

**AN OUTLINE OF THE  
EPISTLE TO THE  
GALATIANS**

**By A.E. Bouter**

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## THE EPISTLE TO THE GALATIANS

Verses 1 to 5 form the introduction, then follows in verses 6 to 10 a description of the problem. Paul's first argument is based on his own personal experiences; this is the historical or the biographical part of the epistle. Here he gives a number of arguments which then form the basis of his further teaching in the book. These important points of view are: Paul's calling and ministry was independent of human teaching, independent of the early churches in Jerusalem and in Judea, independent of the Judaizers, independent even of the pressure that Peter exerted and independent of selfish interest. These points summarize the historic and personal side of the book.

Then from chapter three we see more of the doctrine, although even here we have personal elements, for example a description of Paul's experience with the Galatians, but the emphasis is on the doctrine. Thirdly we have his exhortations connected with the practical working out of the truth. Here we see the power of the gospel as it works itself out in the life of the believer. This therefore is a very relevant book. It has been relevant since the days Paul wrote it and it will be relevant till the rapture.

### Introduction — 1:1-5

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

Paul was his Roman name as a Roman citizen. Saul (meaning ‘desire’) was his Hebrew name as a Jewish descendant of the tribe of Benjamin. We can see in Philippians 3 how he was very highly regarded among his peers in Judaism in the sect of Pharisees, but although he was ‘desired,’ like Saul the king of Israel (1 Sam.8-10), coming from the same tribe, he had to learn that he was by nature an enemy of God, so the experience he had on the way to Damascus, as he briefly describes here, made him Paul, meaning ‘little one.’ It is very striking that when he started his first missionary journey, in the years after his conversion in Acts 13, when he is used by the Holy Spirit to

present the gospel, his name is also said to be Paul. Paul, the 'little one,' not Saul 'desired,' could be used for service to God.

The title 'apostle' is here, of course, connected with the apostolic authority that he had. Paul's opponents would object saying, 'This man calls himself an apostle but he is not of the same level as the twelve from Jerusalem.' But although Paul in 1 Corinthians 15 says, "And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time. For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am" (v.8-10a), it was not an inferior apostleship that he had. His apostleship was connected with Christ ascended in the glory whereas the apostleship of the twelve was connected with the Lord on this earth. The Lord called the twelve, and although one of them, Judas Iscariot, was replaced by Matthias in Acts 1, they received their calling from the Lord when He was here on earth, and this was later confirmed by the risen Lord in John 20, whereas Paul's apostleship is connected with Christ in the glory. That is the great difference.

This does not mean that there was a conflict between them. Paul went up to see Peter and remained with him fifteen days (1:18) so he had time enough to explain to him what his calling was, and Peter had time enough to judge whether it was of God. The time was not long enough for Peter to have taught Paul a lot of things; that was not the purpose of his visit, the purpose was to get acquainted and to have confidence in each other. Peter worked later in the same area that Paul had worked and in 2 Peter 3:15 he confirmed Paul's writings to the Hebrew Christians saying, "as our beloved brother Paul also has written to you according to the wisdom given to him." So there was a very nice co-operation between the two. The Judaizers sought to drive a wedge between Paul on the one hand and Peter on the other suggesting that the twelve, being called by the Lord on this earth, were *real* apostles, whereas this self-proclaimed apostle was not really a vessel of the same order. But that is not true. The apostleship that Paul had from the exalted Lord had a very special character that comes out in his writings. He was not inferior at all.

The word 'apostle' means 'sent one.' In this sense we may apply this in a wider sense to all believers as all believers have been drawn out from this world. It is very remarkable that the Lord said this when He called Paul. The Lord said He would deliver him "from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee" (Acts 26:17). The "people" were the Jewish nation and so the Lord took him from the Jewish nation and from the

Gentiles. He was born a Roman citizen in Tarsus and he was born a Jew also, so he had double citizenship, but the Lord took him from both. Then He said, “unto whom now I send thee.” That is exactly the case with believers today in the whole Christian era. The Lord has drawn the Christians to Himself and then sent them to be His representatives in this world and in that sense we are all apostles. However, there are no apostles today with the kind of authority that these had in those days. Why can I say this? One of the criteria was that an apostle had to have seen the Lord in resurrection (Acts 1:22). We see Him today through faith, crowned with glory and honour, but we never met Him on the road to Damascus, we never met Him in Galilee, we were not there, so that kind of apostle is not around. There are people who claim to be apostles with a special authority today but these are false claims. In the very limited meaning here Paul was the only apostle of this order and we see in the New Testament that he shared the information that he had received with others. In Ephesians 3 he speaks of the eternal counsel, of what the Lord had entrusted to him, but he shared it with the others so there was not a conflict with the other apostles — simply a different emphasis.

Paul’s apostleship was “not from men,” so men were not the *source* of his apostleship; importantly, the exalted Lord was the source of his apostleship. There are a lot of Scriptures that deal with this calling and this source, Acts 9, 22, 26, Galatians generally, 1 Timothy also and 1 Corinthians 15 amongst them. Christ in the glory was the source of the calling. Neither was it conferred through a human channel. It was not through the apostles in Jerusalem that Paul became an apostle there was no human appointment or ordination, he was *called* by the Lord and he was *sent* by the Lord, not on behalf of men or through men; it was totally independent of men. We can make wrong conclusions if we are careless readers of Scripture, because later on in verse 18 Paul stated that he established fellowship with the other apostles. Immediately the enemy tried to drive a wedge between Paul and the other apostles such as in the incident in Acts 15 but the Lord came in to prevent that, so there was really fellowship between Paul and his fellow apostles.

This is emphasized in Acts 13 when the time had come that the Holy Spirit would send Paul on a missionary journey; we read in verse 2 that the church at Antioch in the northern part of Syria where he had been at least for a year was the first Gentile assembly. In Acts 11 we read of the founding of this Gentile assembly when Barnabas, being sent by the apostles from Jerusalem, came there and saw the grace of God, and then seeing a need for teaching there went out to look for Saul of Tarsus, and finding him brought him back

and they taught the assembly in Antioch for a whole year. But later in Acts 13 the time had come that the Holy Spirit said in verse 2, "As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them." This was now a new phase in God's work and in verse 3 we read "And they laid their hands on them and they sent them away." By whom was Paul sent? *By the Holy Spirit*. In the language of the Galatian Epistle we can say, "*by the Lord in the glory*." There is no conflict here, the Holy Spirit and the Lord Jesus work together. We can also say Paul was sent by God. He was *not* sent by the church, he was *not* sent by the elders, the assembly there merely identified with that call; that is why they laid their hands on them, they acknowledged that God had called Paul and Barnabas and they were in agreement with that. So here we see the fellowship that Paul and Barnabas enjoyed. They were not doing their own thing, they were doing the thing the Lord had called them for, but they did it in fellowship with the local assembly. But while this is true, that Paul's calling was not from men nor through men, it was in fellowship with all Christians and so, in short, it was "through Jesus Christ and God the Father." Paul's apostleship was connected with Jesus Christ, the Man in the glory, and with God the Father; of course, our relationship is quite similar. We have a relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ in heaven as well as with God the Father.

Then it says God the Father "raised Him from among the dead." This is an important introduction, for it immediately places the truths that Paul is going to explain on the basis of Christ's resurrection. The Judaizers, as we will find in this book, were working *this* side of the resurrection, whereas Paul was working from the other side of the resurrection, he belonged to 'the resurrection world' where the Lord Jesus is acknowledged in His glory in heaven and where God the Father is known. The Lord established this relationship; it is only on the basis of His resurrection, as other Scriptures such as 2 Timothy 1 explain in more detail, that we as Christians are on resurrection ground. The fact that we are here in assembly is on that basis, on the resurrection ground. Without the resurrection of the Lord Jesus we would have no link with each other and we would have no link with Him and with God the Father either, John 20 confirms that. The day of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, He said to Mary, "go to my brethren and say to them, I ascend to my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God" (v. 17). That is only possible on the basis of the resurrection whereas the Judaizers were and are working on this side of the resurrection, the side where the flesh is still operative. So this is a very important point to consider. Further it says, "who raised Him from *among* the dead." This is *not the* resurrection of the

dead as we have in Revelation 20 when all who die in unbelief will stand before the great white throne for the final judgment; this is rather a resurrection from *among* the dead. Philippians 3 sheds light on this. There were millions and millions of dead people at that moment, but God said, 'This is My man' and He raised Him from among the dead but leaving many more unresurrected. This is characteristic of Christianity. Christianity is based on a *risen* and an *exalted* Christ and on the coming of the Holy Spirit who indwells us.

**“... and all the brethren with me, to the assemblies of Galatia.” (1:2)**

Then Paul writes “All the brethren with me.” I mentioned this fellowship earlier; Paul was in fellowship with the brethren with him, such as Timothy. Let me digress here for a while. Where did Paul meet Timothy? Paul’s first missionary journey in Acts 13 and 14 brought him first to Cyprus and then to Antioch in Pisidia (in modern day southern Turkey) and then he went up to Galatia. This Roman province of Galatia containing the cities of Derbe, Lystra and Iconium (Acts 14:6) was where Timothy heard the gospel and when Paul came back to Galatia the second time in Acts 16 he found Timothy and he had liberty to take him with him on this second missionary journey, Silas also being with him. Paul then went a *third* time to that area and that is described in Acts 18. In verse 22, when Paul came back from his second missionary journey to Caesarea, it says, “having gone up” to Jerusalem he greeted the assembly there, then he went back to Antioch, because Antioch was the place from where he left on his missionary journey. From there he started his third missionary journey in verse 23, “Having stayed there some time, he went forth, passing in order through the country of Galatia and Phrygia establishing all the disciples.” This third missionary journey ultimately brought him to Ephesus, but again he went through Galatia. We have other references to Galatia in 2 Timothy 4, 1 Peter 1, and especially 1 Corinthians 16 where Paul explains to the Corinthians that he had given orders to the assemblies in Galatia concerning a collection for the poor saints in Jerusalem. In all there are seven references to Galatia or to the Galatians in the New Testament.

“All the brethren with me” would have included Luke who was with Paul for part of the second and third missionary journeys. He would be implied in the exercise and perhaps others as well, possibly the local assembly where he was at the moment of writing (Antioch in Syria) would also enter into that exercise. So Paul addressed “the assemblies of Galatia.” This is the only

letter in the New Testament where we see a whole area addressed, not a local assembly like Rome or Corinth, but a whole area.

**“Grace to you, and peace, from God the Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ ...” (1:3)**

This is the general greeting used by Paul, “grace and peace.” Some say “grace” was the usual salutation in Greek and “peace” its equivalent derived from the Hebrew Shalom. I do not know whether that is true, but what we know is that we need grace and peace for every day. “Grace to you” is not only that you stand on the foundation of grace, “Grace to you” means you live from moment to moment in the resources of God’s grace and the resources of grace are going to be developed in this Epistle in contrast to the resources of the flesh or the resources of the law. It is the resources of grace that will bring practical peace with God and form the foundation on which we stand (Rom.5:1), but also there is *now* peace from God the Father in view of our circumstances and exercises, but also in view of the attacks of the enemy. The people of God need those resources of grace and peace every day, every moment. How beautiful that these resources are connected with God the Father and made available to us in the context of this is the special relationship we have with our God and Father and also with the Lord Jesus as He is now in the glory. The source is one, but at the same time there is a distinction: the *family* aspect is emphasized with God the Father, whereas with the name Lord Jesus Christ the *kingdom* aspect or His authority is emphasized. There is no contradiction here, it is two different aspects: on the one hand we have a relationship with God the Father, so there is the emphasis on the family; on the other hand we are subject to the Lord Jesus, He is our Lord and so we are brought together in this submission to His lordship.

**“... who gave himself for our sins, so that he should deliver us out of the present evil world, according to the will of our God and Father ...” (1:4)**

This is the basis of everything, we are on resurrection ground, but how can we be there? It is only because of the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus, without His sacrifice we have nothing, and what a tremendous sacrifice it was! He not only paid everything that was needed to be paid — He gave Himself! Who can fathom the greatness of His sacrifice, the greatness of the price that He paid? Paul refers to this in 1 Corinthians 6, “You have been bought with a



price” (v.20). Who can calculate that price? No one can. Here we see how the Lord Jesus gave Himself for our sins, we see Him as the sin offering without which we would be eternally lost. This is a wonderful reference to the work of our Lord Jesus, the redemption that He has accomplished. And for what purpose? “So that He should deliver us out of the present evil world.”

He is the great Liberator, the great Deliverer, and this was needed in connection with God’s rights. We were in this world under the power of Satan, the power of sin, the power of the flesh and the power of this present *evil* world, that is the world system as it is under the control of the god of this age who blinds the minds of men (2 Cor.4), but we are now totally free from this system. We have no links with the world whatsoever, there is complete separation, and this is according to the will of our God and Father. This explains the challenge in Romans 12 that we should not conform ourselves to or be influenced by this world but that we should be conformed to the will of God. We have been spiritually taken out of this world and now we are sent into it to represent the Lord Jesus. These words “world” and “age” and the expression “the will of our God and Father” are worth studying in more detail.

It is wonderful to see that what the Lord accomplished was according to the will of our God and Father. Here the will of our God and Father is fully seen in the intervention in Paul’s life, how his sending and so on was according to the will of our God and Father. If there was one Christian who was in tune with the will of our God and Father it was the apostle Paul. Now the challenge for us is, ‘Am I in accordance with the will of our God and Father?’

One more comment here; often the name of the Lord Jesus as a Man is connected with God the Father. It reminds me of Abraham and Isaac. It is wonderful to see how the Father and the Son always act in accord, with one mind; they “went together.” Knowing and appreciating this fact is important for us to understand this epistle fully.

**“... to whom be glory to the ages of ages. Amen.” (1:5)**

This is the conclusion of the introduction. That God may receive glory is the ultimate objective, and also the motive, it certainly was the motive of Paul’s service. It was why he was so concerned, because he knew that if the Galatians were under the influence of these false teachers there would not be glory to God the Father. If we are under the influence of Satan’s reasoning in

the religious world then there will not be glory to God the Father. Let me emphasize that; the present evil world implies the *religious* world, the *social* world, the *economic* world, *it is the whole system that is controlled by Satan*. In the context of the letter to the Galatians, it is the religious world. We will see in chapter 6, in connection with the new creation, that we are now under a *new* rule that is not connected with the religious world but it is connected with this world of resurrection. The Galatians needed to learn that that what the religious world produces is *still* enmity against God. We also need to realize this.

### The Problem — 1:6-10

**“I wonder that ye thus quickly change, from him that called you in Christ’s grace, to a different gospel; which is not another one ...” (1:6-7a)**

From verse 6 and onward Paul presents the case. It is remarkable there is no commendation to begin with, as in other epistles. Paul nearly always commends what is acceptable in the sight of God. Paul could even find things to commend in the Corinthian assembly; indeed he makes many commendations in the beginning of 1 Corinthians although they were in a very carnal state. But that is not the way he writes here. Immediately he says, “I wonder that ye thus quickly change, from Him that called you in Christ’s grace.” Here we see early on a deviation from the truth. We do not know exactly when historically this started but these opponents had a quick entrance after Paul’s first missionary journey and it was very effective. The word “changed” here is a radical change which really means “to be moved (or ‘carried’) away.” It is a very strong word. It affects not a basic doctrine only; it affects the very relationship “from Him that called you.” I mentioned the precious relationship we have with the Lord Jesus and with our God and Father, but through the influence of these false teachers, these relationships were immediately affected, and that is why I say the result would be no glory for God the Father.

“Him that called you in Christ’s grace” refers to God. God is the One here who calls. The Lord Jesus in a touching way in John 10 called His sheep by name and He drew them out from the fold of Judaism and to Himself. Later in John 10 He told them that He would draw other sheep from elsewhere, that is the Gentiles, and together they would follow Him. This is this power of the

call. We will see more about the call in verse 15 but here we have stressed the relationship we have because of God's call. When God called Abraham there was an immediate relationship established between him and God, the God of glory (Acts 7:2). Here the enemy is at work to turn the saints in Galatia away from the enjoyment of their relationship with God. If Satan cannot make us lose our salvation (and he cannot), he will try to make us lose the enjoyment of our salvation. Do you see how subtle he is? Consequently there is no fruit for God, it least not for the time being.

"In Christ's grace" means in the *power* of Christ's grace. It is not like the King James translation, "*into* the grace of Christ," no, the call is in the *power* of the grace of Christ. Here the grace of Christ is seen over against what we will see later in Galatians, the power of the law connected with the flesh. The call is connected with God and with the grace of Christ, that is how Paul preached the full gospel as we have in Acts 20, the gospel of the grace of God through which we have been called, but here the Galatians were deviated from that call and brought under a difference influence, they were "moved away to a different gospel." The word "different" here means an altogether different kind, while the word "gospel" of course, means "good news." Paul says as it were, "Yes, you think it is the gospel, but it is not the gospel at all, it is a totally different kind of gospel, which is not another one" (not a gospel of the same kind at all). It sounds a bit complicated, but it is to show it is a counterfeit. For the Galatians the gospel had been, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you are saved," but now it was added, "you then need to be circumcised." This can be checked out in Acts 15 where that situation was again faced.

However, these false teachers added something else to the gospel saying (as it were), "You need to keep the law of Moses in order to be saved," or "You are saved, but now you need to keep the law in order to live a holy life and to be sanctified." Paul explains in this epistle to the Galatians, that whatever is done as being under the law of Moses places one under the curse of the same law. We will never be able to please God by placing ourselves under the law whether it is to be saved or whether it is to live for God, there is *no* way that you can mix law and grace together. If you have grace (and this epistle is one hundred percent grace), and mix one percent of the Mosaic law with it, you do not have anymore this pure grace that Paul defends here. Sad to say, in the history of the church, we see that this mixing has been done over and over again so that the whole has been leavened, the grace which was there has been leavened by a mixture of law and rules and regulations, and so the pure grace was gone.

What Paul presented is very simply this, “Salvation is by faith *plus nothing*.” However, the evil teachers, as we will see in this book, said “Salvation by faith, yes, but you *also* need circumcision, you *also* need to keep the law.” And then, when it comes to the Christian life, they would say, “You can live by faith and grace, yes, but you *also* need to keep the law otherwise you cannot please God.” That is how the enemy tried to turn those believers away from the true foundation.

**“... But there are some that trouble you, and desire to pervert the glad tidings of the Christ.” (1:7b)**

These opponents presented a different gospel which in fact was not a gospel at all. The believers in Galatia thought it was a gospel of the same value as Paul had presented to them, but Paul’s gospel was clearly different. Many passages in Romans explain the gospel but let me quote 1 Corinthians 15 where Paul summarizes the gospel he preached, “Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; by which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the Scriptures: and that he was seen.....” (vv.1-5a). *That* is Paul’s gospel. He calls it “*my* gospel” (Rom.2:16; 2 Tim.1:8), he identified with it. That would be another topic to study in detail. The best way to study such a topic is to take a concordance and list all the different expressions, “the gospel of God” (Rom.1:1), “the gospel of [God’s] Son” (Rom.1:9), “the gospel of Christ” (Rom.1:16), “the gospel of peace” (Rom.10:15), a wonderful expression, “the gospel of the uncircumcision” (Gal.2:7), because mainly Gentiles have accepted this gospel, “the gospel of your salvation” (Eph.1:13), “the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ” (2 Thes.1:8), “the glorious gospel of the blessed God” (1 Tim.1:11) and “the gospel of the grace of God” (Acts 20:24). Paul’s ministry was connected with the “mystery of the gospel” (Eph.6:19) where we see Christ in the glory connected with the believers on this earth as members of His body. Paul speaks about “the fellowship in the gospel” (Phil.1:5), “the truth of the gospel” (Gal.2:5) and “the defence of the gospel” (Phil.1:17). We will see in this book many aspects of how Paul defended the precious truth of the gospel.

Let me mention four points in this connection. Firstly the gospel, the glad tidings, are connected with the Christ, the anointed One, and this speaks of a new order of things that has nothing to do with the law system which was given to man in the flesh. The second aspect is seen in verses 11 and 12. It is not according to man but it is by divine revelation. The third aspect of the gospel is in verse 16 where we see the gospel *is a Person*, a Person who is presented to the nations. Finally, in verse 23 we see another aspect of the gospel, it is the gospel *of the faith*; it is connected with the faith not the law system. To summarize, it is of the Christ, the anointed One, a new order; it is given by divine revelation; it is a Person, it presents a Person and it links us with a Person and so there is a relationship with Christ, with the Son of God and it is a faith system over against the law. We will see later in this book the tremendous contrast between the law and the works of the law, and faith and the works of faith.

