹² “And you, being dead [lifeless] in your sins [*paraptoma*] and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses [*paraptoma*; sins]” (Colossians 2:13).⁵⁹³ Without Christ, we are *dead*; a corpse does not exhibit an excessively high opinion of itself – it is dead, lifeless. Until we, by faith, receive Christ’s life flowing into us (being grafted into the Spiritual Root [Romans 11]) and are abiding in the Vine (John 15), we have no spiritual life; therefore, it is very inappropriate that we should have a high opinion of ourselves. It is this reality that should make us meek, and it is the Spirit of God Who will work this into the fabric of our lives.

Anyone who exalts himself within the spiritual realm has clearly lost sight of who he is before God. Deception, as it is referred to here, speaks specifically to causing someone to believe what is not true (in the case of self-deception, that is simply convincing yourself of a lie).⁵⁹⁴ In all likelihood, such a self-deceived person would only be fooling himself – everyone around him would undoubtedly recognize that he is not as great as he thinks. “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive [*planao*] ourselves [fall away from the truth], and the truth is not in us” (1 John 1:8).⁵⁹⁵ Concerning the latter days, Paul wrote to Timothy: “But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived [different forms of *planao*]” (2 Timothy 3:13), where he speaks of those who will be actively leading others astray even as they themselves are being led astray.⁵⁹⁶ “Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch” (Matthew 15:14); the leaders of the deceived have been deceived themselves, and the *ditch* is the destiny for both. In our verse, the deception takes place within the mind of the individual who is amazed at his own spiritual acumen. Jesus saw this propensity within the Pharisees: “... now ye say, We see; therefore your sin remaineth” (John 9:41); they were the enlightened ones, those who understood God better than anyone else (at least in their thinking),

⁵⁹¹ Stephanus 1550 NT.

⁵⁹² Ibid.

⁵⁹³ Strong’s Online.

⁵⁹⁴ Friberg Lexicon.

⁵⁹⁵ Strong’s Online.

⁵⁹⁶ Ibid.

yet Jesus cut through their blindness to their sin and pointed out their spiritual pride. It was because of their self-righteousness that their sin remained; they felt no need of a spiritual physician, and so the Lord of life passed them by.

The phrase *when he is nothing*, could be construed in our English to mean that there could be a time when he was something (not nothing). However, as we have seen, the Greek is literally *being no one*, or *being nothing*; there is no room here for the potential to think of ourselves as being someone. This is the reason why there is self-deception if you think of yourself as someone of importance – you are nothing. This verse is not to be applied to someone in particular – the words *a man* would more accurately be *whoever*, or *someone*; therefore, it is the *whoever* who is *being nothing*. It is really a general statement about the spiritual condition of all men without Christ. “And you *hath he quickened*, who were dead [destitute of life] in trespasses and sins ...” (Ephesians 2:1).⁵⁹⁷ There is absolutely no room for high-mindedness.

4. But let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another.

By contrast, Paul instructs everyone to test, or examine (*dokimazo – prove*), what they do.⁵⁹⁸ “Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try [*dokimazo*] the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world” (1 John 4:1).⁵⁹⁹ The charge by John is to test and examine the spirit of a person so as to determine if it is of God. In order to accomplish this purpose, it is necessary to conduct this examination in light of the Word of God with the aid of the Spirit of God – no other standard will do! We cannot simply refer to a constitution, a creed, a systematic theology or a statement of faith; we must always use the Scriptures – anything less will lead to uncertain results. Obviously, if we would desire to live godly lives, then the examination of our own work (how we live) must also be done in the light of God’s Word (2 Corinthians 13:5).

This might seem like a strange command; would it not be more fitting for someone else to evaluate what we are doing in order to determine whether we are in line with the commands of the Lord? The reality is that we will all stand before Christ to give an account of what we have done in this life – “we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ” (Romans 14:10). What we cannot determine as we look at the work of another, is their motivation and heart toward God. Jesus said: “Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity” (Matthew 7:22-23). We might well be convinced of the soundness of the work of such people as we view the activities that fill their lives, but the Lord is the discernor of the intents of the heart (Hebrews 4:12). The first part of Romans 14:10 says: “But why dost thou judge [condemn] thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought [despise] thy brother?”⁶⁰⁰ The context is the sorting out of the activities of a weaker brother and a stronger brother – and both of these questions indicate attitudes that are formed based upon observation only; after all, who can see the heart? The elder (*angel*) of Sardis had a reputation

⁵⁹⁷ Strong’s Online.

⁵⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰⁰ Gingrich Lexicon.

of being spiritually alive, yet Jesus saw him as being virtually dead (Revelation 3:1-2); clearly, a view from another's perspective will not always be accurate.

Matthew 7:1 is a favored text within Evangelical communities today: “Judge not, that ye be not judged.” With that brief quote, they close the door on judging or calling anything or anyone into question, and do so with an air of being very Biblical. Jesus is saying: “Judge not, that ye may not be judged ...”,⁶⁰¹ and He then goes on to explain the necessity of first checking our own lives for problems before we point out the minor flaw in someone else. Before you offer to take the mote [a speck, splinter, or chaff⁶⁰²] out of your brother's eye, it would be fitting to remove the beam [a large supporting timber used in construction⁶⁰³] out of your own eye (Matthew 7:4). The thrust of Jesus' teaching is – don't be hypocritical (Matthew 7:5); clearly there is no problem with trying to help your brother remove the speck from his eye; just don't try it with a log in your own. *Judge*, as used here, is from the Greek word *krino*, which springs from the idea of choosing, and includes the thought of criticism and condemnation.⁶⁰⁴ We are to be careful in our condemnation of others, lest the same disapproval (or an even greater) should be brought against us for being guilty of doing the very same things. To guard against being a hypocrite, we must follow Paul's admonition to *prove* our own work (2 Corinthians 13:5); we must examine what we do and why we do it so that we will not be guilty of carrying a *beam* in our eye while noting the splinter in the eye of someone else.

However, within our modern social context (and the modern church differs little) we are not to judge at all – by this it is meant that we are to always be tolerant and accepting of everything in another person's life, and must never question anything that anyone is doing. Jesus rebuked the Jews of His day because they condemned His good deeds, therefore He commanded them: “Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment” (John 7:24). There are two commands in this verse – *judge not* and *judge*. *Appearance* comes from the Greek word *opsis* (*op'-sis*), and relates specifically to the visual (similar to our word *optic*).⁶⁰⁵ Jesus is saying that the Jews were not to make a determination based solely upon what was visible, but they were to *judge* righteously, without partiality, and in keeping with the commands of God.⁶⁰⁶ The Jews were critical of Jesus because they observed Him violating their well-honed litany of commands; Jesus instructed them to be critical (to *judge*) with a Biblical criticism, which, if they practiced such, would expose their own failure to apply the Word of God accurately. We are charged to “try the spirits whether they are of God” (1 John 4:1), which requires us “to test, examine, prove, scrutinize”⁶⁰⁷ whether someone is godly or false, whether they are Biblical or heretical, whether they show forth the Spirit of God or another spirit that is not of God. We are required to examine closely, not superficially, and to base our judgment on the results of such an examination (1 Corinthians 2:12-14). We are also commanded to “mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them” (Romans 16:17). Identifying those who teach error (they are standing apart from the truth of God's Word⁶⁰⁸) flows from conducting a careful examination of the individuals so that we are able to exercise *righteous judgment*.

⁶⁰¹ YLT.

⁶⁰² Friberg Lexicon.

⁶⁰³ Vine's “beam,” “mote.”

⁶⁰⁴ Friberg Lexicon.

⁶⁰⁵ Strong's Online.

⁶⁰⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁰⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁰⁸ Ibid.

