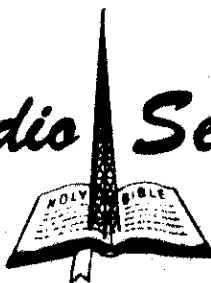


# The Two Covenants

*Law and Grace*

*Radio Sermons*



*by Wayne Carr*

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# Introduction

*“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them” (Eph. 2:8-10).*

Salvation is entirely by grace, and grace utterly precludes the thought of human merit! Were there any question of merit on our part, salvation would not be by grace. The Apostle Paul tells us (in Romans 4:4), “. . . to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt.”

If one works, he puts the person by whom he is employed into his debt. The employer is not released of that debt until he has paid the employee for his labor. Therefore, if by works of ours—if by any efforts of ours—we could earn God’s salvation, we would put God in our debt. And He could not get out of it until He had taken us home to Heaven as a reward—as payment for what *we* had done!

However, no works of ours—no efforts of ours—no labor that we could perform—could *ever* put away the guilt of one sin! Therefore, we are entirely dependent upon grace—upon God’s unmerited favor! It is not only *unmerited* favor, but it is favor *against* merit! We have merited the very opposite!

No true Christian could *ever* doubt the truth of Paul’s words of Ephesians 2:8: *“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God.”* We all know that before we came to the Lord, we were lost sinners—spiritually dead—completely incapable of doing anything that would ever merit our salvation. We know that He picked us up out of that state of spiritual death—that He regenerated us to eternal life by His Holy Spirit—that He gave us life by His grace alone. We simply believed in the glorious message of His death on the Cross for *our* sins, and His resurrection on the third day for *our* justification. Therefore, it was His grace—plus *nothing*—that brought about our salvation!

In spite of this knowledge of the way of our salvation, many Christians down through this age have been willing to doubt that the life He gave us is an *eternal* life. Even though it is understood that our

spiritual life was given through His grace, many are only too willing to believe that the new life is sustained—not by *grace*—but by works of *merit*. Therefore, they believe that—although *initial* salvation is by pure grace—“continued salvation” must come by works of law. The philosophy of these misled ones is this: “The just (those who are justified by God’s grace) shall live (shall continue in their Christian lives) by *works of law*.”

Those with this philosophy refuse to comprehend the truth penned by the ancient prophet, Habakkuk, in Chapter 2 and Verse 4 of his short prophecy: “. . . *but the just shall live by his faith*.” The Apostle Paul used these words from Habakkuk as the text for three of his major epistles: Romans, Galatians, and Hebrews. It is early in the doctrinal section of Galatians (Galatians 3:11) that we find these words: “*But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for. The just shall live by faith*.” Then, as Paul continues to write his most important thesis on “Law and Grace,” he emphasizes the two middle words, “shall live.”

Chapters 3 and 4 of the Epistle to the Galatians were written to all who have come to Jesus Christ for their salvation by grace alone. These chapters emphasize that their *continued* Christian life is just as surely by grace as was their *initial* salvation! “Law works” play no part in any Christian experience! “*For by grace are ye saved through faith; . . . for, The just shall live by faith*.”

The Apostle Paul had founded the churches in Galatia during his early missionary journeys through that ancient land. He had taught that everything in the Christian life is by pure grace, plus nothing—both initial salvation, *and* continued Christian living. However, after he had left these churches, certain Judaizing teachers had come among them. They were teaching that—although initial salvation was by grace—the saved one must obey the Law of Moses in order to sustain that exalted estate. These teachers were adding law to grace, and therefore were preaching “another gospel.” Concerning those who were preaching in this way, the Apostle to the Gentiles was forced to say, “*But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed*” (Gal. 1:8).

The letter to the Galatians was written to combat the doctrine of these false teachers. Paul wrote this letter in great haste (probably from Corinth), because he saw the devastating effect that this “false gospel” was having upon those believers of whom he was the spiritual

"father." It was destroying the glorious liberty into which he had called them. Because there was no professional letter writer available, Paul wrote the original "autograph" of this letter by his own hand in very large Greek characters. (Paul himself records this fact. Galatians 6:11, literally translated, reads, "Ye see with what large letters I wrote to you with my own hand.") The Apostle to the Gentiles felt that he had to counter the teaching of the Judaizers with all possible haste!

The letter to the Galatians is divided into three parts. Chapters 1 and 2 make up the first part and is devoted to Paul's personal testimony as he defends his office of Apostle, and his authority to teach that "the just *shall live* by faith."

The second section consists of Chapters 3 and 4 and is the doctrinal section of the epistle. It is here that he delivers his greatest treatise on the subject of "Law and Grace." (This is the section of the book that we will consider in this study.)

The third section of Galatians is made up of Chapters 5 and 6 and is the "practical" section of the epistle. In it, Paul demonstrates the practical application of the doctrine that he has just emphasized so strongly.

Before we leave our Ephesians passage, let's take the message of Ephesians 2:8 as a whole again: "*For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God.*" Theologians have questioned as to whether "not of yourselves" means the *salvation* or the *faith*. The truth is, we can apply it to the whole subject in question: "*By grace are ye saved, and that not of yourselves.*" Both the *grace* and the *salvation* are "not of yourselves" (ourselves).

"By grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves." The *faith* also is not of "yourselves"—it is all the *gift of God*. But perhaps someone says, "If faith is the gift of God, and God is not pleased to give me that gift, how can I believe?"

Scripture says, "*So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God*" (Rom. 10:17). *God gives the gift of faith to all who give heed to the message of the Gospel!* However, after the Spirit of God brings that message home to the heart, it is thoroughly possible for men to resist the Holy Ghost. It is also possible, on the other hand, to give heed to the ministry of the Spirit, and thus be led on to personal *faith in the Lord Jesus Christ*.

Faith is a gift, and apart from it we can never be saved. But in order that we may have faith, ". . . God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). Refuse the Word, and there will never be faith; give heed to the Word, and "faith cometh by hearing." And thus, of it all, it may be said, "*Not of works, lest any man should boast.*"

In Ephesians 2:10, we read, "*For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.*" The word translated "workmanship" is used only twice in the New Testament—here in Ephesians 2:10, and in the first chapter of Romans. There (in Romans 1), Paul is speaking of the testimony of the Creation. He says in Verse 20, "*For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse.*"

In the original, one Greek word is translated "the things that are made." That word is "*poiema.*" From it, we get our English word "poem." Creation is God's poem, witnessing to His eternal power and glory. That same word, "*poiema,*" is translated "workmanship" in Ephesians 2:10. "*Poiema*" means "something that someone has made." Thus, we read that, ". . . *we are his workmanship* (we are His poem), *created in Christ Jesus unto good works. . . .*"

If we are God's "poem," created and "written" by His hand, how could we possibly add anything of merit to ourselves by our own efforts? How could "law works" complete a literary masterpiece composed by the marvelous grace of God alone? These questions cannot be answered. We are *saved* by His grace through faith, and we *live* by His grace through faith!

We are created in Christ Jesus, quickened unto newness of life with Him and represented before God in Him—"Created in Christ Jesus unto good works." Notice the order. Paul has already told us that we are not saved by good works, but now he says that we must not *ignore* good works. One of the purposes for which He has saved us is in order that we might do good works!

In Paul's pastoral epistles, there are two great sayings: "*This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acception, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; . . .*" (I Tim. 1:15). However, in Titus 3:8,

we read, "This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto men."

Can you see the place that good works have? They are not to be ignored, but they are not meritorious. We are not saved by them—we do not maintain our salvation by them—but we are "created in Christ Jesus *unto* good works." In other words, springing from the fact that we *have been saved*, because we are God's workmanship—God's great redemptive poem—our lives should now be "musical"—they should be "rhythmical" and "lyrical." Every one of us should fit into the place where He has set us in this great symphony of redemption!

With this understanding, let's proceed to Paul's comprehensive doctrinal dissertation on the subject of "The Two Covenants: Law and Grace." Let's look at the details of this most important doctrine.

# 1.

## Justification by Faith Alone

*“O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you? This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh? Have ye suffered so many things in vain? if it be yet in vain. He therefore that ministereth to you the Spirit, and worketh miracles among you, doeth he it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness. Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham. And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed. So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham” (Gal. 3:1-9).*

Beginning with Verse 1 of Chapter 3 of the Apostle Paul's Epistle to the Galatians, the reader now enters upon the strictly doctrinal part of this letter. The closing verses of Chapter 2 ended the personal section of the letter by quoting Paul's rebuke to Peter. (The Jerusalem Apostle had come to the Gentile church at Antioch and had played the hypocrite.) In this rebuke, Paul had expounded on the theme of our justification before God. Justification came by God's grace alone, totally apart from law works. The contents of this rebuke provide the background and springboard for Paul's entering into this comprehensive doctrinal discussion of law and grace.

### The Foolishness of False Doctrine

Paul opens his thesis by addressing those to whom this letter is written in a very unusual way. He says, “O foolish Galatians!” This is an expression of surprise mingled with indignation. The situation in Galatia will help us understand this outcry. There was, on the one hand, among these Gentile believers the native and national spirit joined to the power of the priesthood and the temples. It was the spirit of “Orientalism”—that of stagnation, ignorance, and superstition. On the other hand, there was the desire for education, the recognition that Greece and Rome stood on a higher intellectual level than was



afforded by the native religions and customs. In addition to that, in a positive way, there existed a revolt against the ignorant and enslaving native superstitions.

The people of the province of Galatia to whom this letter was written were those who had shaken off the benumbing and degrading influence of the native magic and superstition. They were those who judged for themselves as to the real values in life; they laid claim to insight and wisdom. Paul accuses them with failing to use that insight and wisdom—that appreciation of the better things—when he uses the Greek word translated “foolish.” This Greek word denotes the stupidity that arises from deadness and impotence of intellect. It means “lacking in the power of perception, unwise.” It refers to one who does not reflect. The word speaks of failure to use one’s powers of perception.

“You Galatians,” Paul says, “are certainly not using your heads.” The word translated “foolish” is used here with an ethical reference—the faculty of moral judgment. Thus, the word indicates a failure to use one’s powers of perception, that failure resulting from a moral defect. It has always been true—as it was with the Galatians—that a Christian who embraces false doctrine does so because of sin in his life. The Galatian defection *was not* caused by any fickleness of the Gauls as a race! Racial traits are not prominent in this picture. Therefore, Paul sends this stinging rebuke: “O Galatians, who fail in the first characteristic of the Galatians, namely, the ability to use your heads and to appreciate the finer values of life.”

### Demon Influence

Then the apostle asks, “Who hath bewitched you?” The word “bewitched” is translated from the Greek “*baskaino*.” Paul’s metaphor is derived from the then-popular superstition of the “evil eye.” The word denotes either the fascination of an evil eye or some malignant influence akin to it. The infatuation of the Galatians is attributed to the malignant effect of some mysterious power of evil. By use of this word, the Apostle Paul attributes the Galatians’ readiness to follow after false doctrine to the influence of demons. The Apostle to the Gentiles attributes the apostasy of the last days of this Age of Grace to similar spiritual influences when (in I Timothy 4:1) he says, “*Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils (demons).*”

As he addresses the Galatian church members, what Paul is really saying is this: "How is it that you seem to have come under a sort of spell, so that you have lost your grasp of the truth and your hearts and minds have become clouded by error?"

Error affects people in that way! It is quite possible for one to have been truly converted and to have begun with a clear, definite knowledge of the saving grace of the Lord Jesus, to come under the influence of some false system—some unscriptural line of teaching. This often occurs because they fail to follow on, to study the Word and to pray over it. So often, when people do come under some such "spirit of error," one finds it almost impossible to turn them about and deliver them from their error. They actually seem to be under a "spell," and—according to Paul's words here—this is exactly the case! Demonic influence most definitely *was* behind the Galatian defection!

The apostle is *not* saying that one person has the power of bewitching another, but he *is* saying that demonic influence is behind the acceptance and retention of false doctrine by true believers. Paul is, in effect, saying, "These men who have come down from Jerusalem, teaching that you cannot be saved unless you are circumcised and keep the Law of Moses, have gotten such an influence over you because there *are* demonic personalities that travel with them which have the power to bewitch you—to cast you under a spell! Therefore, you are not able to reason things out, or to detect what is true and what is false."

It was not exactly that these Galatians had been "given up to strong delusion" (as Paul says will happen to many in the last days in II Thessalonians 2:11), but they *were* under strong demonic influence. When God offers men the truth and they deliberately turn away from it, they stand in danger of being delivered judicially to those supernatural powers which represent that which is absolutely false—the prince of lies himself! This is true of born-again Christians as well as false professors. In all likelihood, these people *were* real Christians—but they were real Christians acting under a spell of demonic influence!

### Publicly Placarded

*"O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set*

forth, crucified among you?" The English words "set forth" are translated from the single Greek word "*prographo*." This was the usual word used in that day for speaking of the act of posting up public announcements or notices. "*Prographo*" is found in early secular documents where a father posted a proclamation that he would no longer be responsible for his son's debts. It does not speak here of the act of painting the crucified Christ on a placard for public notice, but rather of posting a public announcement to the effect that He was crucified. This Paul did in his preaching among the Galatians. This placarded notice of the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus should have been sufficient to keep the eyes of the Galatians from wandering to the enticements of the Judaizers.

The verb translated "crucified" is in the perfect tense. This brings out the fact that the apostle is *not* speaking of the figure of a dead Christ on a crucifix! Rather, he is speaking of the risen, ascended Christ who *had been* crucified, who was alive, whose glorified body still bore the marks of the nails and the scars of the crown of thorns. He is speaking of the Christ who is the living Saviour by virtue of His atoning work on the Cross!

The literal translation of Paul's opening question is, "O, unreflecting Galatians, who bewitched you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was placarded publicly as the Crucified One?" (The words, "That ye should not obey the truth," are not contained in the oldest Greek manuscripts, and they apparently were placed in the Textus Receptus Greek text from an uninspired margin note.)

Once one has laid hold of the blessed truth that the Lord Jesus has been crucified on our behalf, that—in itself—should deliver us forever from such error as that into which these people had fallen. If Christ has actually given Himself for me, it is because it was impossible for me to do one thing to save myself. Because I could not make myself fit for the presence of God—because I could not cleanse my heart from sin—because no work of righteousness of mine could make me fit for a place with the Lord—He had to come from Heaven and give Himself for me on the Cross!

How then can I think of turning back to the ground of human *merit* as a means of securing salvation, or of maintaining me in a condition of salvation before God? I deserved to die, but Jesus Christ took my place, and He has settled for me. He has met all the claims of divine righteousness, and through Him I am eternally saved. Shall I go back to the law to complete the work He has done? Surely not!

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## The Spirit Received by Faith

The Apostle Paul now refers to the beginning of their (the Galatians') Christian lives and says, "*This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?*" (v. 2). We have here a forcible appeal to the experience of the Galatians. By opening with the statement, "This only would I learn of you," Paul indicates that an answer to the question about to be asked would be a decisive argument. It is as if Paul had said, "I will convince you of your error by this one argument. Carefully weigh your answer."

Then he asks his question: ". . . *Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?*" (v. 2). By the words, "the receiving of the Spirit," Paul is referring to the initial entrance of the Holy Spirit into their hearts when they put their trust in the Lord Jesus. The Apostle to the Gentiles is asking the Galatian believers by what means they received God's Holy Spirit when He initially came to indwell each of them. Did He come into their hearts "by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith"?

The words "by the hearing of faith" are translated from the Greek expression "*ex akoes pisteos*." The word "*akoes*" (translated "hearing") refers either to the act of hearing a message or to the message that is heard. The second meaning agrees more with the context, since Paul is contrasting his message of grace with the preachments of the Judaizers. Thus, he asks, "Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the *message* of faith?"

The phrase "of faith" defines or describes the message. It is a message that announces faith as the means whereby one received salvation. Paul's statement and question of Verse 2 are these: "This only am I desiring to learn from you. By means of law works did you receive the Spirit, or by means of the message which proclaims faith?" The only answer the Galatians could give to this question was that they received the Spirit—not by obedience to the law—but through their faith in Paul's message of grace.

In the previous chapter of this epistle, the Apostle Paul has shown how a man is justified before God by faith alone. He has declared that the law really is honored more in recognition of the fact that its penalty has been met in the Cross of our Lord Jesus, than by any poor effort of man to keep it as a means of salvation. Here, in Verse 2, he adds to justification by faith the truth of the reception of the Holy Spirit. He says, as it were, "Go back in your own Christian experience.

You received the Holy Spirit when you believed in the Lord Jesus; when you accepted the Gospel message as I brought it to you. (By this, Paul is referring to his own ministry among these Galatians.) God gave you the Holy Spirit, not on the grounds of any merit of your own, not because of any good thing that you were able to do, certainly not because of law keeping or ritualistic observances, for you were uncircumcised Gentiles. Yet when you believed in the Lord Jesus, God gave you the Holy Spirit." Now he says, "Think it out; did you receive the Spirit by law works? Surely not! How then? 'By the message that proclaims faith!'"

Notice that Paul declares here that the Holy Spirit always is given to a believer through his belief of the message of faith. *That* is also the background of a believer's salvation! It is at that time that God's Holy Spirit comes to baptize the new believer into the one body, the Church. This is "the baptism of the Holy Spirit." That baptism comes with the same act of faith as regeneration and justification. The receiving of God's Holy Spirit is *not* a "second act of grace," as is taught in many assemblies today. There are no additional "works" or "acts of faith"—and certainly no "tarrying" or begging—required of the believer so that he may receive "Holy Spirit baptism." Any teaching that denies the facts presented by Paul in Galatians 3:2 is one of the great errors of our age!

### No "Perfection" Through the Flesh!

In Verse 3, the Apostle Paul asks two questions. "*Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?*" In other words, "If the Holy Spirit came to dwell in you in the condition you were when you came to Christ, do you think you need to complete the work by your own self-effort and by putting yourself under legal rules and regulations? You who know the love of the Lord Jesus Christ *have received the Holy Spirit!*"

In our day, some may say, "I wish I were sure of that." However, such ones fail to note what Scripture definitely declares in Ephesians 1:13: "*Upon your believing, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise*"—that is, you were born of the Spirit, and you were baptized by the Spirit into the one body.

Perhaps someone asks, "Do you mean that when I was born again that was the reception of the Holy Spirit?" Scripture *does* distinguish between the process of the new birth *by* the Spirit and the process of

the reception of the Holy Spirit. However, there is no interval of time between our new birth and the reception of the Holy Spirit. Both processes take place at the same time.

New birth is the work of God's Holy Spirit. The Spirit himself is the One who does this work, and—at the same time—He comes to dwell in the man who is born again. New birth is new creation; the Holy Spirit is the Creator. New birth is the work of God, but the Holy Spirit is God!

There is, however, a difference between being *born* of God and being *indwelt* by the Spirit of God. In past ages and economies of God, men were born of God and yet not indwelt by His Spirit. However, with the coming in of this age of the dispensation of the grace of God, when people are born again the Holy Spirit himself comes to dwell in them. In the case of these Galatians, if the Holy Spirit did not approve of the work that Paul had done—if He did not approve of the stand they (the Galatians) had taken in receiving the Lord Jesus Christ—He never would have come to dwell in them at all. If it were necessary to be subject to the Law of Moses, the Spirit would have made that clear. He would have said, "I cannot come and dwell in you until these things are settled, until you submit yourselves to these regulations and rules."

However, the Spirit had done nothing of the kind. The Galatians heard the Gospel, and they believed. They took their places before God as lost sinners; they turned to Him in repentance. They accepted Christ by faith as their Saviour, and the Holy Spirit said, as it were, "Now I can dwell in them. They are washed from their sins in the precious blood of Christ, and I will make their bodies my temples." Notice what a clear argument Paul has brought up against the legalism of the Judaizers!

In Verse 2, Paul had spoken of the Holy Spirit's initial entrance into the hearts of the Galatian Christians when they put their trust in the Lord Jesus. Now, in Verse 3, he is speaking of the sanctifying work of the Spirit in the lives of these saints. He asks the question, "Are you to such a degree irrational? Having begun your Christian life in dependence upon the indwelling Spirit, are you now being brought on to the state of spiritual maturity by means of self-effort?"

The words "made perfect" are translated from a Greek verb which means "to bring something to the place where it is complete." The noun derived from this verb is the word Paul uses when he speaks

of a spiritually-mature Christian—one who is living a well-rounded, well-balanced, mature life. By the word “flesh” (as it is used here), Paul refers to all that a person is as the product of natural generation apart from the morally-transforming power of the Holy Spirit in regeneration. The word speaks of the unsaved man—body, soul, and spirit—controlled by his totally-depraved nature. This is grouped together with all his human accomplishments, positions, capabilities, and philosophies. Paul uses the Greek word for “flesh” in this exact way in many verses of his epistles.

The Judaizers preached a message of law obedience to the Galatian Christians. This caused them (the Christians) to abandon their position of grace and put themselves in the sphere of law—both that of the Judaizers’ system of legalism and that of the Old Testament economy. Because there was not provision in the Mosaic economy for an indwelling Spirit who would sanctify the believer, the Galatians were turning away from the teaching and the reality of the ministry of the Spirit in the life of the believer in this dispensation of grace. The Galatians were beginning to depend upon self-effort in an attempt to obey an outward legalistic system of works.

Thus, these Christians who had begun their Christian lives in dependence upon the Holy Spirit, were now depending upon self-effort to continue in them the work of sanctification which the Holy Spirit had begun. The present tense of the verb used here indicates that the Galatians had already begun this attempt. In effect, Paul says, “How foolish to think that you can bring yourselves to a state of spiritual maturity in your Christian lives. That is the work of the Holy Spirit! Only He can do that for you!”

### Suffering in Vain

The literal translation of Paul’s two questions of Verse 3 reads, “Are you so unreflecting? Having begun by means of the Spirit, now are you being brought to maturity by the flesh?” Then, in Verse 4, Paul continues, “*Have ye suffered so many things in vain? if it be yet in vain.*” Paul reminds these Galatian believers of what they went through in the early days of their Christian experience. This verse speaks of the sufferings which the Galatian Christians endured as a result of having received the Lord Jesus as Saviour. It had meant so much for these new believers to step out from heathenism and take a stand against their friends and relatives—to accept the Lord Jesus Christ as their Saviour, and to declare that the idols they had once

worshiped were dumb images and powerless to save. To step out and apart from all that in which they had participated for so many years meant a great deal. However, it exposed them to suffering, bitter persecution, and grave misunderstanding from their fellow men.

