

# **PAUL'S LETTER TO THE GALATIANS**



**HOW TO UNDERSTAND IT**

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# Introduction

Our focus in this booklet is on Paul's letter to the Galatians, which is perhaps one of the most misunderstood writings in the Bible. We have presented this subject in the style of an in-depth Bible study, which we think students of the Bible will find very interesting and revealing.

Before starting our study of Galatians, though, we will briefly address the equally misunderstood concepts of salvation, justification and righteousness. The correct understanding of these foundational concepts is vital in order to fully comprehend and appreciate Paul's letter to the Galatians.

Rather than introducing each section with a definition of the biblical terms, "salvation," "justification" and "righteousness," we are presenting these concepts in such a way that their true meaning will *ultimately* emerge.



# Part 1

## The Mystery of Salvation

Many professing Christians do not seem to understand exactly what salvation is, how to attain it, and whether it can be lost. In order to correctly understand what salvation is, one needs to put aside any preconceived ideas and study the scriptural references that God Himself has provided for our learning.

Luke 18:25–26 makes it very clear that only God can grant us salvation. Salvation belongs to God, and therefore, salvation can only come from God (Revelation 7:9–10; 19:1).

The Bible tells us that it is God the Father who is our Savior and who grants us salvation (compare 1 Timothy 4:10). At the same time, we are told that God the Father grants us salvation through His Son Jesus Christ. No one can come to Christ unless the Father draws that person (John 6:44), and no one can come to the Father except through Jesus Christ. There is no salvation in any other but in Jesus (Acts 4:12). He is the only door to salvation (John 10:9, 1).

As the Father sent Jesus Christ as Savior into the world, so both the Father and Jesus Christ are our Saviors (John 3:16–17; 1 John 4:14; 1 Timothy 1:4; 4:10; Titus 1:3; 2:10; Jude 25).

The Bible teaches that God the Father wants all men to be saved (1 Timothy 2:3–5). He offers us salvation by His grace—undeserved pardon (Ephesians 2:4–5, 8–9; Titus 2:11–14). Salvation is a GIFT—it is not anything that we can earn.

Salvation comes through the hearing of the Word of God—the gospel message of the Kingdom of God (Acts 11:13–14; 1 Corinthians 15:1–2; Ephesians 1:13; 2 Timothy 3:14–15).

But hearing alone is not enough. We must also believe the gospel message of our salvation (1 Corinthians 1:21; Luke 8:4–5, 11–12; Romans 1:16; Hebrews 10:39; Acts 16:25–34). BUT we must have living and obedient faith, not dead and disobedient faith (Hebrews 5:9; James 2:14–17; Romans 1:5; 16:25–27; Acts 6:7).

Once we hear and believe the gospel message, we are commanded to be baptized for the remission of our sins (Mark 16:15–16; Luke 1:76–77). Baptism is an outward sign of our repentance, and when we are properly baptized, we will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38)—the down payment or guarantee or earnest or deposit of our salvation (Ephesians 1:13–14; 2 Corinthians 5:5).

The *Ryrie Study Bible* includes the following annotation to Ephesians 1:13–14: “earnest = deposit, down payment. The presence of the Spirit is God’s pledge that our salvation will be consummated.”

Salvation is a process. The Bible tells us that **we *were* saved**; that **we *are being* saved**; and that **we *will be* saved**. Let’s understand.

First, we were saved and are saved. Romans 8:23–24 says that “we ARE saved by hope”; that is, for a certain hope—the redemption of our body. 2 Timothy 1:9 says that God “hath saved us and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace.”

We also read in Titus 3:4–7 that God “saved us” by His mercy through baptism, and that He gave us the Holy Spirit, that “being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.”

To indicate the ongoing process of our salvation, we also read that we are being saved.

Acts 2:47 says, in the correct rendering of the *New King James Bible*, that “the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.” Compare also, in the correct rendering of the *New King James Bible*, 1 Corinthians 1:18 (“who are being saved”); and 2 Corinthians 2:15 (“who are being saved”).

But the Bible also tells us that our salvation is still in the future; that is, that we shall be saved in the future (Matthew 10:22; 24:12–13; Mark 13:13). This shows that “salvation” is not static, but that it is a process.

Romans 5:8–10 says that we were reconciled to God by Christ’s death, and that we shall be saved by His life. It is our potential to inherit salvation in the future (Hebrews 1:14), at the time of Christ’s return (Hebrews 9:28; 1 Peter 1:5).

This means, then, that WE CAN forfeit our salvation. We can judge ourselves unqualified or disqualified to inherit salvation (compare Hebrews 2:1–3; Luke 13:23–27; compare also the admonition



in Philippians 2:12 to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling).

Our salvation deals with what we were saved from, and what we will be saved for.

We were **saved from sin and being a sinner** (Matthew 1:21; 1 Timothy 1:15), and from the penalty for sin, which is death (James 5:19–20; Romans 6:23).

But as we mentioned, this is an ongoing process.

We were saved from sins **that are past** (Romans 3:25: "... Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation [atoning sacrifice] through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God.").

We are also **becoming righteous** in that we are no longer habitual sinners as we were in the past, no longer practicing those things which are contrary to God's way of life [for a definition and thorough discussion of righteousness, see part 3 of this booklet]. It is actually the living Christ in us who fulfills the righteous requirements of the law in and through us (Romans 8:3–4, *New King James Bible*).

But this does not mean that we become sinless overnight—that we will not slip and fall on occasion. We will sin from time to time, but when this happens, we can again claim the sacrifice of Christ and obtain forgiveness of our sins on a continuing basis. This process shows *how* we are being saved (1 John 1:8–9).

When Paul sinned after his conversion, he recognized that he had to be saved or delivered from his body of death through Jesus Christ (Romans 7:24–25).

Our salvation also deals with what we are being saved for; namely, everlasting and eternal life (1 Timothy 1:16) in the Kingdom of God. Matthew 19:16–30 shows that **ultimate salvation, eternal life and entering the Kingdom of God are synonymous and identical expressions to describe our future.**

Herbert W. Armstrong, "What Do You Mean—Salvation," copyright 1961, 1973, described the process of our salvation in these words, on page 21:

"Salvation is a matter of what you become—not where you shall go! God's purpose is to change you—from your vile character to HIS glorious character—not to change the place where you are!...

“You have been converted—changed in mind, concept, attitude, direction of way of life—you are begotten as a child of God—you have now eternal life abiding in you—as long as you continue in contact and fellowship with God (I John 1:3)—all by God’s grace as His gift, and not anything you have earned by your works; and now if you continue overcoming, growing spiritually—and all this actually through God’s power—you shall inherit the Kingdom of God, and be made immortal to live forever in happiness and joy!”

# Part 2

## The Mystery of Justification

Why are people confused about the biblical teaching of justification—the concept of becoming right with God? Why do people think that they are justified by and because of their conduct—because they earned it or deserved it? Why do others think that our justification has nothing to do with how we live?

The Bible shows us that no law—and none of *our* deeds and works—can justify us. If we violate just one of the Ten Commandments, we have thereby sinned and incurred the penalty for lawbreaking. Sin is the transgression of the law (1 John 3:4), and the penalty for sin is death, as Romans 6:23 tells us.