Fundamental to this is a continuous studying of the Word of God so that we are capable of recognizing the error and are also prepared to exercise godly discernment. “For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which *be* the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat [solid food]. For every one that useth milk *is* unskillful [inexperienced] in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age [mature], *even* those who by reason of use [habitual use] have their senses exercised [a vigorous exercise] to discern [judge] both good and evil” (Hebrews 5:12-14).⁶⁰⁹

Paul called on the Galatians to *prove*, test, and examine themselves (not the inward contemplation of modern spirituality, but rather, considering one’s motives and heart under the pure light of God’s Word, and permitting the Spirit of God to illuminate one’s understanding). “Thy word *is* a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path” (Psalm 119:105). The purpose for self-examination is to determine if what we do, how we think, and the discernment that we exercise is Biblically based – is God’s Word really our light? As the Psalmist, we will say: “Examine me, O LORD, and prove me; try my reins and my heart” (Psalm 26:2). Such an assessment in the light of God’s Word is really God examining us, and therein is the key. It is this that separates the wise from the foolish, the child of God from the professing Christian. This process will expose any *beams* that may be in our eyes, which might not otherwise be readily detected. Once we have landed on the firm foundation of the Word of God in our own lives, we are prepared to exercise righteous judgment in testing what comes our way and shining the spotlight of God’s Word on error, and then avoiding it.

If a man shall so examine his own works, then (we read) “shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another.” The Greek word (*kauchema*) translated as *rejoicing* means glorying or boasting.⁶¹⁰ This follows on the heels of “if a man thinketh himself to be something ... he deceiveth himself.” The reality that Paul completely understood, is that through Biblical self-examination (which is really permitting the Lord to scrutinize us in light of His Word) we will very quickly discover that there is nothing within us to provide any basis for boasting. However, if through this process we become confident that the Spirit of God is our Guide, and we place no confidence in the flesh (Philippians 3:3), then we can, in all humility, glory that the presence of God abides within us (Galatians 4:4-6). Modern, worldly spirituality invites us to look within, but not for the purpose of Biblical self-examination – they look within for the good that they say dwells in everyone. Obviously, the Word of God is excluded and the Lord will not be involved in this examination of the heart – no testing or proving is permitted within this form of spiritual deception.

The context for Paul’s admonition is the need to come alongside of a brother who has stumbled, someone who has been overtaken in a fault – a situation that could cause a sprout of arrogance to appear within the heart – the Pharisaical holier-than-thou attitude (Luke 18:11). Do not glory as you see a struggling brother – do not even make a comparison (2 Corinthians 10:12). Examine yourself and recognize that there is nothing within us in which to glory; our glory is in the cross of Christ by which we die, and Christ lives in us (Galatians 6:14).

⁶⁰⁹ Strong’s Online.

⁶¹⁰ Ibid.

5. For every man shall bear his own burden.

At first glance, we might well consider this to be a direct contradiction of verse two: “bear ye one another’s burdens ...” Once again, our English language fails us. The Greek word that is translated as *burdens* in verse two is *baros*, and means a weight or anything that is pressing on us whether physically, or spiritually.⁶¹¹ The Greek word that is used here is *phortion*, and literally means something carried, with no reference to its weight.⁶¹² Jesus said: “For my yoke *is* easy, and my burden [*phortion*] is light” (Matthew 11:30). Evangelicals like that thought and stop there. However, Jesus also said: “... If any *man* will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up [*airo*; to take upon one’s self and carry what has been raised up] his cross, and follow me” (Matthew 16:24); we are to lift up the cross that Jesus has for us, and we are to bear it.⁶¹³ Whether it is a cross of suffering (Romans 8:17) or persecution (2 Timothy 3:12), we must not forget that it is a *cross*. However, Jesus declared this cross to be light, but it will only be light if we follow His instruction to “Take [*airo* (same word as in *take up his cross*)] my yoke upon you, and learn of me” (Matthew 11:29).⁶¹⁴ It is as we are yoked together with the Lord Jesus Christ that the *phortion* (burden) of our cross will be light.

We are called upon to assist a brother who might be struggling under a *baros* (verse 2), but Jesus’ call to discipleship is that we, being yoked together with Him, are each to carry our own *phortion*, our cross. Missing from Evangelical theology today is the acceptance of this truth; as a matter of fact, it is missing entirely from their teaching. Within the Evangelical mind, there is no cross to be borne (that cross of suffering and persecution is inconceivable within the pleasure-seeking mind of today’s professing Christian); the Christian life is to be one of endless bliss and ease. They accept Christ into their lives as the great “problem solver” to make their pathway smooth, and the great “insurance broker” Who negotiates an eternal-life insurance policy for them. Yet Jesus said: “Blessed are ye, when *men* shall revile you, and persecute *you*, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake” (Matthew 5:11), and He also said that if we are not prepared to take up our cross, then we cannot be His disciples (Luke 14:27). In their willingness to compromise and embrace the wisdom of the world, Evangelicals have lost all comprehension of their need to consider the cross that Jesus has called us to bear. For the modern Evangelical, the cross has become little more than a symbol to be worn with pride, or an icon at the front of the church. They view the cross as something for Jesus but not for us; nothing more is required of us than to accept what Jesus did for us on the cross. They call themselves Christians, yet refuse to take up the cross that the Lord has for them; consequently, the Lord says that they are NOT His disciples (Luke 14:27), and that they will be rejected (Matthew 7:23).

To the Galatians Paul declared: “I am crucified with Christ.” The cross was an implement for inflicting a cruel death, not an ornament worn to bring good luck. The work of the cross is one of death; when Paul says that he has been crucified with Christ, he is deeming his sin nature to have died with Christ on the cross. “Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with *him*, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin” (Romans 6:6). The purpose for this is that we might walk in obedience to the commands of God, energized by His Spirit living

⁶¹¹ Vine’s “burden.”

⁶¹² Ibid.

⁶¹³ Strong’s Online.

⁶¹⁴ Ibid.

within us, and thereby living out the righteousness of the Law of God (Romans 8:4). The Law of God is the Ten Commandments written with the finger of God upon stone (Exodus 31:18) – now written by Him upon our hearts and affirmed by His Spirit (Jeremiah 31:33). Nevertheless, the old man will not die easily – and so we see the admonition in Galatians 6:1 to seek humbly to restore the one who has stumbled. We are urged to assist our brothers and sisters in the Lord with their heavy loads (verse 2) in keeping with our *agape* of our neighbor, yet, at the same time, we are constrained to bear our own cross. Amazingly, as we take up our cross, Christ has extended His gracious offer to join us – we are yoked together with Him, and so the burden (*phortion*) of our cross of suffering and persecution is light (Matthew 11:30).

6. Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things.

A new thought is presented here, one that is not specifically tied to the one just completed. This is somewhat similar in nature to Paul’s instructions to the Corinthians: “If we have sown unto you spiritual things, *is it* a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things?” (1 Corinthians 9:11).

The words *taught* and *teacheth* are different forms of the same Greek word (*katecheo*) – the former is passive (the subject is receiving the teaching), and the latter is active (doing the teaching).⁶¹⁵ *Communicate* is from the Greek word *koinoneo* (*koy-no-neh'-o*) that means to share with others,⁶¹⁶ or to contribute.⁶¹⁷ Therefore, the thrust of this is that the one who is being taught should share with the one who is teaching. To the Romans Paul declared: “For if the Gentiles have been made partakers [same Greek word, *koinoneo*] of their spiritual things, their duty [debt] is also to minister unto them in carnal things” (Romans 15:27).⁶¹⁸

The *teaching* that is to be done by those who have been *taught* is *in all good things*, which means in everything good.⁶¹⁹ The Greek word used for *good things* (*agathos*) appears here in the neuter plural form,⁶²⁰ which means that it is referring to external goods (in contrast to spiritual truths).⁶²¹

Within our English, this might seem to say that the one taught should share his learning with the one who is teaching, and this would be commendable and entirely appropriate. However, this is not what Paul is saying here. Even though Paul taught the principle of the hearers contributing to the teacher, this was not something that he practiced personally. We just looked at a part of his teaching to the Corinthians on this subject; now consider his full instruction to them. “If we have sown unto you spiritual things, *is it* a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things? If others be partakers of [*metecho: share in*] *this* power over you, *are* not we rather? Nevertheless we have not [absolute negative] used [taken for personal use] this power [authority or right]; but suffer [endure] all things, lest we should hinder [“a cutting (made in a road to impede an enemy in pursuit)”] the

⁶¹⁵ Strong’s Online.