The only inspired record of any persecutions in the Galatian cities is found in Acts 14. We are left somewhat in the dark regarding these sufferings—their nature and extent. However, the words of Verse 4 make it known that the sufferings endured by Galatian believers were quite intense—and quite extensive.

It was for Jesus' sake that these Galatian believers gladly accepted that which was put upon them. It was for Jesus' sake that they bore reproach and suffered—many of them even unto death. Those who were still living counted it all joy to have part with Christ in His rejection. But now they were being brought under the power of an evil system which taught that they were not really saved until they submitted themselves to what these Jewish legalists required.

Paul appeals to the Galatians not to let these sufferings be in vain by turning their backs on grace and putting themselves under the legalistic system of the Judaizers. A literal translation of Paul's Greek of Verse 4 would read, "So many things did you suffer in vain? If indeed they really were in vain?" The construction of the Greek text is such that it gives the idea, "If it really be in vain." This seems to leave a loophole for doubt in the apostle's mind as to whether the Galatians really were swinging away from grace to law. Paul's words imply an unwillingness on his part to believe this.

The Apostle to the Gentiles cannot believe that all that former suffering had been in vain. He looks back and remembers the exercises they went through, the joy that came to them when they professed to receive Christ. He remembers the love that seemed to be filling their hearts to overflowing so that it spilled out one for another—and even extended to him as a servant of God and for the Saviour himself. Paul says, "I remember the afflictions you were ready to endure on behalf of the Gospel. I cannot believe you were not converted—that it was not real. You have been misled; you have gotten into a fog; and if I can, I want, by the grace of God, to deliver you."

Paul does not display any ill will against the Galatians, nor does he display any against the men who had come down from Jerusalem



with their false legalistic doctrine. However, he did hate the doctrine that they were teaching. We often encounter people who find it difficult to distinguish between a hatred of false doctrine and a love for the people themselves who have come under the influence of it. In our day, when Bible teachers and preachers stand up for the truth of God and warn people against false teaching, that does not imply for one moment that they (Bible teachers and preachers) have any unkind feeling toward those taken up with that false teaching. A teacher of the truth can love a person under false doctrine as one for whom Christ died. He can (and should) pray that the misled one be delivered from his error and brought into the light of the truth.

## Signs and Manifestations

Next, the Apostle Paul reminds the Galatian Christians that when he came among them to preach the Gospel of the grace of God, there were marvelous signs and manifestations that followed. They had all been witnesses as he and Barnabas worked wondrous miracles. Even some among their own number had been the recipients of similar gifts. These miraculous signs were always made evident as they accompanied a testimony for Christ. In Verse 5, Paul writes, "*He therefore that ministereth to you the Spirit, and worketh miracles among you, doeth he it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?*"

Paul's purpose seems to be to contrast the ministry of false teachers among them with his and Barnabas' ministry when they came in the simplicity and fullness of the Gospel of Christ. In effect, he is asking, "Are there any miraculous attestations of these false teachers? Is their testimony accredited by miraculous power?"

The answer, of course, is, "Not at all!" On the other hand, when Paul went preaching Christ and Him crucified, God himself put His seal of approval upon that testimony by giving power to work miracles.

People say, "Why not the same today?" Even today miraculous signs *do* sometimes accompany the preaching of the truth, which are *not* found when error is presented. When the Gospel of the grace of God is preached, men and women believing it are delivered from their sins. The Holy Spirit works, creating a new life, a new nature, and thus sets them free. This is the greatest of all miracles! Error does not produce any such effect! Error can give men certain intellectual conceptions in which to glory, but error does not make unclean lives

clean, nor deliver from impurity and iniquity. In contrast to error, it is the glory of the Gospel that when men truly believe, they actually become new creations in Christ Jesus. There were no such signs and wonders (and have not been since that time) accompanying this law preaching in Galatia!

The word "therefore" used in Verse 5 shows that the thoughts of Verses 2 and 3 are being further emphasized. In Verse 2, Paul speaks of the Spirit's initial entrance into the hearts of the Galatians, at the very moment they placed their faith in the Lord Jesus. In Verse 3, he refers to the sanctifying work of the Spirit in the believer's life. Then, in Verse 5, the subject of the "charismatic" manifestations of the Spirit is introduced. These manifestations relate to the act of the Holy Spirit in enduing certain Galatian members with special gifts of the Spirit. Paul insists that the *grace* way of salvation must be *God's* way—since it is accompanied by the supernatural ministry of the Holy Spirit.

The construction in the Greek requires us to understand that the One who ministered the Spirit to the Galatians is the same Person who worked miracles among them—namely, God the Father. The word "ministereth" is translated from a Greek verb which means "to supply abundantly or bountifully." The word "miracles" is translated from the Greek "*dunamis*"—a word referring to supernatural power, which is sometimes translated "miracles" and sometimes "wonders." When carrying the translation of "miracles" or "wonders," the word "*dunamis*" has reference to the Holy Spirit conferring miracle-working power upon certain members of the early church.

In the view of Paul, the same Spirit performed His work of sanctification in the lives of the Galatian saints and bestowed miraculous powers upon them. The present tense of the participle used here informs us that the work of the Holy Spirit—in both respects—was continually going on in the Galatian churches, even at the time of the inroad of the Judaizers. The Spirit's work *was* being hindered by the Galatians slowly turning away from His ministrations and depending instead upon self-effort. The point is that these Galatians still had the attesting power of the miracles among them. This proved that *grace* and not *works* was the way of salvation! Yet, in spite of all this irrefutable proof, the Galatians were in the process of forsaking grace to take their stand under *law*! Paul is pointing out that, even though for the moment the Judaizers had the upper hand, they had absolutely no evidence that their message was from God!

Let's note very carefully the literal meaning of Paul's words of Verse 5: "Therefore, the One who is constantly supplying the Spirit to you in bountiful measure, and constantly working miracles among you, by means of law works is He doing these things, or by means of the message which proclaims faith?" The correct answer to this question was all the proof Paul needed to win his argument!

### Abraham Justified by Faith—Not Works

In the first five verses of Galatians 3, Paul has made it clear that these Galatian believers received the Holy Spirit in answer to their faith in Christ, not through obedience to law. Therefore, it can be concluded that God does not depend upon law works in the exercise of His grace in this present age. The Judaizing teachers who were attempting to add law works to grace were thus patently wrong!

Now, in the next four verses (Verses 6 through 9), it is Paul's intent to show that *Abraham* was justified by faith, not works. Therefore, the true children of Abraham (those who believe in Jesus Christ, the promised "Seed" of Abraham) are justified in the same way.

Thus, in the doctrinal section of this Epistle to the Galatians (Chapters 3 and 4), it is Paul's purpose to demonstrate that salvation is by grace in answer to faith, and not by works. His first proof was based upon the fact that the supernatural ministry of the Spirit accompanying the act of faith is proof that his message of grace was of *divine* origin, and that the message of the Judaizers (which in character was diametrically opposed to it) was of *human* origin.

The occasion for Paul's argument is found in the fact that the Judaizers taught that the natural descendants of Abraham were his children, and thus accepted with God. This boils down to a teaching that only the circumcised could be saved; thus, circumcision was a prerequisite of salvation. This teaching was based on a misunderstanding of Genesis 12 and 17. The Judaizers argued that no one could participate in the blessings of God's covenant with Abraham—and so in the Messianic salvation which was inseparably connected with it—unless he was *circumcised*.

The mistake these false teachers made was their failure to distinguish between the purely Jewish and national covenant God made with Abraham and that salvation which came through the Messiah, a descendant of Abraham. (The national covenant had to do with the earthly ministry and destiny of the chosen people as a channel which

God would use in bringing salvation to the earth.) Circumcision was God's mark of separation upon the Jew. It isolated him in the midst of the Gentile nations in order that God might use the nation Israel for His own purposes. It had nothing to do with the acceptance of salvation by the Jew.

Against this contention of these false teachers, Paul argues that Abraham was justified by *faith*—not by *circumcision*. In Romans 4:9, 10, Paul writes, "*Cometh this blessedness then upon the circumcision only, or upon the uncircumcision also? for we say that faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness. How was it then reckoned? when he was in circumcision, or in uncircumcision? Not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision.*" In these verses, Paul proves his case conclusively. He shows that Abraham was declared righteous *before* he was circumcised, which demonstrates that his circumcision had nothing to do with his acceptance of salvation.

It is in Verse 6 that the Apostle to the Gentiles turns back to Abraham. These false teachers had said, "God called Abraham out from among the Gentiles and gave him the covenant of circumcision; and, therefore, unless these Gentiles do follow him in this rite, they cannot be saved." It is because of this teaching that Paul now writes, "*Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness*" (v. 6). The Apostle to the Gentiles is quoting directly from the writings of Moses, and this statement concerning Abraham's salvation is found in Genesis 15:6.

### Abraham's "Seed"

Abraham was a Gentile just as these Galatians, and God revealed His truth to him. In Verse 8, we read, "*... God ... preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed.*" Abraham believed what God told him—in fact, he put his entire trust in God's Word—and God justified him by faith!

When did God preach the Gospel to Abraham? If you recall, God took Abraham outside his tent one night and said, "Look now toward heaven, and tell (count) the stars" (see Genesis 15:5). Abraham replied, "I cannot count them, they are in number utterly beyond me." God then told him to count the sand and the dust under his feet. Again, Abraham replied, "I cannot do that." Then God said, "So shall thy seed be. In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." The word "Seed" is singular, and it refers to Messiah. "In thy seed" (*in Christ*)—not *in circumcision*—"shall all the nations of the earth be blessed."

God gave Abraham the promise of a single "Seed"—the Messiah—the Lord Jesus Christ—and that "Seed" (by His work of the Cross) was to bring forth a collective "seed" as numberless as the stars of the heaven, as the sand of the sea, and as the dust of the ground. In the Messiah (in the "Seed" of Abraham), were all the nations of the earth to be blessed. That blessing was *not* to come through Abraham's *circumcision*, but through the promised "Seed."

Abraham was a childless old man but, "*He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform*" (Rom. 4:20, 21). When God perceived this faith in Abraham, He justified him. The covenant of circumcision had not yet been given to him, but he was justified by *faith*.

What is the implication of these facts? If God can justify one Gentile by faith, can He not justify ten million (or one hundred million) by faith? If Abraham is the father of all the faithful in a spiritual sense, then all Gentiles need not fear to follow in his (Abraham's) steps.

### Faith Accounted for Righteousness

Let's look closely at the words, "... Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness" (v. 6). The word "accounted" is translated from a Greek word that deserves careful study. In many of the ancient Greek writings, this word is used as a business term. When so used, it means "put to one's account." It refers to credit being posted to a financial account. The word means exactly the same thing here, except it refers to *spiritual credit* rather than to *financial credit*.

Thus, Abraham believed God, and his act of faith was *placed to his account* in value as righteousness. He believed God and his act of faith was *credited to him* for righteousness. He believed God, and his act of faith was *placed on deposit for him and evaluated* as righteousness. He believed God, and his act of faith was *computed as to its value, and therefore was placed to his account*, as righteousness. Finally, he believed God, and his act of faith was *credited to him*, resulting in righteousness.

All this does not mean, however, that Abraham's act of faith was looked upon as a meritorious action deserving of reward. It was not viewed as a "good work" by God and rewarded by the bestowal of

righteousness. That would be salvation by works. Rather, it was the fact that Abraham cast off all dependence upon good works as a means of finding acceptance with God, and accepted God's way of bestowing salvation that was answered by God in giving him that salvation. Abraham simply put himself in the place where a righteous God could offer him salvation upon the basis of justice satisfied, and in pure grace.

God, therefore, put righteousness to his account. He evaluated Abraham's act of faith as that which made it possible for Him to give him salvation. Paul's message of Verse 6, literally translated, reads, "Just as Abraham believed God, and his act of faith was credited to him, resulting in (Abraham's positional) righteousness." Positional righteousness *is* justification! And, just for the record, let's review a scripturally-derived definition of *justification*: "Justification is the act of God removing from the sinner his guilt and the penalty incurred by that guilt, and bestowing a positive righteousness, Christ Jesus himself in whom the believer stands, not only innocent and uncondemned, but actually righteous in point of law for time and for eternity."

*This is what God did for Abraham when he believed Him! This is what the Judaizers were attempting to merit for themselves by their own good works!*

### Abraham's Spiritual Children

In Verse 7, Paul continues, "*Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham.*" You see, Abraham has a *spiritual* seed as well as a *natural* seed. Those born of Abraham's lineage after the flesh are not really Abraham's sons unless born again—they must have the faith of Abraham to be his sons. However, all over the world wherever the message comes; wherever people, whether Jews or Gentiles, put their trust in that "Seed" of Abraham (our Lord Jesus Christ) and receive Him as Saviour and Lord; God says, "Write him down as a son of Abraham."

We should note, therefore, that Abraham has a vast spiritual "seed." Throughout all the centuries, the millions and millions of people who have believed God as he did—and trusted in the Saviour in whom he trusted—will share his (Abraham's) blessing, and will be with Abraham for all eternity!

The case of the words translated "know ye" in Verse 7 is not imperative, but indicative. In the sense these words are used here, they mean "ye perceive." The statement of Verse 7 is a deduction from the fact stated in the previous verse. Paul is saying, "Ye perceive, therefore, that those who are of faith, these are sons of Abraham."

Paul's argument is, "Since faith was the way Abraham was justified, it follows that those who exercise like faith are his true followers." The word "faith" here is general in its application. This indicates that faith is the determinative factor in life—as against works as a means of appropriating salvation.

The expression "they which are of faith" refers to those who have exercised faith for salvation, and whose standing and character are consequently determined by that faith. And, as we have seen, the phrase "sons of Abraham" is not to be understood in a genealogical sense, but rather in the ethical sense of the term. Abraham was accepted by God on the basis of faith; God deals with all men on the same moral basis. God is no respecter of persons. Thus, the faith exercised by Abraham is declared to be the fundamental condition of acceptance with God. (The word "children" is translated from the Greek "*huioi*," properly translated "sons.")

### God Justifies Through Faith

Paul continues in Verse 8, "*And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen (Gentiles) through faith (not through faith and works, not through faith and ordinances, not through faith and sacramental observances), preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed.*" This verse contains Paul's answer to the false assumption of the Judaizers that, inasmuch as it is in Abraham that all nations were to be blessed, they would have to be incorporated into his descendants by the rite of circumcision. The Apostle to the Gentiles says, "And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the *Gentiles through faith (not through circumcision!)*."

By the use of the word "and" (from the Greek "*de*"). Paul asserts that the blessing of Abraham—namely, the one he received from God—that is, justification—was received by him *through faith*. And it is through the exercise of a like faith that the Gentiles become his spiritual children. It is *not* through submission to circumcision!

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When Paul uses the expression "the scripture," he is usually referring to a particular passage of Scripture. We see numerous examples of this in all of Paul's epistles. The particular passage referred to here is Genesis 12:3. There, Moses had written, "*And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.*" By the apostle's use of the word "foreseeing," he attributes "foresight" or "prophetic vision" to Old Testament Scripture. Paul is acknowledging that God's divine foresight is expressed in the Scriptures. A common expression of the Jews of Paul's day was, "What did the Scripture foresee?"

Thus, God, foreseeing that He would justify the Gentiles by faith, announced the Gospel to Abraham, and the message was to be received by faith. The "good news" announced to Abraham was that someday the Saviour (the Messiah) would arise out of Abraham's nation, Israel. Then, the Gentiles would be saved through Him just as Abraham was saved. Therefore, Abraham rejoiced to see the coming of that day (see John 8:56). Abraham was thus to become the pattern of how a sinner—Jew or Gentile—must appropriate salvation to all who would follow.

The words "would justify" are from a present tense verb in the Greek. The thought is that Paul is dealing here with a general principle—namely, God's rule of action on the basis of which He operates for all time. Thus, faith is the "condition" one must possess in order to be justified. This was announced to Abraham *before* he was circumcised. To repeat: That proves that circumcision had *nothing* to do with the acceptance of salvation!

The literal message of Paul's Greek of Verse 8 is, "And the Scripture foreseeing that on a basis of faith God justifies the Gentiles, announced the Gospel beforehand to Abraham, namely, All the Gentiles shall be blessed in you." The Gospel is God's "good news" concerning His Son. Abraham received that "good news" and believed it. If you and I have received and believed it, we are linked with him—we are children of Abraham.

### Salvation Is by Faith—Plus Nothing!

Paul concludes this discussion of Abraham's salvation with the words of Verse 9: "*So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham.*" This is a definite statement of the proposition which Paul wishes to prove. The emphasis is upon the fact that the *believing ones*



are blessed with salvation—rather than *those who depend upon good works* as the *Judaizers* did.

The word “faithful” is added as a descriptive word in order to impress upon the reader that Abraham chose the faith way of salvation rather than depending upon personal merit and good works. The word here *does not* speak of faithfulness of life in the sense of fidelity—but rather of the fact that Abraham believed God.

From the human standpoint, well might Abraham have depended upon good works. Excavations in the city of Ur where Abraham lived reveal the fact that Abraham was not a wild desert sheik. Instead, he was an educated, wealthy, sophisticated citizen of the world—a dethroned prince, living in—and ostensibly partaking of—a state of culture and opulence little dreamed of by the person who is unfamiliar with the ancient civilizations of the past.

Abraham was no ignoramus with a gullible faith. With, and in spite of, all his cultural background, he saw that much of that with which we have to do is taken upon faith—including the way of salvation! Those who exercise a like faith to Abraham share with him in the same salvation which he received from God.

Therefore, Paul concludes his discussion of Abraham’s salvation with the words, “So that those who are believing ones are being blessed in company with believing Abraham.”

Let me address a question to each of my readers. On what are you resting for *your* salvation? We at “The Christian Jew Hour” often receive letters from people who are indignant because we have said that salvation is through faith alone. It is a rather startling revelation to learn that, after all our Gospel preaching, so many people who make a Christian profession have never yet learned that salvation is absolutely of *grace through faith*. We almost forget that there are hundreds of people who do not believe these things!

How can anyone profess to believe God’s Holy Word and yet insist upon salvation by human effort? In Romans 11:6, we read, “*And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work.*” Can you not see how the Holy Spirit of God brings this home to us? Salvation is either altogether by *grace*—or, it is altogether by *works*! It cannot be by a *combination* of the two!

If we are saved, we are going to Heaven through the infinite grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. Like that lost sheep that went astray and was found by the shepherd, we are being carried by the Saviour home to His Father's house. It is not a question of working our way there! We are brought back to the Scripture that says, "*For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast*" (Eph. 2:8, 9).

If any one of us had to do as much as lift our little finger to save our own souls, we could strut up the golden streets of the New Jerusalem saying, "Glory be to the Lord *and to me*, for by our combined efforts I am saved." No! It is not by works of mine; not by any effort of mine—and in my case, the Lord Jesus shall get all the glory!

Reader, are you in perplexity and wanting the assurance of salvation? Possibly you have prayed and read your Bible, have gone to church, have been baptized, and have partaken of the ordinance of the Lord's Supper. You have tried to do your "religious duty"; but you do not have peace and rest, and you do not know whether your soul is saved. Let me tell you how to have assurance. Turn from self and self occupation, and fix your eyes upon the blessed Christ of God. Put all your heart's trust in Him and be assured that, "*... whosoever believeth in him shall not perish, but have everlasting life*" (John 3:16).

## 2.

### "The Just Shall Live by Faith"

*"For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them. But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith. And the law is not of faith; but, The man that doeth them shall live in them. 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: That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith. Brethren, I speak after the manner of men; Though it be but a man's covenant, yet if it be confirmed, no man disannulleth, or addeth thereto.*

*Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ. And this I say, that the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect. For if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise: but God gave it to Abraham by promise" (Gal. 3:10-18).*

The Judaizers who were troubling the Galatian assemblies taught that the law was a means of justification. However, in this passage of his letter, the Apostle Paul shows that the law is a means of condemnation, and that it is the Lord Jesus Christ who rescues us from its condemnation through the blood of His Cross. This is the theme of Verses 10 through 14.

As Paul continues his discussion of grace versus law, he writes, "*For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them*" (v. 10). In the latter part of this statement, the Apostle to the Gentiles quotes from Deuteronomy 27:26. In our standard English version, Deuteronomy 27:26 reads, "*Cursed be he that confirmeth not all the words of this law to do them. And all the people shall say, Amen.*" The statement of the Holy Scriptures is simply this: Instead of being blessed by their act of putting themselves under the law, men put themselves under a curse.

The Judaizing teachers in Galatia were maintaining that their knowledge of the law entitled them to the blessings which were attached to the sons of Abraham. However, our Lord once said to representatives of this same system: "Ye are constantly searching the Scriptures; and in them ye think ye have eternal life: And they are them which testify of me. And ye will not come to me that ye might have life" (John 5:39, 40, literal translation). This was the great sin of the nation Israel: ignoring the righteousness of God, Christ, and going about to establish its own righteousness (see Romans 10:1-4).

The Apostle Paul argues that on the contrary, Israel has, by its attempt to be justified by the law, entailed the curse of the broken law, for no man could keep the law. The curse is not merely the wrath of God in the form of the final banishment of the sinner from His presence—with all the sorrow and misery which that includes—but represents also a present condition of alienation from God caused by a violation of His law.

The word "continueth," as used in Paul's quotation of Deuteronomy 27:26, is a figurative expression. It speaks of the law as a prescribed district or domain in which one remains, or out of which one goes. Paul's words of Verse 10 can be literally translated as follows: "For as many as are of the works of the law, are under curse. For it stands written, Cursed is every one who is not remaining constantly in all things which stand written in the book of the law in order to do them."

## The Curse of the Law

In reading Paul's message of this verse, one might naturally ask, "What does the apostle mean when he speaks of the 'curse of the law'?" We might further ask, "Is it a curse to have good laws?" Was it a curse for God to give to the people of Israel the Ten Commandments? Was it a curse for Him to give the highest moral and ethical standard that any people had ever received and that ever had been given to mankind—until our Lord Jesus Christ proclaimed the Sermon on the Mount? Is such a code of morals and ethics a curse? Surely not!

All would have to concede that it *was* a great blessing to Israel to have such instruction directly from the God of creation. The standard of the law showed the chosen people how to live and how to behave themselves. The law kept the children of Israel from a great many of the sins to which the Gentile nations round about them were given. Yet, we have just uncovered this expression in inspired Scripture: "The curse of the law." And, the statement in which this expression is contained reads, "For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse."