**“But if even we or an angel out of heaven announce as glad tidings to you anything besides what we have announced as glad tidings to you, let him be accursed.” (1:8)**

This is very strong language. The word “accursed” means “to be under a curse so one cannot be touched.” There is an illustration of this in the book of Joshua when Jericho was going to be destroyed by God, Joshua made it very clear that the people could not take anything from Jericho, because Jericho was under God’s curse but Achan “took of the accursed thing,” “goodly Babylonish garment, and two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold of fifty shekels weight” for himself (Josh.7:1, 21) and so brought the curse upon the whole people and for doing this he was stoned to death. This word “accursed” means you are under God’s curse and you are untouchable, you are under God’s judgment.

There are today people like the Mormons who believe in the Bible but they believe also in the Book of Mormon which was allegedly given by an angel to Joseph Smith. They are an example of this. Such false teachings touch the very foundation of the Christian faith; otherwise Paul would not use such strong language. Paul even saw the possibility that he himself could fall back into Judaism and present something other than the pure gospel to the Galatians, if that were so he says, “I would be a curse.”

**“As we have said before, now also again I say, If any one announce to you as glad tidings anything besides what ye have received, let him be accursed ...” (1:9)**

We read in Acts 14, when Paul was on the way back to Antioch at the end of his first missionary journey, that he went through the assemblies he had formed to strengthen them and even then maybe he already sensed the danger, and so he wrote here, “As we have said before” (in v.8). He was eager to visit the brethren again on his second missionary journey “and to see how they do” (Acts 15:36). Perhaps already at the end of the first missionary journey he had warned them of this danger. We see in 1 Corinthians 15 what the gospel is, and Romans also gives many key verses about the gospel, you can look them up yourself. If something else is presented by anyone, “let him be accursed.” Why?

**“... for do I now seek to satisfy men or God? or do I seek to please men?” (1:10a)**

Those who taught another gospel were out to satisfy men. In chapter 2 we will see more about them in connection with Acts 15 where the Pharisees were very prominent. It is not clear whether these were Jewish Christians who were under the influence of this teaching, whether they were the Pharisees, or whether they were the Jews in general, it does not really matter. Possibly they were the Jews eager to have Gentile Christians circumcised because all the religions that existed at that moment were accepted but a new religion would not be accepted in the Roman Empire, and so long as Christianity was seen as part of Judaism there was no problem.

However, Paul presented something entirely new and so the risk would be for the Jews in general that they would be under scrutiny from Rome concerning this new religion, so they might have been very eager to impose circumcision on all those believers so that they would not have this threat coming from Rome that their religion would be examined. Maybe this was the general motive for these opponents to get everybody who claimed to be a Christian circumcised so that they would be seen as Jews.

**“If I were yet pleasing men, I were not Christ’s bondman.” (1:10b)**

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If Paul had sought to please men, for whatever reason, political, religious or some other reason, he would not have been “Christ’s bondman.” Paul was a bondman of Jesus Christ, he was an apostle but at the same time he was a bondservant, he did not hide that. Paul is in many ways an example for us, he said, “Be my followers as I am of Christ Jesus” (1 Cor.11:1). Christ is the prime example, the true bondman and we follow Him; Paul also was a bondman and we try to follow him as well. Christ is our model in perfection and Paul is the model Christian, the model follower.

## I. THE BIOGRAPHICAL ARGUMENT: AN INDEPENDENT REVELATION — 1:11-2:21

### A. Independent of Human Teaching — 1:11-17

**“But I let you know, brethren, as to the glad tidings which were announced by me, that they are not according to man.” (1:11)**

This could be translated literally, “the evangel that was evangelized by me.” There is a close connection between ‘glad tidings’ and the word ‘announced.’ The gospel is not from man, not through man, but now Paul adds, *not even according to man*, it is not according to man’s thinking, it is not according to man’s standards, it is not according to man’s desires, it is not according to man, period. This is a tremendous challenge also for us to consider. How many of us do certain things because people like it or because it is according to man’s thinking? I repeat what I said earlier, Paul was in fellowship with the brethren, and we need to be in fellowship with each other under the Lordship of Christ, but when it comes to things that people want to introduce because they want to please men then they cannot be tolerated because there is then a conflict with the Lord’s rights and I am not then a bondman of Christ if I go along with that. This shows just how relevant this book is for our day. We can easily fall if we follow man’s thinking, desiring to please man. Paul did not want to do that.

**“For neither did I receive them from man, neither was I taught them, but by revelation of Jesus Christ.” (1:12)**

That is why I said earlier, in verse 18, when Paul visited Peter, that it was not long enough for Peter to have taught everything to Paul. Paul was taught those three years in Arabia (verse 17) by the Spirit of God, and, he says now, “by revelation of Jesus Christ.” This is the revelation of the Person; Jesus Christ was revealed to him.



**“For ye have heard what was my conversation formerly in Judaism, that I excessively persecuted the assembly of God, and ravaged it and advanced in Judaism beyond many my contemporaries in my nation, being exceedingly zealous of the doctrines of my fathers.” (1:13-14)**

This is seen in Paul’s history in the book of Acts, from chapter 8 on. Paul voted for Stephen’s death and when the Lord spoke to him He said, “Why do you push your feet against the pricks?” which is an indication that Paul’s conscience bothered him. Paul saw something in Stephen when he was stoned to death that never left him, his conscience was touched by that but he went on in the persecution, he went on in Judaism nevertheless. He had a place as a trailblazer in rabbinic Judaism (he advanced in it) and so he excessively persecuted the church. Let me just state the passages that you could read to see this: Acts 8, 9, 22, 24 and 26, 1 Corinthians 15, 1 Timothy 1 and also Philippians 3. There we have glimpses of what Paul had done and how the Lord came into his life. But he had a very dominant place in Judaism, he was taught at the feet of Gamaliel, a well respected teacher (Acts 5:34) and then he was probably in Tarsus for a while at the university there before coming back to Jerusalem, the Lord being already glorified in heaven, and he persecuted the Christians there. Judaism at that time was not what God had given through Moses or restored through Ezra; here Judaism was what man had made from what God had given originally. The scribes, a few generations after Ezra, introduced a lot of human reasoning to protect the law, to ensure that the Jews would not transgress it anymore as they had done before the Babylonian captivity. But later this reasoning was put on the same level as the law and gradually even placed above it (they came up with the idea that the “oral law,” meaning their interpretations and traditions, had been given by God to Moses the same time He gave him the written law, and that the ‘oral law’ had been memorized from generation to generation, but now — still according to these scribes — the time had come to put it in writing).

So when the Lord came on earth, His problem was not with the law God had given; He was a perfect Jew, He lived His life according to the law God had given through Moses. He said, “Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil” (Matt.5:17). He was a law-keeping Jew, the only One who ever kept the law. His conflict was with the Jews’ interpretations of the law and man-made traditions as recorded in the Mishna, the Talmud, and in other rabbinical writings. The conflict the Lord had was with rabbinic Judaism, not with the Law of Moses with which He was always in disagreement. Before his conversion, Paul was promoting

rabbinic Judaism and was therefore, by definition, in conflict with the Lord, as he was “exceedingly zealous of the doctrines of my fathers.”

**“But when God, who set me apart even from my mother’s womb, and called me by his grace was pleased to reveal his Son in me, that I may announce Him as glad tidings among the nations ...” (1:15-16a)**

I would like to give from these verses seven points in connection with God and then from verse 17 to the end of the chapter seven points in connection with Paul. Firstly, there is God’s *good pleasure*. It was His good pleasure to call Paul and this is the same for us. It was God’s good pleasure, according to His grace, that called us. In this we see also God’s sovereign grace; the pleasure of God is really God’s sovereignty.

Secondly, we see God’s providence. God had set Paul apart even from his mother’s womb, he was separated *for* God and ultimately that implied that he would be separated *from* Christ-rejecting Judaism one day — that happened when he was called by the Lord in the glory — and further, he was separated for service later on in Acts 13. This setting apart continues today according to God’s providence. God is in control in our lives and He provides.

The third element is God’s *call*. This would be a subject in itself. It is a wonderful subject. Think of the call of Abraham or of Paul on the road to Damascus in Acts 9. The calling of any man is a wonderful intervention on the part of God. There was a relationship between Paul, the one who was called, and God, the One who had called him. The Lord Jesus was the wonderful bond. That is the case with us also (Romans 8).

Then there is God’s *grace*. This is the fourth point. This is developed later in the Epistle. God’s call is not on the basis of law; it is by His sovereign grace. This is a central theme of Galatians. Seven times over we have mention of grace in this epistle. There cannot be any mixture of law and grace. Paul, who was liberated from that religious system, is the one who defends now this system of God’s grace. In the course of the book we will see seven tremendous contrasts. Here we have the first of them, the contrast between grace and law.

The fifth point is God’s *revelation*. This has already been seen in chapter 1:12, this divine revelation concerning the Person of Jesus Christ was a work of God that took place *in Paul*. This is why I have stressed the relationship

that is created between the Caller and the called one. It was not only that God presented Christ to Paul, but He was revealed in him. When the Lord appeared to him on the road to Damascus, He produced something in Saul; there was a work of God in his soul. Again, we can draw a parallel with us, God in His sovereign grace has worked in us so that Christ dwells in us; He has revealed Him in us also. Paul really is a pattern saint for the believers in this respect (1 Tim.1:16).

The sixth point is God's *Son*. There is great emphasis on the Person of the Son throughout Paul's ministry. His preaching from the very start of His service for God was the preaching of Jesus Christ, that He is the Son of God (Acts 9:20). This is characteristic of Paul's ministry. In Romans 16:25 he speaks of, "the preaching of Jesus Christ," not the preaching of the gospel, although this is also true, but Paul presented *a Person* as glad tidings, as good news.

The seventh point is that Paul became God's *channel*, "that I may announce Him as glad tidings *among the nations*." This is the emphasis. This was Paul's ministry, to be a vessel among the nations. He was taken out of Judaism and then the Lord sent him to the Gentiles. We are also God's instruments right now in this wicked world. Of course no one now can claim to be an instrument in the sense that Paul was as a called apostle but there is a parallel, we too are to present the Person of Jesus Christ as good news among the nations.

### **"... immediately I took not counsel with flesh and blood ..." (1:16b)**

Now in these verses to the end of the chapter we have seven points in connection with Paul. The first point is that Paul, after this divine call and commission, did not counsel with flesh and blood. This is something that also happened to Peter. When Peter said, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God," the Lord said to him that the Father had revealed this to him — not flesh and blood (Matt.16:17). This is something similar. This call and commission is an order of things that is out of reach of the flesh, it can have nothing to do with it. This does not mean that Paul would not have fellowship with the other apostles; we see later that he did, but that he did not reason with flesh and blood. That order of things has nothing to do with this new order connected with Christ in the glory.

**“... nor went I up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me; but I went to Arabia, and again returned to Damascus.” (1:17)**

Paul did not immediately go up to Jerusalem, the religious centre, the centre of Judaism; nor to the assembly which was there, although he went there later. The point is that he did not get his orders from there: Jerusalem was not the headquarters of the assembly; rather it was the Lord in the glory, for He was in charge. So Paul went into Arabia as led of God. Why? It was God's school (this is the third point). God took him aside to teach and train Paul. This is an important rule in God's ways. He trains His servants, especially in the beginning, but the training continues (2 Cor. 12:9). This is not very pleasant for the flesh but vitally important.

## **B. Independent of Judean Churches — 1:18-24**

**“Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to make acquaintance with Peter, and I remained with him fifteen days ...” (1:18)**

The fourth point is that after three years Paul went up to Jerusalem. The time had come for him to go there. He had been formed by God and God felt it was the right time that he should go to Jerusalem to visit Cephas (the Aramaic name for Peter). Why did Paul feel the need to visit Peter? Peter had opened the door for the Gentiles (Acts 10) the Lord had used him, but now Paul was in preparation as the vessel to be used by the Lord extensively among the Gentiles and so there needed to be this communication. Paul went to see Cephas to explain to him what had happened to him. We find more details of Paul's conversion in Acts 9.

When Paul came back to Jerusalem, about three years after his conversion, Barnabas introduced him to the believers, but what is mentioned here is important in connection with Paul's ministry. He was going to work among the Gentiles and so he needed to be in touch with the one whom God had used to open the door for the Gentiles. It was not that Paul needed a crash course from Peter to tell him what to do, not at all, it was to have fellowship with him, and so that Peter could discern whether Paul's mission, the things that he wanted to do, was correct or not. Peter would have time enough to correct him in the fifteen days Paul was in Jerusalem, if that would have been

needed, but it was not long enough to train him for this mission. God had trained him during those three years in Arabia. This is an important point.

**“... but I saw none other of the apostles, but James the brother of the Lord.” (1:19)**

Paul did not see the other apostles but he saw Peter and then James, who is also seen as an apostle in this sense. This is important and we will see more about this in chapter 2 in connection with the council at Jerusalem as recorded in Acts 15. Seeing none of the other apostles except James proves that he was not sent by the ‘board of apostles’ to Syria. It is very clear that that was not the case. He only saw Peter and James, who was then also considered an apostle (but in James’ case, he was apostle of a different order, sometimes called ‘second class,’ which means apostles who, like James, had seen the risen Lord, or even the glorified and exalted Lord, as Paul did (Acts 9), but who had not been with Him from John the Baptist all through His ministry till His death and resurrection).

**“Now what I write to you, behold, before God, I do not lie.” (1:20)**

This is a little parenthesis. Why does Paul say this? There had been false teachers among the Galatians and their only way to attack Paul was for them to question his apostleship, they questioned whether Paul was a real apostle. That is why Paul emphasized so much his divine call, “an apostle not from man, nor through man” (1:1) and this is why he gave so many historic details, so that they would understand what God had done and what had happened to him.

**“Then I came into the regions of Syria and Cilicia.” (1:21)**

This is the sixth point. Paul went into the regions of Syria. The brethren sent him away to Caesarea (Acts 9:30) and then he went to Cilicia. We do not know anything about these areas from the book of Acts except that Paul went through them on his journey. So before Barnabas went out to call him in Acts 11 Paul had worked there from Acts 9 to the end of Acts 11, although we do not know exactly how much time that was, and probably assemblies had been formed because we have references to assemblies there, for example, in Acts 15:23, we read, “And they wrote letters by them after this manner; The

apostles and elders and brethren send greeting unto the brethren which are of the Gentiles in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia.” So Paul worked in Cilicia, and there were assemblies formed.

**“But I was unknown personally to the assemblies of Judea which are in Christ; only they were hearing that he who persecuted us formerly now announces the glad tidings of the faith which formerly he ravaged ...” (1:23)**

Paul was now working in Cilicia, in the region of Syria, and the report came back to Judea that the one who was persecuting in past times was now preaching the faith which he once sought to destroy. Where was he doing that, in Judea? No, he was doing that in Syria and Cilicia and when Barnabas went out to find him (Acts 11) he left that field of service and went to Antioch and from there he started his first so-called missionary journey, in Acts 13.

**“... and they glorified God in me.” (1:24)**

This is beautiful. Here we see how Paul was now a vessel of praise. That is the last part of this seventh point, now Paul was an instrument of God, and as the instrument he was now a vessel of praise.

### **C. Independent of the Judaizers — 2:1-10**

Paul’s teaching was independent of human teaching (1:11-17) and independent of the Judean churches (1:18-24) but I want to add, independent also of the other apostles, that is, he was in fellowship with them but he was not sent by them. They recognized the work that he had done in Cilicia and they glorified God in him so there was a form of fellowship, but the point he was making was that he had not been sent by the Judean churches to go to Cilicia.

Now in chapter 2 his ministry is shown to be independent of the Judaizers (2:1-10). If you want to write a key phrase it is, *Christian liberty*. Further, we will see that it was independent of apostolic pressure (2:11-18). Paul was

loyal to his mission even though people exerted tremendous pressure on him to change. Finally, the last point, he was independent of selfish interests (2:19-21). It is here we will see the life of Christ. This last section is already a transition to the doctrinal part of the epistle. Although chapters 1 and 2 are the historical portion, reviewing Paul's history, by the end of chapter 2 he has already started to go into the doctrinal part which is filled out in chapters 3 and 4.

**“Then after a lapse of fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus also with me ...” (2:1)**

We do not know from which point these fourteen years are to be counted, from his calling or from the time he went up to Jerusalem with Barnabas. There are all kinds of theories but let us just keep it very simple. At the end of Acts 14 we see that Paul and Barnabas had come back from the missionary journey, had given a report to the meeting in Antioch, and they stayed there for a while. Then “certain men which came down from Judea taught the brethren, and said, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved” (15:1). Here we have this challenge of the Judaizing teachers. They did not say, ‘You are Christians, and that is okay, but now you *also* need to be circumcised, you need to keep the law in order to live a holy life for God.’ No, they said, ‘Except ye be circumcised, *ye cannot be saved.*’ The first view is more subtle but very dangerous. It is an attack of the enemy to corrupt this new testimony of God's grace. The gospel is one hundred percent grace and to put one percent law in it, as these enemies did, is to corrupt it. That is why Paul was so alert and so sharp in this matter because the enemy was there to starve the work of God. Today this can happen in many different forms, for example, people who say, ‘I have been baptized so I am saved.’ We have this kind of teaching here.

Paul takes up this challenge. Why did they act thus? Because the problem came from Jerusalem and so they wanted to have the problem solved there. If they had not done this the possibility would be that two different fellowships would have been formed. A number of brethren (including Titus) went with Paul up to Jerusalem. In this we see God's wisdom in the problem being solved in Jerusalem. Unity could then be kept. This explains the seriousness of Peter's failure as recorded in Galatians 2, perhaps even after this special Jerusalem meeting (but this is not certain, it could have been before). We are never too strong not to fail. We may know the truth very well but that does

not mean that we will always be faithful to the truth. We can learn from Paul's example.

**“...and I went up according to revelation, and I laid before them the glad tidings which I preach among the nations, but privately to those conspicuous among them, lest in any way I run or had run in vain ...” (2:2)**

How does this verse relate to Acts 15:2? “I went up by revelation”? There is no conflict. We have seen how important it was that Paul was not sent by men, that is why in Galatians 2 he made this point that even when he went up to Jerusalem he went by divine revelation. There is no conflict with Acts 15:2, it is simply God's confirmation of the decision of the brethren in Antioch, “And being brought on their way by the church, they passed through Phoenicia and Samaria, declaring the conversion of the Gentiles: and they caused great joy unto all the brethren” (Acts 15:3). They were full of joy to hear the report of their missionary journeys and perhaps also Paul's earlier work in Cilicia. Then, “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 notice what happened in verse 5, “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 to consider of this matter.” Then we have the details of what happened, and how finally after much discussion the conclusion was reached under the leadership of the Holy Spirit. It is wonderful to see this. This is the background to Galatians 2. Paul first had a private counsel with Peter and John and James to make sure that they understood each other so that there was not a difference of opinion. He had this private counsel with those who were of reputation, for he said, “Lest by any means I should run, or had run, in vain.” Paul realized that if this challenge of the enemy was not countered, his mission would be in vain, and so he was very wise, first he had a private counsel, and then later a public counsel.

**“... (but neither was Titus, who was with me, being a Greek, compelled to be circumcised;) ...” (2:3)**



Titus was a Gentile believer. He had *not* been circumcised and he was *not* compelled to be circumcised. His being with Paul and Barnabas in Jerusalem was again the wisdom of God. So here we have an object lesson. Titus was a living demonstration of the liberty of the gospel of grace for both Jew and Gentile believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. That is why it was so important. If Titus had been compelled to be circumcised it would have implied that Paul's ministry had been in vain. But this decision in Jerusalem was a demonstration that the leaders agreed with Paul's teaching; that they supported it. This was very important. Titus was the living demonstration of this agreement. The matter of Titus not being circumcised was not in conflict with what Paul did with Timothy in Acts 16:3. Timothy was half Jewish, his mother being a Jewess but his father a Gentile; and so Timothy was circumcised for a different reason, to have freely access to Jewish circles, to preach to them. So Timothy represents a different category than Titus; this was not a compromise either. Paul never compromised, as far as we know, although some of his actions may have given an appearance of compromise.