⁶¹⁶ Strong’s Dictionary.

⁶¹⁷ Friberg Lexicon.

⁶¹⁸ Strong’s Online.

⁶¹⁹ Ibid.

⁶²⁰ Stephanus 1550 NT.

⁶²¹ Strong’s Online.

gospel of Christ” (1 Corinthians 9:11-12).⁶²² Paul’s primary concern was that the Good News of Christ should go forth without any impediment, even if it meant that he must set aside something that he taught was his right as an Apostle. We catch a glimpse of the mind of Christ exemplified within Paul’s life in this matter: “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men ...” (Philippians 2:5-7). The eternal Logos set aside His right as a member of the Godhead in order to take on the form of man in order to pay the price for sin; so, on an infinitely smaller scale, Paul chose to set aside his right to be supported so that the Gospel might spread unhindered. Paul goes on to explain his motives: “What is my reward then? *Verily* that, when I preach the gospel, I may make the gospel of Christ without charge [costing nothing], that I abuse [use fully] not my power [of right] in the gospel.” (1 Corinthians 9:18).⁶²³

7. Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.

The word *deceived* in verse three meant causing someone to believe what is not true (even your own self). *Deceived*, as it is translated here, literally means to lead astray, and so to be led away from the truth.⁶²⁴ This is a command: we are not to be deceived; we are not to permit ourselves to be led away from the truth of God’s Word. It does not take a great knowledge of history to realize that there is a very real propensity within mankind to fall away from what God has ordained, and the devil will use every trick that he can imagine to draw the child of God away from the truth. Through our study, we have come to realize that this was the very thing that was happening within the Galatian community, and against which Paul wrote with great vehemence. However, we might be less cognizant of the fact that when Harold Ockenga announced the fresh approach of New Evangelicalism in 1948, he failed to heed Paul’s warning in these three simple words – *be not deceived*. Ockenga was deceived (led away from the truth), and he, along with his colleagues of like mind, went on to spread that deception to millions around the world, so that today the fruit of this massive departure from the truth of God’s Word is what is considered to be mainstream Evangelicalism. The questionable beginnings of this movement have long been forgotten, and their error is now accepted as truth. Unless we are prepared to study the Word of God, we will not come to know the truth and never realize the error that stands at the very foundation of modern Evangelical thinking. That first generation of New Evangelicals chose to be deceived (for the truth was still largely present, but they chose to follow the tenets proposed by this new movement); however, the next generation was raised with the lie, and never knew the truth – they are pagans who have been duped into believing that they are Christians. The Galatians faced a choice, and Paul taught that the doctrine of the Judaizers was to be likened to paganism (Galatians 4:9); by comparison, the New Evangelical’s gospel is also like unto paganism – there is no life in it. This command is directed to the child of God, and is not only a command to be obeyed, but also a warning of the very real possibility of being deceived and drawn away from the truth of God.

God is not mocked. Does this mean that men do not, or cannot, mock God? Jesus, the eternal God in the form of man, indicated that He would bear the derision of men: “And they shall mock

⁶²² Strong’s Online.

⁶²³ Ibid.

⁶²⁴ Friberg Lexicon.

[*empaizo* – to play or trifle with] him, and shall scourge him, and shall spit upon him, and shall kill him: and the third day he shall rise again” (Mark 10:34).⁶²⁵ “And the people stood beholding. And the rulers also with them derided [*ekmukterizo* – a strengthened form (the prefix *ek*), to sneer or scoff at] *him*, saying, He saved others; let him save himself, if he be Christ, the chosen of God” (Luke 23:35).⁶²⁶ It is evident that Jesus bore the mocking of men; how does this fit with Paul’s statement to the Galatians?

The Greek word used here and translated as *mocked* is *mukterizo* (*mook-tay-rid’-zo*), and this is the only time that it is found in the NT. As we noted, a strengthened form of this Greek word is used to describe the derision that was heaped upon Christ by the religious elite of the day while He was on the cross (Luke 23:35). The same word is also used to describe the reaction of the Jewish leaders when Jesus declared that they could not serve both God and mammon; “And the Pharisees also, who were covetous, heard all these things: and they derided [*ekmukterizo*, the strengthened form] *him*” (Luke 16:14).⁶²⁷ The root of this Greek word is *nose* (*mukter*), and so it means to “turn up the nose at, sneer at, treat with contempt.”⁶²⁸ The word *not*, which Paul uses here, is the absolute negative; hence, his declaration is that God is absolutely not mocked or treated with contempt.

In Paul’s letter to the Ephesians, we read: “Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly *places* in Christ: According as he hath chosen us in him [i.e., in Christ] before the foundation of the world ...” (Ephesians 1:3-4). Before the foundation of creation was put into place, God (eternal Father, Logos and Spirit) had already prepared a plan for the redemption of the yet-to-be-created mankind. The writer to the Hebrews said: “Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of *our* faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God” (Hebrews 12:2). Jesus had that eternal plan in mind as He endured the cross; as the eternal Logos Who became man, He endured the reproach of men and the shame of the cross so that He might forever settle the debt of sin that we bear; consequently, the righteousness of the Law of God may be fulfilled through those who are born again by the Spirit of God (Romans 8:3-4). There is a principle at work here that is much larger than the mockery by mankind. Yes, Jesus, God come in the flesh, endured the mocking ridicule of men, but He did so within the overarching omniscience of being God; this was His plan unfolding. Man, thinking that he was the victor and with the voice of the devil, derided the Lord upon the cross, but it was merely premature gloating. Within three days, Satan knew that he was in trouble; the gloating was past and his persecution of the followers of Jesus began (Acts 8:1). Within this context, consider Paul’s statement again: *God is absolutely not mocked*. God, Who knows the end from the beginning, Who is the eternal Alpha and Omega, cannot be thwarted by the schemes of men or Satan. “I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty” (Revelation 1:8). Within the framework of time, man might well mock or scoff at God, but, ultimately, God will not be mocked; man may even deny the existence of God altogether but that does not make it so. “The fool hath said in his heart, *There is no God*.” (Psalm 14:1); however, all who resist the Lord in this life will still be required to give an accounting before Him: “And I saw the dead, small and great, [this includes all of the unrighteous dead from all ages, Revelation

⁶²⁵ Strong’s Online.

⁶²⁶ Vine’s “mock.”

⁶²⁷ Strong’s Online.

⁶²⁸ Friberg Lexicon.

20:5-6] stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is *the book of life*: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works” (Revelation 20:12). The unrighteous dead will be judged according to their works, and doomed to destruction; “... for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified” (Galatians 2:16); destined for glory, from among these *dead*, will come those who were born during the Millennium, who placed their trust in the Lord Jesus and have their names recorded in the Book of Life (Revelation 20:15, 21:27).

The latter part of our verse is what some refer to as the Law of the Harvest. The word *soweth* is in the present tense (subjunctive mood – a possibility), and so it would read: *for whatever a man may be sowing* [speaking metaphorically], *that very thing will he reap*.⁶²⁹ The Law of the Harvest says that if you sow wheat, then you will reap wheat; in other words, the present activity of sowing will produce a future harvest in like kind. We might well recognize that this principle does not always hold true for every situation, for when the Lord spoke of judgment against Israel, He said, “They have sown wheat, but shall reap thorns ...” (Jeremiah 12:13). However, the thought from this verse really carries on into the next thereby providing a context within which this proverb will always hold true.

8. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.