When God gave that holy law, He pronounced a blessing on all who kept it and declared that they would receive life thereby. Romans 10:5 states, "... *the man which doeth those things shall live by them.*" However, on the other hand, God's Holy Spirit has said (as quoted here), "... *Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them*" (v. 10).

Everyone who recognizes in that law the divine will as to the life of man here on earth, and yet fails to measure up to it, comes under its curse! Let me ask, "Who is there today who has ever kept this law?" We all know that certain people do say, "If we do the best we can, God will accept our best efforts and not be critical of our failures."

Scripture positively disallows any such thought! In James 2:10, we read, "*For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.*" Breaking just one ordinance of God's divine law is exactly the same as if the whole law were broken!

We all know how true this principle is in regard to the laws of man. Suppose that I, as a citizen of the United States, violated none of the laws of my country except one. By violating that one law, I have become a lawbreaker—an outlaw! I am therefore subject to the penalty of the broken law. It matters not that I have kept all of the other laws of the land. The penalty for breaking that one law must be paid—no amount of continued law keeping (even for the rest of my life) can ever defray the penalty of that one broken law!

When the Scripture speaks of people being under "the curse of the law," the meaning is that they are subject to the penalty of the broken law—and that penalty is death—spiritual and eternal! Ezekiel 18:20 tells us, "*The soul that sinneth, it shall die. . .*" Because of this, the law is well called "the ministration of death" and "the ministration of condemnation" (see II Corinthians 3:7, 9). All who are under the law, but have failed to keep it, are under condemnation—they are condemned to death—and therefore under the law's curse! There is only one solution. The Lord Jesus Christ has died to deliver those under the law from the curse of the law!

Again, let's consider the question, "Can we not deliver ourselves?" Though we have broken the law in the past, can we not make up our minds that from this moment on we will "turn over a new leaf" and be very careful to observe every precept of God's perfect law?

In the first place, it is impossible for anyone to do that! Men (persons) with fallen natures *cannot* fully keep the holy law of God! Consider that particular commandment, "Thou shalt not covet." One cannot keep himself from coveting, even though he knows it is wrong to do so! Our fallen human nature makes it impossible to obey that precept of the law.

In Romans 7, the Apostle Paul says that as far as the other commandments were concerned, his life was outwardly blameless. He was alive without the law until the commandment, ". . . *Thou shalt not covet,*" came to his attention. Then, he says, "*But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupisence. . .*" (Rom. 7:7, 8). Therefore, Saul of Tarsus was slain by the law of God that he could not keep.

But suppose that Saul of Tarsus (or you) were able to keep all of God's law from this very day until the last day of his (or your) earthly life. Would not that undo and make up for all the wrongdoing of the past? Not at all! The past failure still stands on God's record. According to Ecclesiastes 3:15. ". . . *God requireth that which is past.*" The penalty for all past violations *must* be paid!

## Law Does Not Justify

This is why Paul continues in Verse 11, "*But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith.*" Notice this strong declaration—no man is justified by the law of God—no man ever has been justified by the law of God—no man ever will be justified by the law of God! In Paul's Epistle to the Romans, Chapter 3, Verses 19 and 20, we read, "*Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin.*"

In other words, God did not give the law to save man. He gave the law to test him—to make manifest man's true condition. By the way, that explains Verse 19 of this chapter—a passage that has puzzled some—"Wherefore then serveth the law? *It was added because of transgressions. . .*" The law was really given in order to give to sin the specific character of transgression!

Let's look closely at the details of Verse 11. The words "by the law" are in the Greek, "*en nomoi*," which is literally "in law." This corresponds to the expression "in the book of the law" of Verse 10. We have here the locative of sphere. The man who does not continue in the sphere of the law is under the curse. And, the man who attempts to remain in the sphere of the law by obeying it *is not* justified in the sight of God. The reason: Justification is by faith—and *by faith only!*

The reason why obedience to the law cannot justify a sinner is that his obedience cannot pay the penalty for his past sin. Only blood can pay for sin, for blood means outpoured death—and death *is* the wages of sin. God can declare a believing sinner righteous on the basis of the fact that Christ has met the requirements of the law which we broke. Christ himself has become our righteousness—and on no other basis can we claim righteousness!

The word "just" as describing "man" is used as a legal, rather than an ethical, term. It refers to the man approved by God and accepted on the basis of faith, not to the man's character as exhibited by what he does.

The words "shall live" refer (as the context indicates), not to the impartation of a new and divine life which produces a new experience, but rather to the act of God in justifying the man. He lives in a new relationship to God—that of being accepted in the Beloved.

Paul's statement of Verse 11 says, "But that in a sphere of law no one is being justified in the sight of God is clear, because, The righteous man shall live by means of faith." The last statement is, of course, quoted from Habakkuk 2:4, where we read, "*Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him: but the just shall live by his faith.*" Here, Paul quotes the text for this doctrinal section of his epistle sermon. This quotation from Habakkuk also was the apostle's text for his sermon epistles to the Romans (see Romans 1:17), and to the Hebrews (see Hebrews 10:38).

### The Apostle's Text

Note carefully Paul's text, "The just shall live by his faith," was written in the Prophets. Therefore, this principle was made known even in Old Testament times that men were to be justified—not by *human effort*—but by *faith*. Again, it is three times that Paul quotes these words in his New Testament epistles. The Epistle to the Romans quotes this text, and then deals with the first two words: "The just." How do men become just before God? The Epistle to the Romans answers that question.

In his letter to the Galatians, Paul is dealing with only the second two words: "shall live." When justified by faith, how is one maintained before God in that position? Is it not now by works of their own? Chapters 3 and 4 of the letter to the Galatians makes it clear that men who are justified by faith also *live* by that same faith. *No law works are involved.*

In the Epistle to the Hebrews, the same text from Habakkuk is quoted. And, in Chapter 11 of this epistle, the last two words are expounded—"by faith." Paul answers the question, "What is faith? How did faith sustain the righteous men of Old Testament times? How is faith manifest?" It takes three epistles in the New Testament

to expound one Old Testament text of only six words, "The just shall live by faith." This should give all of us some idea of how rich and full the Word of God is!

## The Law Is Not of Faith

But if "the just shall live by faith," then men never can be justified by efforts of their own. That is exactly what Paul tells us in Verse 12: "*And the law is not of faith; but, The man that doeth them shall live in them.*" The law did not say, "The man who *believes* shall live," but rather, "The man who *does* shall live." That which is said about the law would, to the natural man, seem to be the right thing. If a man does right he ought to live! The trouble is, the natural man not only *does not* do right, he *cannot* do right! We read (in Romans 3:23), "*For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.*"

If one commandment out of ten has been violated, the violator has forfeited *all* claim to life. Suppose a man stumbled and fell over a precipice. Just as he went over, his hand caught hold of the end of a chain, the other end of which was securely fastened to some sturdy support at the top of the cliff. There he hung on the bottom link of that chain. The chain has a total of ten links. How many of those links would have to break in order for the man to fall to the bottom of the cliff? The answer is obvious: Only one!

The law is like that chain. When one sins the first time, this is just like breaking one link of that supporting chain. Down the sinner goes! Breaking the law one time placed that sinner in the place of condemnation. There is nothing further that chain can do to stop that downward plunge. The sinner who has sinned only once is in the place of condemnation. He can never make himself fit for the presence of God by any works of law. There is no power to save in that broken chain. If salvation is to take place, it must be by means other than the law. The law says, "The man which doeth these things shall live in them," but men have failed to *so do!* Therefore, they are condemned to die!

Literally, Verse 12 says, "And the law is not of faith; but the one who has done them, shall live in them." The statement, "The law is not of faith," means that the two principles of law and of faith as a means of justification are mutually exclusive of one another. They are diametrically opposed to each other. After stating this fact, Paul quotes Leviticus 18:5 which (in our Authorized English Version) reads, "*Ye shall therefore keep my statutes, and my judgments: which if a man do, he shall live in them: I am the LORD.*"



Further light is thrown upon this statement from Leviticus by the Apostle Paul in Romans 10:5 where he quotes this same passage when he says, "*For Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, That the man which doeth those things shall live by them.*" When the apostle writes the words, "Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law," he means that there is a righteousness that a human being could accrue to himself by perfect obedience to the law—a thing which a fallen, sinful human being *cannot* do—but which a perfect sinless being *could* do.

However, that righteousness (the righteousness of a perfect sinless being) would be different from the righteousness which God imputes to the believing sinner. The former would be obtained by works, and would be a human righteousness. The latter is obtained by faith—and is a divine righteousness. Under the legal enactments of the Mosaic Law, this could be the futile attempt of a sinner to work out under the law a righteousness which God could approve. Under grace, it is the act of a believing sinner accepting as a gift a righteousness which God has approved—even the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ himself!

### **Redeemed from the Curse of the Law**

But immediately following Verse 12, we find the glorious message of reconciliation! Verse 13 reads, "*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.*" Christ has "bought us back"—"ransomed us"—from the curse of the law. How did He do it? He did it by "*... being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree*" (v. 13).

Here was One who had never violated God's law—here was the holy, eternal Son of God, the Delight of the Father's heart from all eternity—who came into the world—who became Man—for the express purpose of redeeming those who were under the curse of the law! It was He who said, "*... the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many*" (Matt. 20:28). However, had He personally violated that law, He would be subject to its penalty—and therefore could never redeem us. That is why the Word of God is very careful to show us that He never violated God's law—He never came under that penalty!

He was holy in nature from the moment He came into the world. The angel said to Mary. His mother, "... that holy thing (One) which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God" (Luke 1:35). His life was absolutely pure and free from sin (free from law violation) as He went through this scene. He magnified the law and made it honorable by a life of devotion to the will of God. Hebrews 4:15 tells us, "He was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." He was sinless—though tempted—and at last God "... made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him" (II Cor. 5:21).

He (the One against whom God had nothing) voluntarily took our place, went to the Cross, and there paid the penalty that we should have paid. If any one of us had to pay that penalty, eternity would be too short for it! But He—the eternal One—hung on the Cross and settled to the last detail every claim that God's law makes on all the natural sinners of this world. And now, when the sinner receives Him—trusts Him as personal Saviour—that sinner is delivered from the curse of the law!

The word translated "redeemed" in Verse 13 is from the Greek "*exagorazo*," the general meaning of which is "to redeem from slavery." It means "to buy up." This word is used frequently in the Septuagint Version of the Old Testament, with the idea that the deliverance spoken of involves cost of some kind, or effort, or suffering, or loss to the one who brings about the deliverance. The word suggests the figure of a ransom. Men needed a ransom, for the law had left them prisoners under sentence of death.

In the New Testament, there are three Greek words that are translated by our English words, "bought" or "redeemed." These three, taken together, tell the whole story of redemption. The first word is "*agorazo*" and is used in I Corinthians 6:20 where Paul writes, "For ye are **bought** with a price; therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's." "*Agorazo*" means "to buy in the slave market." We are slaves of sin. Our ransom price was paid by the Lord Jesus with His precious blood. Peter (in I Peter 1:18) says, "Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers." That is, we were not redeemed with little silver and gold coins used to buy a slave out of slavery, but with precious blood, highly honored, as of a lamb without spot or blemish—the blood of Jesus

Christ! Thus, believers become bondslaves of the Lord Jesus Christ by right of purchase. The word "*doulos*," or "bondslave," refers to one born in slavery.

The second word is the one Paul uses in the verse we are studying. It is "*exagorazo*," meaning "to buy a slave out of the marketplace." The bondslave of the Lord Jesus Christ is bought—not only to be His bondslave—but he is bought out of the slave market. Never again is he to be put up for sale in any slave market! He becomes the bondslave of the Lord Jesus for time and eternity.

The third Greek word is "*lutroo*," the word translated "redeem" in Titus 2:14. There, the Apostle Paul writes, "*Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.*" The noun that has the same root as this verb means "ransom money used to liberate a slave." The verb means "to set free by the payment of a ransom." The bondslave of the Lord Jesus is set free from his former slavery to sin and is thus able to realize in his life that for which God created him: to *glorify God* and to *enjoy Him* forever.

The "curse" mentioned in Verse 13 is that which the legalistic passages of the Mosaic Law pronounced upon those who did not perfectly obey its demands. The law pronounced both a blessing and a curse. The blessing proved barren. The reason: The law made no allowance for human sin and frailty. The curse, which involved the wrath of a righteous God, brought condemnation upon the offender. It was from this hopeless state of condemnation that Christ redeemed us by satisfying the just demands of the law which we broke. (The law violator was not only helpless to redeem himself—but also helpless to satisfy the just demands of the law and thus find acceptance with God.) He (the Lord Jesus Christ) paid the penalty in our stead, and His payment left a holy God free to bestow mercy on the basis of justice satisfied.

### **The Penalty of the Law**

A vivid picture of all the penalty of the law is given us in the three expressions, "under the curse" (Verse 10), "made a curse for (above) us" (Verse 13), and "redeemed us out from under the curse" (Verse 13). Sinners were under the curse. Christ came above us—thus, *between* us and the curse. He took the blow of the avenging blade that hung over us; and in so doing, He took us out from under the curse—

having become a curse above us. The word "above" is the root meaning of the Greek preposition "hyper"—the preposition of substitution. (This same preposition has been used previously in this epistle when Paul spoke of the substitutionary character of our Lord's death.)

The word "us" refers to the Jewish nation. The Mosaic Law was given to the Jew only. That is not to say, however, that the Gentile is not held responsible by God under the all-inclusive principles of right conduct inherent in God's character and His dealings with the human race. Thus, the Jew was under the curse. And being redeemed by Christ from the curse, the blessing of Abraham was at liberty to flow out to the Gentiles. (Remember: Justification by faith, in the plan of God, was to flow through Israel to the Gentiles.)

The words "being made" are from a Greek verb which means "to become." It is a participle of means, expressing the method by which Christ redeemed us from the curse. In the words, "Cursed is everyone that hangeth on a tree," Paul is quoting from Deuteronomy 21:23. Our English version translates this verse, "*His body shall not remain all night upon the tree, but thou shalt in any wise bury him that day; (for he that is hanged is accursed of God,) that thy land be not defiled, which the LORD thy God giveth thee for an inheritance.*"

Paul quotes these words to support his statement to the effect that Christ became a curse. The Deuteronomy passage (in context) has reference to the dead body of a criminal who had been put to death by stoning, and which was hung upon a tree. There is no direct reference here to Roman crucifixion, which was unknown at the time of Moses. However, our Lord's mode of death is anticipated and prophesied in the Deuteronomy reference.

Paul quotes his Greek words from the Septuagint; he omits the words "of God" after "cursed," since our Lord was in no sense accursed by God in His crucifixion. It was the curse of the Mosaic Law that descended on Christ, thus subjecting Him to the death of a malefactor. The law satisfied its demands upon the Lord Jesus, and thus thrust Him out of the scope of its legal jurisdiction. Therefore, believers also—being identified with Him in His death in which He paid our penalty—are cast out with Him, and are therefore no longer under a curse.

Thus, Paul makes the profound statement of Verse 13: "Christ delivered us by the payment of ransom from the curse of the law by

becoming a curse in behalf of us, because it stands written, Accursed is everyone who is suspended upon a tree." Any believer who can visualize the Lord Jesus Christ hanging on that Cross can know that He was there on his behalf! He, the sinless One, was suffering there for me, the sinner! We believers can all look up to Him, and in faith say, "Lord Jesus, I am thy sin; I am thine unrighteousness. Thou hast none of thine own, but art bearing mine."

We can look again, and now realize that Cross is empty, and that our Lord's body has been laid in the tomb. "He was delivered for our offenses," and buried out of sight as each of us deserved to be buried out of sight. But, we can look again and realize that the tomb, too, is empty, and He has come forth in triumph. "He was raised again for our justification" (see Romans 4:25). We do not look to the Cross now, but to the throne of God. By faith, we see Him seated there—a Man exalted at God's right hand. He is the same Man who stood dumb in Pilate's judgment hall and did not say one word to clear Himself, because we could not be cleared unless He died in our stead!

Who would want to work out a righteousness of his own when he can have one so much better through simple faith in the Lord Jesus Christ? Meditate carefully upon Paul's words, "*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*" (Gal. 3:13).

### **The Blessing of Abraham**

And now, because of that, the blessing of Abraham may come to the Gentiles in Christ Jesus. We who are not the blood descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob may receive the promise of the Spirit through faith. This is what Verse 14 tells us: "*That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.*"

What is "the blessing of Abraham"? During Abraham's lifetime, God had said to him, "In thee and in thy seed shall all nations of the earth be blessed" (see Genesis 12:3 and Genesis 17:7, 8). Centuries, and even millennia, rolled by, and the nations of the Gentiles were left outside—they were outside the circle of blessing—they were strangers to the covenant of promise—they knew nothing of the blessing of Abraham, nor what God had promised through his seed. But now Christ has died—not for Jews only, but for the Gentiles also. And because of His work, the message goes out to the whole world that God

can save everyone who believes on the Lord Jesus Christ. All such believers become, in faith, the "children of Abraham" and are sealed by the Holy Spirit of God. The blessing of Abraham is justification by faith for every believer, even as "... *Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness*" (Rom. 4:3).

Paul draws attention to the fact that when God said to Abraham, "In thy seed shall all nations of the earth be blessed," He was not referring merely to the nation that should spring from him (Abraham), but to one individual Person. It had been settled in the purpose of God from eternity that the Christ (the Messiah) was to be born of Abraham's lineage.

Note carefully: There are two purpose clauses in Verse 14. Each clause is introduced by the word "that" (Greek: "*hina*"). These clauses are coordinate; both depend upon the statement in Verse 13 to the effect that Christ became a curse for us in order that the blessing of Abraham—justification by faith, and also the Holy Spirit—might be given to both Jew and Gentile. This was to be the fulfillment of Joel 2:28 where God had promised, "*And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions.*"

The law (which was the barrier that separated Jew and Gentile) is done away in Christ. By its removal, the Gentiles are put on a common level with the Jew. And, thus united, both Jew and Gentile are recipients of the Holy Spirit through faith.

A literal translation of Paul's Greek of Verse 14 would read as follows: "In order that to the Gentiles the blessing of Abraham might come in Jesus Christ; in order that the promise of the Spirit we (Jew and Gentile) might receive through faith."

## The Nature of a Contract

This concluding statement of Verse 14 leads to the argument contained in Verses 15 through 18. Paul shows that God made provision for justification to be given to the Gentiles on the basis of *faith in*

*Jesus Christ.* God also made provision for the gift of the Holy Spirit to both Jew and Gentile. God accomplished this before the Mosaic Law was given. The law, therefore, cannot make void that which was done by God prior to the giving of the law.

Paul now presents an argument to show that the covenant God made with Abraham was still in force, basing it upon the priority of the covenant and its irrevocable character. He asserts that it is common knowledge that when men make a contract—and that contract is once agreed upon—it cannot be modified or changed except by the mutual consent of both parties. He writes (in Verse 15), "*Brethren, I speak after the manner of men; Though it be but a man's covenant, yet if it be confirmed, no man disannulleth, or addeth thereto.*" Paul is applying this principle to God's covenant with Abraham. He is contending that the law cannot modify this covenant, since the law was given centuries later.

Note here that Paul addresses those to whom he is writing as "brethren." In the preceding verses, the apostle was not so much addressing the Galatians as he was speaking of the Judaizers. Here he is directly addressing the recipients of the letter—his Galatian converts. When he writes the word "brethren," he does it as an expression of loving urgency, but in a conciliatory tone. This is very different from the opening address of this epistle, where the apostle wrote the abrupt, "Paul . . . unto the churches of Galatia" (see Galatians 1:1, 2).

The words, "I speak after the manner of men," have in them the idea of, "I speak from a human point of view," or, "I speak as men do concerning their affairs." Paul is not apologizing for the illustration he is using. Rather, he is desirous of accommodating himself to the ordinary way in which the average man thinks. He wants to be perfectly intelligible to his readers.

The word translated "covenant" deserves careful study. It is the Greek word "*diatheke*," which in its verb form means "to place between two." It refers to the act of one of two individuals placing between them something to which he obligates himself. It is an engagement on the part of one in the sense that he enters into an agreement with another to do thus and so. The word here must not be understood as meaning a "testament"—namely, the testamentary disposition of goods. "*Diatheke*" is used only once in the New Testament in that way, and the place of such usage is in the passage of Hebrews 9:15-17.

As used here, "*diatheke*" refers to an agreement in which God enters into covenant relations with Abraham, and in which He promises to justify him on the basis of his faith in the atonement which He (God) Himself would someday offer. That covenant or agreement was made only by God. God also gave the law centuries later. However, the God who made a covenant with Abraham would not invalidate that covenant by adding another specification to it—namely, obedience to law coupled with faith making two prerequisites to salvation.

The Greek word translated "confirmed" means "to confirm solemnly or publicly, to ratify." The word here is in the perfect tense; this indicates that ratification is a past matter, and that at present the matter is closed and established. Therefore, just as in human contracts, an agreement solemnly ratified cannot be changed unless by mutual consent of the parties involved. So also is the case in this divine contract.

Paul says, "No man disannulleth or addeth thereto." "Disannulleth" is translated from a Greek verb which means "to render without place or standing, to abrogate, to annul." The words "addeth thereto" is from a single Greek verb which means "to make additional stipulations."

In his statement, Paul recognizes two distinct methods of invalidating a contract: First, to annul it directly; and second, to impose new conditions which are diametrically opposed to its spirit or purpose. The doctrine of the Judaziers (at first glance) appeared only to add some harmless new conditions to the covenant of grace. However, the character of these new conditions virtually annulled it! Works added to faith would annul the entire covenant, since any dependence upon *works* means that it is necessary to abandon *faith*! That means that any sinner who claims to be saved on the basis of *works plus faith* is still a *lost sinner*!

One cannot carry water on two shoulders! Neither can one depend upon self-effort for salvation, and at the same time put faith in the Lord Jesus for the same salvation. Here is the terrible tragedy of those systems (or "methods") which teach that works, in addition to faith in the atoning sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ, are needed for salvation. Such advocates are sending millions to the lake of fire (to "*Gehenna*") by their heretical teaching!



Thus, Paul says, "Brethren, what I have to say is in accordance with common human practice. Even though it be a man's covenant, when it has finally been ratified, no man annuls it nor adds stipulations to it." When men make covenants, we expect them to live up to them. God made a covenant of unconditional grace to Abraham long years before. Later the law came in, but that did not invalidate the covenant of pure grace made to Abraham!