**“... and it was on account of the false brethren brought in surreptitiously, who came in surreptitiously to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage ...” (2:4)**

We have seen in Acts 15 there were believers who used to belong to the sect of the Pharisees but this verse goes a step further. The enemy had sent into that public gathering false brethren, spies, to spy out the liberty of the brethren. The liberty they had in Christ Jesus was at stake. The enemy used these spies, these false brethren (not believers) to examine the territory preparing to return later with a greater attack, that was their purpose, but they were foiled by God and by the believers because the brethren stood firm on this point. We will see more later in this epistle about this contrast of bondage and liberty and why this liberty is so crucial.

**“... to whom we yielded in subjection not even for an hour, that the truth of the glad tidings might remain with you.” (2:5)**

Being in this public counsel, or consultation, they were all together now. There was not one who yielded to this threat or to this temptation of the enemy. Why? What was at stake? “That *the truth of the glad tidings* might remain with you.” I want to add here, Paul *preached* the gospel. We see the historical account of this throughout the book of Acts, he was an instrument

in God's hands to convey the gospel. In Romans 1 to 8 we find a *doctrinal* exposition of the gospel. Now here in Galatians we have the *defence* of the truth of the gospel. The truth of the glad tidings is the issue in chapter 2 (e.g. v.14). It was challenged by the enemy who were believers from the Pharisees, Judaizers, but we see here that they were joined *by unbelievers*. The Pharisees wanted to keep the Christians as a Jewish sect and that is why they sent these spies in, they wanted to control this group. We do not know the exact reasons for this. Perhaps it was because of the Roman law which said that there should not be any new religions and so if the Christians, who were at this time mainly Jews, were seen as a new religion there would be conflict with the Roman empire and probably they wanted to avoid that. However, we cannot be sure but what *is* sure is that the enemy wanted to bring the brethren into bondage.

**“But from those who were conspicuous as being somewhat — whatsoever they were, it makes no difference to me: God does not accept man's person; for to me those who were conspicuous communicated nothing ...” (2:6)**

God does not accept man's person and so Paul did not do this either. This is similar to what we read in 2 Corinthians 5:16, “So that we henceforth know no one according to flesh; but if even we have known Christ according to flesh, yet now we know him thus no longer.” Paul represented this new order of things that God had introduced on the basis of resurrection. This is the basis on which we stand and this has nothing to do with what is of the flesh. That is why Paul even went so far as to say, ‘Even if we had known Christ according to the flesh, we do not know Him that way any more, because we know Him now in the glory, crowned with glory and honour, and we serve Him as such, not as the One who was subject to the law.’ The Lord Jesus Himself was perfectly subject to the law, He fulfilled the law, and now that law was being set aside. We will see this later in this chapter also and further on in this book. The Mosaic law has no claim on us any more. That is why we see Christ now *as in the glory* although we can, of course, learn from Him in His path here on earth. He is the model for us.

**“... but, on the contrary, seeing that the glad tidings of the uncircumcision were confided to me, even as to Peter that of the circumcision ...” (2:7)**

Does this mean there are two different gospels? No, there is one gospel but the administration, or the mission of it, was given to two different persons — to Paul to go to the Gentiles, and to Peter in connection with the Jewish work. So it is not that there are two different gospels, but it is two different missions that are confirmed here and they are in agreement with each other. They are not in conflict with each other.

**“...(for he that wrought in Peter for the apostleship of the circumcision wrought also in me towards the Gentiles,) ...” (2:8)**

This proves the point that I just made. There was unity. Why was this unity there? Because the One who worked in Peter was the same One who was working in Paul. That is where the unity came from. It was not a man-made unity, it was a divine unity, and they were subject to it. This is the wonderful example we see here. They were subject to God’s thoughts. The work of God *in* the believer, based on God’s work *for* him (through Christ); then the work of God *with* the believer, are wonderful themes to consider in detail, but we cannot do that now.

**“... and recognizing the grace given to me, James and Cephas and John, who were conspicuous as being pillars, gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship, that we should go to the nations, and they to the circumcision ...” (2:9)**

James and Cephas and John recognized Paul’s apostleship, Paul’s calling, and this is called “grace” here. It is another beautiful touch. This is the first and also the last time in Paul’s writings that we have reference to the apostle John. He now joins them. This is another proof of the unity that was there, Peter, James, John and Paul were all united. How beautiful this is! Sometimes when we read James’ Epistle we think, ‘This is in conflict with Paul’s writings. It does not make sense.’ Martin Luther, the Reformer, had great difficulty in accepting James’ Epistle but there is no conflict, rather it is a different approach. They are in perfect harmony under God’s control.

Here they gave to Paul and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship. Paul was not dependent upon man, his call was not from man but it did not mean that he was totally indifferent to fellowship. Here we see he had fellowship but it was in line with the thought of God and we should seek this also, Paul always sought it. This act was the expression of fellowship. It reminds us of Acts 13

when Paul and Barnabas went out on their first missionary journey and the elders laid hands upon them. This is also a form of fellowship. The laying on of hands has with it all kinds of connotations in the thoughts and teachings of man today but in Scripture it is just the expression of fellowship. This is what they expressed, and it is beautiful to see the harmony, the unity, and how they were interdependent upon each other. This is good to see. Although Paul maintained very clearly that the calling was from the Lord in the glory, there was no conflict there, and so they recognized these two different missions but they had one point to add.

**“... only that we should remember the poor, which same thing also I was diligent to do.” (2:10)**

If we just remind ourselves of the fact that the Lord Jesus became poor; how would that affect us, to think of the poor? The Lord became poor so that we who were poor might become rich. Paul did much to accomplish this promise. In Romans 15, after the third missionary journey, Paul stated his determination to go to Jerusalem with a collection for the poor saints. How much effort he put in among the mainly Gentile assemblies collecting money to help the poor in Jerusalem! There were thousands of believers in Jerusalem, often fiercely persecuted, and so they were in very difficult conditions, so there was a great financial need (partly also because of their early practice of selling and distributing all they had), and Paul was really committed to help. This desire is expressed in many of the epistles that he wrote, for instance 1 Corinthians 16, 2 Corinthians 8 and 9 and Romans 15.

#### **D. The Revelation: Independent of Apostolic Pressure — 2:11-18**

**“But when Peter came to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be condemned ...” (2:11)**

Now we come to the second part of this chapter. It starts with “*But*” and that is not so good. The other contacts with Peter were good, firstly, in chapter 1 following his three years in Arabia and Damascus, and then during Paul’s second visit to Jerusalem (perhaps coinciding with Paul’s and Silas’ visit to bring financial support from Antioch, Acts 11:30), but now he had the third

recorded contact with Peter, and this was not good. Peter had come to Antioch and Paul writes, “I withstood him to the face, because he was to be condemned.” It is difficult to do this to a beloved brother but it is good to see that Peter accepted this rebuke, because later in 2 Peter 3:15 he wrote, “As our beloved brother Paul also has written to you according to the wisdom given to him.” I do not know whether he accepted it right away but we do know that ultimately he did accept it. This must have been very difficult for Paul and that is why I use the word *loyalty*. Paul was independent of the efforts of the flesh because obviously this was the flesh in Peter. We have seen the enemy’s efforts to take away their liberty; now we come to this deviation: Peter, the apostle who had opened the door to the Gentiles, prominent among the apostles in many ways had to be withstood by Paul. How difficult this must have been for Paul, but he did it, because he was *loyal* to the calling that he had received, to the mission God had given him.

**“... for before that certain came from James, he ate with those of the nations; but when they came, he drew back and separated himself, fearing those of the circumcision ...” (2:12)**

We can apply this to many different situations. We may do certain things because of pressure but this is always wrong. Let us ask ourselves, “Can this happen to me that in a similar situation I would act like Peter would?” This can happen even after much instruction. Even after Peter was shown the vision by the Lord in Acts 10, after he had been taught by the Lord Himself that what God had sanctified he should not declare unholy, after his preaching in the house of Cornelius and after the consultation that we have seen earlier in the chapter (perhaps even after the meeting they had in Acts 15, but this probably took place later), he failed in this respect. Can such a well taught man fail regarding this truth? Yes, that can happen. It can happen to the best one and so it can certainly happen to me and to you. This does not only apply to the matter of circumcision or uncircumcision, it may be applied to many other things, that we are able to deviate and follow fleshly pressure, whatever it may be.

**“... and the rest of the Jews also played the same dissembling part with him; so that even Barnabas was carried away too by their dissimulation. But when I saw that they do not walk straightforwardly, according to the truth of the glad tidings, I said to Peter before all ...” (2:13-14a)**

This was hypocrisy and I want to give you a few points about it. This walk was not “straightforward,” they were not going in a straight path. We need to walk straight. Peter was deviating, he made a detour. Sometimes we have to make a detour because the road is blocked but this kind of detour was not allowed because this was a compromise of the truth of the gospel. This great truth and the unity of the company was at stake, but, by the grace of God, the truth and the unity was preserved by Paul’s actions. So this public rebuke was very critical. Why was it public? This mistake had taken place in public and so it needed to be corrected in public and because the man who had made it was a leader. If he had given a wrong direction publicly, it needed to be addressed publicly. This is the point.

**“... If thou, being a Jew, livest as the nations and not as the Jews, how dost thou compel the nations to Judaize?” (2:14b)**

Now Paul gives the reason for this rebuke. He asked Peter, “How dost thou compel the nations to Judaize?” This is his first question. Let me read one very beautiful verse, “Be it known unto you, therefore, men and brethren, that through this man [the Lord Jesus in the glory] is preached unto you the forgiveness of sin, 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). This is very clear language. Peter knew this and here it was confirmed by Paul. This will be worked out doctrinally later in chapters 3 and 4.

**“We, Jews by nature, and not sinners of the nations but knowing that a man is not justified on the principle of works of law nor but by the faith of Jesus Christ, we also have believed on Christ Jesus, that we might be justified on the principle of the faith of Christ; and not of works of law; because on the principle of works of law no flesh shall be justified. Now if in seeking to be justified in Christ we also have been found sinners, then is Christ minister of sin? Far be the thought.” (2:15-17)**

This argument leads to a second question. If we, from having been justified through faith in Christ, go back to the law, Paul says, what are we doing then? Are we not making Christ a minister of sin? This is a difficult portion to understand but what Paul is pointing out here is that if we have declared that we are justified outside the works of the law and then go back to the works of the law, in whatever form it may be, we are then, in practice, making Christ a minister of sin, for we are then declaring that what Christ has

done is not sufficient or even wrong, because we are going back to the law. This is the point Paul is making in this rhetorical question. But then he says, "Far be the thought, this cannot be, it is impossible."

**"For if the things I have thrown down, these I build again, I constitute myself a transgressor." (2:18)**

By believing and being justified by faith in Jesus Christ we set aside the law, it has no impact anymore, but if we intend to follow the law of Moses then we become once again a transgressor.

Then, verses 19 to the end of chapter 2 deal with the life of Christ in the believer. I want now to briefly mention some points in connection with Peter's hypocrisy to see how this was affecting others. First, Peter was leading astray, as he led some who followed him into hypocrisy, even Barnabas was carried away into this (v.13). Second, his *actions* taught that there was a distinction between Jewish and Gentile believers, but there were not two different missions. Thirdly, Peter sent a message to the Christians that Jewish believers must keep the law. This was a wrong message. Fourthly, Peter's conduct destroyed the unity because as a result he and Paul would become separated. The fifth point is that his compromise was an example that even gifted servants, despite the authority they have, can go astray. Peter had great authority, he was a greatly gifted man of God but he still went astray. Sixthly, the faithfulness in doctrine must also be seen in practical things. Someone might say, 'Yes, I am okay in the doctrine,' but the walk is significant, for it shows what you believe: the two go together, they cannot be separated. Doctrine cannot be separated from practice. Today men speak of 'situation ethics' meaning you adapt the standards to the situation, and that was what Peter was doing under pressure, but it is not God's way. Paul said, 'You cannot do that.' The standard is given to us and we are to keep it, there is to be no compromise. If you open a door for compromise, you open a door for heresy. That was really what was at stake, and that was why Paul confronted Peter about these things.

## **E. The Revelation: Independent of Selfish Interest — 2:19-21**

**“For I, through law, have died to law, that I may live to God.” (2:19)**

But to return to the last part of the chapter, we have then “the life” and this shows that Paul was acting independently of selfish interests, he was motivated by Christ. There are many passages in the Scriptures, for example Romans 6 and 7 or 2 Corinthians 3 where we find that the law is really the administration of death and condemnation, it leads to death because no one can keep it; therefore Christ died in our stead, ‘But,’ says Paul, ‘And now, being dead to the law, I live for God. The law has no jurisdiction over me any more, I am dead to it’ whereas Peter allowed the law to have jurisdiction over him. The law has been fulfilled in Christ, He came to fulfill it and He did. But we are not brought back under the law of Moses, we are now to live to God, while the law has no jurisdiction over us anymore. If someone is a criminal and is going to be put on trial tomorrow but he dies tonight the authorities cannot do anything, death terminates this whole situation. So we have died through the law because the demands of the law were maintained, Christ taking the consequences in our stead when He died, the law was fulfilled in His death, that means the law has no jurisdiction over us any more. “That I may live to God” is now the outcome. This is the wonderful truth, and this goes together with the liberty and the loyalty that we have seen, the three go together, liberty, loyalty and life.

**“I am crucified with Christ, and no longer live, I, but Christ lives in me; but in that I now live in flesh, I live by faith, the faith of the Son of God, who has loved me and given himself for me.” (2:20)**

Paul spoke then about his personal experience. He was identified with Christ. So when Christ died on the cross, “I died” (is what Paul said) and this applies to us. “No longer live I.” What is this “I”? It is the old “I,” the old nature. To follow the thought, the old “I” does not live any more, I cannot respond to the claims of the law, because I am dead. If the law says to a dead person, “Do this,” the person cannot respond; he is dead. This is the point here, I cannot respond to the law. But he said then, “Christ lives in me.” This is the other “I,” it is a new “I” and it is Christ. This is the character of the new “I,” “Christ lives in me,” it is a wonderful privilege, Christ is my life, but not only



that, He lives in me, He gives character to this new life. “But in that I now live.....” is now this new “I” that is characterized by faith and by Christ.

But I am still in the flesh. So how do I live this new life? The answer is: by faith, with Christ as the Object, He is my life. The life I have is characterized by Christ, and further, it is by faith not by works of the law. He is the focus of my life, and that is the responsible “I.” In other words, that is the overcomer, the one who gives in to Christ. Peter in this incident did not live by faith, but the one who lives like Paul did here lives by faith, the faith of the Son of God. I totally focus on Him, and He lives in me, He controls me through His Spirit. Finally, and so beautifully at the end of verse 20, ‘Who is this person? Who is this Son of God?’ He is the One who loves me and has given Himself for me. Should I not then live for Him? Should I not do everything to please Him? He gave Himself for me. He is my Substitute.

**“I do not set aside the grace of God; for if righteousness is by law, then Christ has died for nothing.” (2:21)**

This is the conclusion. If we follow Peter’s example we put ourselves on a course that will slowly but surely set aside the grace of God, however, Paul maintained the grace of God just as he also upheld the demands of the law (Rom. 3:31; cf. Matt. 5:17 and Gal. 3:13).

## II. THE DOCTRINAL ARGUMENT: THE FAILURE OF LEGALISM — 3:1-4:31

### A. The Failure of Legalism: From Personal Experience — 3:1-5

**“O senseless Galatians, who has bewitched you; to whom, as before your very eyes, Jesus Christ has been portrayed, crucified among you?” (3:1)**

Paul, when he started the doctrinal section first referred back to what had taken place, the Galatians had accepted the gospel, and in the first few verses he related to what they had experienced themselves. He needed to address them very, very strongly and severely as “senseless Galatians.” This is a very strong word. It is the same word that the Lord used in speaking to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, when He said to them, ‘Fools, why did you not understand the Scriptures that the Messiah must suffer and that the Scriptures must be fulfilled that way?’ It means a lack of understanding. In modern English we would say, ‘stupid.’ Senseless is a good translation.

‘What has happened?’ Paul asked, “Who has bewitched you?” but he did not answer it. We do not know exactly what Paul referred to here; perhaps the Judaizers had even used witchcraft in order to influence the Galatians. We do not know but what we can be certain of is that there had been a strong influence and that they had been carried away. They were fascinated by the new teaching of these Judaizers just as they had been fascinated by Paul’s teaching, as we see in the same verse as indicated by this expression, “Jesus Christ has been portrayed and crucified among you.” They had been even ready to give their own eyes in order to help Paul (4:15). They had been very impressed at the time that Paul had been there. However, a merely intellectual or emotional impression can easily be replaced and that is exactly what happened.

In this section Paul is asking six questions. This is the first one. The answers are so obvious they are not given. They were bewitched, they were fascinated by this new kind of teaching that had come after Paul had left them, that

which Paul called “another gospel,” a counterfeit. The enemy was at work then, and he is at work also in our days in many circles, in many ways, and we are not immune. So we have to cast ourselves on the Lord, that He will protect us and that we might have the right attitude so that we do not do things just because we are impressed but rather because Christ has gotten hold of us. “Christ crucified” would be a study in itself, to see what that means, Christ taking the place of the curse.

**“This only I wish to learn of you, Have ye received the Spirit on the principle of works of law, or of the report of faith?” (3:2)**

This is the second question. The Judaizing teachers were saying, ‘Yes, you can be saved by faith, but you *then* have to follow the law,’ or they would say, ‘In order to be *really* saved, you need to be circumcised.’ Then there was another danger, they would say, ‘Okay, you *are* saved but now in order to live a holy life you *must* follow the law.’ They may have come with all kinds of good-sounding arguments and even today there are many people under the law in some form or another but the law of Moses has been fulfilled in the death of Christ and Christians are not under the law of Moses at all (but under the law of Christ, as we see later).

So the question is, “Have ye received the Spirit?” That is another topic to study. In John’s gospel the Lord spoke about the coming of the Spirit. In Romans 5 we see that “the love of God has been shed abroad in our hearts through the Spirit whom He *has* given us.” The point is the reception of the Spirit. Is this because of works of the law? Obviously not. It is because of the hearing of faith, and this is explained in Romans 10:9, for example, faith comes by hearing of the Word of God, a result of preaching. And so we see here that what Paul had preached had a real impact, it was not just superficial, but those believers had received the Holy Spirit. That again would be a topic in itself to study. When you are born again you receive the Spirit at the same time, but Scripture makes a distinction because the Old Testament believers who were born again did *not* receive the Holy Spirit to dwell in them, although they were born again. In the day and age of grace in which we live, the moment one is born again he also received the Holy Spirit, but the two are distinct. And then, besides, we receive the seal of the Holy Spirit (Eph.1:13) and also the earnest of the Holy Spirit (2 Cor.1:22), another topic to study.

**“Are ye so senseless? having begun in Spirit, are ye going to be made perfect in flesh?” (3:3)**

Again Paul uses the word “senseless.” They were not really thinking. Paul went back to the fact that they had begun right, they had started to run well, but they had been stopped. They had started on the basis of faith, they had started in obedience to Paul’s teaching, but now something had happened and Paul had to ask, “are ye going to be made perfect in flesh?,” this means, ‘Are you going to lead things to perfection in the flesh?’ Earlier we saw faith over against the law and now we see the Spirit over against the flesh, the second of the seven fundamental comparisons in the Epistle.

Perfected by the law means to be ‘led to perfection by it.’ It is, of course, a contradiction in terms, it cannot be. If you have started with the Spirit you will *never* be able to reach perfection in the flesh; it is an impossibility, but that is what these Judaizers were suggesting, that they should follow the law of Moses and then sanctification would be through the law. There was probably a mixture of teaching. There were those who taught, ‘You can only be justified by faith and circumcision’ and there were those who said, ‘If you are a believer, then you need to follow the law in order to be sanctified, or in order to enjoy the relationship with God.’ This is why later on in the Epistle there is so much emphasis on sonship; it is a matter of a relationship with God, which cannot be on the basis of the law, but on the basis of grace and having received the Spirit of God.