Let us assume that a person commits murder—a crime deserving of the death penalty. His subsequent righteous acts do not eradicate or abolish the death penalty. He can only be delivered from execution by a pardon through the governor or other governmental authority.

By the same token, all of us have sinned (Romans 5:12–14; 3:9, 19, 23). No matter how perfectly we may have kept God’s law after we broke it, the death penalty for our sins is still hanging over our heads. Our law-keeping of today cannot justify or annul our law-breaking of yesterday. The law does not justify us. Only God’s GRACE—the forgiveness of the death penalty—can do that.

The Bible does not teach that we don’t have to keep the law of the Ten Commandments anymore—just the opposite is true. But the Bible does tell us that the curse for our breaking the law—the death penalty—has to be removed from us—and that cannot happen through the law, but only through GRACE.

Let us understand that the natural or carnal person CANNOT keep the law—or live without sin (Romans 8:7). Even after our conversion, we still sin because we have not yet fully overcome our sinful carnal nature (Romans 7:14–19).

Each sin brings a curse on us—the curse of death (Galatians 3:10). We are cursed and guilty of death if we break only one of the commandments of the law. The *Living Bible* renders Galatians 3:10: “Cursed is everyone who at any time breaks a single one of these laws that are written in God’s book of the Law.”

Our past sins are not justified by our righteous acts of today (Galatians 2:16; 3:21). But it was never the purpose of any of God’s laws to justify us. NO law can do that.

Rather, as Romans 3:20 points out, by the law is the knowledge of sin. The *Living Bible* says: “...for the more we know of God’s laws, the clearer it becomes that we aren’t obeying them; his laws serve only to make us see that we are sinners.”

The purpose of the law is to reveal to us what sin is. It defines sin for us (Romans 2:18). In the rendering of the *Living Bible*: “Yes, you know what he wants; you know right from wrong and favor the right because you have been taught his laws from earliest youth.”

We read in Romans 7:7 that Paul could not have known sin except through the law. The *New International Version* says: “For I would not have known what coveting really was if the law had not said, Do not covet.”

To repeat, no law can justify us. It does not forgive us of the sins we have committed by breaking the law. Man cannot justify himself. As Galatians 5:4 tells us: if we try to become justified by law, we fall from grace. Only God can justify us through grace.

HOW, then, does God justify us through grace?

Upon repentance and belief in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, God forgives us our sins, thereby removing the curse of the death penalty from us.

We read in Romans 4:25 that Christ died for our offenses and was raised FOR our justification (so also, in addition to the *Authorized Version*, the *Revised Standard Version* and the *New International Version*).

Romans 5:8–10 adds that we were justified and reconciled to God through *Christ’s death*, but that we **will be saved** by *His life*. It is Christ’s life in us that *continues* to justify us and that saves us.

We read in Romans 3:24–26, in the *New King James Bible*, that we are “being justified.”

Romans 2:13 points out this ongoing process of justification, stating

that the doers of the law *shall be* justified—in the future, as explained in this booklet.

However, our law-keeping—regardless of what law we are talking about—does not justify us. To repeat, the reason is that our law-keeping today does not justify our lawbreaking of yesterday. This not only applies to our past sins prior to our conversion—it applies to us today as well. Every time we sin, we need forgiveness—which we can only receive by GRACE.

No one can be justified by the physical works of bringing physical sacrifices or engaging in other physical rituals, such as certain washings. And no one can be justified either by keeping God’s spiritual law—the Ten Commandments—because one violation brings upon us the penalty of death. That death penalty can only be removed by faith, through GRACE—the unmerited forgiveness of our sins through our belief in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

In other words, we must have faith that God will remove the penalty for our sin—which is ETERNAL death—which we have incurred and which we are incurring every time we sin. This forgiveness is strictly BY a GIFT—not by anything which we do—apart from our being truly sorry that we have violated God’s law and by accepting Christ’s FREE sacrifice for our forgiveness.

However, even though we are not justified by works, good *works* or good *deeds* (same word in the Greek) are important when it comes to our future (compare Romans 2:6–8).

We are no longer obligated today to keep the sacrificial ritual works of the law. We are, however, obligated to keep the spiritual commands or works of the Spiritual Law—the Ten Commandments. But that all by itself does not justify us.

Some have concluded that since we are not justified by good works, we are not obligated to perform good works.

But this conclusion is in error. Let us read James 2:14–20 in the *Living Bible*:

“Dear brothers, what’s the use of saying that you have faith and are Christians if you aren’t proving it by helping others. Will THAT kind of faith save anyone...? Faith that doesn’t show itself by good works is no faith at all—it is dead and useless... Without good works you can’t prove whether you have faith or not; but anyone can see that I

have faith by the way I act... Faith that does not result in good deeds is not real faith."

We must have living and obedient faith in order to be justified, and that on a constant basis. Paul says in Romans 4:12 that we must "walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham."

Faith, which is necessary to be justified, does not void or annul God's command to keep His laws. Paul says in Romans 3:31 that we do not make void the law through faith. The *Revised Standard Version* renders the last phrase as, "We uphold the law." We can only keep the law of love because God's love is in us (Romans 5:5).

Christ justifies us on a continuing basis. But we must believe in Him and His power—we must believe that He lives in us; that He can and will justify us; that we CAN keep the law through Him; and that we can obtain forgiveness when we fail and slip.

We read in Galatians 2:16–17, 20:

"(16) Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith OF Jesus Christ, even we have believed IN Jesus Christ, that we **might be** justified [again, notice the process!] by the faith OF Christ, and not by the works of the law, for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified... (17) We seek to be justified by Christ... (20) I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; YET NOT I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith OF the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me. I do not frustrate the GRACE of God; for if righteousness comes by the law, then Christ is dead [died] in vain."

But how does **Christ's faith** in us justify us?

We need Christ's faith—a strong unshakable conviction that we WILL obtain forgiveness when we sin and repent and claim Christ's sacrifice as payment for our sins; KNOWING that His sacrifice is necessary and sufficient for our forgiveness and justification.

Let us allow Christ to fulfill in us the MYSTERY of our justification.

# Part 3

## The Mystery of Righteousness

Christ justifies us when we sin, but He also gives us His righteousness. To understand this relationship, we must realize that the Greek words for justification and righteousness are related.

The important point to realize is that *Christ* must make us righteous. We read in Romans 9:31–32; 10:3, that the ancient Israelites tried, unsuccessfully, to make themselves righteous. But in doing so, they rejected God’s righteousness. They tried it on their own, apart from God, but they failed.

Righteousness has everything to do with obeying God’s law. Christ freed us from the penalty of the law—not from the law itself. We are expected to keep the law. But humans are incapable of keeping the law. They must have help from God to do so. The fact that the living Jesus Christ, dwelling in us through the Holy Spirit, is keeping the law in and through us is expressed in Romans 8:4. *Luther* translates Romans 8:4: “...so that the righteousness, demanded by the Law, would be fulfilled in us.”