### Abraham's "Seed"

The Apostle Paul continues, "*Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ*" (v. 16). Through the Lord Jesus, then, the blessing of God's covenant of pure grace goes out to every poor sinner who will believe in Him!

The promises were made to Abraham and to his "Seed," Christ. However, when Christ is seen as the "Seed" of Abraham here, all those saved by Him are also included in this expression. The word "seed," when used in the singular number in the Old Testament, means "progeny." Thus, to Abraham personally—and to all those who by faith in Christ are brought into salvation—were the promises made.

The fact that the promises were made to Abraham (and to all believers down the ages who follow Abraham in his act of faith) indicates that the faith way of salvation existed before the law was given. Therefore, the faith way of salvation continued through the time the law was in force; it is still in effect after the abrogation of the law at the Cross! Thus, the entrance of the law *did not* affect the covenant at all!

This is why Paul makes those emphatic statements of Verse 16: "Now to Abraham were made the promises, and to his seed. He does not say, And to the seeds, as in respect to many (seeds), but in respect to one (Seed), and to your seed who is Christ."

### Law Cannot Disannul Grace

"*And this I say, that the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect*" (v. 17). God was not playing fast and loose with Abraham when He gave him this unconditional covenant of grace. He did not say, "If you do thus

and so, and if you *do not do* certain things, all the world will be blessed through your seed." Rather, He said, unconditionally, "In thee and in thy seed shall all nations of the earth be blessed." It is not a question at all of human effort; it is not a question of something we earn!

Let's look carefully at Verse 17. The words, "And this I say," take up for the purpose of further argument or explanation a thought which has already been expressed. In Verse 16, Paul has hinted at what he states plainly in this verse—namely, that the law (given much later than the covenant of grace) *cannot* invalidate and disannul the former covenant.

The figure of 430 years, Paul took from Exodus 12:40 where Moses had written, "*Now the sojourning of the children of Israel, who dwelt in Egypt, was four hundred and thirty years.*" By quoting from Exodus 12:40, Paul is not attempting to state the exact period of time that stood between the giving of the covenant of grace and the giving of the law. The word "after" should actually *precede* the words "four hundred and thirty years"—that is, the expression should read, "the law, which came after (more than) four hundred and thirty years."

The statement of the length of time that elapsed between the giving of the covenant to Abraham and the giving of the law to Moses, implies that the law was something new and different. It could not, therefore, be an element forming part of the promise. The longer the covenant was in force as the "alone" (sole) method upon which God operated in the saving of sinners, the more impressive is Paul's statement. God was saving men on the basis of faith without works since the time of Adam. This was most likely about 4,000 years before the law was given!

The law was in force from Moses to Christ, or for a period of fifteen hundred years. At the Cross, it was abrogated. The Judaizers not only attempted to retain the Mosaic institutions for the Jews, but also tried to impose them upon the Gentiles—to whom that law was *never given!* This was what Paul was fighting.

So, the Apostle to the Gentiles says (in Verse 17), "This now is what I mean. A covenant previously established by God, the law, which came after four hundred and thirty years, does not render void, with the result that the promise becomes inoperative."

Paul's argument is as follows. If a covenant once in force cannot be changed or rendered void by any subsequent action, God's covenant with Abraham cannot be changed or rendered void by the subsequent law. If this principle holds good in a human covenant, much more is it true when God makes the covenant—since God is more certainly true to His promise than is man.

### Salvation Is by Promise—The Promise of God's Grace

Then, in Verse 18, Paul concludes, "*For if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise: but God gave it to Abraham by promise.*" The apostle's argument in this verse is that, if the law affects the promise at all, it renders it null and void. Nothing can be added to the covenant of grace without destroying it. Salvation must rest either upon the promise *or* upon the law. The Judaizers claimed that it rested upon the promise *and* the law. But Paul has shown that the law did not abrogate the promise, and thus it had no effect upon it. Thus, if as the Judaizers said, the inheritance is on the basis of law obedience, then it is *not* on the basis of promise.

"But," Paul adds, "God gave it to Abraham on the basis of promise." That settled the matter. The word, "law" and "promise" are without the definite article, indicating that Paul is speaking of them here in their character of two opposing principles.

The word "gave" is translated from the Greek "*charizomai*." This is a very specialized word. It denotes not merely a gift, but a gift which is given out of the spontaneous generosity of the giver's heart, with no strings tied to it. The Greek word translated "grace" ("*charis*") has the same root and the same meaning. Thus, the word refers, not to an undertaking based upon terms of mutual agreement, but upon the free act of one who gives something expecting no pay for it.

This at once shows the difference between law and grace. If salvation were by obedience to the law, that would mean that it would be based upon a mutual agreement between God and the sinner, whereby God would obligate Himself to give salvation to any sinner who would earn it by obedience to the law. But the very genius of the word "*charizomai*" militates against the teaching of the Judaizers—namely, that salvation is by works. There is a Greek word ("*huposche-sis*") which is used of an offer based upon the terms of a mutual agreement. But that word is not found here.

Furthermore, the verb translated "gave" is in the perfect tense here, and that tense speaks of a past-completed act having present results. The past act of God giving the inheritance on the basis of a promise has present results—present to the writer. God gave the inheritance to Abraham by promise, approximately 2200 B.C. The results of this act were still in existence in the century when Paul wrote. The law was given about 1500 B.C., and the promise still held good after the law came and had been set aside.

Let's expand our translation of Paul's Greek of Verse 18: "For if the inheritance is from law (as a method of divine dealing), no longer is it from promise (as a method of divine dealing). But to Abraham through the intermediate instrumentality of promise God has in grace freely bestowed it."

If salvation comes through self-effort, it is not a question of promise at all. But God gave salvation to Abraham by promise, and, "... *the promise*," Peter says, "*is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call*" (Acts 2:39).

This page may be read by one who has been struggling for years to make himself fit for God's presence—perhaps one who has been trying hard to work out a righteousness of his own. "trying to be a Christian." Let me beg of that one, "Stop trying—give it up!" You cannot become a Christian by "trying" anymore than you can acquire a royal title of the English nobility by "trying." You are what you are by birth. You are what you are as a sinner by *natural birth*, and you become a child of God through the *second birth*—through believing on the Lord Jesus Christ. The "blessing of Abraham" is yours when you receive it by faith!

## The Law: A "Nanny" for Israel

*"Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator. Now a mediator is not a mediator of one, but God is one. Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid: for if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law. But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe. But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed. Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster. For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (Gal. 3:19-29).*

As the reader of this epistle comes to Verse 19 of Chapter 3, the Apostle Paul has made it quite clear that the law was *never* given as a means whereby a sinner might be saved. The natural question that now comes to the reader's mind is, "Then why was the law given, and what purpose did it serve?" Paul anticipates this question, and he asks it at the beginning of Verse 19: "*Wherefore then serveth the law?*" In the remainder of Verse 19 and extending on through Verse 23, the Apostle to the Gentiles provides a first answer to this question. He says, "The law was given to show man that sin is not a mere following of evil impulses, but a direct violation of the laws of God."

### The Purpose of the Law

*"Wherefore then serveth the law?" (v. 19). If the law did not add anything to what God had given by promise to Abraham—and surely it could not take anything from it!—what was its purpose? Why did God give it at all? The apostle answers, ". . . It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator" (v. 19).*

Paul is now proceeding to answer the argument that if the law was never given as a means of salvation, then that fact leaves the law without a reason for being. However, the apostle denies this conclusion by immediately asserting that the law was given because of transgressions. The English words "because of" are translated from the Greek "*charin*," which may have either a casual or a "*telic*" (that is, a "purposive"; a "tending toward an end") force. The context here (and also Paul's conception of the functions of the law) indicates that the latter is its usage in this passage. Thus, Paul is declaring that the law was given "to the *purpose* of transgressions."

The apostle's answer to his own question is, ". . . *It (the law) was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator*" (v. 19). We can probably understand Paul's answer better if we read it, "It (the law) was added *with a view to* transgressions." The law was added in order that it might make men see the specific character of transgression, and thus deepen in each soul a sense of his sinfulness and his need.

The crux of Paul's whole assertion is found in the distinctive meaning of the Greek word translated "transgressions." The word is "*parabasis*." The simple verb form that constitutes the latter part of this word means "to step." The prefix preposition, "*para*," means "beyond." The entire word refers to the act of a person stepping beyond a fixed limit into forbidden territory. "*Parabasis*" differs from the Greek word most commonly translated "sin" in the New Testament. That word is "*hamartia*," which means "to miss the mark." In classical Greek, "*hamartia*" was used of a person who failed to hit a target. Therefore, a New Testament "sin" is a "missing of the mark," while a New Testament "transgression" is a "stepping out of legal bounds."

The verb form of "*hamartia*" was used in connection with a direct object like "*hodos*" (road) in a sentence where someone missed the road. Thus, that word translated "sin" implies a deviation from the right course of action. But this word, in the Greek classics, never carried the idea of a willful transgression or overstepping of limitations with reference to conduct imposed by deity.

The word "*parabasis*" (transgression), when used of human conduct, indicates a violation of the rights of others, or of limitations imposed upon one. This is the word that Paul now uses to indicate the

purpose of the giving of the law. Before the law was given through Moses to Israel, the wrongdoing of man was recognized as "*hamartia*"—"sin"—a deviation from the course of right conduct. But when the law was given, sin was seen to be—not merely the following of evil impulses—but the willful violation of explicit law. Thus, the exceeding sinfulness of sin was recognized by the human race. Such, otherwise, might not have been evident.

The law, therefore, was not given because of the *existence* of transgressions. Rather, it was given to show "*hamartia*" (sin) in its true light—that is, an overstepping of what is right into the realm of what is wrong. This revelation of the true nature of sin would cause man to fear God's wrath. Such fear, in turn, would give strength to the weakness of man's moral sense, and thus educate his conscience and make it more sensitive to sin. The particular section of the Mosaic Law in view here (as well as throughout all of the Galatian letter) is the purely mandatory statutes of "Thou shalt" and "Thou shalt not."

The law was given, therefore, to set the stamp of positive transgression upon already-existing sin. It was not to give the knowledge of sin as sin—but rather to show that sin was a violation of (a transgression against) God's commandments.

Paul says, "The law was *added*." The word "added" is translated from the Greek "*prostithemi*," the simple verb stem of which means "to place," and the prefixed preposition meaning "toward." This word marks the law as supplementary to the covenant of grace, and therefore subordinate to it. Paul, in Romans 5:20 writes, "The law entered"—that is, "The law came in alongside." It was not added to grace as an extra provision whereby a sinner might appropriate salvation—for the law is diametrically opposed to grace. It was "brought in alongside" of grace as a measure to show sinners the real nature of their sin. Law was "brought in alongside" of grace to show sinners their need of a Saviour who, in infinite grace, offers them a salvation that is free in answer to faith.

The law was "brought in alongside" until the seed should come to whom the promise was made. Grace flowed full and free from Adam's time to Abraham's time—and from Abraham's time to Moses' time—and from Moses' time to Paul's time. It continues to flow full and free from Paul's time through the present. And grace will still be in force as the only way in which God saves a sinner until the time of the judgment of the Great White Throne! The law was merely in force

from Moses' time to Christ's death on the Cross. And, even while it was in force, God still saved sinners by pure grace!

The covenant of promise (grace) is therefore of permanent validity. It began before—and continued through—the period of the law, and afterwards. The law was a temporary provision brought in alongside of grace to show sinners their need of grace—and it was in force only from Moses' time to the Cross.

### “Ordained by Angels”

In the last part of Verse 19, Paul says, “The law was ordained by angels.” The New Testament refers three times to the interposition of angels in the giving of the law. In Acts 7:53, Luke writes, “*Who have received the law by the disposition of angels, and have not kept it.*” Here, Luke mentions this fact in order to enhance the authority of the law. In Hebrews 2:2, the law is contrasted with God's revelation in His Son by the words, “*For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward.*” Here in Galatians 3:19, the law is contrasted with God's familiar dialog with Abraham in which He (God) spoke to Abraham, calling him His friend.

At Sinai, the law was given through two intermediaries—angels and Moses. The people stood afar off. Grace says, “Come nigh,” while the law says, “Stand off.” The object here of showing how the law was given is to indicate the inferior and subordinate position of the law in comparison to the superior position held by grace. The promise (grace) was given directly to Abraham. The law was given through two intermediaries—angels and Moses. Paul thus shows that the law does not—as the Judaizers claim—have as direct and positive a relation to the divine plan of salvation as does the promise. He also shows it (the law) is only of transitory significance, whereas the promise (grace) has an eternal value and meaning.

Let's literally translate Paul's message of Verse 19: “What is then the significance of the law? For the sake of transgressions it was added, until there should come the seed to whom the promise was made, having been promulgated by angels through the instrumentality of the hand of a mediator.”



## The Promise, Direct from God— The Law, Through a Mediator

Paul then continues, "Now a mediator is not a mediator of one, but God is one" (v. 20). The idea of two contracting parties suggests the thought of the need of a mediator. However, when God gave His promise to Abraham, there was only one negotiating party. God gave the Word, and there was nothing to do on Abraham's part but to receive it. He did not covenant with God that he would do thus and so in order that God's promise might be fulfilled. God simply spoke directly to Abraham and committed Himself when He said, "In thee shall all nations be blessed" (v. 8).

In Verse 20, it is Paul's purpose to show that the promise (grace) is superior to the law, and he accomplishes this by showing that the former (grace) was given directly from God to Abraham—whereas the latter (the law) was given to Israel by God through a mediator. The statement, "A mediator is not of one," requires examination.

The word translated "mediator" is derived from a root word which means "middle," or "the midst." Thus, a mediator is one who intervenes between two—either to make or to restore peace and friendship—or, to form a compact, or ratify a covenant. This word in the Greek text is preceded by the definite article, making the word generic in character. That is, Paul is not referring here to any particular mediator (such as Moses), but rather to the *office* of a mediator—and to mediators in general, looked upon as a class of individuals. However, this generic statement *is* intended to be applied to Moses—the mediator referred to in Verse 19.

The word "one" is masculine in gender, and therefore is personal, referring to a person. That is, a mediator does not act simply in behalf of one person. The very genius of the word implies that the mediator stands "in the midst" of two or more persons—and thus acts as a go-between.

It is not that the mediator acts in behalf of a plurality of persons that constitute one party (in the legal sense), but that there is a plurality of parties between which he acts. Thus, the law is a contract between two parties. God gave the law through a mediator (Moses), and man is obligated to obey it. God will bless man *if* he obeys, and will punish man *if* he disobeys!

However, the promise of free grace is not in the nature of a contract between two parties. God acts alone and directly when He promises salvation to anyone who will receive it by the outstretched hand of faith. There are no good works to be done by the sinner in order that he might merit that salvation. Grace is unconditional. There are no strings tied to it. God is One—that is, He acts alone without a mediator in respect to the promise of grace. Therefore, grace is superior to law. In the case of the former, God spoke directly to Abraham. In the case of the latter, He spoke to Israel through a mediator—Moses. The dignity of the law is thus seen to be inferior to that of the promise (grace).

Paul's message of Verse 20 is, "Now, the mediator is not (a go-between representing the interests) of one (individual), but God is one (individual)."

### Does the Law Contradict God's Promise?

The Apostle to the Gentiles then asks the question, "Is the law then against the promises of God?" Then he exclaims, "Let it not be!" (This is the actual meaning of the Greek words that our English version translates, "God forbid!")

The answer to Paul's question is that the law and the promise are not in conflict, because each has a distinct function. That is why the apostle says, "Let it not be! For if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law."

The law is a ministry of *condemnation*. The promises are a ministry of *salvation*. The law judges a person on the basis of *obedience* or *disobedience*. The promises judge man on a basis of *faith*.

The law, whose ministry is one of condemnation, was not intended to express God's attitude towards man. God's attitude towards man is one of *grace*. The law is not the basis of God's judgment of man. A sinner who rejects Christ goes to the lake of fire for all eternity—not because he has broken God's laws, for his sin is paid for. He goes to a lost eternity, because he *rejects God's grace in the Lord Jesus*. The law is a revelation of the sinner's legal standing, and as such it condemns him. The law cannot therefore justify the sinner, as the Judaizers claimed that it could.

Law and grace are not in conflict, since they operate in different spheres. For instance, here is a father who has discovered that his son has disobeyed his commands. He calls the son's attention to the law which he broke, and pronounces him guilty. He uses this very sentence of "guilty" to bring the boy to see his misdemeanor in its true light. The son becomes repentant, and the father assures him of his forgiveness. The father is not in conflict with himself when using law to bring his son to a realization of the true nature of his disobedience. He has done this in order that his son might repent, and thus put himself in a position where the father can forgive him.

Likewise, God is not in conflict with Himself when He gives the law that man might come to see his sin as a transgression or violation of His holy will. This is the first step in man's act of repentance and faith. Man's faith can then be answered by God with the gift of eternal life.

It is an irrefutable fact that no law could ever give eternal life! The wages of sin is death. The law demands of the sinner the death penalty—spiritual and physical death. The law will not accept the good works of a sinner in lieu of the death penalty! Only the precious blood of Jesus Christ can satisfy the righteous demands of the broken law. Salvation, therefore, is by grace, because God the Son took the sinner's place on the Cross and now offers salvation to the one who believes on Him.

Let's carefully consider the literal translation of Paul's statement of Verse 21: "Is therefore the law against the promises of God? Let it not be! For if a law had been given which was able to impart life, righteousness in that case would have been from the law."

The opening question makes this appeal: "Is the law against the promises of God by bringing in certain terms which were not in the original promise? Does the law set the promise to one side?" The answer is in Paul's exclamation, "Let it not be!"

But some may point out that a certain principle was laid down in the law which declared that "the man that doeth them shall live in them" (see Verse 12), and if any man had been found to do these things perfectly, he could have obtained life on the ground of the law. Recall

though that the law said to man, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die" (see Ezekiel 18:20), and no man was ever found who could keep it. That is why Paul says, "For if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law." The law cannot give salvation to the lost sinner—grace can!

## The Law Convicts of Sin, Turning Men to Jesus Christ

In Verse 22, we have the reason given as to why the law cannot save. "*But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe.*" God has concluded all under sin. In other words, God has found all mankind (every individual) guilty of violation of His law. If we are already guilty of violating God's law, then there is nothing the law can do to redeem us from the curse. We *must* pay the penalty! No amount of future "law keeping" can save us from the penalty of a law already broken!

Paul uses the word "scripture" in the singular number in Verse 22 to refer to a particular passage. There are two Old Testament passages to which Paul probably has reference. The first one is Psalm 143:2, which the apostle has already quoted in Galatians 2:16. Our English translation of this verse reads, "*And enter not into judgment with thy servant: for in thy sight shall no man living be justified.*" The second passage is found in Deuteronomy 27:26, which Paul has already quoted in Galatians 3:10. Our English version of Deuteronomy 27:26 reads, "*Cursed be he that confirmeth not all the words of this law to do them. And all the people shall say, Amen.*"

The word "concluded" is translated from a Greek verb which means "to shut up, to confine." Scripture, in its divine utterances regarding the universality of sin, is spoken of as a jailer who shuts all up in sin as in a prison. The function of the law was therefore to convict of sin that men might turn to the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation.

A literal translation of Paul's Greek of Verse 22 would read as follows: "But the Scripture shut up all under sin, in order that the promise on the ground of faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe." If God has imprisoned all under sin, then must all men be lost? No! All have been imprisoned under sin "that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe." God would have all men recognize their sinfulness in order that all might realize their need and come to Him proving His grace.

God puts all men on one common level. Romans 3:22, 23 tells us, "Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference: For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." Men imagine that there are a great many differences between themselves. One man might ask, "Do you mean to tell me that there is no difference between a moral man and a poor reprobate in the gutter?" Of course, there is a great deal of difference, not only as far as the standard of society is concerned, but also as to their own happiness and the estimate of their neighbors. However, when it comes to a question of righteousness in God's sight, "There is no difference: for all have sinned." All may not have sinned in the same way—they may not have committed exactly the same transgressions—but "all have sinned"—all have violated God's law.

God demands absolute righteousness of sinners before they enter Heaven. "There shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth" (see Revelation 21:27). One man may have some given quantity of his own righteousness, and another man may have a great deal less. However, unless each one has met God's standard of righteousness, he will in no wise enter into God's presence. And, in God's sight, ". . . *There is none righteous, no, not one*" (Rom. 3:10). And, always remember, it is God who has said that—not some zealous, earnest preacher or evangelist—but God himself by the Holy Spirit!

The law was given to demonstrate that fact. But when men take the place of unrighteousness before God—when they take the place of being lost sinners, and own their sin and guilt—what then? "*But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe*" (v. 22).

In other words, when men come to the place where they realize the fact that they cannot earn eternal life by any effort of their own, and are ready to receive it as a free gift, that moment it is theirs! "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life" (see John 3:36). "*Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from (out of) death unto (into) life*" (John 5:24).

### Another Purpose of the Law

It is in Verse 23 that the Apostle Paul begins to show us another use for the law. He writes, "*But before faith came,*"—that is, "*before the*

faith," because it was made known clearly and definitely that God was justifying men by faith alone in His blessed Son—"we were kept under the law,"—Paul speaks now as a Jew—"shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed."

The correct understanding of the expression, "Before faith came," is found in the fact that the definite article is used before the word "faith"—namely, "before *the* faith came." The definite article here identifies the faith mentioned in this verse with the faith spoken of in Verse 22—that is, personal faith in Jesus Christ as Saviour, exercised in this Age of Grace. That faith is fundamentally alike, so far as its character goes, to the faith Abraham exercised. However, it is different in that it looks back to an accomplished salvation at the Cross, whereas the faith of Abraham looked forward to the accomplishment of that salvation at Calvary. The former is faith in a historic Christ, whereas the latter was faith in a prophetic Christ.

Faith has been the appointed means of obtaining the salvation of God since Adam's time. Faith itself did not begin to be exercised on the occasion of the Cross. Faith, as such, did not come then. However, the particular faith in Jesus Christ as exercised in this Age of Grace came at the beginning of the age.

The word "kept" is translated from a Greek verb which means "to keep in ward under lock and key." The law was a jailer who held in custody those who were subjected to sin. They were kept in custody in order that they should not escape the consciousness of their sins and their liability to punishment.