**“Have ye suffered so many things in vain, if indeed also in vain?” (3:4)**

They had been suffering many things. Later in this book Paul referred to this, “As many as desire to have a fair appearance in the flesh, these compel you to be circumcised, *only that they may not be persecuted because of the cross of Christ*” (6:12). The believers were suffering because of their faithfulness to Christ, in connection with the cross of Christ. If they would give in to this pressure to be circumcised then the persecution would stop. So this obviously was persecution from a Jewish side, although maybe they also had persecution from Gentile sources but they had suffered because of their faithfulness and now they were going to give in to this new teaching with a view to getting these sufferings behind them. But, of course, that is not God’s way. It was a real temptation for them to follow this new teaching so that their sufferings would be over, but this would mean that those earlier sufferings would have been in vain.

**“He therefore who ministers to you the Spirit, and works miracles among you, is it on the principle of works of law, or of the report of faith?” (3:5)**

Here is the abundance of supplies that God provides in and through the Holy Spirit. We find many references to this in John’s Gospel: He gives the Spirit “without measure” (3:34); those who are thirsty may come and may receive water freely (7:37-39) and then this will become a source in the believer. So there is an abundance of supply in the Spirit which can never be connected with things of the law and then the question goes on, “.....and works miracles among you.” The Holy Spirit was working miracles in those early days. Hebrews 2 shows that these miracles and signs were taking place at the beginning of a new dispensation. Then Paul asked, “Was this on the principle of the works of the law or was it because of the hearing [or ‘report’] of faith?” This is the same question that Paul had asked earlier. Again the answer is obvious. The Holy Spirit works in connection with the Word of God and with faith because the law of works had been set aside in the death of Christ. Paul’s doctrinal argument here was to show the superiority of grace over the law and that it would be stupid to go back to the law and to try to produce works in order to have a status before God or to enjoy blessings from God, or for whatever other purpose there could be: if it is on the basis of works of law it will never work, because as he proved later, if we are on that principle we are under the curse.

## **B. The Failure of Legalism: From Old Testament Teaching — 3:6-14**

**“Even as Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness.” (3:6)**

Now Paul comes to the second proof. He uses the example of Abraham. Abraham was, of course, a proof text for these Judaizers. They would in their arguments go back to Abraham and so Paul went back to Abraham, but he went back to him to show God’s thoughts, that Abraham believed and it was reckoned to him as righteousness (Gen.15), not on the basis of his circumcision, for that was much later (Gen.17). Having received the Holy

Spirit the Galatians needed to go on in faith, this they could learn from Abraham, the father of believers (Rom.4:11). So we today should learn from Abraham. Although we do not live in the beginning of Christianity when the Church was being established, accompanied by these signs and miracles that took place, then we can also follow Abraham's example, he believed God, "and it was reckoned to him as righteousness." Here we have an important principle that justification is always by faith and not by works of law. This very important argument Paul proves from the Old Testament.

**“Know then that they that are on the principle of faith, these are Abraham’s sons ...” (3:7)**

It is not “*children*,” as the King James Version says, it is “*sons*.” There were those who were literal descendants of Abraham (his children), but the emphasis here is on those who were his ‘spiritual children,’ or ‘sons,’ those who were characterized by the faith that Abraham had. This would also be an extensive theme to study, the characteristics of Abraham’s children and Abraham’s sons, but I leave that with you.

**“... and the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the nations on the principle of faith, announced beforehand the glad tidings to Abraham: In thee all the nations shall be blessed.” (3:8)**

Here the Scripture is equated with God, because it was God foreseeing. We have a similar expression in Hebrews 4 about the Scriptures. “For the Word of God is quick and powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit and of the joints and marrow and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in His sight” (Heb.4:12-13). The Scriptures are equated with God, they are the living Word, God’s Word, that is why the Scriptures could foresee that God would justify the nations on the principle of faith, that is why the Scriptures announced beforehand the glad tidings to Abraham. This is perhaps difficult for us to understand. This is not the gospel that we know, but it certainly was the communication of a good message to Abram. In the King James Version we read, “foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, *preached* — that is, to communicate a good message — *before*,” it is just that. It is not that the gospel of God’s grace as we know it now had been literally preached to Abraham but that God brought a good message to Abraham because he believed. Therefore on

this basis God could promise to Abraham, “In thee all the nations shall be blessed” (Gen.12:3). Abraham is the father of all believers, and so the blessings that belonged to Abraham are accounted to all believers, in whatever dispensation they live.

**“So that they who are on the principle of faith are blessed with believing Abraham.” (3:9)**

We who are living in the day of grace have something more than Abraham but we also have something in common with him, and that is the point here. For example, the Old Testament believers did not have the Holy Spirit’s indwelling, this is a difference, yet we have many things in common with Abraham as this verse shows.

**“For as many as are on the principle of works of law are under curse. For it is written, Cursed is every one who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them...” (3:10)**

This is a very solemn point. If we try to approach God on the basis of works of law we are under the curse. Why is this so? This is explained in Deuteronomy 27 where we find twelve curses and at the end it says, “If you do not continue in *all* things which are written.” The people of Israel were to be divided on two mountains, Ebal and Gerizim (this actually happened in the book of Joshua, chapter 8), six tribes on Mount Ebal to curse, and six on Mount Gerizim to bless, but there were only curses uttered in connection with the people under the law.

This brings home another point, “all things” means that if a man fails in one thing he is guilty of having transgressed the whole law, “For whosoever shall keep the whole law and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all” (Jas.2:10). The Jews had six hundred and thirteen laws in the Old Testament, not only the Ten Commandments, and if a person failed in one of these, he was guilty and had transgressed the whole law. Suppose you have a chain composed of a number of rings and someone is hanging on that chain above an abyss. His whole life depends on this chain. If one link of this chain breaks, will the rest of the chain hold him? No, he plunges into the abyss. And so if one commandment is broken, the whole law is broken, the offender comes under the curse. This is James’ argument and this is Paul’s argument here too.

**“... but that by law no one is justified with God is evident, because ‘The just shall live on the principle of faith ...’” (3:11)**

The Old Testament brings this out clearly. It is not taught in the Old Testament but the principle is illustrated in these words that on the basis of works of the law no one is declared righteous with God; it is only on the basis of faith. This is confirmed in Habakkuk, which is quoted here, “The just shall live on the principle of faith.” There are three elements, *just*, *live* and *faith*. “The just” is an element that is developed in Romans, how the repentant sinner can be declared righteous and just by God and may receive life. The question of *life* is developed in Hebrews. In Hebrews 10:38 the same verse is quoted and there the emphasis is on the life lived on the principle of faith. In the context of Galatians the emphasis is on *faith* because it is works of faith, the works that are produced by faith. This is not our doing something in our own strength by keeping the law of Moses but it is on the basis of faith that we live and are declared righteous. So this is a very important principle which is already contained in the Old Testament and so Paul says in verse 11 that by law no man is justified with God.

**“... but the law is not on the principle of faith; but, ‘He that shall have done these things shall live by them.’” (3:12)**

Law and faith are mutually exclusive. If you are under the law of Moses then you cannot be under faith. If you are under faith then you cannot be under the law of Moses. It is that simple. Leviticus 18:5 says that if a man could fulfill the law he would live, so when the rich young ruler came to the Lord and asked what he could do to obtain eternal life this is what the Lord told him. The law promised life for obedience but no one could ever fulfill the demands of the law, no man was righteous (Romans 3) except for One, and that was the Lord Jesus. That is the stage that Paul arrives at in verse 13. Only Christ ever kept the law to its full extent, He said in Matthew 5 that He had come to fulfill the law. He fulfilled the law in His perfect life but then also in His substitutionary death; this could never be repeated, but it was accomplished in order to give us life and to bring us salvation.

**“Christ has redeemed us out of the curse of the law, having become a curse for us, (for it is written, Cursed is every one hanged upon a tree,) ...” (3:13)**



This implies that He has bought us, that He has delivered us from the curse. It was especially the Jews who were under the law and therefore under the curse, but Christ has redeemed them from the curse of the law. How did the Lord do that? Christ accomplished redemption by becoming a curse for them (also for us), by becoming the Substitute. It was not that there would be any compromise, that God as it were would shut His eyes for a moment and overlook a few demands of the law, no, the law had to be satisfied in full and maintained; indeed, thus it was in the life of the Lord and in His death. His life He lived in complete accordance with the law of Moses. The Lord had a conflict with the Pharisees with their *interpretation* of the law, but He was *never* in conflict with the law of Moses. The conflicts that we read of in the Gospels were with the interpretations and traditions that the Pharisees had made of the law. But during His life the Lord fulfilled the law completely!

Then in His death as our Substitute the law was fulfilled with regard to us, as Christ took our place, as we have seen already in Paul's words, "I am crucified with Christ, and no longer live I but Christ lives in me" (2:20). This is now the result. So here in verse 13 we come to a very important point and this in itself would be a subject of further study and I commend it to you. What a blessed fact that the only One who was ever perfect, who never did anything wrong became a curse for us and died in our stead as our Substitute. This is the wonderful truth that is presented here. Then Paul quotes from the Scriptures, "For it is written, Cursed is everyone that hangs upon a tree." Here we see the Lord Jesus in His perfection, the One who never sinned (1 Pet.2:22), He knew no sin (2 Cor.5:21), in Whom is no sin (1 Jn.3:5) and being apart from sin (Heb.4:15) was made sin for us (2 Cor.5:21). What a topic for meditation and even for our worship. In the Lord's words to Nicodemus in John 3, that He would be lifted up, we see a similar thought, the Lord Jesus would be the sin offering and He would take our place. I repeat, it is really a great study in itself.

**"... that the blessing of Abraham might come to the nations in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith."  
(3:14)**

What is the result of the Lord taking the curse upon Himself? There is blessing. It sounds contradictory, but this is the truth. God is satisfied because the Lord was raised from among the dead and seated at His right hand crowned with glory and honour, and now we are in Christ Jesus, the blessing

of Abraham has come to us through Him. This is a wonderful result of His work. The “we” here is now Jewish *and* Gentile believers, “That *we* might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.” Again, this is something that Abraham did not have. There were promises fulfilled in Abraham’s life and there are also promises that God made to Abraham that will be fulfilled in the millennium, when the nations on this earth will enjoy blessings and Israel also will enjoy special blessings as the result, but they are all based on this work that the Lord Jesus has accomplished. However, we have even greater blessings than believers had in other dispensations.

### **C. The Failure of Legalism: From Priority of Promise — 3:15-22**

Paul has spoken about the importance of Abraham, the father of believers, and our link with him, that we are justified on the basis of faith and not on the basis of works of law. Now Paul comes to his third argument, he shows in these passages the *superiority* of grace. We also see a few more points about the law.

**“Brethren, (I speak according to man,) even man’s confirmed covenant no one sets aside, or adds other dispositions to.” (3:15)**

Paul stated that he was going to demonstrate that the principle of the promise that God had given, whether it was the promise to Abraham or the promise of the Holy Spirit to us, was of a higher order than the law. The promise had the priority.

**“But to Abraham were the promises addressed, and to his seed: he does not say, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed; which is Christ.” (3:16)**

This is like a little parenthesis, because in this verse Paul showed that ultimately the promises would be made real through the seed. And who was the seed? It was Christ. The argument was first that the promise was there before the law came and that when the law came it was *unable* to satisfy the

promise. But then Paul spoke about the seed and that in the seed the promise would be confirmed. We have that in 2 Corinthians 1:20, that in Christ *all* God's promises are yea and Amen. So whatever promise we consider, whether the promise in Genesis 12 or the promise to Isaac or Jacob, whatever promise, *all* these promises need to be linked with Christ otherwise there is no fulfillment.

Paul emphasized the singular expression, it was not a collective singular, it was a personal ('His') and singular ('Seed'). It is important to read the Scripture carefully. Paul quoted a verse from Scripture showing this implies *verbal* and *literal* inspiration. That is another point we could study. The Scriptures have been verbally and literally inspired (2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Pet. 1:20). It is not just an inspiration of concepts, with the words not being important: no, *every word* is important, even the form in which it is given is important.

**“Now I say this, A covenant confirmed beforehand by God, the law, which took place four hundred and thirty years after, does not annul, so as to make the promise of no effect.” (3:17)**

Now Paul returns to his main argument. When God makes a promise He is going to fulfill it and that cannot be annulled by anything that happens later, not even the giving of the law. In order to understand the strength of the expression “a covenant confirmed beforehand by God” we must go back again to Genesis 15 and to Abraham who “believed God and it was accounted to him righteousness.” In the same chapter we see how God confirmed the promise that He made to Abraham, that in his seed *all* would be blessed, a promise that goes back to Genesis 12:2-3. Abraham took a number of animals and they were sacrificed. They were then lined up one part this side, another part that side, and God went through those animals. The procedure that was used to confirm a covenant was that the two parties would slaughter the animals and they would then walk together through their parts to confirm it. But who walked through those animals in Genesis 15? Abraham was in a deep sleep. Abraham did not go through those animals, only God walked through them. What did this mean? The fulfillment, the keeping of the covenant only depended on God. And can you rely on God? Yes, you can. This is the point here. Therefore this covenant cannot be nullified by the law that came four hundred and thirty years later. This number we find in Exodus 12:40, at the end of the chapter, where the nation of Israel left Egypt. This is another topic we will not touch now.

**“For if the inheritance be on the principle of law, it is no longer on the principle of promise; but God gave it in grace to Abraham by promise.” (3:18)**

This naturally follows. The expression here “gave [the inheritance] in grace” is one word, it underlines the gift of grace by God to Abraham. We have already seen that if it is a matter of a gift of grace it cannot be on the basis of law, in fact, it was given so many years before the law came in.

**“Why then the law? It was added for the sake of transgressions, until the seed came to whom the promise was made, ordained through angels in the hand of a mediator.” (3:19)**

“Why then the law?” is a valid question. “It was *added*” is a point to understand. Why was it added? We have several verses in Romans that show that it was brought in to expose the character of sin, that sin was transgression under the law. “It was added *for the sake of transgressions.*” Again, I do not want to go into this in too much detail, but in Romans this is fully explained, Romans 5 and 7 and also 1 Corinthians 15 say that the law *provokes* sin, it causes people to do whatever is forbidden, that is how it works. If the law said, “Do this” people in the flesh, under the law, have a tendency to *not* do it, in fact they *will not* do it, but if the law says, “Do not do this” then people in the flesh, under the law will *do* it. This is how the law provokes sin which then becomes transgression. Sin in itself means that you have ‘missed the mark.’ Transgression is that you ‘step aside,’ meaning you should follow the path of the law but you step aside, you do not walk on the path. This is transgression.

Now the law was added for a number of years, only for a limited time, “until the seed came.” Who is the seed? Christ is, as we have seen. The law was fulfilled in the death of Christ and so it was given for a limited time only and then it was fulfilled. Some more details are then given about the character of the law in order for us to see the difference between it and the system of grace. Firstly the law was ordained through angels in the hand of a mediator. God gave the law to angels so they were mediators; then the angels gave it through the hand of Moses, and so Moses was the mediator on behalf of the people. So there was a great distance between God and the people. Is there a great distance between God and us under grace? No, we are sons, so very close to God. This shows a difference in character. This has nothing to do

with the Lord Jesus Himself as the Mediator between God and man in 1 Timothy 2, which is connected with Him as the Sacrifice as we have seen earlier.

**“But a mediator is not of one, but God is one.” (3:20)**

This is difficult to understand, but may I suggest that it implies that all depends on God. God went through the slaughtered animals alone. Everything depends on God. When we are on the basis of works of law then it depends on *us* and as a consequence it will never work, but when it depends on God alone He is faithful and then things are fulfilled.

**“Is then the law against the promises of God? Far be the thought. For if a law had been given able to quicken, then indeed righteousness were on the principle of law ...” (3:21)**

We could at this point in Paul’s argument come to a conclusion that would be wrong. God had given promises. Now the law was brought in for a time to test people. It was *not* really designed to be against the promises of God. We have seen there is an inherent conflict between the principle of law and the promises of God, but God had added it only for a period of time so that it would fulfill its purpose. But ultimately it was *not* to nullify God’s promises, “For *if* a law had been given which was able to quicken, then indeed righteousness would be on the principle of law.” Paul shows again the shortcomings of the law; the law cannot produce life. This word “quicken” is used in connection with God, it is used in connection with the Lord Jesus, it is used in connection with the Holy Spirit and it is used in connection with the Father, but it is *not* used in connection with the law. *The law cannot give life; it cannot quicken.* This is the point. It can only bring us under condemnation. This is all the law can do, and this is why, if we put ourselves under the law, we put ourselves under a curse because we cannot fulfil the law. The law will only show that we are under the curse.

**“... but the scripture has shut up all things under sin, that the promise, on the principle of faith of Jesus Christ, should be given to those that believe.” (3:22)**

This is a similar expression to what we read earlier. Here we see how Scripture and God work together, and we can say that “[God] has shut up all things under sin.” This word “shut up” means as it were to “put in jail” and “under sin,” as a result of being under the law. But what would be the final result of this condition, of law and sin? It is judgment. However, the principles of faith and promise also go together, leading to blessing.

### **D. The Failure of Legalism: From Superiority of Mature Faith — 3:23-4:7**

**“But before faith came, we were guarded under law, shut up to faith which was about to be revealed.” (3:23)**

Here again the Jews who were under the law are seen in jail as it were, “shut up to faith,” that means until the time that faith came. Here we have dispensational thoughts. The dispensation of law goes on until the dispensation of faith comes, connected with grace. Faith and grace also go together. Before that time came, the Jews were shut up under the law.

**“So that the law has been our tutor up to Christ, that we might be justified on the principle of faith.” (3:24)**

A tutor in the Roman world was someone who took care of the son or sons of a rich man. The sons would have been between the ages of 5 and 16 approximately. Maybe even Luke, the gospel writer, had been a tutor earlier for the man that he mentioned in the opening verse of his Gospel before he was set free. These are things we cannot prove from Scripture but it could possibly be true. A tutor then was a slave who served his master and took care of his master’s sons, until they came of age. We will see later in chapter 4 that the son would then have been able to administer his father’s affairs on his own. The point here is that the Jews had been under the law, the law being the tutor. They were under the law, under the tutor, who would take care of them in that time frame until Christ came. This is often misunderstood. Some people believe that the law will lead you to Christ. No, Israel was under a tutor until the time that Christ came, and then a new order of things was introduced that “we (now it is Jews and Gentiles again) might

be justified on the principle of faith.” This brings in a new order of things, the law has been fulfilled in the death of Christ and a new time frame has come.

**“But, faith having come, we are no longer under a tutor ...” (3:25)**

Paul continues about this new time frame. This only applies to those who were under the law. Now we are not under a custodian or a guardian, this is the superiority of grace, it is a new order of things, we do not have a tutor; we have the Father (this is expanded upon in chapter 4).

**“... for ye are all God’s sons by faith in Christ Jesus.” (3:26)**

The correct translation is not “children” (KJV); it is really a matter of sonship and the context makes this clear especially when we go on to chapter 4 where we see the importance of sonship. Three things are emphasized here, “faith” (v. 25), “no longer under a tutor,” and “ye are all God’s sons.” I want now to emphasize three things at the end of the third chapter, *sonship* (v. 28), a new *unity* is formed, “no Jew, nor Greek” in connection with this new system of things and we are “*heirs* according to promise” (v. 29). Faith is the introduction of a new order of things so that we are no longer under a tutor, but now we are all God’s sons. This goes together with the new order of things and is developed further in chapter 4, but it is connected with and is characterized by faith in contrast to the works of law; it is a position “in Christ Jesus” who is now in the glory, God having given us this position. This is also important (see later).