We find a similar statement in Paul’s letter to the Romans: “For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live” (Romans 8:13). The first two phrases of this verse read: *if according to the flesh you are living, you are beginning to be dying*; both the *living* and the *dying* are in the present tense.⁶³⁰ On the other hand, if you, by the Spirit of God, are continually putting those physical works to death (present tense, *mortify*), then you will have life. The thrust is the same as in our verse.

The best conjunction to begin our verse would be *because* – it provides a stronger connection to the previous verse (and the two are closely tied). It is within the framework of this verse that the Law of the Harvest, presented in the previous verse, finds its confirmed reality.

Here we have a present condition resulting in a confirmed future reality – a present sowing in order to anticipate a future harvest. Whoever is now sowing to their flesh, in the future will harvest destruction and death. “For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh (*sarx*) ... For to be carnally minded [literally: a mind-set of the flesh (*carnally* is from the same Greek word as *flesh*)] *is* death ... Because the carnal mind *is* enmity against God: for it is [absolutely] not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh [absolutely] cannot please God.” (Romans 8:5-8).⁶³¹ There is no wiggle room for doubt as to the harvest that awaits those who live (*sow*) after the flesh. Paul has already provided an extensive list of those things that are the product of a life lived according to the flesh (Galatians 5:19-21). However, what about those who live a clean life (with no evidence of those fleshly deeds), who care for the poor,

⁶²⁹ Stephanus 1550 NT.

⁶³⁰ Ibid.

⁶³¹ Strong’s Online.

give liberally of their substance, but do not have faith in the Lord? Jesus said: “If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? or if *he ask* a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? Or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall *your* heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?” (Luke 11:11-13).⁶³² Jesus readily acknowledged that unregenerate man bears the ability to do good things, and so it is not surprising to see many godless people in the world doing many wonderful things.

However, you might ask, does this not contradict Romans 3:12? “There is [absolutely] none that understandeth [literally: to put together], there is [absolutely] none that seeketh [searcheth] after God. They are all gone out of the way [turned from the right – the Way], they are together become unprofitable [useless]; there is [absolutely] none that doeth good, no, not one [*no one is doing right, that is not as much as one*]” (Romans 3:11-12).⁶³³ This passage speaks of the spiritual man, and it is clear that we are all under sin (Romans 3:9), which simply means that outside of Christ, we are all spiritually dead (Ephesians 2:1), but that does not discount the natural ability of fallen man to do good things. What we must not miss is that all of these *good things* do nothing for the spiritual condition of the individual; Isaiah declared: “all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags” (Isaiah 64:6) – the *good* deeds of the ungodly are *filthy rags* before God.

Here is the failure of the New Evangelical movement: it places a much greater emphasis on social responsibility than on spiritual integrity. It is always easier to **do something** than it is to **be someone**. What has happened over the years is that social welfare has overshadowed the heart that is right with God and committed to His Word. Professing Christians have been zealous for social programs and eliminating the physical needs of their culture, but they have lost the foundation from which such is to spring, namely, a heart filled with love (*agape*), first of all for God and then for their neighbor (Matthew 22:37-40). Consequently, we live in a day when many wonderful things are being done (and some even in the name of Jesus), yet they are empty works that will yield nothing more than a “depart from Me” from the Lord (Matthew 7:23). Like Samson, modern-day Evangelicals are busily doing many good deeds, yet they “wist not that the LORD [has] departed” from them (Judges 16:20). Their good deeds have become works of the flesh (the Spirit of God is not present) and from such “wonderful” deeds they will harvest *corruption*, destruction, ruin, and death (the opposite of eternal life).⁶³⁴

We have little difficulty understanding that those who sow the works of the flesh, as Paul outlined it earlier, will reap a harvest of destruction. However, when there are those who are doing great humanitarian works and even claiming to do them in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, to have them also reap corruption – we have a greater difficulty wrapping our minds around that. For this reason we are called to “try the spirits whether they are of God” (1 John 4:1); we are to “judge righteous judgment” (John 7:24), looking to the heart and permitting the Spirit of God to guide us

⁶³² This seems to point to the time of Pentecost when the Spirit was poured forth on all who believed. In John 4:10, Jesus speaks of giving living water to the Samaritan woman, and in John 14:17 He speaks of the Spirit being presently with the disciples (abiding within the Lord), and of a future time when the Spirit will be *in* them. All indications are that today we are not to ask for the presence of the Spirit; Jesus said that He would ask the Father to send the Spirit (future tense) that He *may abide* with us forever (John 14:16). In all cases, the Spirit will be sent by the Lord Jesus (or at His request); we do not ask for Him (John 15:26, 16:7). Romans chapter 8 makes it clear that if we are *in* Christ, then we will walk by the Spirit (v.1) and we will be indwelt by the Spirit (v. 9).

⁶³³ Strong’s Dictionary; Stephanus 1550 NT.

⁶³⁴ Friberg Lexicon.

in discerning righteousness (1 Corinthians 2:14). Jesus said: “Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit” (Matthew 7:15-17). It is by the Spirit of God within us that we will be able to test and examine the spirit of another to determine if they are a “good tree” or whether their fruits are the empty works of humanitarianism.

By contrast, the one who is continually sowing (present tense) unto the Spirit of God will from the Spirit reap life without end. The Law of the Harvest – what you sow you will reap – is a reality in the spiritual realm. Therefore, we would do well to examine ourselves (Galatians 6:4; 2 Corinthians 13:5) so that our work might flow from a heart that is committed to the Word of the Lord and is a residence for the Spirit of God. Let us give careful heed to Jesus’ words: “Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment” (John 7:24).

9. And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.

May we not be fainting or losing heart in doing well, or what is worthy of praise.⁶³⁵ To the Corinthians, Paul wrote: “For all things *are* for your sakes, that the abundant grace might through the thanksgiving of many redound [abound] to the glory of God. For which cause we faint [*weary* – same Greek word (*ekkakeo*) as in our verse] not [absolute negative]; but though our outward man perish [waste away⁶³⁶], yet the inward *man* is renewed day by day” (2 Corinthians 4:15-16).⁶³⁷ Even though Paul faced every kind of discouragement, he would not become weary because of his spiritual life being continually made new by the Spirit of God. It is not that there is no reason to be tired and discouraged, and Paul acknowledges that his body might well be exhausted, but inwardly he could feel refreshed and invigorated through the working of God’s Spirit – and the focus is the *glory of God*. Paul wrote virtually the same charge to the Thessalonians as we have in our verse: “But ye, brethren, be not weary in well doing” (2 Thessalonians 3:13).

Truly, there are times when we can become tired even though we know that what we are doing is a good thing and for the cause of Christ. Something as simple as standing fast in Christ can be wearing when we face criticism by those who profess to be Christians. Often it is not so much a weariness of our body, but a discouragement of heart that threatens us; yet Paul’s word to the Corinthians is that our spirits can be renewed by the Spirit of God. Israel grew tired of following the dictates of the Law of Moses: “Ye said also, Behold, what a weariness *is it!* and ye have snuffed at it, saith the LORD of hosts; and ye brought *that which was torn*, and the lame, and the sick; thus ye brought an offering: should I accept this of your hand? saith the LORD” (Malachi 1:13). Being obedient to the Lord’s commands concerning the sacrifices became burdensome for Israel, and they were no longer careful to bring a spotless lamb. The children of Israel had lost sight of the spiritual application and the promise of the perfect Lamb to come; their hearts were turned away from the Lord and they only saw the necessity of performing an outward ritual. How many professing Christians fill the pews of modern churches, yet it is merely an outward expression of compliance with an age-old tradition. Their hearts are not renewed by the Spirit of God, and they

⁶³⁵ Stephanus 1550 NT; Friberg Lexicon.

⁶³⁶ Friberg Lexicon.