The word "unto" is from the Greek "*eis*," and here it is not temporal in its significance. Rather, it has the idea of "until," but also carries the idea of "with a view to." That is, sinners were kept guarded under the law with a view to their exercising faith in Christ. The law shut them up to one avenue of escape—namely, faith in Christ. During the 1500 years in which the law was in force, it was the means of convicting sinners of their sins and of causing them to look ahead in faith to the atonement God would someday offer. This atonement would pay for their sins. These sinners were saved by the blood of Christ just as surely, and just as eternally, as believing sinners since the Cross. But when the faith in a historic Christ came—that is, a faith exercised in the Christ of history rather than in the Christ of prophecy—then the law was abrogated.

Therefore, the literal sense of Paul's Greek of Verse 23 is, "But before the aforementioned faith came, under law we were constantly being guarded, being shut up with a view to the faith about to be revealed." The Gentiles, during that period of preceding history, did not have the law—but the Jews did. God gave the Jew that law, and he was looked upon as a minor child under rules and regulations.

### "The Law Was Our Nanny"

Paul continues, in Verse 24, "*Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.*" Here Paul gives us the precise reason why God gave the law. The law was given in order that, by showing the sinner that sin was an actual transgression of God's laws, he might see the necessity of faith in a substitutionary sacrifice for sin, and thus be led to put his trust in the Christ of prophecy who would in the future die for him.

The word translated "schoolmaster" is the important word here. It is "*paidagogos*." The English word "schoolmaster" could better be the translation of "*didaskalos*," which literally means "a teacher." It is true that our word "*pedagogue*" comes from the Greek "*paidagogos*," and that the English word does refer to a schoolmaster. But the Greek word did not have that meaning. Rather, the word "*paidagogos*" designated a slave employed in Greek and Roman families who had general charge over a boy while he was in his years from about six to sixteen. The "*paidagogos*" watched over the boy's outward behavior, and he took charge over him whenever he went from home—as for instance, to school.

This slave was entrusted with the moral supervision of the child. His duties were therefore quite distinct from those of a schoolmaster. Furthermore, Paul's metaphor of a "*paidagogos*" seems to have grown out of the word "kept" of Verse 23. The Greek word translated "kept" means "to guard." Thus, the word refers to a *guardian* of a child during his early minor years, rather than to a teacher or schoolmaster. Perhaps our word which bears the closest resemblance to the Greek "*paidagogos*" is the word "nanny." In British terminology, the word "nanny" refers to one who is in charge of a young child—one in charge of the moral training of that child. Paul says that the law was given as a "nanny" for the nation Israel.

By describing the law as a "*paidagogos*"—a "nanny"—Paul emphasizes both the inferiority of the law to grace, and also its temporary character. The law was therefore the guardian of Israel. It was given to keep watch over those committed to the law's care and accompanying them with its commands and prohibitions—keeping them in a condition of dependence and restraint—and continually revealing to them sin as a positive transgression. The apostle's literal words of Verse 24 read, "So that the law became our guardian (our 'nanny') until Christ, in order that on the grounds of faith we might be justified." God gave the Jew that law, and he was looked upon as a minor child under rules and regulations. God gave the law to His chosen people as a code of morals to serve until Jesus came to set before us the most wonderful moral code the world has ever known. Thus, the law served in a very real way to protect and keep Israel from much of the immorality, iniquity, vileness, and corruption found in the heathen life around them. As long as the people lived in obedience—in any measure—to that law, they were saved from a great deal of wickedness and evil.

### No Longer Under a Nanny

"The law was our child leader (our 'nanny')"—perhaps not exactly to *bring* us to Christ—but, "The law was our child leader *until* Christ." We are told in John 1:17, "*For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.*" Now that Christ has come, all have been brought to the door of the schoolroom of grace. All who know God's Word have learned the blessed truth of justification by faith alone in Him whom God has set forth to be the propitiation for our sins. We are no longer under a "nanny."

This is why we are told (in Verse 25), "*But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster.*" In the Greek text, the definite article appears before the word "faith." This points out that it is the "faith" in the historic Christ which is referred to here, just as it was in Verses 22 and 23.

Actually, Paul's words are, "But (this) faith having come, no longer are we under the nanny." He is telling those to whom he is writing that they are not only freed from the law as a means of attempting to secure justification, but that they are also freed from that law as a means of sanctification. Why? It is because we have so much higher a standard in Christ risen from the dead, and we are to



be occupied with Him. As we are taken up with Him, the grace of God teaches us that, "... denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world" (Titus 2:12).

For example, suppose that I—as a Christian—by some strange oversight had never even heard of the Ten Commandments. Just suppose it were possible that I had never known of them. But on the other hand, I had been taught the wonderful story of the Gospel, and had been entrusted with some of the Books of the New Testament that show how a Christian ought to live. If I walk in obedience to this revelation, I live on a higher—on a holier—plane than he who only had the Ten Commandments!

Anyone having the wonderful teaching that came from the lips of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the marvelous unfolding of the epistles showing what a Christian ought to be, has this new standard of holiness. This is *not* the law given at Sinai—but rather the principles that come from the risen Christ at God's right hand. As I am walking in obedience to His principles, my life *will* be a righteous life! Therefore, "After that faith is come we are no longer under the nanny."

### Adult "Sons" by Adoption

Then Paul writes, "*For ye are all the children (sons) of God by faith in Christ Jesus*" (v. 26). Paul shows that the wall of separation between Jew and Gentile had been broken down at the Cross, and that both Jew and Gentile become children (sons) of God in Christ Jesus. And he does so by the change from the first person "we"—with its reference to the Jews—to the second person "ye" with its reference to his readers—both Jew and Gentile.

The word translated "children" is the Greek "*huios*," and is the important word in this verse. This word signifies someone of full age. Under law, the individual was in his minority and under a guardian. Now, under grace, he has attained his majority, having outgrown the surveillance of his former guardian (or "nanny").

The context shows that the words "in Christ Jesus" must be separated from the words "by faith." The words "in Christ Jesus" are put at the end of the sentence so as to form a distinct proposition which Paul enlarges upon in the following verses. Verse 26 should be translated as follows: "For all of you are God's sons through faith, in Christ Jesus."

Therefore, it is through our faith in Christ Jesus that we received the "adoption as sons." And, from Him and through Him, we receive life. The question might be asked, "To whom does God communicate eternal life?" The answer: To all who put their trust in His blessed Son. First John 5:12 states, "*He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.*" Thus, we can see why our Lord Jesus stresses, ". . . *Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God*" (John 3:3). There must be the impartation of the divine life. All who receive the gifts of this life become members of God's family by adoption. This is a new and wonderful relationship—a relationship that was not available in all previous dispensations.

### A Mystical Union with Christ

And then we are told, "*For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ*" (v. 27). Having spoken of the Galatians in Verse 26 as "in Christ" (referring to that mystical and vital union which exists between the Lord Jesus and the believer), Paul now reminds them of how they became united with Christ. When they put their faith in Him as Saviour, the Holy Spirit *baptized* ("introduced" or "placed") them into vital union with Christ. This "baptism of the Holy Spirit" is spoken of by Paul in Romans 6:3, where he writes, "*Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?*" The Apostle to the Gentiles speaks of this same baptism in I Corinthians 12:13: "*For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.*" The reference here in Galatians 3:27 *cannot* be to water baptism, for that never put a believing sinner in Christ. The Greek word "*baptizo*" means "to put or place into."

The words "put on" are translated from the Greek "*enduno*." This word is used in the Septuagint to speak of the act of clothing one's self with strength, righteousness, glory, and salvation. The word does not convey the idea of putting on a mask or playing the part of another. It refers to the act in which one enters into actual relationship with someone else. When we "put on" Christ, we have the Son of God within ourselves and are thus being made like Him. We have been brought into one family with Him, and we share one nature with Him.

Therefore, Paul's words of Verse 27 tell us, "For as many as were introduced into (a mystical union with) Christ, have put on Christ." The Apostle to the Gentiles has in view the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

It is by that baptism that we are actually made members of Christ's body. Therefore, in the fullest, deepest sense, we do "put on Christ." And, in so doing, we become members of the "new creation." And, the "new creation" places all of us in an entirely different relationship to all other members of Christ's body.

## **Earthly Distinctions Are Not Found in Christ's Body**

That is why the apostle continues in Verse 28, "*There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.*" In Christ, the individual differences between Jew and Greek, between slave and free, between male and female, are merged in that higher unity. All believers are raised into that higher unity by the fact that they all have a common life in the Son of God. There is one spiritual Body, and one heart now beats in all members of that Body. The pulsating life of the Lord Jesus is the motivating power. One mind guides all—the mind of Christ. One life is lived by all—the life of the Lord Jesus produced by the Holy Spirit in the various circumstances and relations of each individual believer's experience.

Therefore, it is within the Body of Christ—the Church universal of this age—that all believers experience that which Paul speaks of in Verse 28: "*There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond (slave) nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.*" In making these statements, Paul does ignore natural distinctions. Of course, we still retain our natural place in society, we remain servants (wage earners) or masters (employers), we remain male or female. However, as to our place in the New Creation, God takes none of these distinctions into account. All who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ are one in Him—"... *members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones*" (Eph. 5:30). This fact needs to be brought home to every new believer!

## **All Believers Are Abraham's Seed—And God's Heirs!**

"... *for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise*" (v. 28, 29). In Verse 29, Paul brings this conclusion to his discussion of the unity of the one Body produced by the baptism of the Holy Spirit. To be "in Christ" and to be "Christ's" come to exactly the same thing—"all one in Christ Jesus." "And if ye be Christ's (if you belong to Him), then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."

The Judaizers taught that by becoming subjects of the Mosaic Law, the Galatian Gentiles would become the seed (or progeny) of Abraham. Paul asserts that this privilege comes to one by faith in Christ. In Romans 4, Paul shows that Abraham was justified by faith, and was thus constituted the spiritual father of all who put their faith in Christ—whether they are circumcised or uncircumcised. God made salvation dependent upon *faith*, in order that it might be available to both Jew and Gentile.

Since Abraham is the spiritual father of *all believers*, this does away with the false Jewish notion that kinship to Abraham brings one into the divine favor and gives one salvation. By belonging to Christ, believers are also Abraham's posterity, for Christ is the Seed of Abraham. Since believers have entered into relationship with Christ, they must consequently have a share in the same state—and must likewise be Abraham's seed!

Therefore, Paul says, "And since ye are Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, heirs according to the promise." Because you, too, have believed God as Abraham did, your faith, also, is counted to you for righteousness. (Abraham "believed God, and it—his faith—was counted unto him for righteousness." See Romans 4:3.) Thus, every believer forms a part of Abraham's spiritual seed.

Keep in mind, there are both the *spiritual* and the *natural* seed of Abraham. Those who are in his bloodline (those who are physical descendants of Abraham) are his "natural" seed. However, only those (both Jew and Gentile) who have exercised Abraham's *faith* are his "spiritual" seed. "They which be of faith are blessed with believing Abraham" (see Galatians 3:9).

Abraham was saved by the promise—by God's grace. All who are his spiritual seed are also saved by grace. Abraham never knew the law, and neither he nor any of his descendants were ever saved by the law. God's only means of salvation is by pure grace—plus nothing! The law was only given to serve as a "nanny"—a child trainer—to Israel during the days of that nation's "minority." Under grace, all of those who believe are "adopted as sons." Such are in their "majority"—full-grown sons—they do not need a "nanny." Every believer in the Lord Jesus Christ should be clear as to this distinction between "law" and "grace."

## 4.

# Grace: Our Adoption As Sons

*"Now I say, That the heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all; But is under tutors and governors until the time appointed of the father. Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world: But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ" (Gal. 4:1-7).*

In this section of his letter, the Apostle to the Gentiles makes a very interesting distinction. If thoroughly understood, this distinction will help greatly in enabling us to see the relative place of Old Testament believers and that of those in the present glorious dispensation of the grace of God. ("Dispensation" may be defined as *economy* or *age*.) We need to remember that in all dispensations—all of God's economies—it was necessary that men be born again in order to become the children of God. The new birth has always been—on the part of adults at least—by faith in the divine revelation. We are told in James 1:18, *"Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures."*

What is true of us in this age has been true of believers in all ages. Each one was begotten by the Word of Truth. Of course, in the case of infants who die before they come to the age of accountability, God acts in sovereignty. He regenerates them at the moment of death by His divine power, apart from that child's personal faith in the Word. The Lord Jesus has said, *"Even so it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish" (Matt. 18:14).* However, it is just as necessary that children be born again as in the case of adults, for, *"That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit" (John 3:6).* There must be a new birth on the part of every person who would enter the kingdom of God.

## Dispensational Distinctions

There are great dispensational distinctions marked out in Holy Scripture. In Old Testament times, believers were all God's children, but they were not definitely recognized as His sons. In this age it is different. All of God's children are also His sons.

Some may ask, "Well, what is the difference?" The distinction is one that we today perhaps would not think of making. However, when Paul wrote the Epistle to the Galatians, all his readers could understand what he was saying very clearly. In that day, minor children were not recognized as their fathers' heirs. When they came of age, however, he (the father) took them down to the forum (answering to our courthouse), and there officially adopted them as his sons. From that time on, they were no longer considered as minor children, but rather recognized as heirs.

Old Testament saints, the apostle has already shown us, were in the position of minor children; they were in need of a "guardian." Now he tells us that New Testament saints—since the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost—are acknowledged by God as His sons by adoption. The Holy Spirit himself is the "Spirit of adoption." When Christ is received in faith, at the very moment of our conversion, God's Holy Spirit comes to seal us as God's sons and heirs. This is confirmed in Romans 8:14-17, where we read, "*For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself (Himself) bareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.*"

### The Minor Child

The divinely-directed reasoning of the Apostle Paul in these first seven verses in Galatians 4 is very striking and beautiful in its orderly presentation of this theme. He begins, "*Now I say, That the heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all; But is under tutors and governors until the time appointed of the father*" (v. 1, 2). Actually, Paul here continues the argument for the inferiority of the condition under law, using an illustration from contemporary life. In order to understand his argument, we should understand the technical terms which he uses.

In Verse 1, the word translated "child" is the Greek noun "*nepios*." This Greek word is made up of two words that together mean "one that does not speak." The word refers to an immature person—one who is immature both intellectually and morally. This is the word that Paul uses to describe a person under the law. He is treated as an immature person. An adult, for instance, is old enough to govern his own actions. A "*nepios*" must have restraints put upon him. So, in the spiritual world, Israel under the law was treated like a minor child—one who was immature and thus incapable of taking care of himself.

The word "servant" in Verse 1 is translated from the Greek noun "*doulos*," and this word speaks of a bondsman. It is the term used of a slave in a servile condition. The minor child in a household of that day was legally in much the same position as a slave. He could not perform any act except through his legal representative. This person was the guardian (or the "nanny") in the case of a minor, and his sanction was necessary for the validity of any contract undertaken in his behalf.

The word "lord" in Verse 1 is from the Greek "*kurios*," which here is used in the sense of "owner." The word "tutor" is from "*epitropos*," the word which designates the guardian of a minor orphan. The word "governor" is from "*oikonomos*," and it refers to a steward of one's property. The "tutor" was the guardian of the child's person—the "governor" was the guardian of the child's property.

The words "the time appointed" are translated from "*prothesmias*." This is a Greek legal term that refers to an appointed time for the termination of the minority status—this time set by the father of the child. There is an illustration of the use of this term in the case of Antiochus Epiphanes. He appointed Lysias to be steward of the affairs of the kingdom and guardian of his son Antiochus Eupator until a specified time—that time being when the father would resume the authority on his return.

Now, after having developed these technical terms, let's retranslate Verses 1 and 2 so as to bring out Paul's literal meaning. "Now, I say, that as long as the heir is in his minority, he does not differ one bit from a slave, even though he is owner of all, but is under guardians and stewards until the time previously fixed by his father."

The example is that of a young child in the home before he has attained his majority (or legal age). He may actually be the heir to vast

wealth, but he is not permitted to have his own way—nor is he permitted to enter into the possession of any part of his inheritance. He is to be kept in the place of subjection for discipline and training. His place in the home is practically no different than that of a servant. In fact, he, himself, has to be subject to the servant, as Verse 2 tells us. He is under guardians and stewards until the time appointed of the father.

Paul makes his example quite clear, and it does not take a trained mind to understand it. We should note the application. The apostle shows that the people of Israel (God's earthly people) were in this state of "non-age." And, beyond this, the same example applies to the Gentile world that had placed itself under the "weak and beggarly elements" of a pagan law. When he uses the word "we" in Verse 3, he is referring to the Christians to whom he is writing—both those of Gentile and Jewish background. He says, "*Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world.*"

The word "children" is translated from "*nepios*," the same word that was used in Verse 1. Thus, it means "immature ones," and Paul's reference is to the time "when we were immature ones." Our English word "elements" is from a Greek noun which refers to any first thing from which the others belonging to some series or composite whole take their rise. Therefore, the word refers to "first principles."

The word "world" is translated from the Greek "*kosmos*." This Greek word for "world" actually refers to an organized system, and it is used here (just as it is in John 3:16) to refer to the world of humanity. It is the "world" over which Satan rules as the "prince of the powers of the air." The "elements of the world" refer here, therefore, to the first principles of non-Christian humanity. In the case of the Jew, the expression refers to the symbolic and ceremonial character of Judaism and its legal enactments. In the case of the Gentiles, the expression refers to the ceremonial and ritualistic observances of the *pagan religions*.

Therefore, by literally translating Verse 3, we can obtain the beginning of Paul's application of the example that he set down in Verses 1 and 2. He writes, "In like manner, we also, when we were in our minority, were in a permanent state of servitude under the rudimentary first principles of mankind." That is, all the Galatian believers (whether formerly Jews or Gentiles) were under some form of law—and "law" speaks to man in the flesh! God gave the law to Israel



in order to impress upon the individual Israelite his duties and responsibilities. It was his "guardian" and "steward," and it was given for disciplinary reasons. The law had no power in itself to produce the new life, though it could guide the children of God and show them the path they should take through the world.

## The Adopted Son

The law, however, was an almost intolerable bondage to those who did not enter into the spiritual side of it. But now—since a new age has come in, the "Age of Grace"—a wonderful change has been brought about. We read (in Verses 4 and 5), "*But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.*" This completes the apostle's application of his example of Verses 1 and 2. With the coming of Jesus Christ, and His work of the Cross, the people of God now have left their minority, and have been adopted as "adult sons."

Let's carefully analyze Verse 4. In the phrase, "the fulness of the times," the words "of the times" are in a construction called the "objective genitive." In this grammatical construction, the word "times" (Greek: "*chronos*") refers merely to time as conceived of as a succession of moments. There is another Greek word for "time," and this word is "*kairos*." "*Kairos*" refers to the critical epoch-making periods foreordained by God. However, the word Paul uses here ("*chronos*") refers merely to the lapse of time. The meaning is simply that God would send forth His Son when it was time. This corresponds to the time appointed by the father of the minor child (in Verses 1 and 2) for that child's adoption as an adult son.

The point of time referred to in Verse 4 marked some outstanding events in the history of the human race. First, it was the moment which God had ordained for Messiah's first coming. It was to the Prophet Daniel that God had given the date of His first advent some 483 years after the edict of the Medo-Persian government to rebuild Jerusalem.

Second, the Mosaic Law had done its educational work. It had demonstrated to the world that the most highly-favored nation on earth—the Jewish nation—was totally depraved. The Jewish nation was depraved *despite* all of God's blessings and mercy. This gave the Gentile portion of the human race a picture of its own totally-depraved heart.

Third, the Mosaic Law in its three sections—the Ten Commandments, the laws governing social relationships, and the Levitical system of sacrifices—was done away with as a legal system. It was to be superseded by the Gospel of grace centering faith in a historic (not a prophetic) Saviour.

Fourth, the Roman empire maintained world peace. Roman roads made travel for missionaries easy. The universal use of the Greek language made the speedy propagation of the Gospel possible. The earth's "stage" was all set for the drama of the greatest event in the history of the human race—the incarnation, the sacrificial death, and the bodily resurrection of God the Son.

The word translated "sent forth" demands study. It is the Greek "*exapostello*." The word "*apostello*" refers to the act of one who sends another with a commission to do something—the person sent being given credentials. Our word "apostle" comes from this Greek word. The prefixed preposition "*apo*" means "from," or "of." This means that the person sent is to represent the sender. He is his ambassador.

In Hebrews 3:1, our Lord Jesus Christ is called "the Apostle and High Priest of our profession (confession)." Not only was our Lord sent off from the presence of the Father for His mission in this world, but (as the other prefixed preposition "*ex*" signifies) He was sent out from His presence. As the old hymn says, "Out from the ivory palaces, into a world of woe" came our Saviour.

Not only was God the Son sent forth from Heaven, but He became incarnate in the human race through virgin birth, just as the words "made of a woman" indicate. And, not only did He become incarnate, but He was born and lived His life previous to His work on the Cross under the Mosaic Law. Paul's words say that He was "made under law." The definite article is absent before the word "law" in the Greek text. So, He (Christ) was "made under law" as such. He was subject to the Jewish legal economy, just as any Jew was subject to it.

The literal translation of Verse 4 should read, "But when there came the fulness of the time, God sent off His Son, woman born, made subject to law."

"The fulness of the time" was, of course, the completion of the prophetic periods as given in the Old Testament. That which immediately comes to mind is the great prophecy of the seventy weeks of

Daniel 9. When at last the time had arrived that Messiah was destined to appear, God fulfilled His Word by sending His Son into this scene to be born of a woman—and that woman was an Israelite under law.

## Christ's Eternal Sonship

While considering Verse 4, we should carefully observe one thing. There are certain professed Bible teachers today who deny what is called "The Eternal Sonship of Christ." Such teachers tell us that He was not "Son" from all eternity. They admit He was the Word (as set forth in John 1:1), but they say He became the "Son" when He was born on earth. Paul's words of Verse 4 definitely deny any such teaching! The Apostle to the Gentiles writes, "God sent forth his Son, woman born, made subject to law." He was the "Son" before He ever descended from the heights of glory to the virgin's womb. It was "the Son" who came in grace to become Man in order that we might be saved.

This same truth is set forth in I John 4:9, 10: "*In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.*" Nothing could be clearer than the two definite statements in these verses. God sent His Son—sent Him into the world—sent Him from Heaven—even as John 3:16 declares: "*For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.*"

We dishonor the Lord Jesus Christ if we deny His Eternal Sonship. If He is not the Eternal Son, then God is not the Eternal Father! Someone has well asked, "Had the Father no bosom till Jesus was born in Bethlehem?" He came from the bosom of the Father to be born into this world in order that He might be our Kinsman-Redeemer.