**“For ye, as many as have been baptised unto Christ, have put on Christ.” (3:27)**

This position of sonship is now shown here on earth in two different ways, Christ is in the glory, but we have been baptized unto Him, we are identified with Him who is absent from this scene. This is developed in Romans 6 that through baptism we have been brought into a new realm and identified with a new leader, Christ. But you may also think of baptism in connection with the baptism of the Holy Spirit because the Holy Spirit links this with Christ in a way that goes even further. Baptism is in connection with our bodies being here on earth, but we are identified with a rejected Christ on earth. However, through the baptism of the Holy Spirit we are linked with Him as He is now

in the glory; we are members of His body. This wonderful truth is developed in 1 Corinthians 12:13 and Ephesians 4, “one body, one Spirit.” Baptism connects us with Christ, either in testimony here on earth or also, through the Holy Spirit, we are introduced into this new realm of things and are under His control. The result is, “ye have put on Christ.” We are clothed with Christ, He is our garment. So if we connect this with the Holy Spirit in testimony here on earth we are clothed with Christ through this baptism in these two different meanings. It is wonderful to think about this. When God sees us He sees only Christ in us; we are in Christ Jesus; God has clothed us with Christ, “the best garment.” What does this mean? God wants to see Christ and nothing else.

**“There is no Jew nor Greek; there is no bondman nor freeman; there is no male and female; for ye are all one in Christ Jesus ...” (3:28)**

This new unity was formed, implying the setting aside of all differences. This is very well demonstrated in the early church in Antioch in Syria (Acts 13). There believers from among the Gentiles and the Jews, even different social groups, were all together in one assembly. The doctrinal exposition of this is found in more detail in Ephesians 2 how the wall of separation, the law, had been set aside and there was now this remarkable unity of believers taken from among Jews and Gentiles. It is not that Gentiles had been introduced into Judaism or that they had been brought into the blessings of Judaism, no, the believers taken from the Jews and the believers taken from among the Gentiles had both been introduced into something entirely new, into a new system of things.

The second characteristic of this unity was that there were no social differences. There may have been social differences in their worldly positions, but that did not count in connection with the unity in the assembly, they were still there, just as the differences between Jew and Greek will still be here as long as we are on this earth, but in Christ they no longer exist. This is the point, in Christ there is not even a difference between male and female, but as long as we are on earth there is still a difference so we have to be very careful how to apply this. There have been people who have said, ‘Well, there is no difference between male and female anymore,’ and so they have come to all kinds of conclusions. But this new position is “in Christ.” As long as we are on earth these differences still play a role but they should not interfere with the position we together have “in Christ.” For instance, Peter



interfered with this truth when he did not eat with Gentile believers at Antioch.

**“... but if ye are of Christ, then ye are Abraham’s seed, heirs according to promise.” (3:29)**

This is a beautiful series of points: (1) we belong to Christ, we are of Him; (2) we are sons of God; and (3) “heirs according to promise.” The promises of God are made real to us who are heirs. This again we can connect with the promises God made to Abraham. The idea of being an heir means there is a very close connection, there is an intimate relationship with God, which was never the case under the law.

So chapter 3 shows the *inferiority* of the law and brings out the *superiority* of this new system connected with faith and grace; this is very practical in many ways, also for us today.

**“Now I say, As long as the heir is a child, he differs nothing from a bondman, though he be lord of all ...” (4:1)**

The Jews were under the law. In ch. 3:23 Paul compared the law with a jailor who kept the people in jail, and in verse 24 with a tutor who taught those who are still under it. It was therefore connected with spiritual immaturity. This continued “until Christ came,” “that [Jew and Gentile] might be justified on the principle of faith.” This new system was marked by faith. We are no longer under a tutor and so here we see the importance of true sonship connected with faith and with grace; there is superiority in sonship and this is now considered in more detail.

Paul then came to an additional proof connected with this sonship. “As long as the heir is a child,” and so in a state of immaturity, he was not yet accountable and he could not be held responsible for his father’s business. The father might have had a company, and he might have allowed the bondman to take care of everything, but only when the child came of age would he have been able to take care of everything and take full responsibility. As long as he was a child, as long as he was under a tutor, he *could not* have this responsibility, although he was lord of all. He was the heir, but he could not function as such yet.

**“... but he is under guardians and stewards until the period fixed by the father.” (4:2)**

This underlines again this idea that he was still a child, he was unaccountable, he was immature, he had not reached the condition that he could rule the goods of his father, “until the period fixed by the father.”

**“So we also, when we were children, were held in bondage under the principles of the world ...” (4:3)**

This is the conclusion or the application. The “we” here is also under the law, of course. We have to examine the context in order to see who the “we” refers to. Here the “we” are those who were under the law, that is, the Jews, held in a position of immaturity. This is very important, they were held in bondage, whereas true sons are connected with *liberty*. The subject of liberty is dealt with practically in chapter 5. It is a tremendous contrast, the bondage is linked with Judaism, the law system, but the *liberty* is linked with *sonship*.

What are “the principles of the world”? They mean that the law was given to man in the flesh. The law was not given to the believers, like Abraham, in order that he would follow the law of Moses (the law of Moses did not exist then, but suppose it did), it would not have been his rule of conduct; he had different moral rules to follow. It is important to understand that bondage is a result of the law of Moses given to man in the flesh, for we will see later that Paul made a reproach to the Galatians in saying “You are going back to the beggarly principles” (v. 9). We must understand that the principles of the world are connected with man in the flesh and in this case man as he is under Judaism. We should not confuse this situation with the position of a true believer such as Abraham. I would like to give more details about the differences between the law of Moses and the law of Christ when we come to chapter 6, because not being under the law does not mean that we are lawless, rather it means we are under a different law. We are not in bondage under the Mosaic law which is connected with the principles of the world, but we belong to a new order of things. Even when the law of Moses was not there, a moral law (or ‘principle’) always existed, this cannot be denied. However, we will keep this for chapter 6.

**“... but when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, come of woman, come under law ...” (4:4)**

After this period of tutorship was over, the time of testing for the first man was completed (1 Cor. 10:11), something happened: the time of fullness had come. When man had failed under all the testings, then God sent His own Son. God waited four thousand years (four being connected with testing) and then He sent His Son. We should not confuse this expression with “the fullness of the Gentiles” (Rom. 11:25), or “the fullness of times” (Eph. 1:10), when the Lord will reign in His millennium kingdom and every knee will bow before Him; this is a different fullness. The “fullness of the time” is connected with the testing of the first man. When this period had been completed God came in sovereign grace.

Paul was discussing the matter of sonship, and so in connection with this we see now how God in His sovereign grace sent His *Son*. This expression implies the eternal Sonship of the Lord Jesus. It does not say that He *became* Son when He was born, neither was He created, He came *of* a woman, as a human being, but He was *not* made, He was *not* created. He is the eternal Son, God’s Son, a divine Person. Further, “Come of woman” indicates His perfect humanity. So we have His deity and His humanity in one Person, “God sent forth His Son.” In verse 6 it says that God has sent out (the same verb) the Spirit of His Son into our hearts. Did the Spirit only become Spirit when He was poured out into our hearts? Of course not; He was already the Spirit and came as such and in the same way the Lord Jesus was already Son when He came to this earth, and then He also became a Son in Manhood, as Son of man. This would be a topic in itself, I only touch upon it. This is really a mystery.

In 1 Timothy 3:16 we see how great is the “mystery of godliness,” how the One who is eternally God became man, “The Word became flesh.” This was the incarnation, a great mystery. In what condition did He come? He took up the position that Israel had under the law. This is stated in verse 2, and I want now to highlight [seven or eight] points in verses 4 through 7. First is His deity and His humanity in one Person, and second He “came under the law,” He took up all the responsibility under the law *but without any failure*. We read in Matthew 5:17 that the Lord came to fulfill the law. He did not come to just live under the law and have nothing to do with it. There was only one Person in the whole history of mankind who kept the law completely and this was the Lord. When there was a conflict with the Pharisees it was not because the Lord did not keep the law of Moses, it was because He did not

keep the rules of the rabbis. They took the conflict very serious and rejected the Lord. Again, this would be in itself a topic to study. The Lord came under law, He lived perfectly under the law, completed the law, and then we read in Romans 10:4, "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness." He brought everything to completion, nothing could be added. The law had reached its goal in the Person and work of Christ. In this sense it could be set aside, and that means we are not under that law anymore, we *cannot* be under that law. We will see in chapter 6 that we are rather under the law of Christ but it is important to see that the Lord Jesus kept the Mosaic law in its entirety: He fulfilled it and even became a curse under it in our stead (see earlier).

**"... that he might redeem those under law, that we might receive sonship." (4:5)**

The third point after His incarnation and His responsibility as a Man under the law is redemption, to set free in view of what follows. The fourth point is the result of redemption, "that we might receive *sonship*." Here again, the "we" is Jew and Gentile believers brought into a position of sonship or 'adopted' to be sons. Sonship is a word that is not often used, it is the contrast to what we had earlier, the child who is like an infant, in the position of being kept under the law, a position of immaturity. The result of redemption is that we are brought into a position of sonship and in connection with this position we will see a few important points in the following verses. This word is used in Ephesians 1:5, where we see that God has adopted us as sons *for Himself*, and twice in Romans 8. Adopted to be sons means to be put into a position of sonship and that is linked with maturity and with dignity. It is a wonderful position *not under the law*, as under a jailor or under a tutor but it is a position of dignity in God's presence and involves having fellowship with God. Sonship is then connected with the cry, "Abba, Father," and in this we have *intimacy*. So this topic of sonship is really essential. It is the result of what the Lord has done and it goes together with the reception of the Holy Spirit.

**"But because ye are sons, God has sent out the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father." (4:6)**

Paul said, "*Because ye are sons.*" He then applied this specifically to the Galatians who were being brought back through his corrective teaching into the true position, "*Ye are sons.*" The fifth point is, therefore, the position of

sonship in which connection God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son. Let me repeat very briefly these points. The first step in the fullness of time is (1) the incarnation of the Lord Jesus Christ and the mysteries connected with it, then (2) His life under the law; (3) redemption, to set free from bondage; and the result of that (4) that we would receive sonship. Now here in verse 6 is the next point, (5) “because ye are sons, *God has sent out the Spirit of His Son* into our hearts.” Why into our hearts? Because in Scripture the heart signifies the centre of our being. “The love of God is shed abroad *in our hearts* by the Holy Spirit which is given unto us” (Rom.5:5). You can compare the heart with the very centre, but you could also compare it with the control chamber of a big factory, everything is controlled by the heart. So the One who controls the heart is in control of everything, and the Spirit of God is in control in a believer and this links with the thoughts we had earlier about liberty and grace and love. The fact that it is connected with the heart, the centre of our personality, is the sixth point. This should make us conscious of the position we have and make us enjoy it.

The seventh point is the response now, “Abba, Father.” This is why I said earlier that the Lord’s Sonship is connected with intimacy, because under the law we *never* find in Scripture that a Jew said “Abba” to God. Israel was connected with God as Father in a national way only. God had called Israel a son, but it was collective, it was national. No one then could ever say “Abba, Father” to God, but now, because of the accomplished work of Christ, we have this liberty, liberty that gives free access to the immediate presence of God (which liberty is developed in the Epistle to the Hebrews). This liberty is connected with the dignity and intimacy of sonship, “Abba” simply means “Daddy.” Only once did the Lord say it, and it was when He was in a time of distress in the garden of Gethsemane. He cried “Abba, Father” because perhaps the emphasis was then on the emotion, it was a response. The emotions are controlled, of course, by the Holy Spirit here not by the flesh and so there is a response to God in the context of this intimacy. As to the believers, this is also seen in Romans 8:25-26.

These are the wonderful results of the work of the Lord Jesus and the nearness we have now, the enjoyment of fellowship with the Father and this wonderful relationship. This goes together with worship, the Holy Spirit crying now in our hearts, “Abba, Father.” The Spirit produces this worship as we find in Philippians 3:3, we “worship God in the spirit.” Every individual Christian has this position now and may function accordingly, but the question is: Do we enjoy this position? Do we function according to this position? The enemy does not like it if we do. The enemy would like to deter

us from this enjoyment. He would like to bring in hindrances, and that is exactly what he did with the Galatians. The enemy hates it when God receives His portion in worship, when we say “Abba, Father.” I am not just repeating vain words. These are not vain words. It is also a matter of the emotions, the thoughts and the affections that are connected with the expression “Abba, Father.” That counts for God, and this is what the enemy hates. He does not want God to receive anything from creatures here on this earth and so we will see from verse 8 on how the enemy works.

**“So thou art no longer bondman, but son; but if son, heir also through God.” (4:7)**

This is the conclusion. The application and the results are threefold; we are “no longer bondmen.” This could be misunderstood. In this context it means we are no longer under the bondage of the law. In another setting we *are* bondmen, Paul for example often called himself a bondman of Jesus Christ and in that sense we *are* bondmen, but that is a different connection, a different relationship. This is important for us to grasp, that we see there is no contradiction in Scripture. We *are* bondmen in a matter of response, serving God as such, but here it is connected with being under the law. We are under grace and so we are sons. Secondly we are heirs, and this is really connected with the fulfillment of God’s promises. Again there are other Scriptures that speak more about this but I think we will have a few more details about being an heir in this chapter (which is also the 8th point in 4:4-7).

### **E. The Failure of Legalism: From Danger of Reaction — 4:8-11**

**“But then indeed, not knowing God, ye were in bondage to those who by nature are not gods ...” (4:8)**

Now we want to move on to the next section, where Paul presents another proof. The proof of sonship is very important doctrinally to show how we are not under the law but under grace and also what that means practically, but then he comes to a further proof and that is in connection with how the Galatians reacted. The Galatians had reacted in the wrong way. The original

position was, “Ye (the Galatians) *were* in bondage,” that is they were idol worshippers, “as pagans to those who by nature are no gods.” Idols are sometimes called in Scripture “nothing”; but of course we know at the same time that behind these idols there are demonic powers at work, and in that sense we could not say they are nothing.

**“... but now, knowing God, but rather being known by God, how do ye turn again to the weak and beggarly principles to which ye desire to be again anew in bondage?” (4:9)**

Knowing God is from our side but being known by God is from His side and this is more important. It establishes the intimate relationship of sonship. Knowing God means in a relationship of love, as we find also in 1 Corinthians 8. This intimate relationship we have with God is stressed many times in the Scriptures. For example in 1 John 5:20 instead of enjoying this intimacy what were the Galatians doing? They had turned again to the weak and beggarly principles desiring to be in bondage again. What was Paul talking about? As pagans they were once under the beggarly principles or rudiments of the world and they were thus in bondage, but they had been delivered from that bondage, they had been set free. “You *were* in bondage to those who by nature are no gods, and now you turn to the law.” This is the point we have to grasp, ‘By turning to the law,’ Paul said, ‘you are going back to the weak and beggarly principles to which you were earlier in bondage.’ So having enjoyed the liberty of sonship and then going back to the law of Moses (which was given to man in the flesh) they were going back to the same level as they were before as pagans, in bondage to idols. That was his argument. The law, as it was given to man in the flesh, stood on the same level before God whether the people were pagans in bondage to idolatry or whether they were under the law of Sinai in bondage. God viewed them *both* in bondage and they were *both* lost. If *as believers* they went back to the law, they would go back to the same beggarly, poor principles they once were under, they would fall back into immaturity and all the other things that we have seen, although they would not lose their salvation, they would lose the joy and God would lose His portion for the time being. However, they had been brought from idolatry to Christ and now they were in the process of going back to Judaism, but as a system this would separate them from Christ, just as they were separated from Christ when, as pagans, they had practiced idolatry. This is Paul’s argument, and he supports this argument in the next verse by giving some details about what they were doing.

**“Ye observe days and months and times and years.” (4:10)**

The law of Moses was completely fulfilled in the Lord Jesus in His Person and work. The shadows given in the Old Testament pointed to Christ (e.g. Rom.10:4) but here the Galatians were going back to the shadows which had been fulfilled, they were turning their backs to the sun and looking instead to the moon. The Epistle to the Hebrews shows this in great detail. This is what they were doing by “observing days, and months, and times, and years,” they were replacing the One who had fulfilled all the shadows by going back to those things that had earlier, before the Lord came, pointed to Him. The days, for example, would be keeping the Sabbath, the months would be the new moon, the times would be the different festivals as we have in Leviticus 23 and the years would be the sabbatical year every seven years or the year of jubilee. They wanted to put themselves under all these regulations.

**“I am afraid of you, lest indeed I have laboured in vain as to you.” (4:11)**

Paul had worked hard, the word he used here means “working very hard,” but now, he said, it may have been in vain. How sad to see that what the Galatians did has been repeated on a large scale in the history of the church in introducing all these regulations from a very early date, not only in the Roman Catholic church but also in Protestant churches. We have to understand that here it is not the same issue that Paul brought out in Romans 14 regarding the weak believer. A weak believer is one who would not eat certain meat, somehow being under the law, perhaps a Jewish believer who would only eat kosher meat, or who wanted to keep certain days. Paul said in Romans 14 to the strong ones that they should bear with this, but he *also* said to the weak ones that they should not judge the strong ones, who had liberty not to keep those laws and regulations. However this is *not* the issue here, the issue here is far different and more serious. Here it is a matter of systematically bringing all the believers under such order of law. In the Colossian Epistle it is even more of a mixture, being paganism and pagan philosophy mixed with Judaistic principles. However, some parallels exist between Galatians and Colossians. At the end of Colossians 2 Paul describes they were doing similar things we have here in Galatians as a result of law-keeping.



## **F. The Failure of Legalism: From Contrast of Motives — 4:12-20**

**“Be as I am, for I also am as ye, brethren, I beseech you: ye have not at all wronged me.” (4:12)**

Here we have another proof against legalism and this has to do with, we could say, *the contrast of motives*. Paul’s motive was to help the believer, but when we consider what these false teachers were doing, we understand they were really only promoting their own interests, as we will see in verses 17 and 18. What does “Be as I am” mean? It is an appeal. Paul is free. He says to the Galatians, “Be as I am, enjoy this liberty just as I do.” There is a difference, though. Paul once had been under the law as an observant Jew, but now he was free from it, and they were once in bondage to paganism and had been set free, but they wanted to go back to bondage to legalism. Paul said, “No, be as I am,” but then he continued, “for I also am as ye” (namely, set free through Christ). Then he said, “ye have not at all wronged me.” Perhaps this was to reassure the Galatians that, as he said later on, he was not their enemy. The Galatians might have said, “You know, we have done wrong before, because we have said that we want to go back to the law, we want to be under the law, and Paul might have said that that was not good to do, so maybe some thought that they had attacked Paul and that he would have been angry at them. No, he said, “ye have not at all wronged me.” What can we learn from this? Where there was a doctrinal disagreement he did not take things personally. This is also a lesson for us.

**“But ye know that in weakness of the flesh I announced the glad tidings to you at the first ...” (4:13)**

Paul here underlined the relationship they once had with him, how in physical weakness he presented the glad tidings to them and that must have been on the first and second missionary journeys, perhaps also a part of the third missionary journey (see introduction).

**“... and my temptation, which was in my flesh, ye did not slight nor reject with contempt; but ye received me as an angel of God, as Christ Jesus.” (4:14)**

From chapter 6 where we see that Paul ended the epistle with some words of his own, it may suggest that Paul had a problem with his eyesight, but we have no further indication as to this from Scripture. There are also indications that he may have had a speech impediment and that people would have had a natural tendency to have contempt for him because of this, but we cannot be sure about this either. However, he must have had a physical problem and there was a danger that his audience would have been critical of him because of this, and that he might react; but they would have been wrong to think that Paul would react in this way. When Paul came to Galatia they did not reproach him nor reject or despise him, they received him “as an angel of God, as Christ Jesus.” Paul was there really as Christ’s representative.

**“What then was your blessedness? for I bear you witness that, if possible, plucking out your own eyes ye would have given them to me.” (4:15)**

That had been a happy situation, “blessedness.” This is the same word that Paul used in Romans 4:8 when he spoke of the blessedness of the believer, “Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.” This blessedness that he described was the blessedness that the Galatians had when they believed the gospel.

**“So I have become your enemy in speaking the truth to you?” (4:16)**

Their love for Paul had been very great and his saying words against them might have led them to think he was their enemy, but of course he was not their enemy; he was merely trying setting things straight. He loved them but there were those who were zealously trying to corrupt them, from wrong motives.

**“They are not rightly zealous after you, but desire to shut you out from us, that ye may be zealous after them.” (4:17)**

Paul was acting with right motives; the false teachers had the wrong ones. They were zealous after the believers there and desired to “shut you out from us,” they wanted to separate these believers from Paul so that they would then become zealous after themselves (the false teachers). So it was really a party spirit that energized them, they were forming a party.