It is actually Christ, dwelling in us, who fulfills the law through us—if we allow Him to do so, and if we don’t resist His lead.

The *Living Bible* translates Romans 8:4–9:

“So now we CAN obey God’s laws if we follow after the Holy Spirit and no longer obey the old evil nature within us... those who follow after the Holy Spirit find themselves doing those things that please God... You are controlled by your new nature if you have the Spirit of God living in you. (And remember that if anyone doesn’t have the Spirit of God living in him, he is not a Christian at all).”

We can only keep the righteous requirements of the law, IF Christ lives in us through the Holy Spirit, and IF we follow Christ’s lead. Christ must keep the law in and through us. He condemned sin in His flesh—and we must allow Him to condemn sin today in our flesh.

Romans 3:21–22 talks about the “righteousness of God which is by faith OF Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe.”

We need to believe in Jesus; that Jesus is the Son of God; that He died for us; that His sacrifice forgives our sins and removes our death penalty—but that belief is just the beginning. The faith necessary for salvation is Christ’s faith—the faith OF Christ—living in us and enabling us to keep the law.

The Bible teaches that the faith of Christ—Christ’s faith in us—makes us righteous. Those who believe in Christ must have the faith OF Christ living IN them.

Philippians 3:9 says: “... and be found in him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith OF Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith.”

2 Corinthians 5:21 clarifies that we are to become the righteousness of God in Christ.

It is only through Christ living in us that we can keep the righteous requirements of the law. Faith in Jesus and His sacrifice is just the beginning. Belief in Christ’s sacrifice deals with justification and forgiveness of sin. But to live righteously, we must have the faith *of* Christ living in us, which is making us righteous. True righteousness is a GIFT from God. We need to seek God’s righteousness—not our own—and it is THAT godly righteousness which God offers to us—by GRACE—and in which we have to walk.

We are to seek the Kingdom of God and HIS righteousness (Matthew 6:33)—the righteousness of God (2 Corinthians 5:21). We read in Isaiah 54:17 that the righteousness of the servants of the LORD is from God. As mentioned, Philippians 3:9 explains that Paul’s righteousness is not his own, but through the faith OF Christ—the righteousness which is of God by faith.

Romans 5:17 says that we receive righteousness and grace as a gift. Compare also Romans 5:18–19, 21.

Christ’s faith and love in us enable us to keep the righteous requirements of God’s law, and they thereby declare us to be righteous.

Romans 8:10 says that if Christ lives in us, the Spirit is life because of righteousness.

It is the love of God which is “shed abroad in our hearts” by the Holy Spirit (Romans 5:5), which fulfills the law in and through



us. After all, the love of God is defined as the keeping of God's law (1 John 5:3). So, again, it is God's love, which enables us to fulfill or keep His law. And as long as we keep the law of love, we remain in the state of righteousness. We read in Deuteronomy 6:25 that this IS our righteousness that we keep His commandments.

When we slip and fall, we obtain forgiveness, after repentance, so that we can continue on our path toward salvation, justification and righteousness.

How does Christ's faith in us make us righteous? In the same way that it made Abraham righteous. We already saw that when we sin, Christ's faith in us justifies us. It makes or declares us to be righteous or just. But it also enables us to *stay* righteous by not sinning.

This is a process. Let's consider Abraham.

Abraham had to grow in faith. He had to become strong in faith. He was not perfect in faith from the very beginning. Abraham sinned at times because of lack of faith. He lied because he was afraid to tell the truth. He took matters into his own hands, rather than waiting in faith for God to act for him.

At first, he did not have, or he did not use abundantly, the faith of Christ, which motivates us to keep God's law. First, the faith of Christ worked *with* him, and then, after his conversion, it worked *in* him. Yes! Abraham was converted—he changed and became more and more obedient to God. (For further proof that Jesus Christ was indeed the Being within the God Family who dealt directly with Abraham and ancient Israel, please read our free booklet, "*God Is A Family.*")

The faith of Christ in us is a living, obedient faith, which brings forth good works. We are called upon to uphold the OBEDIENCE of the faith (Romans 1:5; 16:26). It is the kind of faith, which Abraham had. His faith started with faith in God, but it had to grow—in effect, the faith OF Christ had to join his faith, so that his faith became more and more the faith OF Christ. Abraham's human faith had to be superseded more and more by godly faith.

But he had to grow in that faith, which he did. He grew in learning how to totally and completely rely on God, in faith, knowing that whatever God promises, He can and WILL do.

Romans 4:20–21 remarks about Abraham, in the *Revised Standard Version*, that "... he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God,

fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised.”

The *Living Bible* says: “He believed God, for his faith and trust grew ever stronger...”

The more he grew in faith, that is, the more he allowed Christ’s faith in him to guide and lead and motivate him, the more he became obedient to God’s law. And the more he kept God’s law, the more he grew in faith. Another way to say it is that Abraham became more and more convinced that he did not have to sin, that God would help him stay obedient.

In fact, Abraham became more and more convinced, as the apostle Paul was (Galatians 2:20), that it was no longer he who was living his life, but rather it was the living Christ dwelling in him who lived His life in him. And the more he LET Christ live in him—the more he allowed Christ’s faith to live in him—the more he overcame his sins and faults and shortcomings.

This is how Christ’s faith in him enabled him to keep the law and to thereby remain in the state of righteousness. But since Christ was doing it, Abraham lived the righteousness of God—not his own righteousness.

That is how Christ’s faith in us makes us righteous, enabling us, inspiring us, motivating us and encouraging us to keep the righteous requirements of the law—by allowing Jesus Christ to do it for and through us. We become righteous and we are able to stay righteous, IF we allow Christ to let His love in us flow out of us, toward God and toward others, thereby fulfilling God’s law of love.

If we do this, then the mystery of righteousness is being fulfilled in us.

# Part 4

## The Mystery of Paul's Letter to the Galatians

Paul's letter to the Galatians has been quoted over the centuries for proof that the Ten Commandments are no longer in effect. As we will show in this verse-by-verse Bible study, nothing could be further from the truth.

The exact date when the letter was written is somewhat unclear, though it could have been penned as early as 52 or 53 A.D., or perhaps around 58 A.D.

As we will explain, the purpose of Paul's letter is to show, among other issues, how we can obtain justification. The purpose was not to show that the Ten Commandments were abolished. Rather, Paul was determined to prove that we cannot earn justification or salvation through our works.

Let us study together the entire letter to *understand* what Paul is saying.



# Galatians, Chapter 1

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We read Paul's words in Galatians 1:1–5, as follows:

“(Verse 1) Paul, an apostle, (not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead;) (Verse 2) And all the brethren which are with me, unto the churches of Galatia: (Verse 3) Grace be to you and peace from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ, (Verse 4) Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father: (Verse 5) To whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.”

We see that at the very beginning, Paul identifies himself as an apostle. He was made an apostle by Jesus Christ—not by man—but this is not to say that God did not use men to ordain him to the office and rank of apostle (see Acts 13:1–3; 14:4, 14; 1 Timothy 2:7). Christ established His Church, and ministerial ranks within the Church, for the purpose of teaching and preaching the truth, ordaining others, baptizing new converts, laying hands on them, anointing the sick, along with many other responsibilities.