Jesus Christ was born under the law. He took His place before God here on earth as an Israelite, and He was subject to the law of God. He kept that law perfectly—He himself was sinless. He could never come under the law's curse because of any personal failure of His own. (He did not fail!) Therefore, He was able to go to the Cross and give Himself up to death to bear the curse of the broken law. He did this that He might redeem them that were under the law, "that we," says the apostle, "might receive the adoption of sons."

Jesus Christ met all that was against His people and brought them out into a place of full liberty. He brought them to a position where God could publicly own them as His sons—no longer minor children in the servant's place, but heirs of God—joint heirs with Jesus Christ.

### **Redemption and Adoption**

Let's take a close look at the language mechanics of Verse 5. The word "redeem" is translated from a Greek verb which means "to buy out of the slave market." The word "law" is not preceded by the definite article (as we have noticed), hence "law" in general is referred to here. Paul conceived of the Gentiles as possessing a "law," and that law being of divine origin. In Romans 2:14, 15, he writes, "*For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another.*" Thus, the Apostle to the Gentiles does speak of a "law" written in the hearts of the Gentiles. This law, written upon the Gentile heart, could easily become externalized and be made into a legalistic system.

In I Corinthians 9:20, Paul writes, "*And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law.*" He refers first to the Jews, and then to those who are under the law. He includes in the second expression anyone who was living under a system of legalism—Jew or Gentile. Then he continues, "*To them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ,) that I might gain them that are without law*" (I Cor. 9:21).

### **The Giving of the Holy Spirit**

Therefore, the literal meaning of Paul's Greek of Verse 5 is, "In order that He might deliver those under law, in order that we might receive the placing as adult sons." The testimony to this was the giving of the Holy Spirit. So, in Verse 6, we read, "*And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.*" This is true of all believers. We need to remember that since the bringing in of the new dispensation in all its fullness, every believer is indwelt by the Holy Spirit, and thus is baptized, sealed and anointed by Him.

Romans 8:9 tells us, "But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if (since) so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." Therefore, there is no such person in the world today as a true Christian who is not indwelt by the Spirit of God. We have the Spirit of the Son, and because He dwells in our hearts we now look up with adoring love into the face of God and cry, "Abba, Father."

We should carefully consider the language that Paul uses in Verse 6. The phrase, "because ye are sons," gives the reason for God's act of sending the Holy Spirit to take up His permanent residence in the hearts of the Galatians. The act of the Holy Spirit in placing the Galatian believers as adult sons of God is the first and objective step which the preceding context has mentioned. This operation of the Spirit brought about their release from the position of minors under law and placed them in the position of adult sons. The bestowal of the Holy Spirit gave the Galatians a consciousness of the filial relationship between themselves as sons of God and God their Father. Instead of looking upon God as Judge, they could now look upon Him as their Father with whom they have the privilege of living as His sons. The fact of their possession of the indwelling Spirit was enough to demonstrate to the Galatians that they were no longer under law—but rather under grace.

The word "crying" (from the Greek "*krazo*") signifies "a loud and earnest cry," or "a public announcement." In the Septuagint, this word is often used of prayer addressed to God. It emphasizes the earnestness and intensity of the Holy Spirit's utterance in the Christian. The word itself does not convey the idea of joy, but the intensity of the Spirit's utterance (in this case) must include a joyous note. The word "crying" is, in the Greek text, associated with the word "Spirit." So, it is the Holy Spirit who is doing the "crying."

And what does the Spirit cry? He cries, "Abba, Father." The words that Paul uses here are equivalents—but they are in two different languages! The Greek word "*pater*" (translated "father") is the Greek equivalent of the Aramaic (and Hebrew) word "*abba*." Aramaic is the language which the Jews spoke in Palestine in the first century. Actually, "*abba*" is a familiar form of the more formal term "*abra*," which is the Hebrew and Aramaic term for "father." Probably our best English translation of "*abba*" is "papa." Paul uses both the Hebrew and Aramaic term for "father" (or "papa") and the Greek term "*pater*" (or "father") to show that the Spirit can cry out to God in

the native language of either Jews or Gentiles. Regardless of the language spoken, the believer in whom the Spirit has taken up His residence can cry out to the Father in Heaven in the affectionate term, "Papa!" The "adult son"—from the source of the indwelling Holy Spirit—could speak directly to the Father. And he can speak to Him with the kind of affectionate fondness contained in the term that the Lord Jesus used to express the wonderful thought of filial relationship to God.

Paul says, "And because you are sons, God sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts crying Abba, my Father!" We have Jew and Gentile united through grace, addressing God as members of one family—as His children by birth, and as His sons by adoption—and crying, "Abba, Father!"

### **No Longer a Minor Child—But a Son!**

The apostle's conclusion follows very naturally: "*Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if (since) a son, then an heir of God through Christ*" (v. 7).

It is in the fact of the Galatians' possession of the Holy Spirit that Paul finds the proof that they are adult sons of God. The apostle emphasizes the fact that their position as sons gives them freedom from bondage to the law—for he says that they are no longer slaves ("*doulos*"). He also implies (by the use of the words "no longer") that at one time the Galatians *were* under bondage to law. The change from the plural "sons" to the singular "son" brings the matter of sonship closer home to each individual reader.

As a son, Paul says, the believer is an heir of God. The apostle brings up the conceptions of heirship and inheritance again, perhaps to remind the Galatians that their position as heirs of God is accomplished not through any personal merit or good works—but through the grace of God. Thus, the Galatians are reminded that it is *not* through coming under law—but in maintaining their freedom from it—that they will be able to obtain the blessing of Abraham. It was this blessing that the Judaizers were holding before their eyes as a prize, obtainable only through circumcision. Paul here appeals to the Galatians (and to us) to retain the status of adult sons under grace (a status which they already possessed) rather than going back to the position of a minor and a slave under law.

Therefore, he says, "So that no longer are you a slave but a son, and since (you are) a son, (you are) also an heir through God." The old conditions (which prevailed throughout the centuries before the incarnation and work of Jesus Christ) have come to an end. Believers are no longer in the servant's place, but by the reception of the Spirit are God's recognized sons. They are thus heirs of all His possessions through Christ Jesus our Lord!

## 5.

### "Weak and Beggarly Elements"

*"Howbeit then, when ye knew not God, ye did service unto them which by nature are no gods. But now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage? Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years. I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain. Brethren, I beseech you, be as I am; for I am as ye are: ye have not injured me at all. Ye know how through infirmity of the flesh I preached the gospel unto you at the first. And my temptation which was in my flesh ye despised not, nor rejected; but received me as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus. Where is then the blessedness ye spake of? for I bear you record, that, if it had been possible, ye would have plucked out your own eyes, and have given them to me. Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth? They zealously affect you, but not well; yea, they would exclude you, that ye might affect them. But it is good to be zealously affected always in a good thing, and not only when I am present with you. My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you, I desire to be present with you now, and to change my voice; for I stand in doubt of you" (Gal. 4:8-20).*

In Verse 7 of this chapter of his epistle, the Apostle Paul had stated to the Galatian Christians, "So that no longer are you a slave but a son, and since (you are) a son, (you are) also an heir through God." In spite of this, the Galatians were determined to return to their former position as minors and slaves under law. This is brought out in Verses 8 through 11.

## Service to Demons

Paul writes, "*Howbeit then, when ye knew not God, ye did service unto them which by nature are no gods*" (v. 8). In earlier parts of this letter, we saw that the Galatian Christians, who had been brought out of pagan darkness into the light and liberty of the Gospel through the ministry of the Apostle Paul, had fallen under the influence of certain "Judaizing" teachers. These teachers were carrying them into subjection to the Law of Moses. They were telling these new-born babes in Christ that, unless they were circumcised and kept the Law of Moses, they could not continue in a "state of salvation." These Judaizing teachers proclaimed that, while they began in faith, they had to complete their salvation through works of their own. It was thus that they could acquire merit—by obedience to the commands of the law. The Apostle to the Gentiles has been showing his Galatian converts that the law could only condemn—could only kill. It could not justify; it could not give life—neither could it sanctify. Paul showed them that our sanctification is as truly by faith as is our justification.

Now, Paul continues to reason with these Gentile converts. He is trying to show them the folly of giving up Christianity's covenant of grace (with all its liberty and light) for the twilight and bondage of the old covenant of Judaism. "Don't you remember," he says, "You were heathen when I came to you. You were enslaved to heathen customs, you served those that you esteemed to be gods who really are not gods. You were worshipers of idols—and you know that in those days you were misled by pagan priestcraft. There were certain things you could not eat, places you could not go, things you could not touch. There were different kinds of offerings that you had to bring; there were charms against evil spirits, and amulets, and talismans. You were slaves to worldly customs in those days of your paganism. The thing that amazes me is that you should be willing to go into another bondage after having known something of the liberty of grace."

Notice that the Apostle Paul speaks of the former gods which the Galatian Gentiles worshiped. (We can know something of the religious practices of the Galatians from the account of the incident at Lystra that is recorded in Acts 14:9-18.) Paul knows that these pagan "gods" were realities—he did not treat them as myths or superstitions. In fact, the Apostle Paul calls the "gods" of the pagan world "demons" in such passages as I Corinthians 8:5, 6. Note what he says, "*For though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, (as there be gods many, and lords many,) But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by*



whom are all things, and we by him." Then in I Corinthians 10:19, 20, we find words to this effect: "What say I then? That the idol is anything, or that which is offered in sacrifice to idols is anything? But I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons (not 'devils,' as in the KJV), and not to God: And I would not that ye should have fellowship with demons." Thus, Paul is definitely speaking of former demon worship when he says, "*Howbeit then, when ye knew not God, ye did service unto them which by nature are no gods (that is, to demons).*"

The words "did service" are translated from the Greek verb "dooloo," the verb from which the noun "doulos" (which means "a slave") is derived. The Galatians had been slaves of these false deities (these demon spirits)—they had been in bondage to them under a system of legalism.

Paul most definitely grants these demon spirits objective existence—but he denies that they are "gods" by nature. The word "nature" is translated from "*phusis*" which means "that which belongs to a person or thing by virtue of its origin," therefore, "its essential character." This word is used even of the divine nature, which of course is without origin. Paul does not deny the existence of these demons, but rather he denies their deity. However, while the apostle did not think of them as deity by nature, at the same time he did not class them as being of mere mundane matter. They belonged to a world not human, but demoniac—a point which must have been well known to the Galatians from Paul's former oral instruction.

Literally, Paul's statement of Verse 8 should read as follows: "But at that time in fact, not knowing God, ye were in a slave's bondage to the gods which are not gods by nature." Before you came to know the true and living God, you served as slaves to spirit personalities subservient to Satan—spirit personalities which are not of divine nature.

### Another Bondage

Paul continues in Verse 9: "*But now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage?*" Notice that expression, "After that ye have known God, or rather are known of God." There are really two sides to a knowledgeable relationship with God. The expression, "known by God," cannot refer merely to knowledge simply in a purely theocratic or intellectual sense. The Apostle to

the Gentiles must have regarded such knowledge by God as an ever-present fact. This phrase has to refer to God's knowing the Galatians in a saving way.

There are both Old and New Testament examples of the use of the idea "known by God" in this way. In Psalm 1:6, we read, "*For the LORD knoweth the way of the righteous. . .*" In Nahum 1:7, the prophet writes, "*The LORD is good, a strong hold in the day of trouble; and he knoweth them that trust in him.*" In I Corinthians 8:3, Paul has written, "*But if any man love God, the same is known of him.*" And again, we have the Lord's words of Matthew 7:23, "*And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.*"

Paul then adds the phrase, "or rather are known of God," to the phrase, "after that ye have known God," for several reasons. First, it is to remind the Galatians that they do not owe their knowledge of God to themselves, but rather to Him. Their escape from idolatry and bondage to law was not affected by any knowledge they acquired of God, but by God coming to know them in a saving way. Therefore, they should clearly see the folly and wrong of abandoning this advantageous position and taking an inferior one from which they had been rescued.

Second, our knowledge of God is more His act than ours. If God knows a man, that means that an activity of God has passed over to man, so that the man—as the subject of God's knowledge—enters into the knowledge of God. The Greek word translated "know" here is "*ginosko*." In the New Testament, this word often implies a personal relationship between the "knower" and the "known."

In our witnessing to others, we often say, "Do you know Jesus?" It's all right to say this, but we should realize that it is really Jesus who knows us. It is because He knew us first that we are able to know Him!

God knew me long before I knew Him. He knows me now—since I have trusted Christ—as His child. This principle applies to all who are saved. That is why Paul can say to the Galatians, "Isn't it a shame that after you have known God, or rather have been known of God, that you would turn now to as legal a system as that from which you were delivered? After you have come into this blessed relationship with Him as your Father—if you really know what it is to be born again—*isn't it strange that you'd turn to an inferior way?*" Or, in the

words of his letter, "How turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage?"

Someone might ask Paul at this point, "But what do you mean? The Galatians were turning to law—to observing Jewish feasts and Jewish sabbaths—Jewish ceremonies. But they never knew those things in their pagan days. Why do you say, 'How turn ye *again*'?"

Paul uses these words because the principle is exactly the same! Why do the pagans go through their forms and ceremonies? Because they hope to gain merit, and thus to save their souls. Why did the Jews go through all their rites and ceremonies? They did it that they might please God in that way, and thus gain merit and eventually save their souls! The principle is just the same, whether one tries to save himself by offering his own child—or the dearest thing he has—on a pagan altar. The principle is just the same, whether one keeps the seventh-day Sabbath (as some people try to do today) and thereby hopes to save himself, or whether one observes the pagan feast days and thus hopes to please the pagan "gods" by such actions.

The Jewish festivals have been fulfilled in Christ. We should not be going back to them, hoping to please God by their observance! These festivals had their place once, and those of faith could observe them in obedience to the Word of God. However, that place is not theirs now, because "... *Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth*" (Rom. 10:4). All these former ceremonies were merely shadows of things to come. Now that the reality is come, why go back to the shadow? We are not going to be occupied with the "type" since we have the "antitype"—we are not going to be occupied with pictures when we have the reality. The worldly principle, of course, is to try to merit salvation by one's own works.

### **"How Is It Possible for You to Turn Back?"**

So Paul says, "... *how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage?*" (v. 9). The word "how" is translated from the Greek "*pos*." The word really means "how is it possible?" Paul asked this question while he was full of wonder. The Apostle to the Gentiles could hardly conceive of such a thing as a believer—having been once rescued from abject slavery to demons in a pagan religion—returning to a human system of bondage. The verb translated "turn" is in the present tense, and Paul's question should be translated, "How is it possible that you *are turning*?" They

were in the act of turning away from grace to law even while Paul was in the process of writing this letter!

The question, "How is it possible that you are turning back again to the weak and beggarly rudimentary things to which ye desire to be in bondage again?" is a rhetorical one. The purpose of the question is to show the absurdity of their actions. This question also calls the attention of the Galatians to the ineffectualness and poverty of their old religious system contrasted to the power and richness of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It was, of course, a perverted form of Judaism to which the Galatians were turning, but pagan religions are included in Paul's thought as just as ineffectual. Both were legalistic in character; both were without a dynamic to accomplish ethical principles in the life.

The two "again's" found in Verse 9 are from the Greek words "*palin*" and "*anōthen*," respectively. These two words are Greek synonyms; they both mean "again." The first word, "*palin*," refers to a repetition of an act. The second word, "*anōthen*," speaks of the repetition of an act, that repetition having the same source as the first act. In other words, in "*anōthen*," there is a return to a former position. The Galatians, in turning to a system of legalism, would be returning to their former position under law. The word "*anōthen*" not only refers to the act of returning to a former position, but of returning to the beginning. These Galatians would be going back to the elementary beginning principles of religious thought.

When Paul speaks of the rudimentary forms of religion (calling them "weak and beggarly elements"), he shows the utter impotence of these to do and bestow what was done and bestowed by God in grace. They are "weak" in that they have no power to rescue men from condemnation. They are "beggarly," since they have no rich endowment of spiritual blessings.

Up to this point, the Apostle Paul has spoken with respect to the education given to the world by the social habits, institutions, and laws of the Greco-Roman world. Through this education, civilized man learned much in the sphere of morals and natural religion which would bear comparison with the progress of Israel under the ethics of the Mosaic Law. But when Paul compares the mechanical routine of formal religious ceremonies found in the pagan religions and among so-called "religious" Jews with the spiritual teachings and dynamics of the Gospel, he does not hesitate to call them "weak and beggarly."

## The Basic Equivalence Between Paganism and Apostate Judaism

It seems obvious from Paul's words of Verse 9 that he considered both the Mosaic Law and all forms of pagan law in the same category, and subservient to the same purpose. He includes his Galatian readers as being from a similar educational background as Jewish converts to Christianity. Some would ask, "But how could Paul classify in the same category that divinely-ordained law which he elsewhere describes as 'holy' and 'just' and 'good' (see Romans 7:12) and those degraded pagan systems which he elsewhere reprobates as 'fellowship with demons' (see I Corinthians 10:20)?"

The answer seems to be that the apostle here regards the higher elements in pagan religions as corresponding—however imperfectly—to the lower elements in the Mosaic Law. Both sets of laws were made up of two component parts: the *spiritual* and the *ritualistic*. Viewed in their "spiritual" aspect, there is no comparison between the one and the other. In this respect, the pagan religions were wholly bad. They added nothing of their own to man's innate sense of dependence upon God, and which they could not entirely crush. They were evil and soul-destroying—they were the prompting of demons.

On the contrary, in the Mosaic Law, the *spiritual* element was most truly divine. But this does not enter into Paul's reckoning here. Christianity has appropriated all that was spiritual in its Old Covenant predecessor. The Mosaic economy of law was a foreshadowing—a germ of the Gospel. Thus, when Christ came, the spiritual element of that law was of necessity extinguished—or rather absorbed—by its successor. Deprived of this, the Mosaic Law was a mere mass of lifeless ordinances. That law differed only in degree—not in kind—from any other ritualistic system, pagan or otherwise.

Hence, the Mosaic Law and the pagan law approach within such a distance of each other that they can (under certain limitations) be classed together. They have at least so much in common that a lapse into Judaism can be regarded as a relapse to the position of unconverted paganism. Judaism was a system of bondage like paganism. Paganism had been a disciplinary training like Judaism.

Both systems alike are "*stoicheia*," which means "elementary systems of training." "*Stoicheia*" is the Greek word that is translated "elements" in Verse 9. They had at least this in common, that as ritual

systems they were made up of precepts and ordinances. Thus, they were representatives of "law" as opposed to "grace," or "promise"—that is, as opposed to the Gospel. Doubtless, in this respect, the highest form of pagan religion was much lower and less efficient than the Mosaic ritual. But still, in an imperfect way, they might do the same work: They might act as a restraint which, multiplying transgressions—and thus begetting and cherishing a conviction of sin—prepared the way for the liberty of manhood in Christ.

Note Paul's question of Verse 9 as it literally reads. "But now having come to know God, indeed rather having become known by God, how is it possible that you are turning back again to the weak and beggarly rudimentary principles to which ye are bent on again being in bondage?"

### Only Two "Religions"

It has been well said that there are only two religions in the world: the *true* and the *false*. All forms of false religion are alike. They all say, "Something in my hand I bring," and the only difference in the various outshowings of these false religions is in what that something is. But the true religion—the revelation from Heaven—leads a man to cry out, "Nothing in my hand I bring!"

Christianity says, "*Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost*" (Titus 3:5). We see Christians today who turn to symbols and pictures as a means of spiritual help. But when they do, they are just going back to the "weak and beggarly elements" of the world. If one were to ask a practicing pagan, "Is this idol your God?" some might say, "Yes." However, a pagan who had truly considered his beliefs would probably answer, "No; it is not exactly that I consider that idol as my God, but it does represent my God. It helps me to enter into communion with my God."

One can see exactly the same thing in professing Christendom where some religious organizations fill their churches with statues and images. It is true that the images are not of Mars, Jupiter, Venus, Isis, or Osiris, but *they are* images just the same. The representations are supposedly of Saint Joseph, Saint Barnabas, Saint Paul, the twelve apostles, the blessed Virgin Mary—and even of Christ. Often candles are burning in front of the images, and worshipers bow before them. We might ask, "Why do you not worship God only? Why worship

these images?" The answer usually given is, "We do not worship the images—rather, we *revere* them, and they are simply aids to worship. These images help to stir up our spirits and help us to worship."

To these modern "Galatians," Paul's question can be well put: "How turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage?" There is no painter or sculptor on earth who can make an image of my Christ! The only picture of Him acceptable to me is the one given in the Bible. If one wants to be stirred up and put in a worshipful spirit, he should sit down with his Bible and read Isaiah 53—or perhaps the account in the Gospels of what Christ accomplished in His work of the Cross. As that one is occupied with the truth of God, his heart will be drawn out in true worship. One who is truly "in Christ" does not need pictures to help him to worship! Pictures and images are just the "weak and beggarly elements" of the world! In this age of God's grace, we are to worship in "spirit and in truth."

### "Days, and Months, and Times, and Years"

The Apostle Paul continues in Verse 10, "I am sorry to see you go back to these things"—"*Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years.*" The "days, and months, and times, and years" which the Galatians were observing were those which the Mosaic Law required Israel to observe. This is made clear by Paul's statement (in Verse 21) to the effect that the Galatians are bent on being under the law. From Verse 1 of Chapter 5, it is clear that the Galatians had not yet adopted circumcision. Also from Verse 3 of Chapter 5, it is clear that they had not yet been asked to adopt the whole law. This shows that the Judaizers had pursued the deceitful course of presenting to the Galatians only part of the requirements of the Mosaic Law. They had presented those parts which might be the least repulsive to them as Gentiles. Having gotten them to adopt the festivals and perhaps the feast days, the Judaizers were now urging them to adopt circumcision.

The word translated "observe" is from the Greek "*paratereo*." This word denotes careful, scrupulous observance—an intent watching, lest any of the prescribed seasons be overlooked. A merely legal or ritualistic system of religion always develops such scrupulousness. Paul, a former Pharisee, was well acquainted with the meticulous care with which the Pharisees kept all the appointed feasts and fasts. It hurt him to see these Gentile Christians being drawn into the net of the Judaizers—and thus enslaved by a mere formal, lifeless ritual.