**“But it is right to be zealous at all times in what is right, and not only when I am present with you—” (4:18)**

In other words, Paul said, “If you want to be zealous, be zealous at all times in what is right, and not only when I am present.” This can be a lesson for us, too. The Lord wants us to be zealous in the things that are right during the time of His absence.

**“my children, of whom I again travail in birth until Christ shall have been formed in you ...” (4:19)**

This phrase “My little children,” is only found once in Paul’s writings. It is found seven times in 1 John, and once in John 14. It is a very affectionate term. Of course, they were sons, we have seen this earlier. This was the position they had, but at the same time they were Paul’s little children, referring to the fact that they had accepted the Lord through Paul’s ministry. In this sense they were his little children. Why then, if they had accepted the Lord through his ministry, he goes on to say, “of whom I again travail”? It is as if he had to give birth to them a second time. This was how he compared the situation. He had given birth to them when they were born again, but now he was, as it were, in travail to give birth to them a second time. This second birth was in view of *formation*, “that Christ be formed in you.” The exercise Paul had was like a mother giving birth to a child; he was very affectionate, he loved them a lot, just as a mother loves her child, and he wanted now also, with the same zeal, with the same love, *Christ to be formed in them*. It was now not to receive Christ as their Saviour, it was now being formed after Christ, a further development.

This is the desire that the Lord has for each one of us and that Paul had for all the Christians, that Christ would be formed in them. I will give you one example; if we turn to Colossians we see how Paul had a deep exercise for the believers, writing to them, “God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope

of glory: whom we preach [or ‘announce’], warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus” (Col. 1:27-28). Here we find the concept of what a mature man in Christ is: that is, Christ formed in the believer. This was Paul’s exercise, to lead the believers to maturity. This matter of spiritual growth was a spiritual battle, as we see in this conflict. Paul’s exercise for the Galatians was to help them, and that is why in the last part of Galatians 4 he goes back to Abraham a second time. Now, as I said earlier, those false teachers probably liked to go back to Abraham, the father of all believers, but it was to make their wrong conclusions, but when Paul went back to Abraham it was to set the record straight.

**“... and I should wish to be present with you now, and change my voice, for I am perplexed as to you.” (4:20)**

Paul would like to be present with them, to change his voice, to speak very solemnly to them, as he was in anguish of soul about them.

### **G. The Failure of Legalism: From Contrast of Bondage and Liberty — 4:21-31**

**“Tell me, ye who are desirous of being under law, do ye not listen to the law?” (4:21)**

The Judaizing teachers would put the Galatians under the law of Sinai, they had placed themselves under the law, and they were in the process of bringing others there. Now Paul is going to show how inconsistent they were: “Do you not listen to the law?” His argument was, “If you are under the law, you had better listen to the law, but you are not listening to the law at all, you are totally inconsistent! To demonstrate this inconsistency he took two examples, two women. Let us just briefly highlight them, and then we will go over a few details.

**“For it is written that Abraham had two sons; one of the maid servant, and one of the free woman. But he that was of the maid servant was born according to flesh, and he that was of the free woman through the**

**promise. Which things have an allegorical sense; for these are two covenants: one from mount Sinai, gendering to bondage, which is Hagar. For Hagar is mount Sinai in Arabia, and corresponds to Jerusalem which is now, for she is in bondage with her children but the Jerusalem above is free, which is our mother.” (4:22-26)**

There are seven main contrasts in this part of the Epistle. (1) Firstly, two sons; one of them born of a maid servant and one of them born of a free woman. (2) There are two different women, the maid servant and the free woman. (3) Then there are two different systems, the one connected with the flesh, the other connected with promise (v.23). Now Paul builds on that. (4) There are also two covenants, the first connected with God’s promise (ch.3). This promise cannot be annulled by the Mosaic covenant because that came later. This is connected with Mount Sinai, where the law was given. This corresponds to the Jerusalem which is now. (5) Two mothers: the Jerusalem at that time was like Sinai, “For she is in bondage with her children but Jerusalem which is above is free, which is our mother.” The contrast is with Mount Zion, in Scripture connected with God’s grace (Hebrews 12, for example). (6) Then we have the two Jerusalems, the Jerusalem below as it is now in bondage over against the Jerusalem which is above. (7) Finally we have the seventh contrast, two conditions, a condition of bondage connected with the present Jerusalem and, contrasted with this a condition of liberty, of freedom, which is connected with the Jerusalem above, which is our mother.

I want to add to this that the Jerusalem above here is *not* to be confused with the new Jerusalem, as we have in Revelation 21, rather it is to show that we as believers have something in common with the Old Testament believers. Abraham expected the city which had foundations (Heb.11:10), by faith called the city to come (Heb.13:14). There are three references to this heavenly city in Hebrews 11, 12, and 13. The believers in the Old Testament have a part in this, and so do we, but we have more than this (although this is not indicated here; it is developed elsewhere). We have something in common with Abraham who also knew this liberty. He was also connected with this system of grace and liberty.

**“For it is written, Rejoice, thou barren that bearest not; break out and cry, thou that travailest not; because the children of the desolate are more numerous than those of her that has a husband.” (4:27)**

Paul quotes Isaiah 54 here in this connection, “Rejoice, thou barren.” The barren here is not Sarah, it is Israel, as the context shows, “who was without husband.” Israel had a husband, God took Israel as His wife (Jer.2), so when God entered into the covenant relationship with Israel, she became His wife, but then she became unfaithful, and God had to send her away (as we read in Isaiah and other Scriptures). Thus she became desolate, without husband, and so she had no children, “thou that travailest not.” But then, what does Paul say? “The children of the desolate are more numerous than those of her that hath a husband.” Here we see that in the future Israel will come back to God, and then she will see what happened in the meantime: in the two thousand years that she was set aside as a nation, God has brought in this harvest from the Gentiles.

The Lord said in John 4:22, “Salvation is from the Jews” and so when Israel will be brought back to God she will see all these children that will be counted to her. She did not give birth to these children, but these children will be counted to her, as it were, because salvation is of the Jews. Again, I repeat, this is not in connection with the heavenly position, the special place we have now in connection with the heavenly Christ, but it is in connection with God’s way for this earth, that He will account all the believers to that earthly vessel (because salvation is from the Jews), which will then be glorified in the millennial reign.

**“But ye, brethren, after the pattern of Isaac, are children of promise.” (4:28)**

Now at the end of the chapter Paul makes some conclusions. The comparison is now concluded, “Ye brethren, after the pattern of Isaac,” that is, the son of the free woman, “are children of promise,” over against the flesh. Abraham tried to act according to the flesh, but what was the result? He had this son from Hagar. Here we see the result of what the flesh can produce, even with the best intentions. Abraham had good intentions, but the flesh can only produce flesh.

**“But as then he that was born according to flesh persecuted him that was born according to Spirit, so also it is now.” (4:29)**

The one who was born according to the flesh was Ishmael, and he “persecuted him that was born according to the Spirit.” Neither Abraham nor

Sarah could have a child but they both trusted God and then He gave them Isaac, the son of the promise. It is connected with faith and freedom according to the Spirit. The conclusion of the matter is that the flesh persecutes that which is after the Spirit and so it is now. As the Galatians had become spiritual sons, the religious flesh was zealous and the false teachers were after them. Satan does not want this position of sonship to function; he does not want us to be true worshippers, so the flesh will always be there to persecute what is after the Spirit.

**“But what says the scripture? Cast out the maid servant and her son; for the son of the maid servant shall not inherit with the son of the free woman.” (4:30)**

But what says the Scripture? Previously Paul had written, “The Scripture, foreseeing that God.....” (3:18) and “The Scripture has shut up all things under sin” (3:22). So here we see again the importance of the Scriptures. Now here in chapter 4 the Scripture is really quoting what Sarah said, “Cast out the maid servant and her son.” What Sarah said at that time was according to God’s thoughts. It has authority, also for us to draw a lesson from it, as Paul does here, “For the son of the maid servant shall not be an heir with the son of the free woman.” That was the conclusion. So it was then; so it is now.

**“So then, brethren, we are not maid servant’s children, but children of the free woman.” (4:31)**

This is the final conclusion and the application for us today as well. We are not associated with a system of bondage, “but children of the free woman,” linked with promise. This is what God wants us to enjoy and this leads to practical consequences, we have been set free. There is a vital connection between doctrinal truths and practical truths, that is, the outworking of the truth is practical. But we must have the doctrine before we can work it out practically. True practice flows from true doctrine.

### III. THE PRACTICAL ARGUMENT: THE EFFECTS OF LIBERTY — 5:1-6:10

We come now to the practical part of the epistle. Paul's arguments can be divided into three main parts, the first series of arguments is based on the historical events as Paul had experienced them (chapters 1 and 2). The second part deals with the doctrinal arguments (mainly chapters 3 and 4) although the doctrinal part cannot be entirely limited to these, for in a sense the whole Epistle is doctrine. Now we come to the third part, the practical arguments, and this subdivision of the letter is perhaps the most powerful part.

It is very helpful to have a few key words. In verse 1 "*Stand fast*," that is our position, then as believers we go on and we are "*running*" (v.7). This is a topic that Paul elaborates very much in the Scriptures. He compares himself — and Christians in general — with runners in a race. To run the race we need training and diligence. In Hebrews 12, for example, we are running in the race of faith, and we need to look steadfastly on the Author and Finisher of the race of faith. Also Paul said that the Galatians had run well. Further in Galatians 5, the other key word is in verse 16, "*Walk in the Spirit*." This is the Christian walk. There is not a contradiction between these terms, rather they highlight certain truths, the position in which to stand firm, to go on running the Christian race, and the Christian experience to walk, which implies behaviour, attitudes, practice. Then the fourth key word we find in verse 25, "*Let us walk by the Spirit*." There the word "walk" is a different word in the Greek text. It means "*to walk in order*" so that we are not out of step. In verse 16 it means the Christian walk, the Christian practice, which includes our daily lives in which He wants us to be overcomers, but when it comes to verse 25 the emphasis is walking *in order*. It is more like a military term so that we do not walk out of step, causing others to trip over us. In chapter 6 we will see seven points about walking in order. So: we stand, we run, we walk and we walk in order. These are the four key words that I just wanted to highlight.



## A. Liberty — 5:1

**“Christ has set us free in freedom; stand fast therefore, and be not held again in a yoke of bondage.” (5:1)**

The summary statement in verse 1 is “Christ has set us free in freedom.” This is the Christian liberty that Paul maintains in this epistle and for which he was ready to pay a high price. He defended his liberty at all cost. The Lord Jesus said in John 8, “When the Son has set you free, you shall be free indeed.” This is the kind of liberty that the Lord wants His people to enjoy. In Romans 8, for example, we find details about this Christian liberty but here the emphasis is a little bit different.

I connect this with what Paul says in verse 1, “Stand fast,” or, “Stand firm.” This liberty is something to enjoy in the Christian experience, but it is also something that is hard to understand. Christian liberty is not legalism. This is the way that the enemy wants people to go; legalism is the opposite of Christian liberty. Further, Christian liberty does not mean license, we will see in chapter 6 that we are under the law of Christ. This is a new law, a new order of things, the law of Christ relates to the new nature. God does not force us to obey His commands; rather, he has given us a nature that desires to do exactly what He wants us to do. James speaks about the royal law (Jas. 2:8) and the law of liberty (Jas. 2:12) so there is obligation but not in the sense of a bondage. In one sense we are bondmen of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, but it is not in the sense of bondage that we have seen in connection with Hagar at the end of chapter 4, a system that is in bondage with her children (v. 25) which is characteristic of Judaism, and which Paul calls “a yoke of bondage” (5:2). No, that is something that is entirely different from God’s thoughts. If we are under such bondage, we will not be able to serve God effectively, nor will we be able to worship Him well. A yoke of bondage will stop the believer from going on. There will be all kinds of hindrances and that is what Paul wants to prevent. We are set free from such bondage, we are set free from paganism, set free from this religious side of bondage and set at liberty. This liberty is a precious thing, and it is constantly under attack. Many are the forces seeking to move away the saints either towards legalism or towards license. Therefore, we have to have our focus right in connection with this liberty and that is why he says, “Stand firm.” When it comes to the enjoyment of these precious Christian truths there is always this challenge to stand firm, so we will not lose them, but that

we will enjoy this position of liberty in true fellowship with God. In every epistle Paul gives encouragement in this sense, to hold fast.

## **B. The Consequences of Liberty — 5:2-12**

Now follow seven consequences of not holding this liberty and allowing such a wrong yoke upon us. The yoke that the Lord speaks about in Matthew 11 is easy and has nothing to do with the yoke of bondage as we see here. The apostle pointed out in Acts 15 that the Israelites were not able to take this yoke of the law, they were not able to produce fruit for God under this kind of bondage, and so Paul did not want the Christians to be placed under that bondage either, but there was a constant battle to maintain their freedom.

**“Behold, I, Paul, say to you, that if ye are circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing.” (5:2)**

[1] This is the first point. They were not circumcised yet, although they were contemplating it, in connection with this false doctrine, this mixture of law and grace. The false teachers might say something like, “You will lose your salvation if you will not be circumcised,” but Paul said, “Christ shall profit you *nothing* if you are.” He said that the consequence of this would be that they would not benefit from Christ in any practical manner. So Paul did not say that they would lose their salvation, but practically their being circumcised would have had very serious consequences. These teachers were saying, “You need to be circumcised in order to be saved” or “You are saved by grace but now you need to keep the law in order to please God, you need to keep the Mosaic law in order to live a holy life.” Paul pointed out that they would lose their true Christian liberty.

This liberty means, we are free from the law as the grounds, or the means, of our justification before God. We have seen in chapter 2 that we are not justified by the law or declared righteous before God on the basis of doing works of law, for this can only be on the basis of faith. Our rule or standard of life and our basis of fellowship with God are not through the law of Moses, but through the law of Christ. We are under a new rule, as Paul says in chapter 6:16, “As many as walk by this rule,” which is the law of Christ. This is the law of liberty I was referring to. So what Paul was saying then

was that it was not only the act of circumcision by itself, but that such an act would involve the whole ‘package’ that came with it; it would imply that they would be brought back under the Mosaic law. That would be the consequence. Therefore Paul said, “Christ will profit you *nothing*.” They would not benefit from Christ practically. I repeat, it does not mean that they would lose their salvation, but in actual practice for their Christian life they would not draw any profit from Christ. That is what Paul pointed out. It was a very serious consequence. If people say, “I am saved and now I keep the law of Moses in order to please God,” what are they doing? They are placing themselves under a curse. We have seen that in chapter 3. In that sense Christ cannot help them. It is not that Christ *does not want* to help them, but because of the decision they have made He *cannot* help them.

**“And I witness again to every man who is circumcised, that he is debtor to do the whole law.” (5:3)**

[2] The second point is that these people were sometimes very inconsistent. They would say, “We will keep the Sabbath,” but they would forget about the Passover lamb. This is just an example. ‘No,’ Paul would say, ‘you cannot do that. If you keep the law, if you are under the law, you have to keep the *whole* law.’ James 2:10 also makes this point and there are other references that show the same principle very clearly. You cannot divide the law into a moral part or a ceremonial part or a ritual part, the law is one package, you are either under it, or not at all. This is why Paul said, “If you view circumcision as part of the law, then you are a debtor to the whole law.” A debtor means you are in debt. To the believers who were considering being circumcised, Paul said, ‘If you do that, you will be in debt, you will lose your walk, you will lose all your riches in Christ, you will not be able to enjoy them, you will be a debtor.’ In chapter 3 Paul had already shown that if a man was under the law he was obliged to keep the whole law (vv.10-13).

**“Ye are deprived of all profit from the Christ as separated from him, as many as are justified by law; ye have fallen from grace.” (5:4)**

[3] The third consequence is that those who wanted to be justified by the law by being circumcised would be deprived of all profit. This goes together with verse 3, but it further means that they would in actual practice be separated from Christ. He elaborates on the same point in verse 3 but here makes it even more forceful. The word “deprived” means “render

inoperative.” We have a similar thought in Romans 7:6, “But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead to that wherein we were held we should serve in newness of spirit.” Here the deliverance from the law is that the law has no claims anymore, it has been rendered inoperative to the real believer. This is the same principle that Paul applies now in another way. He says, “If you want to be justified by the law, then you deprive yourself of all profit from Christ.” We cannot have it both ways, it is either law or grace. In Romans 6 Paul shows, if we are in this new order of things the law has no claims on us anymore, but on the other hand, here in Galatians 5 he says in verse 4, “If you want to be justified by the law, you cannot have any benefit from Christ anymore.” Paul’s teaching is very consistent.

**“For we, by the Spirit, on the principle of faith, await the hope of righteousness.” (5:5)**

[4] This is the fourth consequence. If they would place themselves under the law or want to be justified by the law, there would also be a conflict with the Holy Spirit because the Holy Spirit acts on the principle of faith. So just as they would lose their profit from Christ, they would also lose the help of the Spirit. Faith is here connected with hope. The impossibility of justification by the law is here contrasted in verse 5 by the hope of righteousness. True believers are justified on the basis of faith and they have a real hope, a hope of righteousness. Here faith, hope and love are linked together. Through faith we benefit from the help of the Spirit and we have the right kind of hope, the hope of righteousness; but if we are under the law, if we want to be justified by the law, our hope is gone.

With expectation we are looking forward, with eagerness. It is the same word that is used in Philippians 3:21, “We *expect* the Christ as Saviour” to come from heaven to transform our bodies to make them conform to His glorified body. We hope with expectation. Here we see the same kind of expectation in connection with the hope of righteousness. Again this is connected with Christ. Whenever faith, hope and love are mentioned in Scripture they are always connected with something. For example, the Thessalonians not only had faith, hope and love, they had, “*the hope of faith, the labour of love, and patience of hope*” (1 Thes.1:3). In this sense we may await with patience the hope of righteousness.

**“For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision has any force, nor uncircumcision; but faith working through love.” (5:6)**

[5] This is the fifth point. Paul elaborates now on the principle that you cannot be justified by law, because the position in Christ makes the other things of no importance. He shows how relative those things are which are of so much importance to the religious man. If we have been in the Jewish position such as being circumcised and now we have been saved, Paul does not ask us to change that circumcision now, but if we are a Gentile person who is saved, we are also now in Christ Jesus being uncircumcised, we are not asked to change that either. Such things are irrelevant. What really is relevant is the position *in Christ Jesus*. This is a position we have, and it is mentioned forty-eight times in the New Testament. Interestingly, we are also said to be “in the Lord” forty-eight times. In Galatians the fact that we are “in Christ Jesus,” is emphasized five times. This means the anointed Man in the glory (Christ), who is Jesus (emphasizing His manhood), He is the One in whom God sees us. This is the wonderful position we have, and so these matters like for example circumcision or uncircumcision, are not important in themselves. However, they are important when it comes to the matter of justification or sanctification. If one says, you cannot be justified unless you are circumcised then the matter becomes important, not because the issue itself is so weighty, but because that is where the deviation starts.

Summing it up Paul says, “but faith working through love.” This is what matters. We have seen the hope of righteousness, now we see faith working through love. The three go together many times. This love is the love for God and it is the love for the people of God. In James 2 Abraham, the father of all believers, is called “a friend of God” (v.23). He is said to have worked *by faith*, that was his relationship with God. Then we find Rahab whose characteristic was a love for the people of God. Faith is seen in Abraham, love for God, faith is seen in Rahab, the harlot, and this goes together with love for the people of God; this is what really characterized Rahab. *Faith* goes together with *love* and it is linked with *hope*.

**“Ye ran well; who has stopped you that ye should not obey the truth?” (5:7)**

[6] Paul now comes to his sixth point, the loss of direction. The Galatians received Paul enthusiastically when first he went to Galatia, they were even ready, if it had been possible, to pluck out their own eyes and to

give them to Paul. They were going on well at one time, and Paul says about that, “You ran well.”