In verse 3, Paul emphasizes the role of God the Father. As Christ said, we are to pray to the Father, for His is the glory forever. The Father is “greater” than Christ (John 14:28), and Christ came not to do His own will, but the will of God the Father.

In verse 4 Paul shows that Christ, in accordance with the will of the Father, is willing to deliver us from this evil world or age—this present evil civilization or society. There are three worlds or ages mentioned in Scripture: the world which once existed but was destroyed in the flood (2 Peter 3:5–6); this present evil world; and the world to come (Hebrews 2:5; Ephesians 1:20–21).

And, Paul introduces his overall theme at the very beginning of his letter. In verse 3, he mentions GRACE—which is God's unmerited

pardon for us. It is because of GRACE that we can obtain forgiveness; be delivered from the present evil world; and inherit salvation and eternal life in the Kingdom of God.

Continuing with Galatians 1:6–7:

“(Verse 6) I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: (Verse 7) Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ.”

Paul is addressing here, not necessarily the gospel about Christ, but the gospel OF Christ—that is, Christ’s gospel; the gospel, which He brought and preached.

He went on to explain, in Galatians 1:8 and 9:

“(Verse 8) But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. (Verse 9) As we said before, so say I now again, if any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.”

Paul insists that the gospel that He preached was the very same gospel that Jesus Christ brought and preached. What was the gospel that Jesus Christ preached?

Clearly, Christ preached the gospel of the Kingdom of God (compare Mark 1:1, 14–15; Matthew 9:35; Luke 4:43; 8:1; 9:11; Acts 1:3).

It was the same gospel that Paul preached (compare Acts 14:21–22; 19:8; 20:25; 28:23, 30–31).

It was also the same gospel that the other apostles and elders and deacons preached (see Luke 9:2; compare also Luke 9:60; Acts 8:12).

Finally, it is that same gospel that is to be preached to the world just prior to Christ’s return (compare Matthew 24:14).

Paul goes on to say in Galatians 1:10:

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

Paul addresses the important fact that we cannot be men pleasers

and God pleasers at the same time, when there is a conflict.

Continuing in Galatians 1:11:

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

That is, the gospel of the Kingdom of God is not invented by man. It is a message from God the Father that has to be revealed. In Paul’s case, Christ taught him directly, as is stated in verse 12—apparently, while he lived in Arabia (see below, in verse 17).

Paul states in Galatians 1:12–14:

“(Verse 12) For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ. (Verse 13) For ye have heard of my conversation [conduct] in time past in the Jews’ religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and wasted [tried to destroy] it: (Verse 14) And profited in the Jews’ religion above many my equals in mine own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers.”

The term, “Jews’ religion” is rendered as “Judaism” in the *New King James Bible*. This term is only used twice in the Bible—and both times in the book of Galatians. Paul identifies it with the “traditions of my fathers.” This terminology is used in Matthew 15:1–9 and in Mark 7:1–13.

Paul, as a Pharisee, had thought that he could earn justification and righteousness by keeping the traditions of the fathers; that is, the “Jews’ religion” or Judaism. This term does not refer to Old Testament laws, but to traditions, invented by the Pharisees, such as ritual washings and other man-made regulations.

We present here a few examples of the regulations that the Pharisees had come up with regarding Sabbath keeping, which show what a burden they were on the people. For instance, it was prohibited to carry any food which weighed as much as a dried fig. Only the weight of half a dried fig or an olive was allowed (Talmud: Tractate Shabbath, Folios 28a, 70b, 71a). It was also prohibited to carry a piece of paper, or more than one swallow of milk, or enough oil to anoint a small part of the body (Shabbath, 78a, 76b). If a fire broke out on the Sabbath

in a person's home, he could only carry out the necessary food for the Sabbath and only "necessary" clothes (Shabbath 120a).

Surprisingly perhaps, Orthodox Judaism today still imposes similar restrictive and burdensome Sabbath regulations. Notice the following article from ABC News, which reported on October 26, 2009:

"Rabbinical ruling causes havoc as Orthodox Jews debate fate of Sabbath elevators... The Jewish day of rest has become a bit more labor-intensive for Yosef Ball. The Orthodox Jew and his wife are no longer using elevators custom-built for the Jewish Sabbath, ever since a rabbinical ruling last month outlawed them. Instead, they have been hiking up seven flights of stairs to get home each Saturday, lugging with them their five young children and a double stroller...

"Jewish law, or halacha, forbids the use of electrical items on the Sabbath. But for decades rabbis have allowed special elevators that automatically stop at every floor without the riders pushing any buttons, permitting Orthodox Jews to ride them and live in high-rise buildings. The ruling last month by one of Israel's leading rabbis, calling the elevators a no-go, has reignited a vigorous debate over the lifts, forcing Orthodox Jews living on top floors to decide if they're up for the steep hike home from synagogue on Saturdays.

"The Orthodox community has long been divided over the elevators. Opponents say that while the riders push no button, the weight of the passengers still increases the amount of electricity required to power the lift, thus violating Jewish law...

"The ruling, decreed last month, is the latest in a series by Israeli rabbis on the minutiae of applying Jewish law to daily life. Top rabbis can count tens of thousands of followers who abide by their rulings. Rabbi Yosef Shalom Elyashiv, the revered 99-year-old scholar who signed the elevator ruling, has been behind other controversial decisions before. In September, he proclaimed Jews could not wear Crocs shoes on Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, because they were deemed too comfortable for the somber fasting holiday...

"The elevators are just one of several electric devices that rabbis have found loopholes for, allowing their use. Religious families can use timers for their lights and special hot plates to warm food as long as those hot plates were not switched on or off during the Sabbath."

No wonder that Jesus chastised the religious rabbinical leadership



of His time for having made the Sabbath a burden through their pharisaical rulings. What would He say today? Obviously, He would not approve of such modern twisted unbiblical Sabbath decrees either.

Paul makes clear that following these kinds of rules can never impress God. In fact, in zealously obeying and following these kinds of rules, Paul was motivated to persecute the true church of God (verse 13).

He continues in Galatians 1:15:

“(Verse 15) But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother’s womb, and called *me* by his grace”

Paul had been known by God since or before his birth. The same is true for Jeremiah and David. The same is true for true Christians today. God says that all those who are called in this day and age were predestined before their birth to be called (compare Romans 8:28–30). This does not mean that they are automatically saved. They are only *called* for salvation—their opportunity is today—but they are still to overcome and qualify for the gift of eternal life.

Paul knows that God called him by His grace—by His unmerited pardon. Paul did not DESERVE to be called. Nobody *deserves* to be called. God calls according to His plan—and when someone is not called by God, he cannot come to Christ (compare John 6:44, 65).

Continuing in Galatians 1:16:

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

Paul understands that God called him to reveal His Son IN Paul; that is, Christ would live IN Paul and guide and direct him. How would He live in Paul? Through the power of the Holy Spirit of God, as we read in Acts 9:17–18.