The "days" refer to the Sabbath days, and to the feasts which were observed just for a day. The "months" refer to the monthly recurring events such as those described in Isaiah 66:23. Also, the reference to "months" could refer to the festival of the seventh month described in Numbers 29. The reference also could have to do with the celebration of the appearance of the new moon (see Numbers 10:10, and 28:11). "Times" refers to the celebrations not limited to a single day—such as the Passover, the Feast of Tabernacles, and to the feasts of the fourth, fifth, and seventh months (see II Chronicles 8:13). "Years" may have reference to the Year of Jubilee or the sabbatical year.

Paul tells the misled Galatians, "Days ye are scrupulously and religiously observing, and months, and seasons, and years." They were going back to the Jewish Sabbaths and other holy days and festivals—the Jewish sabbatical year and the Year of Jubilee. But they were wrong in doing so, because these things are not binding on us today! Why? It's because the Sabbath day of the Jews (and all the other things those celebrations spoke of) has found a fulfillment in Christ. Remember, He said, "*Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest (a Sabbath)*" (Matt. 11:28).

*"There remaineth therefore a rest (a true Sabbath-keeping) to the people of God"* (Heb. 4:9). We have found our Sabbath in Christ. So we observe the first day of the week, the day of His resurrection—not in order to gain merit, but because we are glad to have the privilege of coming together as a company of worshiping believers. We like to take advantage of the opportunity to preach the Gospel of the grace of God.

That seventh-day Sabbath was the memorial of Israel's deliverance from Egypt. That does not apply to us; we have found its fulfillment in Christ. Some may ask, "Are you quite certain that the Sabbath of the law is included among the shadows?" Yes. All we have to do is to turn to Colossians 2:16, 17 and read, "*Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holiday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days: Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ.*"

Do you see the contrast? It was the Sabbath in Old Testament times—one day's rest in seven. Now we have the fulfilled work of the Lord Jesus—and in this age, we have seven days' rest in seven! New Testament believers have rest in Him continually. They are delivered from the Sabbath of the Mosaic Law!



The nation Israel also had her sacred months. There was the month in which they had the Passover and the Feast of the Firstfruits. Then the seventh month, in which was the great Day of Atonement and the Feast of Tabernacles. But all of which those months and feasts speak has been fulfilled in Christ. He is the true Passover: "... *Christ our passover is sacrificed for us: Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth*" (I Cor. 5:7, 8).

The Feast of the Firstfruits had its fulfillment in the resurrection of Christ. It was He who said, "... *Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit*" (John 12:24). Our Lord Jesus Christ fell unto the ground in death, and now has become the "firstfruits of them that slept." We worship Him with adoring gratitude for all that this means to us!

The great Day of Atonement has had its fulfillment in the Cross. The Lord Jesus Christ was the sacrificed Victim whose precious blood makes atonement for the soul. We read, "*For the life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul*" (Lev. 17:11).

That is all fulfilled in Jesus. In addition, He is the true fulfillment of the Feast of Tabernacles, the feast which carries us on to His coming back again when He will bring in everlasting righteousness. All these celebrations of months and times were given to point forward to the comings (both the first and the second) of the blessed Son of God and His wondrous work!

"*Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years*" (v. 10). In past times, many in Israel had fallen into the evil habit of consulting astrologers and others. They were thus known as "observers of times." However, that was distinctly contrary to God's mind, and He links it with demons. Christians should have nothing to do with anything like that. Israel also observed sacred years. There was the sabbatical year; every seventh year had to be set apart as a Sabbath to the Lord. One cannot pick out certain parts of the Mosaic Law and keep those parts only. *If one is bound to keep the seventh-day Sabbath, he is also bound to keep the seventh-year Sabbath!* Paul says that, as Christians, we are delivered from all these. It was only bondage, and we are free from it.

## Paul's Doubt of the Galatians

Because of what these Galatians were doing, Paul says (in Verse 11), "I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain." Martin Luther said of this verse, "These words of Paul breathe tears." The construction in the Greek does not give the impression that the apostle has fears about the future of the Galatians which may not be realized. It is clear that he suspects that what he fears has already happened. Paul was not apprehensive with respect to his own interests or his fruitless labors, but rather with respect to the spiritual welfare of his Galatian converts. They were the objects of his anxiety.

The word "labour" is translated from the Greek "*kopiaio*" which means "to labor to the point of exhaustion." It is in the perfect tense, thus indicating the finished and thorough piece of work Paul had done in the evangelization of the Galatians. He says, "I am afraid about you, lest perhaps in vain I have labored to the point of exhaustion for you."

Perhaps as he wrote this verse, Paul really doubted as to whether they were truly converted. He remembered how they had confessed their sins, and then the joy they had. And now he says, "Was that not genuine?"

One may often feel that way about those who profess to accept the Lord Jesus Christ as their Saviour. Some make a good start and apparently seem to be real Christians. But the next thing you know, they are "taken up" with some unscriptural thing. It is then that one wonders whether it was all a mistake. If people are truly saved, then they are sealed by God's Holy Spirit. He is the Spirit of Truth, and He comes to guide new converts into all truth. We would not expect true converts to go off into error.

However, it can happen. Those who truly belong to Christ can be "taken up" with grave doctrinal error. But if their conversion was real, they can be recovered. In fact, recovery of one who has gone astray is part of the testimony that their confession was real. If such ones are never recovered, we read, "They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us" (1 John 2:19).

## Paul's Appeal to the Galatians

Now (in Verses 12-20), Paul appeals in a most touching way to the Galatians to maintain their freedom from the law. He reminds them of their enthusiastic reception of him and the Gospel which he preached. Then he tells them of his longing to be with them now in order that he might speak to them personally.

The Apostle to the Gentiles turns directly to these converts of his, and in the most tender way he says, "*Brethren, I beseech you, be as I am; for I am as ye are: ye have not injured me at all*" (v. 12).

First, Paul exhorts them, "Be as I am, for I am as ye are." The word "be" is translated from the Greek "*ginomai*," which means literally "to become." His exhortation is therefore, "Become as I am, because I also became as you are." That is, "Become as I am, free from the bondage of the law. I became as you are, Gentile."

Paul is exhorting the Galatian believers to free themselves from bondage to law just as he had done. He appeals to them to do this, because he who had possessed the advantages of the law had foregone these advantages. He had placed himself on the same level (in relation to the law) as Gentiles. Paul tells the Galatians that he gave up all those time-honored Jewish customs and those former associations of race to become like them. He has lived like a Gentile so that he might preach to Gentiles. He pleads with these Galatian believers not to abandon him when he has abandoned all for them.

The addressees of this letter could not fail to remember the occasion of Paul's address at Pisidian Antioch. At the close of this address, the Jews departed from the synagogue, but the Gentiles besought him to repeat to them the words of life on the next Sabbath. They could not fail to remember how the Jews had expelled Paul from the city. They (the Galatian Gentiles) had been suitors to Paul to maintain the freedom of the Gospel. Now, he in turn, is appealing to *them* to maintain the freedom of that same Gospel!

Therefore, he says, "Become as I am, because I also became as you were, brethren, I am beseeching you. Ye had done me no wrong!" What more tender appeal could this great apostle make to those who were the fruit of his own labors in the Gospel? He could not stand to see them go back into bondage under the law.

## Paul's Reminder

Another reminder is called to the attention of the Galatians in Verse 13. "*Ye know how through infirmity of the flesh I preached the gospel unto you at the first.*" Paul wants the Galatians to remember that when he came to Antioch the first time, it was not his intention to evangelize that territory. Rather, he had intended to go on to another place. However, a sudden attack of illness made his stay there imperative. Therefore, it was because of his illness that he preached the Gospel to them.

With regard to Paul's illness at Antioch, we should recall the following facts. First, the illness occurred under the observation of the Galatians who watched its progress, who were familiar with its repulsive symptoms, and who showed tender sympathy towards the sufferer. (This fact may help us to understand the words, "Ye had done me no wrong," in the preceding verse.)

The Galatians might easily have spurned Paul and refused his fellowship. There he was, a Jew, and a stranger to them. He was afflicted with an illness that normally aroused disgust and loathing by reason of its repulsive nature. But instead of doing Paul the wrong of rejecting him, they welcomed him with open arms, and also his Gospel message with open hearts!

Second, the Galatians knew that Paul had not intended to work among them. His face was turned to the Greek cities of Asia Minor and the mainland of Greece itself. They knew that he was detained among them by his illness.

Third, this illness which incapacitated him for further travel had allowed him to correspond freely with local ones—those around him. This indicated that the Apostle to the Gentiles was among them by an act of God himself!

Fourth, the success Paul had in winning the Galatians to the Lord Jesus indicates that his illness was of a chronic nature. By necessity, his sick chamber had become his pulpit!

Fifth, in connection with his reference to his illness, Paul mentions in Verse 15 that if it had been possible, the Galatians would have plucked out their eyes and would have given them to him. The implication should be clear that he needed a new pair of eyes, and that therefore his illness was an eye affliction. His words in Galatians 6:11,

"Ye see with what large letters I have written to you with my own hand," confirm this. (The large Greek letters were necessary because of his impaired vision.)

A further confirmation of this is found in the fact that in the lowlands of Pamphylia (a region through which Paul had just passed on his way to Pisidian Antioch), an oriental eye disease called "ophthalmia" was prevalent. In addition to all this, the Greek words translated "despised" and "rejected" indicate that the illness had caused him to have a repulsive appearance. Such a repulsive appearance of the face is a symptom of the disease called "ophthalmia."

Therefore, Paul says, "But ye know that because of an infirmity of the flesh, I preached the Gospel to you on the occasion of my first visit." It was the apostle's intention to touch the hearts of these Galatians by reminding them of those early days when he came to Antioch in Pisidia, and to Iconium, Lystra and Derbe, and preached the Word among them. Did he come with pomp and ceremony, marvelous costumes, and candles and images? No; nothing like that. He came, not as a great and mighty ecclesiastic, as one professing to have authority over them, but rather as a lowly, sick man preaching Christ and Him crucified. "*Ye know how through infirmity of the flesh I preached the gospel unto you at the first*" (v. 12).

### "Ye Received Me as an Angel of God"

Then he continues, "*And my temptation which was in my flesh ye despised not, nor rejected; but received me as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus.*" Some of the ancient Greek texts read, "And *your* temptation," not, "And *my* temptation," as we have it in our Authorized English Version. That is probably the correct reading. Paul is speaking of that which was a temptation (testing) to the Galatians, rather than to himself.

Paul's illness was (in a sense) a temptation to the Galatians, in that its nature was such that a normal reaction to it would be one of loathing and disgust. These initial attitudes would then be followed by the rejection of the afflicted one. The word "despised" is translated from a Greek word which means "to spit out, to reject, to spurn, to loathe." "Rejected" is translated from a word which means "to hold and treat as of no account, to despise." There was something in the physical appearance of the apostle that tempted the Galatians to reject him and his message.

But instead of spurning Paul, these unsaved Galatians had received him as an angel (messenger) of God—they had received him even as Jesus Christ. Paul's reference here is probably to the healing of the lame man at Lystra. In their excitement at this miraculous healing, the Lycaonians thought that Barnabas was Zeus, the chief of the Greek gods, and that Paul was Hermes, the messenger and the interpreter of the gods. Paul glances back to the day when these Galatians had received him as a messenger of the gods. They had been willing to worship him just as though he were the Son of God.

That reaction of the Galatians was, to be sure, an outburst of native superstition and pagan religion. Paul repudiated their overtures at the time with indignation. However, these converted Galatians could look back at all this and thank God with a feeling of grateful joy that they had not welcomed the Greek gods of Olympus, but rather messengers of the living God who had made Heaven and earth. There was an echo of this same incident in Paul's words in Galatians 1:8: "*But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, . . .*"

Paul's words of Verse 14 are literally, "And the temptation to which ye were subjected and which was in my flesh, ye did not loathe nor utterly despise, but as a messenger of God ye received me, as Christ Jesus."

### The Galatians' Changed Attitude

Paul continues, "*Where is then the blessedness ye spake of? for I bear you record, that, if it had been possible, ye would have plucked out your own eyes, and have given them to me.*" The word "blessedness" is translated from a word which in secular Greek means "prosperous." When this word is used as an adjective and associated with a person, it means that the person spoken of is in a state of prosperity. Paul reminds the Galatians of the prosperity of their spiritual lives which consisted of such a state of self-sacrifice and self-abnegation that they were willing to dig out their own eyes and give them to Paul. He asks, "Where is that prosperous condition now?"

Thus, Paul is saying, "Where is therefore your (spiritually) prosperous state? For I bear witness to you that if it had been possible, you would have dug out your own eyes and would have given them to me."

That is the way they once felt! But now Paul has to ask, "Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?" (v. 16). It was these false teachers that had upset these Galatians who had once been the apostle's friends!

The "therefore" in Verse 16 is translated from the Greek "*hoste*," which is often used by Paul in the sense of "therefore" when he introduces an imperative or an affirmative conclusion, but not an interrogation. The word "enemy" is translated from a Greek noun which speaks of an enemy in an active sense—that is, it speaks of one who is hostile to another. Paul says that he has become an enemy of the Galatians—not from his point of view—but from the standpoint of the Galatians.

Paul thus makes the statement, "So then I have become your enemy because I am telling you the truth." Since the apostle refers to the fact that he has told them the truth, he was probably calling to mind the occasion of his second visit to them (recorded in Acts 18:23). It was probably then that he found the danger impending, and thus spoke plainly against the Judaizers.

### "Courting" from the Judaizers

Then, speaking directly of the Judaizers, Paul says (in Verse 17), "*They zealously affect you, but not well; yea, they would exclude you, that ye might affect them.*" In contrast to his own frank truthfulness in which he risked incurring the displeasure of the Galatians, the apostle tells them of the Judaizers' dishonorable attempt at "paying them court" in order to win them over to themselves.

The word "they" refers to the Judaizers. The fact that Paul does not mention the Judaizers by name is in keeping with the emotional strain and the irritation he was experiencing at the time.

The words "zealously affect" are from the Greek "*zeloo*." Our English word "affect" as used here is an example of one of the obsolete words in the Authorized Version. The word is from our old English verb "affectaire," which means "to strive after, to desire earnestly." In other words, it means "to pay court to"—just as a lover pays court to his lady. Paul says that the Judaizers were zealously paying court to the Galatians. Then he adds to that statement, "But not well."

Our word "well" is translated from the Greek "*kalos*." Judaizers were paying court to the Galatians, but not in an honorable way. What was dishonorable about their paying court to the Galatians is told us in the words of Paul, ". . . yea, they would exclude you, that ye might affect them."

The word "exclude" is translated from a Greek word which means "to shut out." That from which the Judaizers wished to shut out the Galatians is not stated in so many words. The context suggests that the Judaizers were attempting to shut the Galatians out, either from the benefits of the Gospel of grace, or from fellowship with Paul and his companions. (Paul and his companions maintained that the Gentiles are accepted by God on the basis of faith without works.) In either case—whether separated from the benefits of the Gospel or from fellowship with Paul and his companions—the result would be that the Galatians would turn to the Judaizers for guidance and fellowship. Then the Judaizers would be in a position where the Galatians would be paying court to them.

However, it would be more natural to speak of shutting out the Galatians from the benefits of the Gospel, since the Greek verb used favors that interpretation. There is another Greek verb that means "to alienate or cause separation from." This would be the more natural word for Paul to use if he meant that the Judaizers were attempting to separate the Galatians from him. Thus, the idea is that the Judaizers were zealously paying court to the Galatians. They were attempting to shut them out from the benefits of the Gospel, in order that they (the Galatians) might have to pay court to the Judaizers, since they would have no refuge for their souls elsewhere.

Therefore, Paul's statement is, "They are zealously paying you court, but not honestly, desiring to isolate you in order that you might be paying court to them." In other words, these Judaizers have come to make a prey of you with their false teaching. They are trying to affect you adversely in order that you might rally around them. They want to get up a religious "party" of their own. They are not seeking your good, but rather trying to extend their own influence.

After making this point clear, Paul continues, "*But it is good to be zealously affected always in a good thing, and not only when I am present with you. My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you*" (vv. 18, 19). Actually, Paul's opening statement (in Verse 18) says, "But it is good to be zealously courted at



all times in a good thing, and not only when I am present with you." He is referring here to his own persistent court of the Galatians. The apostle is saying that the fact that someone else pays them court, and that they court the favor of another, is not wrong in itself. He indicates that he himself is not insensible to such attachments.

In making these statements, Paul is remembering how warm were the feelings of the Galatians toward him when he was with them. He yearns for their continued cordiality towards himself. Paul had courted the Galatians, not to attach them to himself, but that he might join them to the Lord Jesus. He was glad that they should be courted at all times, even by others—if it were done in a right spirit, and in connection with the truth of the Gospel.

### Paul's Relationship to His Galatian Converts

The Greek text of Verse 19 shows that the words, "My little children," are not in the vocative case—thus introducing a fresh appeal. But rather, they are in an accusative case, and they stand in apposition with the pronoun "you" of Verse 18. This is the language of deep affection and emotion. Paul uses this expression to assert his rights to hold the love of the Galatians. He speaks of them as his "children" (Greek: "*tekna*," which means "born ones"). Paul was their spiritual father.

The Apostle Paul is, for the second time, distressed for his Galatian converts with the same anguish that he experienced in his efforts at their conversion. The metaphor which speaks of a Christian winning converts to the Lord Jesus as those who give birth to spiritual children is found in I Corinthians 4:15 where we read, "*For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel.*" And, in Philemon 10, we read, "*I beseech thee for my son Onesimus, whom I have begotten in my bonds.*" It was a Jewish saying, "If one teaches the son of his neighbor the law, the Scripture reckons this the same as though he had begotten him."

The word "formed" is translated from the Greek "*morphoo*," which refers to the act of giving outward expression of one's inner nature. We use the English word "form" in that way sometimes. For instance, "I went to the tennis match yesterday. The winning player's form was excellent." We mean by this that the *outward expression* which he gave of his *inward ability* to play tennis was excellent.

In Verse 19, Paul refers to the *outward expression* of the Lord Jesus in the lives of the Galatian Christians. These to whom Paul was writing were truly saved. The Lord Jesus Christ was resident in their hearts. But there was little of His beauty in their lives. The word "again" tells us that at one time He *was* clearly and abundantly evident in their experience. But now He had ceased to be seen in the lives of those to whom Paul was writing.

The Judaizers, in placing the Galatian Christians under law, had caused them to substitute self-effort in an attempt to obey a newly-imposed law for their previous dependence upon the Holy Spirit for the production of a Christlike life, in and through them. The passive voice of the Greek verb translated "be formed" tells us that the Lord Jesus dwells in the heart of a Christian in a passive way, and thus does not express himself through the Christian. He has given that ministry over to the Holy Spirit. Recall that He once said (referring to the Holy Spirit), "That one shall glorify me" (see John 16:14).

The Holy Spirit was not being recognized and depended upon by the Galatians. Consequently, He was not able to minister the Lord Jesus to and through the Galatians in a full measure. What havoc the Judaizers were working in the Galatian churches!

Paul must, therefore, write these words for their benefit. "But it is good to be zealously courted in a good thing at all times, and not only when I am present with you, my born ones, concerning whom I am again striving with intense effort and anguish until Christ be outwardly expressed in you." He is saying, "I remember when you were saved, I went through the very pangs of birth in my soul, and now I am going through it all again because I am in such anxiety about you."

### **Paul's Desire for Direct Communication**

And, in Verse 20, he says, "*I desire to be present with you now, and to change my voice; for I stand in doubt of you.*" The Apostle Paul, concerned about the unhappy situation in the Galatian churches, moved by his deep love for the Galatian believers, and perplexed as to how he could help them in this present crisis, expresses the wish that he might be with them personally. He desired to be present in order that he could "change his voice." These last words could mean either or both of two things—each in perfect harmony with the context.

First, they could mean that the apostle regretted the severity of his language on the occasion of his second visit to the Galatian churches. At this time he had warned them against the Judaizers, and desired to be with them personally in order that he might talk to them in a more tender and affectionate manner—however, still telling them the truth. We find a similar instance in which he, for a time, regretted the stern tone he had used in II Corinthians 7:8.

Second, the words "to change my voice," were regularly used of the act of changing to some other means of expression. Paul longs to go to them and speak personally, rather than send a message through the medium of writing. Probably the Apostle Paul could put his heart into his voice. The pen stands between them. He knew the power his voice could have on their hearts. However, he had found it impossible to go to them at that time.

Thus, in the providence of God, the Church has this letter to the Galatians! All down through this age, Christians have found it a tower of strength and a bulwark against the heresy which teaches that salvation is appropriated by faith plus works.

Both of the above interpretations could be true, and both could be included in what Paul meant by these words. He desired to be with the Galatians personally so that he might speak to them face to face instead of writing a letter. And, in speaking to them, he could change his tone from one of severity to one of gentleness.

The word "now" is translated from a Greek word that sharply defines and particularizes the point of time referred to in the context. One could translate this word by the English expression "At this very moment." The words "stand in doubt" are translated from the Greek "*aporeo*." This word finds its base in "*poros*," which means "a transit, a ford, a way, revenue, resource." The Greek letter "*alpha*" is prefixed to this word, and that negates the meaning of it. Thus, the compound word means "to be without a way or a path, not to know which way to turn, to be without resources, to be in straits, to be in perplexity."

That was Paul's position with regard to his Galatian converts. The verb is in the middle voice; this fact speaks of the inward distress of a mind tossed to and fro by conflicting doubts and fears. The Greek has it, "I am perplexed in you." Paul's perplexity is conceived as being in the Galatians. He says, in effect, "I am puzzled how to deal with you—how to find an entrance into your hearts."

The Allegory

We could translate Verse 20 to read, "Moreover, I was wishing that I were present with you at this very moment, and could thus change my tone, because I am perplexed about you." In other words, "I am writing some strong things to you, but I would like to talk tenderly, lovingly, to you if I were only there. I am not sure about you."

False religion never can give certainty, but the blessed, glorious Gospel of the grace of God does! It fully assures us of complete and final salvation if we believe God. Who, then, would turn away deliberately from the liberty that we have in Christ to the bondage of some false system?