⁶³⁷ Strong’s Online.

have given up trying to understand and obey the commands of God; they have relinquished all spiritual thinking to the “experts.” We are challenged to not become weary (the subjunctive mood indicates that we can become weary), and the writer of Hebrews provides us with a perspective that might be of help: “For consider [ponder] him [i.e., Christ] that endured such contradiction [rebellion] of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds” (Hebrews 12:3).⁶³⁸

The result of not being overcome by weariness or discouragement and of having the inner man renewed by the Spirit of God, is that, at the proper time, we will harvest, if we are not weakening (present tense *faint*).⁶³⁹ We can see an application of the spiritual Law of the Harvest – it is very well to sow the seed, but if we are not prepared to endure until the proper time of harvest, we will not reap what has been sown. “For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end ...” (Hebrews 3:14). We are called to perseverance; we must endure and not give up (Luke 9:62). Jesus told us very plainly: “And ye shall be hated of all *men* for my name’s sake [*because of My name*]; but he that shall endure [*hupomeno* – to remain faithful through trials] unto the end, the same shall [*that is the one who will* (emphatic pronoun identifying the *enduring one*; *saved* is future tense)] be saved” (Mark 13:13).⁶⁴⁰ Paul’s word to the Galatians was: “Ye did run well” (Galatians 5:7), yet they were beginning to falter in the Christian race because of the heresy of the Judaizers; they were being distracted, with the very real potential of falling out of the race altogether (Galatians 5:4). There will be a spiritual harvest (as we are a participant in Christ) if we remain faithful unto the end (Hebrews 3:14). The reality is the same for us as it was for the Galatians. If the Galatians succumbed to the teachings of the Judaizers, then they are fallen from grace; they would, in essence, have returned to a form of paganism (Galatians 4:9); they might still speak of faith in Christ, but they would have lost it all by adding works to the Gospel of God. “When the righteous turneth from his righteousness [apostatize, not simply a stumble], and committeth iniquity, he shall even die thereby” (Ezekiel 33:18); “For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins ...” (Hebrews 10:26). May the Lord help us to endure in His truth.

10. As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all *men*, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.

The word translated as *season* in the previous verse, and *opportunity*, as it is used here, are, in fact, the same word in Greek (*kairos*), which speaks of a favorable time or a time of opportunity wherein to carry out a prescribed activity.⁶⁴¹ In the previous verse, it referred to a time for reaping, which is a very specific time and quite narrow in its application; here it is a much broader application, for it is always a time to do what is good, right and beneficial for others. Therefore, as we have occasion, may we be working that which is helpful unto all, and especially to our kindred in the faith.

⁶³⁸ Strong’s Online.

⁶³⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁴⁰ Stephanus 1550 NT; Friberg Lexicon.

⁶⁴¹ Strong’s Online; Friberg Lexicon.

The placement of this is opportune – there has been the challenge to assist others with their burdens (Galatians 6:2), and the encouragement not to be disheartened in doing what is right (Galatians 6:9); we are herewith exhorted to use our time by working good unto everyone, but most particularly to our brethren in the faith of Christ. The *well doing* (*kalos poieo*) of the previous verse speaks of doing what is right or helpful; here we have the word *good* (*agathos*) that describes something that is essentially good, and because of that goodness, it is beneficial to others (a core goodness that overflows in benefit for everyone). Underpinning this is God’s command to love (*agape* – love as an act of the will) our neighbor as ourselves, which, as you will recall, is founded firmly upon our *agape* of God with all of our heart, soul, mind and strength (Mark 12:30).

“Depart from evil, and do good; and dwell for evermore” (Psalm 37:27). Here the Psalmist uncovers the calling of God upon His child: turn away from evil and do that which is good. Jesus said: “Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven” (Matthew 7:21). Is this a works salvation? By no means! “For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit” (Romans 8:3-4). We are saved by God’s grace through faith in the finished work of Christ, which includes His death on the cross, His burial, and His triumphal resurrection (Ephesians 2:8). To the Philippians Paul said: “... as ye have always obeyed ... work out [to *work fully*, that is, *accomplish*;⁶⁴² by implication to *finish*⁶⁴³] your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of *his* good pleasure” (Philippians 2:12-13). If we have been born again by the Spirit of God, then we must do that which is right (we must be living in obedience to God’s commands), for the Spirit of God is working in us; “ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you ...” (Romans 8:9). It is not that we are saved by the grace of God and then that’s the end of it – no, we must labor with all perseverance in obedience to what the Word of God declares. “Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast [immovable], unmoveable [firmly persistent], always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour [intense labor united with trouble and toil] is not in vain in the Lord” (1 Corinthians 15:58).⁶⁴⁴ The Psalmist understood this: “Depart from evil, and do good; and dwell for evermore. For the LORD loveth judgment, and forsaketh not his saints; they are preserved for ever: but the seed of the wicked shall be cut off. ... The mouth of the righteous speaketh wisdom, and his tongue talketh of judgment. The law of his God *is* in his heart; none of his steps shall slide” (Psalm 37:27-28, 30-31). The *do good* of Psalm 37:27 is inextricably linked to the Law of God being *in his heart* (v.31). This is the reality of Romans 8:4 – the Spirit of God working out the righteousness of the Law of God in our lives.

Paul’s charge to the Galatians is this: let this goodness be evident to everyone whom you touch, but above all to the family of the faith. Our English left out the definite article *the*; it is *the* faith, not just any faith. Evangelicals today have become casual with how they define saving faith; Ecumenism demands that faith become both more inclusive and accommodating, and Evangelicals have been more than willing to comply. One of the planks of the New Evangelical declaration made in 1948 was to seek the favor of those of a liberal theological position, to dialogue with these heretics and gain their respect (in other words, become Ecumenical). Such blatant disobedience of

⁶⁴² Strong’s Online.

⁶⁴³ Strong’s Dictionary.

⁶⁴⁴ Strong’s Online.

the Word of God (2 Corinthians 6:14) has led to a general downgrading of doctrine within the Evangelical movement so as to make room for their newly found friends and associates – the liberals and heretics of yesterday. We must take heed to *the faith*: “Watch ye, stand fast in **the faith**, quit you like men [be brave], be strong” (1 Corinthians 16:13).⁶⁴⁵

11. Ye see how large a letter I have written unto you with mine own hand.

Robert Young translated this verse as: “Ye see in how large letters I have written to you with my own hand.”⁶⁴⁶ It seems that the reference is to the size of the letters used in writing (the Greek word is plural, not singular), rather than to the length of the epistle itself. The word *see* (*oida*) is in the imperative mood, and calls upon the readers to note that Paul has included his own writing in this letter – authenticating that he is its author. Paul’s letters were, for the most part, dictated, and physically written down by someone else. For example, Tertius is openly declared as being the scribe for the book of Romans (Romans 16:22). This is also evident in other epistles as Paul indicates that he is personally writing a greeting at the end (1 Corinthians 16:21; Colossians 4:18; 2 Thessalonians 3:17), the implication being that someone else wrote his dictation for the rest of the epistle.

Some claim that Paul wrote with large letters because of poor eyesight (using Galatians 4:15 as their basis for this position). This may be true, but it could simply be that Paul wrote with a distinctively large script. The Greek verb (*egrafa*) translated as *have written* is not in the past tense,⁶⁴⁷ rather it bears no reference at all to time, which is generally translated into English as being past tense; perhaps simply *write* would provide a better sense for us. What is noteworthy is that the rest of this epistle was written with Paul’s own hand, very likely as an additional attempt to impress upon the Galatian believers the gravity of their situation with the Judaizers.

12. As many as desire to make a fair shew in the flesh, they constrain you to be circumcised; only lest they should suffer persecution for the cross of Christ.

Paul provides a summary comment on how he perceives the Judaizers – those who were agitating to have circumcision and the keeping of the Law of Moses added to faith in Christ (Acts 15:5). They are resolved to make a good impression outwardly (in keeping with their Pharisaical background); it is their determination to remain Jews in good standing. Notice that it is a fleshly impression that they are trying to make, rather than a spiritual one – something that should have been their greater priority.