And with the power of Christ’s Spirit in him, Paul preached mightily the gospel of the Kingdom of God to the Gentiles (compare Acts 20:22–25 ; 26:15–18).

Paul goes on to say in Galatians 1:17–24:

“... (Verse 17) Neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me; but I went into Arabia, and returned again unto Damascus. (Verse 18) Then after three years I went

up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and abode with him fifteen days. (Verse 19) But other of the apostles saw I none, save James the Lord's brother. (Verse 20) Now the things which I write unto you, behold, before God, I lie not. (Verse 21) Afterwards I came into the regions of Syria and Cilicia; (Verse 22) And was unknown by face unto the churches of Judea which were in Christ: (Verse 23) But they had heard only, That he which persecuted us in times past now preacheth the faith which once he destroyed. (Verse 24) And they glorified God in me."

It appears that Paul was instructed personally by Jesus Christ, when dwelling in Arabia (verse 17). In verse 19, Paul identifies James, the brother or half-brother of Jesus Christ, and the author of "the letter of James," as an "apostle." He then relates that Christians glorified God who is living in Paul, for preaching "the faith."

"Preaching the faith" includes the message that we must believe or have faith in the gospel. And the gospel of the Kingdom of God includes, of course, the message that we must have faith in God and His power, because it is impossible to please God without faith.

## Galatians, Chapter 2

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Paul continues his narrative in Galatians 2:1–2:

“(Verse 1) Then fourteen years after I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and took Titus with me also. (Verse 2) And I went up by revelation, and communicated unto them that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but privately to them which were of reputation, lest by any means I should run, or had run, in vain.”

After he had seen Peter and James, and after he had visited the regions of Syria and Cilicia, Paul was inspired to return to Jerusalem, together with Barnabas and Titus, to communicate with the apostles regarding his preaching. Paul did not regard himself as having an understanding of everything. He knew that the Christian way of life requires *growing* in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3:18), so he conferred with the other apostles to make sure that he understood and preached the truth of the gospel correctly—and as we saw, there is only ONE gospel.

Continuing in Galatians 2:3–5:

“(Verse 3) But neither Titus, who was with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised: (Verse 4) And that because of false brethren unawares brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage: (Verse 5) To whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might continue with you.”

Paul begins here to introduce the issue of physical circumcision. That issue had been decided and settled during the ministerial conference in Jerusalem, as reported in Acts 15. It was understood and decreed that a Gentile did not need to be circumcised to become a baptized member of the Church of God.

But some Jews, claiming to be Christians but who were instead “false brethren” (verse 4), continued to insist that circumcision was still necessary. Apparently, they also taught that other ritual temporary laws contained in the Book of Moses had to be kept as well, and it seems they also taught that the Jews’ religion or Judaism—the tradition of the fathers—had to be upheld.

Paul says in verse 4 that they came to spy out the **liberty in Christ**. He refers to the liberty from sin; the liberty or freedom from the curse or the penalty for breaking the law, which is death; real freedom which Jesus promised all of us when He said: “When the Son of Man makes you free, you are free indeed” (compare John 8:31–36). But as Peter points out, in 1 Peter 2:16, our freedom cannot be used as justification for sinful conduct. We are freed from the penalty of the law, not from the need to obey the law.

Paul insists, in verse 4, that false brethren had come in and taught wrong doctrines to bring true members into *bondage*. Peter warned in 2 Peter 2:18–19, that while those false brethren were promising “liberty,” they were slaves of corruption and in *bondage to sin*.

Having received God’s true liberty and walking in liberty does not mean ignoring or transgressing the law of God. Quite to the contrary! Psalm 119:45 says: “For I will walk at liberty, For I seek Your precepts” (*New King James Bible*).

Paul says that these false brethren were determined to bring others into “bondage.” That Greek word is also used in 2 Corinthians 11:20. It means, “to enslave thoroughly.”

The context of the use of the word “bondage” is the falsely alleged, continued need for physical circumcision. What Paul wants to convey in this context is the following idea:

If we think we have to be circumcised and have to fulfill certain temporary Old Testament rituals and have to follow Judaism and the traditions of men in order to obtain justification and righteousness, then Christ died in vain for us. His sacrifice did not do us any good and we are still in our sins—still in bondage to sin—not really free from the penalty of sin, which is death.

Peter said in Acts 15 not to place a yoke on Gentiles and not to trouble them by insisting that they must be circumcised and must keep all of the temporary rituals in the law of Moses. He pointed out

that the Gentiles were receiving repentance (Acts 11:18) and salvation from God through grace—just as the converted Jews had obtained repentance through God’s grace—and grace is not of works.

Continuing in Galatians 2:6–14:

“(Verse 6) But of these who seemed to be somewhat, (whatsoever they were, it maketh no matter to me: God accepteth no man’s person:) for they who seemed to be somewhat in conference added nothing to me: (Verse 7) But contrariwise, when they saw that the gospel of [better: for, compare *New King James Bible*] the uncircumcision was committed unto me, as the gospel of [for] the circumcision was unto Peter; (Verse 8) (For he that wrought effectually in Peter to the apostleship of [better: to, compare *New King James Bible*] the circumcision, the same was mighty in me toward the Gentiles:) (Verse 9) And when James, Cephas [Aramaic for Peter], and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship; that we should go unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision. (Verse 10) Only they would that we should remember the poor; the same which I also was forward [eager] to do.

“(Verse 11) But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed. (Verse 12) For before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles: but when they were come, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision. (Verse 13) And the other Jews dissembled [played the hypocrite] likewise with him; insomuch that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation [hypocrisy]. (Verse 14) But when I saw that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel, I said unto Peter before them all, If thou, being a Jew, livest after the manner of Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews?”

The truth of the gospel requires no separation between Jews and

Greeks. All are to be ONE in Christ. God is not a respecter of persons, compare Acts 10:34–35; Romans 2:11; 1 Peter 1:17.

But Peter set the wrong example. As it is stated in verse 12, he still feared those who were of the circumcision. The understanding prior to the conference in Acts 15 had been that a Jew was not to eat with uncircumcised Gentiles (compare Acts 10:28; 11:2–3). But God had revealed to Peter that that understanding was wrong and that it had no place in the Church of God.

What does Paul mean, in verse 14, that Peter was compelling Gentiles to live as Jews?

Peter was “compelling them” by first sitting and eating with Gentiles—thereby living after the manner of Gentiles—but then separating from the Gentiles when Jews came, as IF there still WAS a separation and as if there still WAS a need for Gentiles to be circumcised and to keep all the Jewish rituals. That is, he was inducing them or coercing them to think that they should perhaps adopt those customs and be circumcised.

Paul continues in Galatians 2:15:

“(Verse 15) We who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles...”

The law and the covenants [both the Old Covenant at Mount Sinai and the New Covenant] and the oracles [certain oral understanding that had been preserved; for example, the Hebrew calendar and the structure of the seven-day week] had been given to Israel and the Jews. The Jews had the law of the Ten Commandments and could therefore understand what sin was, which is defined as the transgression of the law (1 John 3:4). They should have lived by the law, which they did not.