## 6.

### The Allegory of Hagar and Sarah

*"Tell me, ye that desire to be under the law, do ye not hear the law? For it is written, that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondmaid, the other by a freewoman. But he who was of the bondwoman was born after the flesh; but he of the freewoman was by promise. Which things are an allegory: for these are the two covenants; the one from the mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is Agar. For this Agar is mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children. But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all. For it is written, Rejoice, thou barren that bearest not; break forth and cry, thou that travailest not; for the desolate hath many more children than she which hath an husband. Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise. But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now. Nevertheless what saith the scripture? Cast out the bondwoman and her son: for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman. So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman, but of the free" (Gal. 4:21-31).*

In this closing section of his great treatise on law and grace, the Apostle Paul directs his readers to a great truth of the Old Testament. He shows that the history of Hagar and Sarah illustrates the present status of law and grace. As the son of the bondwoman gave place to the son of the freewoman, so law has given place to grace. This simple but

profound truth is vividly shown out in the "picture book" of the ancient Hebrew scriptures.

### **"Do You Really Understand the Law?"**

Paul introduces his discussion of the allegory of Hagar and Sarah by asking the Galatian Christians (and all his readers) a question. *"Tell me, ye that desire to be under the law, do ye not hear the law?"* (v. 21). We have already seen that, while the Galatians were a Gentile people who had been saved by grace, they had fallen under the influence of certain Judaizing teachers who were trying to put them under the law. These false teachers were saying (just like those "certain men which came down from Judaea" that are mentioned in Acts 15:1), *"... Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved."* This is the reason the Apostle Paul has addressed the doctrinal section of this letter to the great question of law and grace. He has expounded on the question. Clarifying it, he has explained that salvation is not by works of the law but entirely by the hearing of faith.

Undoubtedly, these false teachers of Jewish background who had come among the Galatians were referring these new believers back to the Old Testament. They probably gave them Scripture after Scripture in which it seemed evident that the law was the supreme test. They could demonstrate that Moses had described *"... the righteousness which is of the law,"* and that he had said, *"That the man which doeth those things shall live by them"* (Rom. 10:5). Moses had written in the Book of Deuteronomy (as quoted in Galatians 3:10), *"... Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them."* The Judaizing teachers were seeking to impress upon these believers the importance of endeavoring to propitiate God—of gaining divine favor—by human effort.

So now Paul asks the questions: "You desire to be under the law; do you? Do you want to put yourself under the Law of Moses? Why do you not hear the law? Why do you not carefully read the books of the law and see just what God has said?"

Paul uses the term "law" here in two different ways. In the first instance he is referring to Moses' Law—the law given at Sinai with the accompanying rules and regulations, statutes and judgments that were linked with it. Then, he uses the word "law" to refer to the books of the law. *"Tell me, ye that desire to be under the law (the legal covenant), do ye not hear the law (the books of the law in which God tells us of the covenants)?"*

The words "ye that desire to be under the law" imply that the Galatians had not adopted—but *were* on the point of adopting—the law. The idea here is, "Ye who are *bent* on being under law." The definite article does not appear before the noun "law" in the Greek text. Therefore, the word "law" as used in the first part of this verse refers to law as a principle of life—not just to the Mosaic Law.

The apostle asks the Galatians who are bent on being under law, "Are ye not hearing the law?" This is to call attention to the full impact of the Mosaic Law to these Galatians who are bent on upholding the authority of the law, but who are not heeding the full significance of it. Literally translated, Paul's question is, "Tell me, ye that are bent upon being under law, are ye not hearing the law?"

## Two Sons of Abraham

Then the Apostle to the Gentiles turns the attention of the Galatian believers back to Genesis and says, "*For it is written, that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondmaid, the other by a freewoman.*" The word "for" connects the contents of Verse 21 with those of Verse 22. The idea is, "Your desire to be under law is not in harmony with Scripture, and here is the Scripture." Then he calls to mind the story of Hagar and Sarah. By the way, the word "bondmaid" is the translation of the Greek "*paidiske*," a term frequently used in the Septuagint and designating a female slave.

A literal translation of Verse 22 would read, "For it stands written, Abraham had two sons, one from the maidservant and one from the freewoman." We should all know the story that Paul refers to. Abraham's wife was Sarah, and God had promised that Abraham and Sarah should be the parents of a son who was to be the precursor of the coming "Seed of Woman" in whom all nations of the earth should be blessed. However, the years passed by, and it seemed to Abraham and Sarah as though there was to be no fulfillment of that promise. Finally, losing hope, Sarah herself suggested that they should descend to the lower custom of the people of the nations around them, and that Abraham should take another woman. The woman he was to take would not exactly occupy the full status of a wife, but rather she would be brought into the home as a concubine.

As we are told in Genesis 16, Abraham foolishly agreed to Sarah's suggestion, and as a result he took Hagar, the Egyptian handmaid. From that union, a son was born who was called "Ishmael." Abraham

fondly hoped that Ishmael would prove to be the promised one through whom the Messiah should come into the world. But God said, "No; this is not the one. I told you that you would have a child of Sarah, and this one is not the promised seed."

Abraham pleaded, "O that Ishmael might live before thee!" (see Genesis 17:18). But God said, as it were, "He can have a certain inheritance, but he cannot be the child of promise. In due time Sarah herself shall have a child, and in that child my covenant will stand fast."

### The Two Mothers

In Verse 23, the Apostle Paul makes a definite statement concerning these two sons: "*But he who was of the bondwoman was born after the flesh; but he of the freewoman was by promise.*" Ishmael, born of the bondwoman, was born after the flesh—that is, by natural generation in the ordinary course of nature. But Isaac, born of the freewoman, was born according to promise through the miraculous interposition of God when the parents were too old to have children. Thus, Ishmael was born in the course of "law," while Isaac was born according to "grace."

The words "was born" are translated from a Greek verb in the perfect tense. Paul here uses the *perfect tense* in preference to the usual aorist (past tense), because he was not thinking simply of the historic fact of the two births—but rather of the still-existing results of those births. Ishmael's descendants do not belong to the covenant people, Israel. Isaac's descendants are those that have the promise. In Verse 22, Ishmael and Isaac are coupled together as the sons of one father. Here in Verse 23 they are contrasted in that they each had a different mother.

We can expand our translations of Paul's Greek of Verse 23 to bring out the full sense of the apostle's statements: "But on the one hand, the son of the maidservant was one born in the ordinary course of nature. On the other hand, the son of the freewoman was one born through the promise."

### Literal History with a Symbolic Meaning

The Apostle to the Gentiles now shows us that these historical events had a symbolic meaning. He does not mean to imply that they

did not actually take place as written. The events recorded *did* actually happen. The Scripture (in speaking of the Old Testament records) tells us (in I Corinthians 10:11), "*Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples (types); and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world (age) are come.*" Notice, "All these things happened."

Some people say they did not happen—that they were just myths, or folklore, or something like that. However, the Holy Spirit says, "All these things happened." When we read in God's Word about the different Old Testament characters, and the nations, and the cities, and so on, all these are to be received as historic facts. During these last two centuries—when the voice of archaeology has been crying out so clearly and loudly—not one thing has been discovered to refute anything written in Scripture. Moreover, thousands of discoveries have been made which help to bear witness to and *authenticate* the Bible record. The Bible does not need to be authenticated, of course, as far as faith is concerned, for we believe what God has said. However, these important discoveries have helped in a large measure to shut the mouths of skeptics who would not believe the statements of Scripture to be true.

Abraham lived, Sarah lived, Hagar was a real personage, the two sons were real personages. From Ishmael came the Arabs; from Isaac, the Hebrews. From the very beginning, the two boys did not get along very well, and these nations were not friendly. That explains in large measure the trouble in Palestine today. They could not get on in the beginning, and cannot today! But the Apostle to the Gentiles undertakes to show that these mothers and their sons had symbolic significance.

Therefore, he tells us (in Verse 24), "*Which things are an allegory: for these are the two covenants; the one from the mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is Agar.*" Paul says that the story of Hagar and Ishmael and Sarah and Isaac is an allegory. Again, this *does not* mean that he is casting doubt upon the historical trustworthiness of the patriarchal narrative in Genesis. An allegory is a statement of facts which is to be understood literally, and yet requires (or justly admits) a moral or a figurative interpretation. Paul, while using the story as an illustration, does so in order to prove his argument to the effect that the law is superseded by grace. Then he speaks of the covenant of law that was given at Mount Sinai. This is allegorically identified with Hagar. This covenant places its children in a condition of bondage.



Let's consider a literal translation of Paul's Greek of **Verse 24**. "Which class of things is allegorical. For these are two covenants, one from Mount Sinai, begetting bondage, which is as to its nature classed as Hagar."

### Hagar Represents Law

Paul continues in Verse 25, "*For this Agar (Hagar) is mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children.*" The exact meaning of the statement, "For this Hagar is mount Sinai," is in debate among commentators. However, it seems obvious that Paul is equating the woman Hagar, the mother of Ishmael, with Mount Sinai, the "mother" of the law. The name "Hagar" closely resembles the Arabic name for the mountain that we call Sinai. Paul seems to play upon this resemblance as he makes his statement of the allegory. The Arabians today are called "sons of Hagar," and this word appears to refer both to Mount Sinai and to Ishmael's mother.

This Hagar (or Sinai) corresponds, Paul says, to the then existent city of Jerusalem—the center of the apostate observance of Judaism. Just as Hagar, a slave, bore children that by birth became slaves, so the followers of legalistic Judaism are in bondage to law. Paul says, "Now this Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia, and corresponds to the Jerusalem which now is, for she is in bondage with her children."

Therefore, the allegory to which Paul calls attention can be stated as follows: These two women represent the two covenants. Sarah represents the Abrahamic covenant, Hagar the Mosaic. What was the difference between these two? The Abrahamic covenant was the covenant of sovereign grace. When God said to Abraham, "In thee and in thy seed shall all nations of the earth be blessed," He did not put in any conditions whatsoever. It was a divine promise. God said, "I am going to do it; I do not ask anything of you, Abraham, I simply tell you what I will do."

**That is grace! Grace does not make terms with people; grace does not ask that we do anything in order to procure merit. Many people talk about salvation by grace who do not seem to have the least conception of what grace is. They think that God gives the grace to do the things that make them deserving of salvation! That is not it at all!**

We read in God's Word, "*Being justified freely by his grace. . .*" (Rom. 3:24), and that word "freely" literally means "gratuitously." The same word is translated "without a cause" in another portion of Scripture. It is said of the Lord Jesus Christ that the Scripture was fulfilled which was written concerning Him, ". . . *They hated me without a cause*" (John 15:25). The Lord Jesus never did anything to deserve the bad treatment that men gave Him, and you and I cannot do one thing to deserve the good treatment that God gives us. The Lord Jesus was treated badly by men *freely*; we who are saved are treated well by God *freely*. We should all understand this wonderful fact, and our souls should be thrilled with the joy of it! What a marvelous thing it is to be saved by grace! One reason that God saves people by grace is that "It is more blessed to give than to receive"—and God must have the more blessed part!

### Sarah Represents Grace

Therefore, we see the covenant of grace illustrated in Sarah. God had said to Sarah, "You shall have a child, and that child will be the means of blessing to the whole world." It seemed impossible that God's promise could ever be. However, in His own good time, God's Word was fulfilled. And, at last, through Isaac came our Lord Jesus Christ who brought blessing to all mankind.

Hagar, on the other hand, was a bondwoman, and she speaks of the covenant of law—of the Mosaic covenant made at Mount Sinai. It was there on that mountain that God said, "The man that doeth those things shall live in them." However, no man was ever found who could keep that law perfectly, and therefore on the ground of law no one ever obtained eternal life. Sarah, who typifies grace, became the mother of the child of promise. Hagar typifies law, and she became the mother of the child of the flesh. The law speaks only to the flesh, while the believer is the child of promise (grace) and has been born of divine power. ". . . *Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God*" (John 3:3).

Hagar typified Jerusalem which is here on earth, because Jerusalem at that time was the center of the legal religion. But Sarah typifies Jerusalem above, and Paul goes on to say (in Verse 26), "*But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all.*" When Paul says that Jerusalem above "is the mother of us all," he is literally saying that she is "our mother." "Us all," or "our," speaks of Christians—those who have been born again through faith in Jesus Christ.

The law is the earthly system—it speaks to an earthly people—to men after the flesh—whereas grace is a heavenly system which avails to children of promise (grace). Jerusalem above is “our mother.” Why? Because Christ is above! Christ has gone up yonder, and having by Himself made purification for sins, He has taken His seat on the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens. There He sits exalted, a Prince and Saviour; and from that throne grace is flowing down to sinful men!

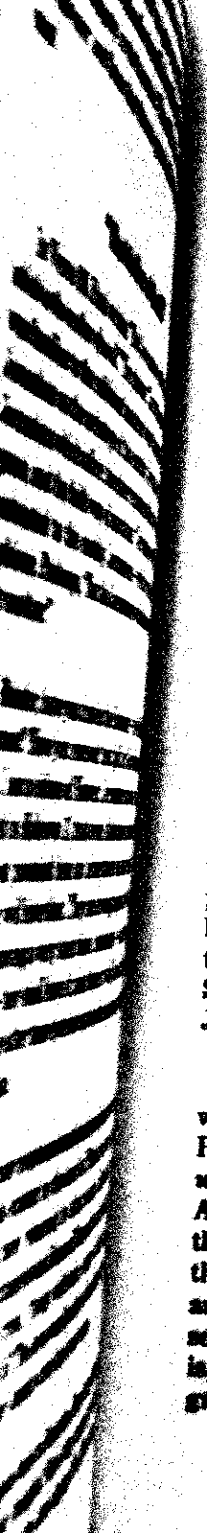
### “The Mother of Us All”

In Verse 26, Paul writes, “*But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all.*” The phrase, “Jerusalem which is above,” was familiar to the rabbinical teachers who thought of the heavenly Jerusalem as the archetype of the earthly Jerusalem. The heavenly Jerusalem which is free, therefore represents Sarah—and therefore, grace, and the faith way of salvation. “Jerusalem which is above” is contrasted to the earthly Jerusalem—which represents legalistic Judaism. Paul says, “But the Jerusalem which above is free, which is our mother.”

Reader, have you trusted the Saviour—the Mediator of the new covenant? Have you received that gift of God's grace? Can you say, “Yes, I am a citizen of Heaven; Jerusalem above is my mother”? We are told in Hebrews 11 that even Abraham looked for that heavenly city. God promised him an inheritance on earth, and someday his children will have that. They are trying to get it now after the flesh, and are having a very hard time. Someday—in accordance with the promise—they shall have it; and then it will be all blessing for them. That will be after their eyes are opened to see the Lord Jesus Christ as their Messiah.

A great many people are troubled about the present nation Israel. That nation has existed in the land of Palestine since 1948. Many Jewish people have returned to that nation. Have these people changed their attitude toward Jesus of Nazareth since that time when their forefathers cried, “Away with him, away with him! Crucify him!” (see John 19:15)? The Jews would not have the Saviour then, and they have been under Caesar's iron heel ever since.

Now, many have gone back to Palestine. Have they changed in their attitude—and their thoughts? Have they turned to God and confessed the sin of crucifying the Lord of glory? No! Then how can



they expect blessing even when they are in the land? No wonder there is trouble—trouble which will continue and increase until the dark and dreadful days of the Great Tribulation. These returned Jews are but the children of Hagar. But someday, when the Church has been caught up to be with the Lord, and God turns back to Israel, a remnant from them will be saved. "... *they shall look upon (unto) me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son. . .*" (Zech. 12:10). And when they own as Saviour and Lord Him whom once they rejected. He will cleanse them from their sins. He will take them back to the land—He will bring them into blessings—He will destroy all their foes—and they themselves will become a means of blessing to the whole earth. That is the divine program as laid down in the Word of God!

Oh, Jewish friend, how we would like to urge you to search the Scriptures, turn to your own Bible and read Chapter 53 of the Book of Isaiah, Psalm 22, Psalm 69, and the last three chapters of the Book of Zechariah. Then, if you have a New Testament, read the Epistle to the Hebrews and the Gospel of Matthew, and see if the Spirit of God will not show you what is the whole trouble with Israel today. All of the troubles have come upon that new nation because they have sought blessing—not after the Spirit—but after the flesh. They refused the promised Seed when He came. Therefore, they are far from the blessing of God.

And, Gentile friends, if you are seeking salvation by church membership, by observing ordinances, by charity, by your own good works, prayers, and penances, can you not see that you, too, are seeking the blessing after the flesh? Don't you know that God will give it to you on the ground of *pure grace*? Oh, that you also might become children of Sarah—children of the covenant of grace—who can say, "Thank God, Jerusalem above is our mother."

"Our citizenship," says the Apostle Paul, "is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ" (see Philippians 3:20). And Abraham, we are told, "... *looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God*" (Heb. 11:10). Abraham is in Heaven, and all his spiritual children who have died in the past are with him there. The Lord Jesus told of the poor beggar—the spiritual child of Abraham—who died and was carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom. All the redeemed who have passed off the scene are now in the "paradise" of the third Heaven where Abraham is, and very soon—when the Lord Jesus comes—we all shall join that great and glad multitude!

## The Joy of the Barren Wife

And then, not only now but through the Millennial Age, how many will there be who are the children of God! The Apostle Paul, in Verse 27 now quotes from Isaiah 54:1: ". . . *Rejoice, thou barren that bearest not, break forth and cry, thou that travailest not: for the desolate hath many more children than she which hath an husband.*" Paul's quotation comes from Isaiah 54:1 as it was translated into the Greek of the Septuagint. The words are applied to the unfruitful Sarah who answers to the heavenly Jerusalem.

What a strange Scripture this verse is! First, let's notice its character. The chapter that precedes this outburst is Isaiah 53. In that great chapter, we have the fullest, the most complete prophecy of the coming into the world of the Lord Jesus. We have His suffering and death and resurrection foretold more clearly than in any other place in all the Bible. Isaiah saw the coming Saviour suffering, bleeding, and dying on the Cross. And, in viewing this vision he says, "*But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: The chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all*" (Isa. 53:5, 6). Then, the prophet closes that chapter with the wonderful words, "He bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors" (see Isaiah 53:12). And then, the very next word, when you come to Isaiah 54:1, is "Sing!"

There is certainly enough there to make you *sing!* "He bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors. Sing!" Of what shall we sing? We should sing of the matchless grace that God has manifested in Christ!

Paul translated that word, "sing," as "rejoice." Why? Because the Lord Jesus has now died—the sin question is settled—and now God can let free grace flow to poor sinners! Grace in the past had been like a woman who was foresaken and alone, and longed to be the mother of children, but wept and mourned alone. But now, there is cause to "sing"—to "rejoice."

Now, on the other hand, here is legality typified by another woman, and this woman has thousands of children—people who **profess to be saved** by human effort—saved by their own merits. Yes; "**legality**" is a wonderful mother. She has a vast family. Poor "grace"

does not seem to have any children at all! But now the Gospel goes forth. And what happens? "Grace," the one forsaken, neglected, becomes the mother of more children than "legality"! This is why Paul says, "For it stands written, Rejoice, barren (woman) who does not bear. Break forth and cry, you who do not travail, because more are the children of the desolate than of the one who has an husband." "Grace" now has untold millions of children—and there will be millions more in the glorious age to come!

## The Children of Promise

In Verse 28, we read, "*Now we (ye), brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise.*" (The textual evidence is strongly in favor of the conclusion that Paul wrote "ye" instead of "we.") Paul is assuring the Galatian Christians that they are not like Ishmael, the son of the slave woman. Rather, they are like Isaac who was born according to the promise—not in the usual course of nature, but miraculously. They are born of the Holy Spirit, and they have their standing before God—not on the basis of physical descent from Abraham, but upon the promise made to Abraham which applies to all who have like faith to him.

The Apostle to the Gentiles literally says, "And, as for you, brethren, after the manner of Isaac are ye children of promise." Is that true for all of us as it was for the Galatians? Reader, have you believed God's promise? He has promised a full, free, and eternal salvation to everyone who trusts His Son. We who have believed *are* children of promise. But the children of legality cannot understand this. No one hates grace as much as the man who is trying to save himself by his own efforts.

*"But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now"* (v. 29). The reference is to Ishmael who persecuted Isaac. We read of this in Genesis 21:9: "*And Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, which she had born unto Abraham, mocking.*" In like manner, the Judaizers were persecuting Paul and all those who would not forsake grace for law. And thus has it been all down through the Church Age. Legalizers are always prone to persecute those who believe in salvation by pure grace. The great Roman Church with its roots in the fourth century and continuing through the middle ages to our time has always been a great persecutor of those who believe that "the just shall live by faith."

## Grace Casts Out the Law

*"Nevertheless what saith the scripture? Cast out the bondwoman and her son: for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman"* (v. 30). Paul, in interpreting the allegory, says that the rejection of Ishmael points to a rejection of the children of Abraham after the flesh in favor of those who become children of Abraham by faith. The law and the Gospel cannot coexist. The law must disappear before the Gospel. It is hardly possible to estimate the strength of conviction and depth of prophetic insight which this declaration implies.

The Apostle to the Gentiles thus confidently sounds the death knell of Judaism at a time when one-half of Christendom clung to the Mosaic Law with a jealous affection little short of frenzy. The Judaic party seemed to be growing in influence at that time, and it was strong enough—even in the Gentile churches of his own founding—to undermine Paul's influence and endanger his life. The truth which to us who believe is now a truism must then have been regarded as a paradox!

Paul's statement is most definite. "But what does the Scripture say? Throw out the maidservant and her son. For the son of the maidservant shall by no means inherit with the son of the freewoman." God says, "My children are the children of promise; my children are those who are saved by grace." Reader, do you know the blessedness of the reality of it in your own soul?

*"So then, brethren,"* the apostle concludes, *"we are not children of the bondwoman, but of the free"* (v. 31). This verse brings to a climax the argument that believers are not a community or nation in bondage to legal statutes. They are, rather, members of the community of believers whose relation to God is that of *sons*, and who do not have the spirit of *bondage* by the Spirit of sonship. In other words, we believers have nothing to do with the legal covenant, but we are the children of the covenant of grace.

The literal translation of these words with which the Apostle Paul closes the doctrinal section of his letter is, "Therefore, brethren, we are children, not of a maidservant, but of the freewoman." In other words, we believers are not children of law, but of grace. These very words which close the doctrinal section of his Galatian letter also serve as the basis upon which Paul builds the practical instruction which follows in Chapters 5 and 6.

We will not consider this practical section of Paul's Galatian letter as a part of our present study. A separate study of Chapters 5 and 6 of the Book of Galatians will be prepared under the title, *Living by Faith*.



**The End**