Think of Paul in Philippians 3, how he was trying to reach the goal, it was his all-consuming effort. There are other Scriptures where we can see the running. This takes energy and commitment. “But,” he says, “who has stopped you?” This is a very solemn thing. There was one who had stopped them. Paul was himself an example of a runner who ran well. He says in Acts 20:24, “But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.” He is an example for us to follow. We are now runners in the race and we are to follow Paul’s example, and, of course, to follow the Lord Jesus. But the Galatians were stopped because of wrong doctrine. Paul asks the question, “Who has stopped you that you should not obey the truth?” Here is a play on words. The word “obey” here could be translated “that you would not be persuaded by the truth,” and then he says, “This persuasion is not of Him that calls you.” There is a link between this lack of obedience and this new persuasion, this new conviction, this new obedience that characterized them, this persuasion, was “not of Him that calls you.” To finish this word play, in verse 10, “I have confidence,” could be translated “I am *persuaded* as to you.” So there is a link between the verses 7-10 through this word play.

**“The persuasibleness is not of him that calls you.” (5:8)**

As a consequence of point 6, the believers were moving away, like already mentioned in Galatians 1:6, where we also have a reference to the call, “I marvel that ye are so soon removed from Him that called you into the grace of Christ and to another gospel.” They were moving away from the position that they had when they were called. This is now further emphasized. They were moving away from their position, and this was not according to the One who had called them. We have seen this call in a very powerful way exemplified in Paul himself in chapter 1:15.

**“A little leaven leavens the whole lump. I have confidence as to you in the Lord, that ye will have no other mind; and he that is troubling you shall bear the guilt of it, whosoever he may be.” (5:9-10)**

[7] This is the seventh consequence, the principle that there was corruption from within. It had only started with perhaps one person, “*he that is troubling you*” (v.10). Then we have references also to there being more people who were leading the Galatians astray, but here Paul emphasizes one person, so we see how much harm one person can do. “*He that is troubling you*” is a reference to the false teacher and he says, “*he shall bear the guilt of it.*” This is an epistle that is not dealing with assembly principles, as is the case in 1 Corinthians 5 where the same expression is used about leaven. There Paul explains that the man needed to be dealt with and disciplined. Of course this needs to be done here also, but that is not the issue of this epistle, rather it is to show how this teaching would work as a leaven until it had leavened the whole lump. It had a small start, “*a little leaven*” but what a consequence it had!

In Matthew 13 the Lord presents a parable about a woman who takes a little bit of leaven and puts it in the three measures of meal and we see then the process of corruption that results. There it is related to *idolatry* in connection with the history of the church until it leavens the whole thing. This is exactly what has happened. The Lord speaks also of the leaven of the Sadducees, *rationalism*. They rejected many things because of rationalism, for example, they did not believe in the resurrection. This will work as leaven, it will convince others as well, and so this spreading action works with wrong doctrine as we have here. It is an ongoing process. It is very insidious. And so when this takes place, what needs to be done? The leaven needs to be removed, before it gets a chance to penetrate the dough. This is how Israel was taught to have un leavened loaves; in 1 Corinthians 5 Paul applies what happened in the history of Israel to the Church, to instruct them to be free from leaven’s influence.

It is beautiful to see in verse 10 that, despite the seventh point he has mentioned about the dangerous situation, he also says, “*I have confidence as to you in the Lord, that ye will have no other mind.*” Paul is stressing to the Galatians that if they paid attention to his word they would not go the wrong way. It is beautiful to see this, and this may have helped them also to come to their senses, and to go back to the right track.

**“But I, brethren, if I yet preach circumcision, why am I yet persecuted? Then the scandal of the cross has been done away.” (5:11)**

Paul was not preaching circumcision in order for the believers to be saved, but maybe they had heard how Timothy had been circumcised; Paul had used Christian liberty to do that, and he did it so Timothy would be able to reach the Jewish communities he would visit, because Timothy was half Jewish. We saw earlier that Paul would not allow this in the case of Titus who was a Gentile. So Paul was definitely not preaching circumcision.

The message that he preached was not to circumcise, because then he would not be persecuted. The fact that he was persecuted showed that he was not preaching circumcision, so maybe that was a misunderstanding with some among the Galatians. In chapter 6:12, “As many as desire to have a fair appearance in the flesh, these compel you to be circumcised, only that they may not be persecuted because of the cross of Christ.” This was a very real thing that Paul presented here. The cross of Christ will not go together with this religious compromise to circumcise, whatever carnal purposes it may concern.

Not only do we need to grasp what Paul is saying here, we need to make applications as well. In the religious world of today, people will follow outward rituals like baptism or other sacraments and put their trust in them. It is wrong. This is exactly the same thing that Paul condemns here in connection with circumcision. The cross sets aside everything of man, also of the religious man, so if we want to build on rituals or regulations it is an immediate contradiction to the cross. The scandal of the cross means it is a scandal for the religious man. That is why Paul says in 1 Corinthians 1:23 that the cross is a stumbling block to the Jews, a cause of offence, they cannot accept it.

**“I would that they would even cut themselves off who throw you into confusion.” (5:12)**

Again Paul refers to the false teachers. We have seen in verse 10 one particular person, but now Paul speaks in the plural, “*they*,” and he speaks, as it were, “I would that they would mutilate, or cut themselves off.” This is really what Paul is saying, that they might use the knife for circumcision, so let them, then, castrate themselves. He is mocking them. In Philippians 3:2 he refers to this religious action by another term, “the concision.” This is another term of contempt to illustrate these people who were always cutting, they wanted to cut, but no amount of cutting would benefit them. So Paul says, “You may start with this kind of circumcision and continue, but it will not



benefit you. You may even go as far as to castrate, but it will not benefit you.” No amount of cutting will help. The believers in Galatia were brought into confusion because of this teaching.

### C. Definition of Liberty — 5:13-15

**“For ye have been called to liberty, brethren; only do not turn liberty into an opportunity to the flesh, but by love serve one another.” (5:13)**

Christian liberty is superior to the law system, and here we see how there is also this contrast between the Spirit and the flesh. Again we find this call, God’s call, being stressed. It is a beautiful thought, to meditate upon the privileges connected with the power of God’s call, and where it leads to. It leads to true liberty. Now, if we have a privilege we also have a responsibility and this is what comes out in the second part of this verse. There is the danger of license, the enemy is very subtle. If he cannot catch believers in legalism he will try to catch them in license. “No,” Paul says, “do not use the liberty as an opportunity to the flesh.” We will see in the next chapter that we are under a new rule, we are not in bondage, but it is a system of things that we can now serve one another by love. This word “serve,” means ‘to serve as a bondservant.’ If we want to be a bondservant, Paul says, “do not be bondservant *of the law*, but be a bondservant *of one another*.” The point that he is making is that what these false teachers were doing was not through love. But the new rule, the law of Christ, goes together with love. It goes together with what the Lord says in John 13 about the love one for another. That characterizes this new order of things.

**“For the whole law is fulfilled in one word, in Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself ...” (5:14)**

We might say, “But we have just said that we are not under the law of Moses.” We would be right, but what Paul is saying is that if we follow the instructions that he has given (and I refer already ahead to this expression of chapter 6:2, “Bear one another’s burdens, and thus fulfill the law of Christ,” and thus being under the law of Christ, the royal law, the law of liberty), we will do certain things that the law of Moses also asked for. I could perhaps

give an example. If I go to the United States can I say that the laws of Canada do not apply and so I can go through a red traffic light? No. The fact that I am under another law system does not mean that I am now not obliged to do these things. So may I apply it this way, the fact that we are under the law of Christ means certain things and we do not do them by obligation, we do them out of love. We have a desire to do exactly what God wants us to do and by doing this we will, at the same time, do what this other law asks, although we are not under that law. I repeat, we are *not* under the Mosaic law, but we will do what the Mosaic law also asks, “You shall love your neighbour as yourself” (Matt.22:39). Under the law of Christ we will do that exactly but not as being under the Mosaic law. This is the point to grasp.

**“... but if ye bite and devour one another, see that ye are not consumed one of another.” (5:15)**

We are under this new law, and it has much higher and more difficult standards than the Mosaic law. I will expand on this later, but by keeping these standards out of love, this being the desire of our new nature, we will also do what the Mosaic law asks, but not because we are under the Mosaic law. It does not mean that we have now to do all that the Mosaic law asks, for example to keep the Sabbath and things like that, not at all. Paul has explained earlier that with privilege comes responsibility. Here in 5:15 evidently the flesh was at work. In saying this, we may perhaps come to this conclusion: Paul says, “You are not under the law of Moses, but at least the law of Moses says, ‘You shall love your neighbour as yourself.’” Do it then, instead of biting and devouring one another.

#### **D. Individual Practice — 5:16-24**

**“But I say, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall no way fulfil flesh’s lust.” (5:16)**

[1] I will be brief about the five points that Paul summarizes in connection with walking in the Spirit. The Lord wants us to be overcomers, He has given us all the resources that are needed, and so He says, “If we take

advantage of these resources we shall in no way fulfill fleshly lusts.” This is the first point.

**“For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these things are opposed one to the other, that ye should not do those things which ye desire ...” (5:17)**

[2] In the King James translation it says, “so that ye *cannot* do the things that ye would,” but that is a wrong translation. The new translation and other versions clearly show that. The point is that ‘ye *should* not do those things that ye desire.’ What we really desire, according to the Spirit, according to the new nature, is opposed by the flesh, but it is not impossible, (as the KJV states), for we have the new nature connected with the Spirit: He will do those things that God asks, loving and serving one another, for example. So this verse is a description of the conflict between the flesh and the Holy Spirit, but also a new spirit in the believer connected with the new birth or the new nature while the flesh is still in us and thus there is this conflict.

**“... but if ye are led by the Spirit, ye are not under law.” (5:18)**

[3] This is the third point. We have now, through the Holy Spirit, a new leader. This is a proof for believers who are led by the Spirit. This is practical evidence that they are not under the Mosaic law. If we are under the Mosaic law, the rule given for man in the flesh, then the Spirit of God has nothing to do with this. However, we will see more about this in chapter 6:16, “As many as walk by this rule, peace be upon them, and mercy.”

**“Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are fornication, uncleanness, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, strifes, jealousies, angers, contentions, disputes, schools of opinion, envyings, murders, drunkennesses, revells, and things like these” (5:19-21a)**

[4] The fourth point of this new walk is connected with the contrast between the flesh and the fruit of the Spirit. Here Paul summarizes the works of the flesh. We have many lists of the works of the flesh in the New Testament, Romans 1, Mark 7, 1 Timothy 1 and 2 Timothy 3, for example. Here he gives also a list and we can divide it into four categories. The first

category involving fornication, uncleanness and licentiousness has to do with sexual sins. The second category, idolatry and sorcery, has to do with false worship, including witchcraft. The third category contains eight points and has to do with social and personal relationships. These words are difficult to follow, for there are so many different translations of them. Hatred is mentioned here and there, as emphasis on enmity and strife in contrast to the fruit of the Spirit, which is peace. The third category is envy, which is a special evidence of the flesh. We have to humble ourselves before the Lord. How easily some of these things are displayed among believers! Contentions are divisions, actions, or disputes, a word that is also used in Romans 16:17, where Paul says, "Consider those who cause division." It is a work of the flesh, of forming schools of opinion, which is the idea of sects or denominations. These four categories summarize the works of the flesh over against the fruit of the Spirit.

**"... as to which I tell you beforehand, even as I also have said before, that they who do such things shall not inherit God's kingdom." (5:21b)**

If this happens to true believers, they are on a way that leads away from God's kingdom. Here we see the kingdom of God in its future aspect. Let us not be confused (as some people are) in thinking that these works of the flesh can only be done by unbelievers. No. These things can be done by believers also, if and in the measure they give way to the flesh. We have seen in verse 17 the conflict between the flesh and the Spirit: if a believer lets the flesh have control, then these things will happen in his life. What Paul is saying is that at that moment they are on a pathway that will not lead to the inheritance of God's kingdom. In another connection, Paul makes it very clear in many passages, that we are already in God's kingdom today, and being there we understand immediately that these things cannot be tolerated. This is very obvious.

**"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, fidelity, meekness, self-control ..." (5:22,23a)**

This is a marked contrast with what has gone before. This is our new state, of course, in connection with the new nature, but under the control now of the Holy Spirit. There are not fruits, plural, there is *one fruit*, but it is a nine-fold fruit. It is wonderful to consider this fruit of the Spirit in its nine aspects. We have three categories. Love, joy and peace, in the first category; then

longsuffering, kindness and goodness, in the second; and finally faithfulness, (or gentleness or fidelity) and meekness (a quality which controls the thought) and self-control, in the last. These three categories together are the nine-fold fruit of the Spirit. This is what God would like to see in our lives, individually and collectively. Paul says, almost in irony, “Against such things there is no law.” Here the question comes, “Do we cultivate this fruit?” Well, how can we do this? We have to learn many lessons with regard to the flesh. In the flesh there is no good (that is confirmed in many Scriptures in the New Testament) and God has condemned it. The positive point in verse 24 is that this fruit bearing is done by faith. In the power of the Holy Spirit we cultivate these qualities, we overcome, as we have mentioned earlier. “Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall in no way fulfill fleshly lusts” (verse 16). This is how to live victoriously. These points connected with the walk in the Spirit are really to help us to live lives of spiritual victory, to be overcomers. In this kind of atmosphere the fruit of the Spirit will be produced in us, and this is in the context of love, as we saw earlier (John would say, ‘first love’). All this goes together with practicing radical self-judgment, on an ongoing basis.

**“... against such things there is no law.” (5:23b)**

[5] This fifth point goes all together with this last matter of walking in the Spirit, living as overcomers, and then producing the fruit of the Spirit. This is Paul’s conclusion in verse 25. If we live by the Spirit (if: that is, what we are positionally), then let us walk by the Spirit in practice. We will see seven points in connection with this walking in step with each other.

**“But they that are of the Christ have crucified the flesh with the passions and the lusts.” (5:24)**

“They that are of the Christ” is a precious expression. I have spoken about privileges and I have also mentioned that privilege goes together with responsibility. These people have crucified the flesh, not only positionally, but experimentally. This is the application of what they have learned. I want to refer to chapter 2 where Paul says, “I am crucified with Christ” (verse 20). There we see the identification with Christ. No longer live I but Christ lives in me, but in that I now in live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me.” It is a wonderful identification through the cross of Christ.

We have seen in chapter 5:11 a reference to the stumbling block of the cross being done away if Paul would still preach circumcision. There are also in chapter 3 a couple of references to the cross where Paul presented Christ as crucified, in verses 1 and 13, “O senseless Galatians, who has bewitched you; to whom, as before your very eyes, Jesus Christ has been portrayed, crucified among you?” and “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.” There are many references to the cross in this book and later in chapter 6 we will see another very important reference. We will see how, through the cross of Christ, we are crucified. The cross of Christ is mentioned in verses 12 and 14, “Far be it from me to boast, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom the world is crucified to me, and I to the world.” How important the cross is in this book! In that sense we are of the Christ. Through this identification with Him as crucified we now live with Him. It is a wonderful link we have, the link of intimacy through faith in the Lord Jesus, the Christ, the Anointed One, the One in whom God has found all His delight, this is the One in whom we have found all our delight and from whom we draw all our resources. If we deviate from this we lose the benefit of the resources that we have in Christ. This was the challenge at the beginning of this chapter.

## E. Social Practice — 5:25-6:10

**“If we live by the Spirit, let us walk also by the Spirit.” (5:25)**

After Paul has spoken about the walk in the Spirit, or in the power of the Spirit, or according to the Spirit, in fellowship with the Spirit, which has to do with our daily practice, the way we behave, we come to walking by the Spirit. This implies walking together, in step with each other, we walk together as in an army, in ranks, having our eyes focused on the Lord Jesus. This is how we keep rank, by so doing we do not cause any trouble to the one before or after us or beside us. In connection with this kind of walking there are seven admonitions. It is not only that we are *individually* responsible how we walk in the Spirit (as in verses 16 to 24), but now the point is that we walk *together*.

**“Let us not become vain-glorious, provoking one another, envying one another.” (5:26)**

[1] The first admonition is in this verse: that we walk together under the leadership of the Holy Spirit. This is the ‘social aspect’ of our walk. We have in the first part of the book Paul’s biography, then we have the doctrine, and then in chapters 5 and 6 we have the doctrine is to be worked out in our daily lives, which could be called the social aspect.

We are not to become vainglorious because if we look for glory for ourselves we become like the people who wanted to be prominent under the Mosaic law, like the Pharisees and the scribes. The danger that Paul warned about was that the Christians would be placed under that kind of a system, under that kind of a law and would also become vainglorious, just like the Pharisees and just like Paul was before his conversion. Paul thought he was God’s best servant but in fact he was God’s greatest enemy. That is what he found out and it was because of his vainglory. In John 12 the Lord instructs us how the religious leaders were looking for their own glory and for the glory of man, but that is vainglory. If we look for the glory of man, we are occupied with the wrong kind of man, we are occupied with *vain* glory, because this glory will disappear, it will pass, whereas eternal life is connected with Christ in the glory. This last is an order that remains.

Looking for vainglory causes also a provoking of one another; these two go together. If I have a desire to be first among the brethren I try to put someone else down, which is a provocation. How easily this can happen when we place ourselves under man-made rules and not only that, the other extreme is to envy one another. This is the first admonition in connection with walking in step. If I become vainglorious, if I provoke or envy, I walk out of step, this will have detrimental effects for myself and for the others who walk with me. This envy is also very clearly seen with the Pharisees. They delivered the Lord Jesus because of the religious envy that marked them (Mark 15:10). This is also something that marks the natural man and so it can also happen to us, 1 Peter 2 makes it very clear. There are five points in 1 Peter 2:1 that we have to lay up or lay aside and one of them is envy. It is not something that is only characteristic of unbelievers, and that is why this is an admonition for us as well.

**“Brethren, if even a man be taken in some fault, ye who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of meekness, considering thyself lest thou also be tempted.” (6:1)**

[2] This is the second admonition. This is not someone living in sin, it is not someone who is consistently living in a wrong relationship or a wrong life or wrong attitude, but is someone that is *taken* by something, so it becomes a trespass; it is not a systematic course of life that he is following, like living in sin. Let me give an example, suppose one of those Galatian believers had been influenced by the Judaizers and had been overtaken, he had missed the mark (that is what sin is), but not only that, a trespass is something that means you are out of step. Jude at the end of his epistle writes “to him that is able to keep you *without stumbling*” (v.24). It is beautiful to see that Paul addresses the believers as brethren here. We have seen how he was in despair over them in chapter 4, but also how he had confidence in them because they were true believers and he was confident about the work of God in them.

So this chapter starts with “Brethren” and the last verse also says, “*Brethren*, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen.” So Paul addresses them in the right way, in the relationship he enjoys with them in Christ, and now he talks about someone who had been overtaken in a trespass, and so was walking out of step. Now what is going to be done? There are three things that are needed for the remedy.

[A] Firstly, only those who are spiritual can be of any help to restore — restoration always being the objective — such a one who had been overtaken. Under the Mosaic law, with the Pharisees, it would be ‘culmination’ (getting rid of someone) but under the law of Christ (as we will see in verse 2) the objective is restoration, because it is a true believer who has been guilty of this trespass. The word “restoration” here is a word that is used among other things for the repairing of the nets in the Gospels of Mark and Matthew, or in connection with the disciples becoming perfected, established in spiritual progress and discipleship. Sometimes it is used and translated as “prepare,” for example Noah ‘prepared’ the ark for his household (seven times it is translated by this verb). Here this restoration is a process to bring someone back to the thoughts that God had for him and for the believers in general. It is also sometimes used for bringing praise. This restoration would then also be to the praise and glory of God. What a contrast with the trespass!



The man who was half dead and whom the Samaritan helped, the priest and the Levite had already passed by (Luke 10). If we look at this whole story, we see very clearly how Luke describes them and their attitude, they were “Judaizers” and did not really care for people’s needs, whereas the Good Samaritan came to help the hopeless man. This is what we have here, the work that is involved in restoration; also it must be in a spirit of meekness. Some have read the need to be spiritual as a sarcastic statement of Paul to the Galatians, “You who are spiritual,” but let us keep it as a condition that is needed to help in the process of restoration in the wider setting of God’s assembly. There needs to be this right spiritual attitude. In 1 Corinthians 2 we see the *natural man*, in chapter 3 we see the *carnal believer*, but then we see the *spiritual believer*. This is the category which is addressed here, spiritual maturity is supposed. In Hebrews 5:12 we see how the believers lacked this, although as far as time was concerned they should have been teachers, but they were still babes, and so there was a lack of spirituality. There are several examples we could give about this matter of being spiritual or lack of spirituality, Ephesians 4:14 for example, where we see how the babe is “tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness.” So that is the first condition to help for restoration: being spiritual.