Jesus had said to them: You have the law, but no one keeps the law (compare John 7:19). And Paul said that even though the Jews had the law, they dishonored God by transgressing the law (Romans 2:23).

Continuing in Galatians 2:16:

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

Paul makes very clear that no kind of law-keeping can justify us or make us righteous. The reason is, that just one sin we commit makes us unrighteous, and only the blood of Christ can justify us or make us righteous again, by forgiving that sin.

But note carefully that Paul speaks in verse 16 about the faith IN Christ and the faith OF Christ.

Not only our faith in Christ is required for our justification, but also the faith of Christ. It is Christ's faith that lives in us that makes us righteous.

It is of course true that we must have faith in Christ—including in His name, identity, role and function, His message, and His sacrifice (Acts 3:16; 20:21; 24:24; John 3:14–15; 5:24; 11:24; 12:46). Before we receive the Holy Spirit, which God gives us only after repentance, belief, proper adult baptism (Acts 2:38) and the laying on of hands through God's true ministers (Hebrews 6:2; Acts 8:14–20)—our faith IN Christ is the ONLY kind of faith we can have.

But even this is not a "dead" faith, but a "living" faith—it is that kind of faith that manifests itself through works of OBEEDIENCE (James 2:14, 17, 22, 26; Romans 1:5; 16:26; Acts 6:7). John 3:36 reads, correctly translated: "He who believes IN the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not OBEY the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him" (compare *Revised Standard Version*). In fact, without living, obedient faith in God the Father and Jesus Christ, we cannot even receive the Holy Spirit (Acts 5:32).

Once we receive God's Holy Spirit, and with it a "measure of faith" (Romans 12:3), Jesus Christ's living FAITH begins to reside in us. As we allow Christ to lead and direct our lives more and more, we also allow His faith in us to become more and more powerful. Not that Christ's perfect and boundless faith needs to grow or become more effective, but WE grow to the extent that we allow Him and His faith in us to motivate us and lead us.

Remember that Jesus could not do many miracles because of the lack of faith of the people (compare Mark 6:5–6; Matthew 13:58). It is through Christ's faith in us that we can become more and more obedient and perfect. But if we refuse to take advantage of and use Christ's faith in us, we will not grow toward perfection.

Returning to Galatians 2:16, please note that the *New King James*

*Bible*, as well as most other modern translations, including the *New International Version*, the *Revised Standard Version* and the *Living Bible*, incorrectly use the words “faith IN Christ,” rendering the passage as follows:

“... knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith IN Jesus Christ, even we have believed IN Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith IN Christ and not by the works of the law” (*New King James Bible*).

This false rendition is very damaging, as it totally clouds the biblical truth that we must have the faith OF Christ in us, and it is the faith OF Christ, which justifies us. It is the living Jesus Christ, dwelling in us through the Holy Spirit, who makes us perfect through HIS faith. OUR faith IN Christ, even though necessary, could NEVER accomplish this.

Therefore, the rendering of Galatians 2:16 in the *Authorized Version*, as quoted above, is accurate.

Additional passages also show that we must have the faith OF Christ, LIVING IN US, in order to inherit eternal life.

Note, for example, Galatians 3:22, which is rendered incorrectly in the *New King James Bible* and other modern translations, but which is translated correctly by the *Authorized Version*:

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

Ephesians 3:12 reads, in the *Authorized Version* (note that many modern translations, including the *New King James Bible*, again mis-translate this passage): “In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith OF HIM.” The Greek word for “HIM” is in the genitive (expressing possession or origin), so that the translation “OF HIM” is correct.

It is Christ, through His Spirit, who dwells in our hearts through faith (compare Ephesians 3:16–17). He is the author and finisher of faith (compare Hebrews 12:2; please note that the word “our” in “our faith” was added by the translator and is not in the original).

Another passage that has been mistranslated in most modern versions, including the *New King James Bible*, but that has been accurately rendered in the *Authorized Version*, is Philippians 3:9:

“And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which



is of the law, but that which is THROUGH THE FAITH OF CHRIST, the righteousness which is of God by faith.”

Notice too that the *New King James Bible* translates James 2:1 correctly, as follows: “My brethren, do not hold the faith OF our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with partiality.” This rendering is correct, as the Greek words for “Lord Jesus Christ” are in the genitive.

Notice also Revelation 2:13. Christ says to the church in Pergamos: “I know your works... And you hold fast to My name, and did not deny MY FAITH...”

Notice, too, Revelation 14:12: “Here is the patience of the saints; here are those who keep the commandments of God and the faith OF Jesus.”

In this instance, the *New King James Bible* and the *Revised Standard Version* render the passage correctly—while other modern renditions mistranslate this passage as well. Those, then, who KEEP God’s commandments AND the faith OF Jesus Christ, which dwells in them, will be saved. It is absolutely necessary that Christ’s faith dwells in us and motivates us to endure, persevere, and continue in our godly walk to inherit the Kingdom of God and eternal life.

The difference between **our faith in Christ** and Christ’s faith or **the faith of Christ in us** is one of degree. OUR faith is not free from doubt or fear, while CHRIST’S FAITH knows no doubt or fear. It is, therefore, important to let Christ’s faith in us guide and lead our life. Christ is making us perfect—if we let Him—and perfect love casts out fear (1 John 4:18).

In addition, Paul states in Galatians 2:16 that we cannot be justified by the works of the law. In this context, Paul is referring to physical labor or the hard works of rituals under the Mosaic law. He is not speaking here of the Ten Commandments, which are not physical, but spiritual (Romans 7:14). Those Old Testament rituals, such as washings, which were required three times a day, were a substitute for the Holy Spirit. They taught the Israelites the habit of obedience.

However, it is also true that we cannot *be justified* by our works or deeds of the law of the Ten Commandments.

Continuing in Galatians 2:17:

“(Verse 17) But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ,

we ourselves also are found sinners, is therefore Christ the minister of sin? God forbid.”

Sin is the transgression of the law. The fact that we still sin from time to time shows that Christ must justify us continuously.

Also, some say that in the Greek it reads: “If we WERE found sinners [that is, in the past, prior to our conversion], is Christ therefore a minister of sin?” In that case, Paul conveys the idea that Jesus justified us by forgiving us our past sins.

In either case, Christ does not become a minister of sin in that He forgave our past sins prior to conversion and that He forgives our present sins after conversion; rather, He justifies us by forgiving and taking away our sin.

Paul goes on to say in Galatians 2:18:

“(Verse 18) For if I build again the things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor.”

Paul is trying to convey the thought that when he again breaks the law, which he broke before, then he is again a transgressor, as sin is the transgression or the breaking of the law.

In addition, Paul is also emphasizing here that the church had understood that physical circumcision was no longer necessary, and that the wall of separation between Jews and Gentiles had been broken down. When Peter appeared to build up again that wall of separation, which had been destroyed, he became a transgressor—he sinned against his Gentile brother by causing him offense.

Continuing in Galatians 2:19:

“(Verse 19) For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God.”

The law of the Ten Commandments teaches us what sin is. Through the law comes the knowledge of what sin is (Romans 3:20). Through that knowledge of the law, we realize that we have broken it. We realize that we deserve death. But Christ came to die for us. In accepting His sacrifice, we no longer are under the power of the law to execute us.