Paul again points to their rationalized reasoning for insisting upon keeping the Jewish traditions: they do not want to suffer! “And I, brethren, if I yet preach circumcision, why do I yet suffer persecution? then is the offence of the cross ceased” (Galatians 5:11). Paul recognized that if he had preached a gospel that included circumcision, then he would have faced no persecution

⁶⁴⁵ Strong’s Online.

⁶⁴⁶ YLT.

⁶⁴⁷ Strong’s Online.

from the Jews, but, by doing so, the pure Gospel would have been destroyed (Galatians 1:7). It seems that the Judaizers had a greater fear of the disdain of their Jewish brethren after the flesh than they did of compromising the Gospel of God. Modern Evangelicals follow the same pattern; they would rather cultivate the favor of their fellowman than the favor of God. Ecumenism is based upon the brotherhood of man and a skewed and superficial view of the Scriptures. There is a common shortsightedness, a greater fear for what is visible than for what is inevitable. Even though Jesus promised hardship in this life (Matthew 10:22), Evangelicals pursue a life free of conflict, and are willing to compromise the teachings of Scripture in order to achieve this blind-form of nirvana (Satan will ensure that there is sweet fellowship among those who practice compromise and accommodation – but the Spirit of God will not be there). The promised cost of being a disciple of Christ (Luke 14:27) is deflected in favor of a feigned spirituality founded upon the shifting sands of theological relativism.

“For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom: But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness” (1 Corinthians 1:22-23). The pure message of the cross (Jesus – crucified, dead and risen again) was not readily accepted, as Paul well knew. The Jews struggled with Jesus being their Messiah since He was crucified by their own religious leaders, and the philosophical Greeks couldn’t comprehend the concept of the resurrection. The full Message of the cross will lead to suffering and persecution (Romans 8:17-18; 2 Timothy 3:12), and it is this that both the Judaizers and modern Evangelicals seek to avoid. The Gospel is an exclusive message (there is absolutely no room for Ecumenism – Jesus said, “I am the way” [John 14:6], but Ecumenism demands flexibility on this central doctrine), and Jesus demands a strong commitment (we must take up our cross, anything less disqualifies us from being His disciple – Luke 14:27). Expediency and fear of reprisal have many today accepting the Evangelical movement as their own, with no recognition of its failure in the light of Scripture; likewise, the Judaizers sought to cultivate favor with their fellow countrymen, but to their own spiritual demise. Unless we are prepared to hold tenaciously to the whole Message of God’s Word, no matter the cost, we will forgo hearing from our Lord: “Well done, good and faithful servant ...” (Matthew 25:23). If we live in the favor of the average Evangelical today, we might do well to carefully examine our spiritual position according to the Word of God (2 Corinthians 13:5). “Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you! for so did their fathers to the false prophets” (Luke 6:26).

13. For neither they themselves who are circumcised keep the law; but desire to have you circumcised, that they may glory in your flesh.

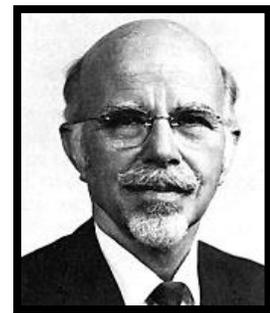
You will recall that the position of the Judaizers was that both circumcision and the keeping of the Law of Moses should be imposed on the new converts to Christ. “But there rose up certain of the sect of the Pharisees which believed, saying, That it was needful to circumcise them, and to command *them* to keep the law of Moses” (Acts 15:5). This was their openly stated position. However, Paul notes here that even those who were circumcised according to the Jewish custom did not continue to observe the Law. Keep in mind James’ words: “... whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one *point*, he is guilty of all” (James 2:10). By not keeping the Law of Moses perfectly, the Judaizers were, in fact, guilty of violating it. Jesus identified the same problem within the lives of the Jews of His day: “Did not Moses give you the law, and *yet* none of

you keepeth the law? Why go ye about to kill me?” (John 7:19). Hypocrisy lies at the heart of the Judaizers’ message; in other words, they are saying: “We want you to keep the Law of Moses, even though we know that we cannot.”

Paul goes on to expose their motive. The Judaizers’ desire to bring these new believers into compliance with their Jewish traditions was so that they could be proud in their flesh; it would be a fleshly pride, for they would have brought the Galatians down to a gospel that held no life! The Pharisees of Jesus’ day were no different from those of Paul’s day: “Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves” (Matthew 23:15). The Pharisees labored long and hard to win a convert, even though such a conversion would not change the convert’s eternal destiny; there is a zeal for converting others, even within those who do not hold to the truth.



There can be no denying the missionary zeal of many within the Evangelical community today. The US Center for World Mission (recently rebranded as Frontier Ventures) is an edifice that attests to this truth; they promote and track missionary activity all over the world, yet they do not hold to the true Message of the cross of Christ – that Message that will draw forth persecution. Rather, they promote group decisions to become “Christian” (but keep in mind that their *Christian* is not Biblically defined – it has suffered the ravages of Ecumenism and compromise). Donald McGavran declares: “Peoples become Christian as this group-mind is brought into a lifegiving relationship to Jesus as Lord.”⁶⁴⁸ He goes on to elaborate: “It is important to note that the group decision is not the sum of separate individual decisions. The leader makes sure that his followers will follow.”⁶⁴⁹ McGavran, as the father of the Church Growth Movement, set in motion a rapid expansion of the Evangelical movement, but not in accordance with God’s Word. They may well accomplish many things, and all in the name of the Lord, but they have departed from the truths of Scripture, and so they present a gospel that has been corrupted and perverted. The Judaizers sought to sway the Galatians into their doctrinal position (which Paul readily identifies as being perverted – Galatians 1:7) so that they might have a reason to rejoice. The devil will always provide a sense of accomplishment to those who convince someone else to follow their error; this is all the more reason that we must “hold fast the profession of *our* faith [*the hope*] without wavering” (Hebrews 10:23).⁶⁵⁰ Evangelicalism boasts of the thousands upon thousands who are becoming Christians today, yet they have lost what it means to be someone who is committed to follow Christ through the guidance of the Spirit of God. In their enthusiasm, they rejoice in the massive revivals that they identify as taking place all around the world that, they declare, can only herald the soon return of the Lord Jesus Christ. In their eagerness to fit in, many Evangelicals have fallen for the heresy that we must build the Kingdom of God on earth so that Christ can return to claim what we have done; Jesus said, “I will build my church (*ekklesia*)” (Matthew 16:18) – “Except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it ...” (Psalm 127:1).



Donald McGavran

⁶⁴⁸ Donald McGavran, The Bridges of God, p. 12.

⁶⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁵⁰ Stephanus 1550 NT.

14. But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.

We've seen the expression, *God forbid*, used two other times in our study (Galatians 2:17; 3:21), and we have discovered that each literally meant *let it not be*.⁶⁵¹ We have exactly the same Greek words used here, with exactly the same meaning. The Greek word for *God* does not appear in the phrase; this phrase simply represents an emphatic statement of denial that we might express as “*don't even think about it,*” or “*how ridiculous.*”⁶⁵² Paul has already admonished the Galatians not to seek after empty praise (Galatians 5:26), and if anyone thinks that they are someone of importance, *being nothing*, they are deceived; now he provides a personal declaration that he will not boast (*glory*) about anything except the cross of Christ.