[B] The second condition is a spirit of meekness. Meekness does not give nor does it take offence. How easily we offend someone and how easily we are offended! A servant of the Lord must be marked by this meekness (2 Tim. 2:25) and this quality is needed to receive the word (Jas.1:21). This meekness goes together with the wisdom from above and is a quality we find in the Lord Jesus and in the Good Samaritan.

[C] The third condition is to consider ourselves. This is very personal. If we feel that we are able to help, then that is good, but then we also must consider ourselves, for we should not think we are better than the person who needs to be helped. When we think we are better, we have already failed the test that is provided here, which implies true self-judgment, as well as real humility, not a fair show of humility in the flesh as the Pharisees sometimes did, but true humility and not thinking to be better than the other person, because we are also vulnerable, “lest thou also be tempted.”

So these conditions are like tests needed before we can help in connection with restoration. Of course, the Lord wants to prevent failure, He wants to prevent someone walking out of step, but if it happens then these spiritual qualities are needed to bring someone back in step. This verb “walk” implies

walking together in one rank, walking in step. This is another important admonition, to be walking in step with each other (see general context above).

**Bear one another's burdens, and thus fulfill the law of the Christ.” (6:2)**

The Pharisees and the Judaizers would put burdens on other people, but they themselves would not touch them (Matt.23:4). This is also a very practical admonition, it is Christian liberty. Christian liberty is used to help other Christians, and that is the point here. If there is one who has been affected by a catastrophe, if, for example, he has lost his house or wife, or something else very serious has happened, then that is a tremendous burden. In such a case others are there to help carry that burden. What is so remarkable is that it then says, “and so fulfill the law of Christ.” This is again a tremendous subject in itself. We are not under the law of Moses, this is what the Galatian Epistle is all about. The law of Moses cannot justify us, cannot save us, cannot help us to live holy lives, instead we are under the law of Christ and by fulfilling these admonitions, by putting them into practice, we fulfill the law of Christ. The Lord makes this clear in John 13, for example, when He gave an example by washing the feet of His disciples. This is the law of Christ and we find other expressions in the New Testament that summarize the same law of Christ. In the Gospels the expression ‘the law of Christ’ is not mentioned but we see the principles. The Lord said we should love one another as He has loved us (John 15:12), that we should love one another even to the point that we would give our life for a brother or sister (1 John 3, 4, Eph.5). This law of Christ is called in James’ Epistle ‘the law of liberty.’ It is called the perfect law of liberty (1:25) and the royal law (2:8). We are under the law of Christ, not the Mosaic law. The law of liberty does not mean that we are lawless; Paul explains this in 1 Corinthians 9, that he is lawfully subject to Christ, but being under the law of Christ implies we have true liberty, it is to do exactly what He desires us to do. The law of Christ is what Christ has in mind for us and it is our desire also because the new nature desires to do exactly what the law of Christ wants it to do. This is the topic here in verse 2 and it is a large topic in the New Testament. It is another of those subjects for you to study privately.

**“For if any man reputes himself to be something, being nothing, he deceives himself ...” (6:3)**

There is a little parenthesis in verses 3 and 4, where Paul gives more an argument as to why he says this. There is religious pride: we think we are better than others. Paul often uses a similar expression in 1 Corinthians and also in other places. This kind of thinking of the religious man is vain thinking. Paul says, "If we think to be something while we are nothing, we deceive ourselves." To accept that within ourselves we are nothing (a very condemning statement) is very hard, but it is the truth. If we accept this, that in ourselves we are nothing, then the Lord is everything, then He can use us.

**"... but let each prove his own work, and then he will have his boast in what belongs to himself alone, and not in what belongs to another." (6:4)**

We have to test ourselves. Instead of deceiving ourselves, we should be testing ourselves and our work. The word "testing" means "proving," or "putting to the test." The Pharisees and Judaizers tried to boast in so many circumcisions, in what they had accomplished in connection with others, whereas Paul says what you can really boast in is your own work *if* that can pass the test. Paul speaks about his real and good boasting in verse 14, "But far be it from me to boast, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." This was Paul's boasting, but instead of doing this the Pharisees and Judaizers were boasting in their religious efforts or success, and so could not pass the test.

In verses 3 and 4 we have an explanation of verse 2. To help each other according to the law of Christ implies that we do not think highly of ourselves, like the Levite and the priest who passed the man who was half-dead did, but rather we think like the Good Samaritan, and then also that our own work may be put to the test.

**"For each shall bear his own burden." (6:5)**

[4] This is the fourth point. Walking in step each one has his or her own responsibility. I cannot take someone else's responsibility. If I interfere with somebody else's responsibility I cause this other person to walk out of step, and that was what the Judaizers did. Paul says, "Bear ye *one another's* burdens," and "For every man shall bear *his own* burden." It is the same word in English, but in the Greek there is a difference, for a different word is used in verse 2, meaning a heavy burden or a load. This can be a tremendous thing

or it can be a small thing in our eyes, but there the point is that we should be *available* to help, whereas in verse 5 the word is used for something that you can *and should* carry yourself, it is your own responsibility which nobody else can or should take, it clearly is a different word. It is a word we find also in Matthew 11 in connection with the yoke of Christ, where He says, “My yoke is easy and My burden is light.” There it is obviously our carrying the burden ourselves, and even then, in the context of Matthew 11, we see the Lord carries with us. Here in Gal. 6 the emphasis is on what we carry ourselves, according to our own responsibility towards God.

**“Let him that is taught in the word communicate to him that teaches in all good things.” (6:6)**

[5] Here we have the fifth principle of walking in step, about sharing, and this is very general, to share and help the one who instructs. The instructed ones share with the one who instructs “all good things” This is not only financial, it says “in *all* good things.” This is another point the details of which can be worked out practically.

**“Be not deceived: God is not mocked; for whatever a man shall sow, that also shall he reap.” (6:7)**

[6] This is the sixth point, concerning the principles of God’s moral government. We need to realize this because if we do not, we will walk out of step. In verse 9 we will come to the seventh point, “And let us not be weary in well doing.” The Judaizers were leading astray. We can give other examples in the New Testament where we find this danger of being led astray by false teaching. In connection with this, Paul says, “God is not mocked.” The Galatians, having received this epistle, needed to realize that they were in the process of being deceived, and if they went on with this, they were mocking God. But Paul says, “God is not mocked”

**“For he that sows to his own flesh, shall reap corruption from the flesh; but he that sows to the Spirit, from the Spirit shall reap eternal life ...” (6:8)**

Paul now brings in the principle of God’s governmental dealings. Here it is man’s responsibility, but it is God’s government. I will just give one example

of many that could be quoted. When David confessed his sins, he received forgiveness of his sin with Bathsheba and also for causing her husband to be killed in the war, but in God's government he lost four of his sons. So it is not that the believer can lose his salvation, it is a matter that he can lose the enjoyment of fellowship with God. Whatever action we take, we will have to face the consequences. David's sin was forgiven, but in God's government he had to face the consequences, the death of four sons, including Bathsheba's baby. So this is a very solemn principle, every action is scrutinized by God; we are under His government.

This sowing and reaping is a very general principle in Scripture and could be developed in more detail. Here we see there is either what the flesh produces or what the Spirit produces; what line do we want to follow? If we want to be on the line of the flesh, the result is corruption. I repeat again, *this does not mean loss of salvation*, but it does mean a great loss. If we follow the line of the flesh, we lose fellowship with God now, and we lose a reward in the age to come, whereas when we now sow to the Spirit we enjoy fellowship with the Lord, we enjoy eternal life because here, for it is presented as a present position. Eternal life in Paul's ministry in general is presented as what is to come, but in 1 Timothy 6:12 he says to Timothy that he should "grasp" eternal life, we reach out to lay hold of it in order to enjoy eternal life in its riches now. This is, however, more the topic of John's ministry, the present enjoyment of eternal life. Perhaps I can state it in this way: sowing to the Spirit will result in fellowship with the Lord, enjoying eternal life now, and it sets us on a path that leads us to eternal life. This is not a contradiction. We have received eternal life, but we are also on the way to eternal life, the realm of eternal life.

**"... but let us not lose heart in doing good; for in due time, if we do not faint, we shall reap." (6:9)**

[7] In verse 9 we come to the seventh point of walking in step, the admonition to continue in well doing, Christian living, Christian giving, whatever it may be, we are to help each other. Many examples could be given of what this means practically. Again we see what is ultimately before us, "in due season we shall reap." So also in connection with doing good, there will be a reward. That is why there is this element of reward in connection with the age to come. Luke 19, for example, develops this as well, that what we do now will have its reward in the age to come, not in connection with the fact that we will go to heaven or that we will be in the Father's house (that is not

the point, for this is a matter of pure grace), but rather the place we will have in the age to come in the kingdom when the Lord will appear with us. This depends on our faithfulness *now*, so “in due season we shall reap” is a hint to the matter of a reward in the age to come.

**“So then, as we have occasion, let us do good towards all, and specially towards those of the household of faith.” (6:10)**

Now we come to another point which goes together with the previous verse. Verses 9 and 10 really go together in forming the seventh point as to how we can walk in step and produce good things even towards all men. This is the characteristic of Christianity: it seeks the blessing of all, but in actual practice, “especially unto them who are of the household of faith.” Those who should receive the benefit of this, the recipients, are first of all the household of faith. Here we see the believers as members of one family, one household. This is one way to describe them and there are many others. We try to do them good in the first place but we also reach beyond this circle to all men.

These are the seven admonitions in connection with our walking in the Spirit that we may walk together in step or in rank.

## CONCLUSION — 6:11-18

### A. Motive of Liberty — 6:11-16

**“See how long a letter I have written to you with my own hand.” (6:11)**

I do not want to spend too much time on the matter of the large letters, it could be that Paul used a secretary to write but that at the end he wrote a few words himself with large letters, or he may have written the whole letter himself with large letters. He was not a skilled scribe. Of course, he could write, but the reference to the large letters could have been to show how important this whole matter was that he took the time to write himself because he was so burdened about it. That again shows Paul’s care for the Galatians.

**“As many as desire to have a fair appearance in the flesh, these compel you to be circumcised, only that they may not be persecuted because of the cross of Christ.” (6:12)**

Now we come to this important matter of the cross. We find the words “Cross” and “crucified” together a total of seven times in this epistle, but in this verse we see again the religious world wanting to have a fair appearance. This is the way to show off. This is the natural action of the religious man. One example may show this, when Samuel came to anoint David he was impressed by the stature of David’s oldest brother, he thought, “This is the one.” He had not yet learnt the lesson of the choice of Saul who was a head taller than all the Israelites and had been chosen to be the first king of Israel. This is the thinking of the religious man, he wants to be the tallest, and he wants to be the highest. This was the attitude of the Pharisee, and even Samuel was affected by this kind of thinking. The Lord, by contrast, looks on the heart, but man looks on the outward appearance (1 Sam.16:7). These Judaizers were after the fair show in the flesh, for them appearance and faith had to be the same. The second point here is that they would compel, they would force you, to be circumcised, “only that they may not be persecuted.” They would want to avoid the persecution because of the cross of Christ. I

will to come back to the cross of Christ at the end of the consideration of this chapter.

**“For neither do they that are circumcised themselves keep the law; but they wish you to be circumcised, that they may boast in your flesh.”  
(6:13)**

The third point is that there is not only hypocrisy; there is also inconsistency with them. We have seen several examples of hypocrisy but now Paul comes to the matter of inconsistency. Those who were the circumcisers were inconsistent and those that had been circumcised by them were inconsistent, they could not keep the law. Even if they claimed to keep the Sabbath they were inconsistent, they could not fully maintain the law. When people say, “We want to fulfill the law of Moses, to glorify God,” they will always be guilty of some inconsistency.

The fourth point follows, “that they may boast in your flesh.” Just as the Pharisees would go to the ends of the earth to get one proselyte to be converted to Judaism in order to have something to boast in, so these Judaizers, if they would succeed in circumcising the Galatian believers would then have gone right back to Jerusalem to boast in this.

**“But far be it from me to boast save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom the world is crucified to me, and I to the world.”  
(6:14)**

Why is this so important? We have seen in this epistle how the cross has terminated this whole course of things, what the Bible calls the “age” of this world (1:4). In 6:14 we have the cosmos. Here is the world as a system, whether it is religious, political, economic, social or whatever character it is, this world system is crucified, so the age and the cosmos. In chapter 2:19 we see that we are crucified to the law of Moses, the law has no say anymore because of the cross of Christ. That is why we see here that the cross is a mark of demarcation, it separates. There is on the one hand this world system or this ‘age’ over against, as we saw in verse 15, the new creation, the new world to which we belong. The cross separates between the one and the other. The flesh, we have seen in chapter 5:24, is crucified. What is the other side of the cross? The Spirit. We saw that in chapter 5:24, “They that are



Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit."

We also saw in chapter 3:13 that the cross meant that Christ took the curse of the law upon Himself. He became a curse so that we would not be under a curse anymore but there should instead be blessings for us. This is what we see now. The other side of the cross is the blessing of eternal life so what belongs to man, to this order of things, to the flesh, disappears in the cross; it is exposed, condemned and then set aside to introduce something new. Instead of law, there is now the law of Christ but it is on the basis of grace. So we have these tremendous contrasts in this book, the old man or the new man, everything is put on the basis of resurrection. This is the new world that is on the other side of the cross. This is how important this whole matter of the cross is and this is why Paul boasts in "the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ."

**"For in Christ Jesus neither is circumcision anything, nor uncircumcision; but new creation." (6:15)**

Circumcision is irrelevant. Paul was circumcised but it was not important. The Galatians were uncircumcised Gentiles but that in itself was not important, what really mattered was "new creation." This is what he brings out. This is what really counts. In 2 Corinthians 5 Paul shows that even if they had known Christ after the flesh now they did not know Him as such anymore. There are *new relationships* on the other side of death, a new creation, and here we see there is a *new law*. I would suggest this rule is really the law of Christ, as we saw in verse 2, "thus fulfill (or 'make full') the law of Christ." This is the rule of the new creation. We are under a new rule. The new creation is not a lawless system it is marked by a new order of things, and that goes together with the law of Christ or the law of liberty.

**"And as many as shall walk by this rule, peace upon them and mercy, and upon the Israel of God." (6:16)**

So moving now, walking together (here the same word is used, meaning to walk together, in rank or in step) by this law, the result will be, "*peace*." Again, that is God's government, "and mercy." That is in connection with their circumstances. Then it says, "and upon the Israel of God." There is perhaps no other verse in Scripture to directly explain this verse. The word

says “and,” the Greek word *kai* may also be translated as “even,” so we could read, “upon them, *even* upon the Israel of God.” Although we could read this word this way, we must admit it is not the usual translation, for the normal meaning of this word is “and.” So what Paul is saying here is that the Galatians were walking now, if they would accept the admonition they would walk by this new rule of the new creation and the result would be peace upon them and they would receive mercy from God to walk in this path. But what about the Jewish believers who had been circumcised? They would also follow the same principles as well. They were not under the law of Moses for they were also under the law of Christ, they also had to follow this rule of the new creation, and they would also enjoy peace and mercy. In general, in the New Testament, we see that Jewish believers and Gentile believers are one (e.g. Eph.2), but although they are one in Christ, they are seen here as distinct, because it is in connection with the whole matter that Paul has developed. The Jewish believers had been circumcised but they were not under the law of Moses anymore, they were (like the Gentile believers) under this new rule. This verse cannot be used to say, ‘Now all believers are spiritual Israel, and so the Church is now Israel.’ I think, the Israel of God is really the Hebrew Christians. The believers of the Jews were a remnant, as Romans 11 shows, but, of course, they belonged to the Church, there is no question about it, yet they are seen here as distinct, although they belong to the same Church of the living God.

To come back to the new creation, the new relationship and the new rule, if you would study Ephesians 4 you would find the new creation is connected with new morals and also a new unity in connection with the new man in Ephesians 2. Colossians 3 shows this new creation is marked by a new system of knowledge. I just hint at these things which could be developed more. The new creation is a vast topic in the New Testament and here it is connected with this matter of the rule of law because that is what is addressed in Galatians.

### **B. Price of Liberty — 6:17**

**“For the rest let no one trouble me, for I bear in my body the brands of the Lord Jesus.” (6:17)**

The last time we saw a man who caused trouble (chapter 5). Now Paul says, "Let no one trouble me, for I bear in my body the brands of the Lord Jesus." He did not need to be troubled as he had enough trouble already. In 2 Corinthians 11, for example, we find a whole list of his physical sufferings because of his allegiance to Christ. These were the brands that counted, not the fact that he was circumcised or not, that had no value at all. (1) In antiquity a soldier was tattooed with the name of his commander, his general. In the same way Paul had the brand of the Lord Jesus Christ, because the Lord Jesus Christ was his general, his commander, and this was a sign of allegiance. The fact that Paul had these brands, these stigmata's in his body was more important than circumcision. (2) The bond-slave was often marked with the name of his master. This is another example. Paul had had all kinds of physical sufferings, he had been stoned several times, he had been shipwrecked and many other things had happened to him and these marks could be seen in his body. This is what really counted before God. You, teachers, talk about physical things; well let us talk about these things. Paul said he was a bondman and these physical signs showed that. (3) He was also seen as a criminal, not a real criminal, of course, but he was considered as a criminal in the eyes of the Jews (in Ephesians 4 we see that he was in bonds because of the testimony). In the case of criminals, these marks or brands were to expose their crimes. What was Paul's crime, if we may use this language? He preached Christ and that is why the religious leaders wanted to get rid of him, but he said that these brands were very precious, for they showed his allegiance to the Lord Jesus Christ, and nobody could change that. (4) Fourthly, every priest of any religion had this kind of mark in his body, to show his consecration to his god. Here we see Paul's commitment, his consecration, his devotion to the Lord Jesus Christ. So in all these four different settings we see these brands in his body, that was what indeed counted.

### C. Benediction of Liberty — 6:18

**"The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brethren. Amen." (6:18)**

This is what we all need, the resources that are in the Lord Jesus Christ and His grace. Over against the law keepers, the Judaizers, those who wanted to make a fair show in the flesh, he puts the resources that we have through the

grace of God (and God is the God of all grace, 1 Pet. 5:10). So “the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ” means that all the kinds of grace that are needed are available in Him.

## The Cross

I want to close with a few comments about the cross. First, I draw attention to chapter 2 verse 20, which demonstrates that the cross sets aside the first “I” and introduces the new “I.” It is an important example of the tremendous difference between what is *before* the cross and *after* the cross: the old “I” and the new “I.” The cross sets aside what is of the flesh and introduces what is of the Spirit of God. The cross is the ‘wall of separation’ between bondage and liberty, between the life of the sinner outside of Christ (which is morally death) and eternal life in fellowship with Him. This is why there are these huge contrasts in Galatians.

The noun ‘cross’ and the verb ‘crucify’ together are used seven times in Galatians (the seven references are quoted from JND):

1. “For I, through law, have died to law, that I may live to God” (2:19);
2. “O senseless Galatians, who has bewitched you; to whom, as before your very eyes, Jesus Christ has been portrayed, crucified *among you*?” (3:1);
3. “But I, brethren, if I yet preach circumcision, why am I yet persecuted? Then the scandal of the cross has been done away” (5:11);
4. “But they that *are* of the Christ have crucified the flesh with the passions and the lusts” (5:24);
5. “As many as desire to have a fair appearance in *the* flesh, these compel you to be circumcised, only that they may not be persecuted because of the cross of Christ” (6:12);
6. “But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ” (6:14);
7. “...through whom *the* world is crucified to me, and I to the world” (6:14).

## Greeting

Then, as far as the greeting is concerned, it is remarkable that it is very short. It is not that Paul lacked love for the Galatians, but in this critical situation he had to be very brief. Notice also that verse 18 says, “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ *be with your spirit*, brethren.” They were in danger of being led astray by the flesh. However, the Holy Spirit needed to be put in control, and

also their own spirits needed to be consciously and willingly made subject to the Spirit of Christ. This challenge is still with us today: may the Lord help us!

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