A better translation of the original Greek in verse 19 is: “I died to the law” (compare *New King James Bible*); that is, Paul says that he

died to its PENALTY. The law had no more power or claim over him to execute him, as the penalty for law-breaking—DEATH—had been forgiven. Paul had been pardoned. Christ died for Paul so that Paul could have forgiveness of sin, and so that he could live for Christ and God the Father in newness of life.

Paul is explaining that he achieved or accomplished none of this on his own, but that it was granted to him through the grace of God—through the power and help of Jesus Christ.

Paul tells us in Romans 3:19 that those under the law; that is, under *its penalty*, are guilty. When we don't break the law, we are not under the law—we are not subject to its penalty—we are not guilty. The law tells us what sin is. The law is made for the sinner so that the sinner can cease sinning (compare 1 Timothy 1:8–16).

In 1 Corinthians 15:31, Paul says that he dies daily; that is, he dies daily to sin and his desires to sin, so that he can live in righteousness.

In Romans 6:1–2, Paul says again that we died to sin (again, sin is the transgression of the law) in order to live in righteousness. We are no longer under the law—under its penalty. We died to the law. We are now under grace, which is God's favor or unmerited pardon.

Paul then says in Galatians 2:20:

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

Paul says that he was crucified with Christ. He DIED in baptism. He was resurrected to live a new life in Christ. He now lives “by the faith OF Christ.” It is now Christ's faith that lives in him. And that new life is separate from the way of sin. We are dead to sin to live for righteousness. Compare Romans 6:3–14.

In regard to the phrase, “faith of the Son of God,” in Galatians 2:20, the original Greek here is a little bit more complicated. Literally translated, it says, according to “*Interlinear*”: “... yet I live, no longer I, but lives in me Christ; but which I now live in flesh, in faith I live, that of the Son of God.”

Some say that the rendering should be, “in faith I live, IN that of

the Son of God," adding the word "IN" to imply that we live through OUR faith IN the faith OF Christ. But the word "IN" is not in the original. It is more compelling, from the context and the structure of the sentence, to state that we live in faith WHICH IS the faith of the Son of God. Notice again the literal rendering, word for word: "in faith I live, THAT OF the Son of God."

Continuing in Galatians 2:21:

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

Righteousness does not come through the law. It comes through God's grace, in at least two ways: When we sin, God makes us righteous again or justifies us through the forgiveness of our sin upon repentance. Since forgiveness is by grace, righteousness does not come through the law.

Also, Christ IN us fulfills the righteous requirements of the law in us when we follow the lead of the Holy Spirit (compare Romans 8:3-4). And it is also by God's grace—not by the law—that Christ lives in us through the Holy Spirit. Therefore, righteousness does not come through the law, but by Christ living in us, as our merciful LIVING High Priest. He gives us the power to overcome sin and to remain righteous.

We are righteous as long as we keep the law. We become unrighteous when we break the law, and it is Christ's shed blood which justifies us or makes us righteous, when we repent of our sin and obtain forgiveness. Compare 1 John 1:6-10.

## Galatians, Chapter 3

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Having explained how we can—and cannot—obtain justification and righteousness, Paul continues the theme in Galatians 3:1–9:

“(Verse 1) O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you? (Verse 2) This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? (Verse 3) Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh? [i.e., by your own doing?] (Verse 4) Have ye suffered so many things in vain? if it be yet in vain.

“(Verse 5) He therefore that ministereth to you the Spirit, and worketh miracles among you, doeth he it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? (Verse 6) Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness. (Verse 7) Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham. (Verse 8) And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed. (Verse 9) So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham.”

Paul explains that faith is important for our justification and righteousness. But he is not speaking of dead faith—faith without works—but he is emphasizing living faith—faith, which is evidenced by works. It requires obedience to the truth (compare verse 1).

Paul explains that we do not receive the Holy Spirit by our works, but by faith in God the Father and in His Son Jesus Christ. We do not receive the Holy Spirit by the physical ritual works of the law, either. But true faith WILL RESULT in good works. God does not give the Holy Spirit to those who refuse to OBEY HIM (Acts 5:32).

In James 2:21, we read that Abraham was justified by works, and James 2:24 adds that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only. However, Paul says in Romans 4:2–3 that Abraham was not justified by works, but by faith.

Is there a contradiction?

No, but we must understand that Paul and James talk about two different things.

James condemns theoretical, esoteric, dead faith which is not accompanied and manifested by works or good deeds. He condemns that kind of faith which even the demons have (James 2:19). That dead faith which does not show good works will justify nobody (James 2:17–18, 20, 22).

Although James emphasizes deeds or works, he is really trying to show the difference between dead faith and living faith (verse 26). Only living faith (faith accompanied by works) can justify us. When James says that man is justified by works and not by faith only, he means to say that man is justified by living, practical, outflowing, obedient faith, and not by dead, useless, theoretical, loveless, disobedient faith.

To put it differently, James addresses people who think that their intellectual, theoretical faith in God and Jesus is enough, and that nothing further—no good works and no obedience to the law—needs to accompany their faith.

Paul, on the other hand, addresses people in Romans 4:2–3, and in Galatians 3:5–9, that had fallen into the other ditch—the opposite extreme. They believed that their good works would justify them and make them righteous; that they could obtain justification on their own, by how they lived—that they did not need God or faith in Christ’s sacrifice to obtain forgiveness and justification.

That Paul and James agree on the necessity of LIVING obedient faith for our justification has been clearly understood by *Rienecker, Commentary to the Bible*, stating:

“... the works through which faith becomes perfect and without which it is dead [according to James] are the same works for which we were created in Christ so that we should walk in them [according to Paul, compare Ephesians 2:10]. The one who refuses to grant necessary help to his neighbor [according to James] has also in Paul’s judgment denied the faith [see his statement in 1 Timothy 5:8].”

Paul continues in Galatians 3:10:

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

Paul conveys the thought that nobody kept all the physical works of the law, including all of its rituals, washings or sacrifices. In addition, nobody even kept all of God’s spiritual commandments of the Ten Commandments and its judgments and statutes. Therefore, everybody is under the curse or penalty of the law, which is the second death for spiritual sin or which might be physical death or other physical penalties for civil or criminal infractions.

But Paul is not saying here that the entire law is no longer binding on us. He is just talking about the *means of justification*.

Note the context of the passage that Paul quotes when he says: “Cursed is everyone that does not continue in all things written in the book of the law.” We find that passage in Deuteronomy 27:2–3, 8, 15–26.

When reading that passage, it is obvious that there is nothing wrong with those injunctions listed therein. They are clearly still binding on Christians today.

In verse 10 of Galatians 3, Paul also refers to the “book of the law.” That book included the spiritual timeless law of the Ten Commandments, the statutes and judgments, but also the temporary passing law of the sacrificial system and the rituals (as substitutes for Christ’s sacrifice and for the Holy Spirit). That book of the law is also mentioned in Deuteronomy 31:24–26.