The cross has become a symbol for, or a word representing all that Christ did to procure our redemption. We are not enamored by the wood of the cross – unlike the Catholics who preserve scraps of what they think might have been the cross on which Jesus died. Early on in their history,



Tertullian

the Roman Catholic Church fell into many and varied excesses, one of which was a veneration of what they accepted to be the cross of Christ. “The Cross to which Christ had been nailed, and on which He had died, became for Christians, quite naturally and logically, the object of a special respect and worship.”⁶⁵³ Although they claim less veneration for the cross than for God, their frequent use of the sign of the cross shows how dramatically this idolatry has infiltrated their traditions. They quote Tertullian, from the early AD 200s, as saying: “We Christians wear out our foreheads with the sign of the cross”;⁶⁵⁴ originally, the sign was made with only the right thumb upon the forehead. As with so many things within Catholic traditions, the

focus is upon the physical while the spiritual significance of what Christ accomplished upon that wooden cross has been buried under the weight of liturgy. Not unlike the Pharisees, from their very early years Catholic traditions have been fraught with minute rituals, while the much more significant truths of God played a decreasing role in their thinking (Matthew 23:23); the primary difference is that the Roman Catholic rituals generally originate in pagan idolatry.

For Paul, the *cross* was that which encompassed all that the Lord had done for us. To the Colossians Paul wrote: “And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself ...” (Colossians 1:20). Clearly, the cross shed no blood, but it became a representative word to express all that Christ did to bring about the reconciliation that was set in place before the earth was formed (Revelation 13:8). Therefore, when Paul says that he will not boast except in the cross of Christ, he is indicating that he will only boast about what Christ accomplished for us through His sacrifice and subsequent resurrection. The necessity of the resurrection is made abundantly clear in 1 Corinthians 15 where Paul declares: “And if Christ be not risen, then *is* our preaching vain, and your faith *is* also vain” (v.14). We hold no veneration for

⁶⁵¹ Vine's “forbid.”

⁶⁵² Friberg Lexicon.

⁶⁵³ <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/04529a.htm>

⁶⁵⁴ <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/04517a.htm>

the wooden instrument upon which Christ died (unlike the Roman Catholics), but there is complete glorification of the Lord Who procured salvation for all men through His death upon a cross and His subsequent resurrection from the dead.

Paul provides personal testimony of the working of the cross (symbolizing all that Christ had done) in his own life. By the cross, the world (all that stands in opposition to a holy God) is crucified unto Paul, and he to the world. “For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also *in the likeness* of his resurrection: Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with *him*, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin” (Romans 6:5-6). Paul earlier declared to the Galatians: “I am crucified with Christ” (Galatians 5:20), and he reiterates that here, but with the added thought that the world, all that remains under the control of the devil, is reckoned to be dead to him (it is *crucified*). The essence of this is that Paul will only glory in the cross of Christ by which he is freed to live a life of holiness; “being then made free from sin, ye became the servants [*doulos; slaves*] of righteousness” (Romans 6:18).⁶⁵⁵ The Lord made this principle known through Jeremiah as well: “Thus saith the LORD, Let not the wise *man* glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty *man* glory in his might, let not the rich *man* glory in his riches: But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I *am* the LORD which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these *things* I delight, saith the LORD” (Jeremiah 9:23-24).

What we must not miss from our verse is that *is crucified* is in the perfect tense, which means that it has been done once in the past, it will not be repeated, and there are continuing consequences from that past action.⁶⁵⁶ This is a reminder (although we might well miss it in our limited English language) to the Galatians (and to us) that turning our backs on the true Gospel is done at great peril to our souls (Galatians 5:4 – *ye are fallen from grace*; indicative mood, a statement of fact).⁶⁵⁷ The work of Christ on the cross can only be appropriated once! “For it is impossible [unable to be done] for those who were once enlightened [imbued with saving knowledge] ... If they shall fall away [*having fallen away*; commit apostasy⁶⁵⁸], to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame” (Hebrews 6:4, 6).⁶⁵⁹ In like manner, the world can only be crucified to us once, and we to the world (Romans 6:6). Peter understood this principle: “For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge [a precise and correct knowledge] of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ [i.e., being crucified to the world], they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning” (2 Peter 2:20); the latter end is worse because there is no longer any hope of redemption – the only means of redemption (Christ) has been spurned. The Galatians faced this reality with the lure of the Judaizers; Paul has likened the teachings of the Judaizers to the paganism that the Galatians had left behind (Galatians 4:9). They had come to faith in Christ, thereby reckoning such error to be crucified (dead to them), but they are now being swayed to accept the doctrine of these Jews, which would be to fall from the faith of Christ (Galatians 5:4). “Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God” (Hebrews 3:12).

⁶⁵⁵ Strong’s Online.

⁶⁵⁶ https://www.ntgreek.org/learn_nt_greek/verbs1.htm

⁶⁵⁷ Strong’s Online.

⁶⁵⁸ Stephanus 1550 NT; Friberg Lexicon.

⁶⁵⁹ Strong’s Online.

15. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature.

Paul now strikes at the very root of the Judaizers' heresy, and declares circumcision and uncircumcision to be equally ineffective; after all, salvation does not come through either one. "For he [Jesus Christ] is our peace, who hath made both [the Uncircumcision and the Circumcision – v. 11] one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition *between us*; Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, *even* the law of commandments *contained* in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain [the Jew and the Gentile] one new man, *so* making peace; And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby: And came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh" (Ephesians 2:14-17). In Christ there is neither circumcision nor uncircumcision; through the cross (representing Jesus' death, burial and resurrection) Christ made provision for one Body: an *ekklesia* of faithful new creatures redeemed through His sacrifice. Therefore, we are to "put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness" (Ephesians 4:24).

Another truth that we must not miss: the Judaizers, because they added circumcision to faith in Christ, were no longer in Christ. Paul declares so plainly that, in Christ, circumcision has no power (*availeth*), yet the Judaizers were insisting that it did. These Jews professed a gospel that was something other than the truth (Galatians 1:7), and Paul declares very simply that they are not in Christ. If we understand nothing else from this epistle to the Galatians but this principle, our commitment to the pure Gospel of God will then be deepened. As we identify those about us who advocate a gospel that is contrary to the Word of God (an Ecumenical message is standard fare today), or one that embraces more than faith in Christ, we must understand that they are not *in Christ Jesus*. If we grasp this principle, it should then serve to motivate us to hold fast to the truth of the Scriptures, and to avoid the ear-tickling words of the heretics (2 Timothy 4:3-4). If we are *in Christ Jesus*, then we are a new creation – "Therefore if any man *be* in Christ, *he is* a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (2 Corinthians 5:17). The phrase *are become new* speaks of the work of Christ (His death, burial and resurrection) finding its expression in us; the Greek *ginomai* (*are become*) carries the perfect tense, thereby describing a completed past action with ongoing results.⁶⁶⁰ We can only become *new* once; "For if we sin wilfully [knowingly] after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no [absolute] more sacrifice for sins ..." (Hebrews 10:26).⁶⁶¹ To the Galatians, Paul made it abundantly clear that if they succumbed to the doctrine of the Judaizers, then they *are fallen from grace* (Galatians 5:4) – a simple statement of fact. "Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee" (1 Timothy 4:16).

16. And as many as walk according to this rule, peace *be* on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God.

⁶⁶⁰ Strong's Online.

⁶⁶¹ Ibid.

You may recall that we have looked at two different Greek words translated into English as *walk*. The one (*peripateo* – *per-ee-pat-eh'-o*) refers to generally making your way through life, whereas the other (*stoicheo* – *stoy-kheh'-o*) speaks of a very specific and narrowly defined walking, like unto military formation. Paul uses the latter here. His blessing of peace and mercy rests upon those who will walk in accordance with the principle that he has just declared – namely, in Christ Jesus all are made a new creation. This is not merely someone who lays claim to an eternal inheritance (as today's Evangelicals believe), but this is a “new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness” (Ephesians 4:24). There is an inner renewal by the abiding presence of the Spirit of God (Romans 8:10-11) that results in a change in behavior (Romans 8:4 – an inner change finding expression in a life of holy living).

Paul extends his blessing of peace and mercy to *the Israel of God*. This is an interesting phrase, particularly in light of the doctrine of the Judaizers being the focus of this letter to the Galatians. The Judaizers sought to add the Jewish rite of circumcision and adherence to the Law of Moses to faith in Christ (thereby destroying the Gospel – Acts 15:5 cp. Galatians 1:6-7); now Paul extends his blessing upon *the Israel of God*. He is emphasizing the contrast between the doctrine that the Judaizers were promoting, and the truth of God. The Judaizers undoubtedly considered themselves to be God's true Israelites, yet Paul exposes them as being pagans (Galatians 4:9).

To the Romans Paul declared: “They are not all Israel, which are of Israel” (Romans 9:6b); in other words, not everyone born of Israel (physically) is of Israel (spiritually); for he goes on to speak of the necessity of being children of the promise (Romans 9:8). Isaiah recognized the reality that not everyone who was born of Israel would be saved: “For though thy people Israel be as the sand of the sea, yet a remnant of them shall return” (Isaiah 10:22; repeated and elaborated on in Romans 9:27-32a). Hosea declared the words of the Lord: “... I will say to *them which were* not my people, Thou *art* my people; and they shall say, *Thou art* my God” (Hosea 2:23). It is clear that the redemption of God would extend beyond the physical descendants of Israel. In Romans 11, Paul clarifies that, by faith, we are all grafted into the spiritual root of Israel (not the physical root!), which is Christ; this provides a context for the fulfillment of the word of the Lord through Hosea. As he concluded his very clear explanation of our unity in the faith of Christ, Paul wrote that “... blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness [completion⁶⁶²] of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved ...” (Romans 11:25b-26a). These two thoughts are linked, and it is only as we draw them together that they harmonize with the rest of Scripture (and particularly the extensive illustration that Paul has just made). Therefore, we realize that the *Israel of God* is none other than spiritual Israel, the *ekklesia* that Jesus said that He would build (Matthew 16:18), and the Body of Christ, of which we who believe are all a part (Ephesians 2:16). This is the spiritual Israel of God's design, not a pandering after the physical trappings of the Jews, as the Judaizers were doing, but faith in Christ as exemplified in the lives of Enoch, Noah and Abraham (Hebrews 11:5-8).

17. From henceforth let no man trouble me: for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus.

⁶⁶² Friberg Lexicon.

The first phrase is literally, *in the future let no one be causing troubles to me*, or henceforth let no one cause me troubles.⁶⁶³ The verb *causing* bears the imperative mood, it is a command (and in the Greek *trouble* is a noun and plural – not a verb). The word *trouble* primarily denotes a beating, an exhausting and wearisome difficulty.⁶⁶⁴ The thrust of this is that after expressing himself so completely on the matter of the heresy of the Judaizers, Paul wants to be wearied no further with this matter. He has provided a thorough exposure of the error being propagated; from this point, it is the responsibility of each one to determine for himself if he will heed Paul's warning and remain faithful to the Gospel of Christ, or if he will choose to fall for the false teaching of these Jews.

Playing off of the word *trouble* (beating), Paul says that he already bears in his body the marks, or the brands, of the Lord Jesus. Paul undoubtedly felt the urgency of imparting the Message that God had given him, and anyone who propounded a gospel contrary to the true Gospel would have been a heavy burden to him. To the Galatians he said: "I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain" (Galatians 4:11); his fear was that he had labored (to the point of exhaustion) unto them in vain.⁶⁶⁵ The word *labour* and our word *trouble* have a common root meaning in the Greek; there can be no doubt as to the intensity of Paul's ministry.

The word *bear* is the same Greek word (*bastazo*) as used in Luke 14:27: "And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple"; it means to take up and carry.⁶⁶⁶ Paul plainly states that he has endured suffering in the service of the Lord Jesus – a reminder that the cross that we are called to bear is one of suffering (Philippians 3:10) and persecution (2 Timothy 3:12). For this reason, we must count the cost of discipleship before we commit to following the Lord. "No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back [contemplating what is left behind], is fit for the kingdom of God" (Luke 9:62). After counting the cost of discipleship, we must not shrink from following the Lord, but rather walk according to the leading of the Spirit in accordance with the holy calling that we have from God (2 Timothy 1:9).

18. Brethren, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ *be* with your spirit. Amen.

The word *with* speaks of being with someone, to aid or help.⁶⁶⁷ Paul's final word to the Galatians is a prayer that the grace of the Lord Jesus would help the "spirit of you." Their attention needed to return to the Lord, Who would help them cling to the right way. The word *brethren* comes at the end of the sentence in the Greek text. Here is one final appeal to them as fellow believers; yes, they were teetering on the brink of spiritual disaster (Galatians 1:6-7), but Paul yet appeals to them as brothers in the Lord.

The word *amen* is not a Greek word but is a transliteration of the Hebrew, generally meaning may it be fulfilled.⁶⁶⁸

⁶⁶³ Stephanus 1550 NT.

⁶⁶⁴ Friberg Lexicon.

⁶⁶⁵ Strong's Online.

⁶⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁶⁷ Gingrich Lexicon.

⁶⁶⁸ Strong's Online.

Concluding Comments

Paul's letter to the Galatians is an amazing exposé of some of the doctrines of the Christian faith that have fallen into significant disrepute today. The New Evangelicalism pronounced in 1948 blazed a trail away from the narrow Gospel message of the Bible, and what Harold Ockenga proclaimed to be "new" is, unfortunately, no longer new, but commonplace. Under the light of the teachings of the Spirit of God through this letter, the reality of Ockenga's message takes on a much more significant and sinister hue for those who walk in its pathway.

The first noteworthy teaching that Paul hammers home is that the Gospel message is very narrowly defined. Jesus said: "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John 14:6). When we are prepared to recognize that Jesus is the eternal Logos, the Word (Revelation 19:13), it requires that the Word of God must be central to all that we teach and hold with great perseverance. The significance of this hits when we realize that Paul's instruction to the Galatians is that they are to reject everything that does not line up with the Scriptures. Today our world is filled with variations on the truth of God's Word; every denomination and sect has its version of the truth, yet invariably their founding document is not the Bible, but something drafted by their founder(s) emphasizing certain truths over others. Governance, in such cases, does not follow Scripture, but their carefully drafted constitutions, creeds or statements of faith. We live in a time when even the Word of God comes in numerous flavors to fit the taste of almost any sinner, or carefully outfitted with the theological musings of one's favorite "Christian" philosopher. Preachers and teachers today, for the most part, do not challenge their listeners to study the Scriptures to ensure that what they are hearing is, in fact, Biblically accurate. "Church" has become big business and that's how it is run. In Galatians we discover that ANY departure from God's Word must be rejected completely – this runs contrary to the Ecumenical minds of today!

Paul leaves no doubt as to the significance of departing from the faith, which can be something as simple as accepting a doctrine that is contrary to the Word of God. The lure for the Galatians was not into worldliness or some aberrant sect; they were simply being tempted to add the Law of Moses to their Christian faith – something that God had given to the Jews! How could something from God be dangerous? However, it becomes very evident that if they accepted this teaching, it would then be as if they were returning to their original paganism – they would be falling from the grace of God.

We might well hear much about apostasy today, but how it has been defined has become skewed due to its Ecumenical context. Apostasy is not complex – it is simply falling away. However, even the great theological minds of today think that apostates are "falling away" from something that they never believed or truly embraced. If we read this letter carefully, we will come to understand that this is not the case – the many warnings in Scripture to hold fast to the doctrine that we have received and to remain steadfast in the faith, are there for a reason. We are charged to be vigilant, and so we must be continually alert lest we fall victim to the lure of the enemy.

It is my prayer that this study will become as significant in your life as it has been in mine. We must simply permit the Spirit of God to work the truth of His Word into our hearts and minds – minds that are often filled with the standard Evangelical theologies that provide us with a latitude of life that Paul did not prescribe for the Galatians. God help us to be faithful!