The book of the law included permanent and temporary laws. Old Testament Israel had to keep them all. But we are no longer obligated today to keep the temporary laws, but we are still very much obligated to keep the spiritual laws.

Continuing in Galatians 3:11:

“(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.”

Paul explains that Christ will justify us when we have faith that He will, and we will then live by faith; that is, by HIS faith living in us.

Continuing in Galatians 3:12:

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

However, just one act of disobedience will incur the death penalty, and the man who strictly lives in the law, without faith in God’s forgiveness for his repented sins, will cease “living”—he will die with that unrepented sin.

Continuing in Galatians 3:13:

“(Verse 13) Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree:”

The curse of the law is the penalty for breaking or violating the law. Christ redeemed us from the curse or penalty of the law—not the law—as He became a curse for us, in that He took our sins upon Himself and paid the penalty for our sins on our behalf. He thereby redeemed us or set us free from the penalty of death, which we brought upon ourselves by sinning—breaking the law.

Paul continues in Galatians 3:14–19:

“(Verse 14) That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith. (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. (Verse 16) Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ.

“(Verse 17) And this I say, that the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect. (Verse 18) For if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise: but God gave it to Abraham by promise. (Verse 19) Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed



should come to whom the promise was made; and it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator.”

This passage has confused quite a few commentators and scholars. What law does Paul refer to here in verse 17, which was “430 years after” the covenant was made? The covenant is the one of promise to Abraham (Genesis 17:1–2), so the approximate time frame for this law “430 years after” the covenant, refers to the time just after Israel’s exodus from Egypt (Exodus 12:40). But what law does Paul have in mind?

Paul is not talking about the law of the Ten Commandments, which was in existence since Adam and Eve.

The Bible consistently teaches that people transgressed the Ten Commandments long before the “law” mentioned in Galatians 3 came into existence.

We read in 1 Timothy 2:14 that “Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression.” Eve sinned when she violated God’s law. This means that God’s law of the Ten Commandments was already in effect long before Abraham or Moses, because Paul tells us in Romans 4:15, “...where there is no law there is no transgression.” And when we sin, we are “convicted by the law as transgressors” (James 2:9).

Adam and Eve transgressed the law of the *Ten Commandments* when they took of the forbidden fruit. They sinned by *disobeying God*, by *stealing* from Him and by *lying* to Him about it. They also committed *idolatry* by following Satan, *desiring* to have something that was not theirs. Later, Cain sinned by *murdering* his brother Abel (Genesis 4:7–8). The men of Sodom were “sinful” against God (Genesis 13:13) in violating His commandments and principles pertaining to *marriage* (Genesis 18:20).

God prevented two pagan rulers, both referred to as Abimelech, from sinning against Him by having an *adulterous relationship* with Abraham’s and Isaac’s wives (Genesis 20:6; Genesis 26:10). Later, Joseph refused to *commit adultery* with Potiphar’s wife, knowing that this would be a sin (Genesis 39:7–9). Jacob sinned by *deceiving, or lying to*, his father Isaac (Genesis 27:35). Jacob knew that *stealing* was sinful (Genesis 30:33; 31:39). Joseph later explained that kidnapping a person was

*stealing* and therefore sinful (Genesis 40:15). His brothers understood, too, that *stealing* was sinful (Genesis 50:17; Genesis 44:8).

*Fornication* was understood to be a sinful act long before God spoke the Ten Commandments to Israel (Genesis 34:7, 31; 38:24). *Murder* also was declared to be sinful (compare also Genesis 49:6–7), and the midwives refused to kill the Israelite baby boys because they feared God (Exodus 1:16–17).

Prior to arriving at Mount Sinai, God clearly identified the observance of the seventh-day *Sabbath* as a law that had to be obeyed (Exodus 16:4–5, 22–30). After all, it had been in effect since Adam and Eve were created (Genesis 2:2–3).

We see, then, that the Ten Commandments were in force and effect since the creation of man. In breaking them, man sinned and fell into transgression. And because of such transgression, another law was later added, as we read in Galatians 3:19.

This (temporary) law was ADDED because of transgression—but where there is no law, there is no transgression. The law of the Ten Commandments was transgressed, and because of that, another law—that of the sacrificial system and the washings and rituals—was added, *AFTER* the Israelites had transgressed against God by building a golden calf.

Paul tells us the same in Romans 5:13–14, which reads in *the New King James Bible*: “For until the law sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed when there is no law. Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those who had not sinned according to the likeness of the transgression of Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come.”

Paul tells us clearly that there was already sin in the world BEFORE “the law” came. Sin, we know, is the transgression of the LAW. Therefore, there was a law in effect that was broken *before* this additional “law” came. So, the law that came or was added must have been different from the law that was already broken. In fact, this particular law [the law of sacrifices] was added *because* another law [the Ten Commandments] had been transgressed.

We also read, in Romans 5:14, about the *transgression of Adam*. Adam sinned—sin being the transgression of the law. Others sinned too—although perhaps not to the same degree that Adam sinned—because we

read in Romans 5:14 that death reigned from Adam to Moses. Romans 6:23 tells us *why* death reigned: “For the wages of sin is death.” When we sin or transgress God’s law, we have to pay a penalty—death. This is confirmed by the apostle James in James 1:15: “...sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.”

Please also note that Paul says in Galatians 3:19 that the law which was added because of transgression was ordained by angels. The Ten Commandments were not ordained by angels: When God spoke the Ten Commandments from Mount Sinai, He spoke them directly, not through angels. But apparently, the sacrificial system and washings were given to Moses through angels.

Continuing in Galatians 3:20:

“(Verse 20) Now a mediator is not a mediator of one, but God is one.”

While the law of the sacrifices and other rituals was apparently given to the mediator Moses through angels, the law of the Ten Commandments was given directly by God. It was God who taught the Ten Commandments directly to Adam and Eve before they sinned, and it was God who uttered the Ten Commandments directly to Moses and the people of Israel. Paul makes the point that God did it Himself—not through the help of mediators.

Continuing in Galatians 3:21:

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

No law—whether it is a spiritual or a temporary law—can GIVE life. The purpose of the law—any law—is to define for us (spiritual) sin or physical transgressions or infractions.

Continuing in Galatians 3:22–23:

“(Verse 22) But the Scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe. (Verse 23) But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed.”

Paul says that the Jews were kept under the law. A better rendering can be found in the *New King James Bible* which says that we—the Jews—were “kept under guard by the law.” That is, ancient Israel and Judah were kept under guard by the ritual law of physical works, washings, and sacrifices.

Continuing in Galatians 3:24–25:

“(Verse 24) Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster [or tutor] to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. (Verse 25) But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster.”

Paul is saying that we are no longer under the tutor or that we are no longer kept under guard by the law of sacrifices and washings.

Paul explains in Hebrews 10:1–10 that the Old Testament sacrifices were given to bring sin to *remembrance* (verse 3)—not to forgive sin. But when faith in Christ’s sacrifice came, which brings forgiveness, sacrifices and washings were no longer necessary (compare Hebrews 9:9–10).

In addition, Paul makes the point that we must be justified by faith. Our law-keeping—regardless of whether it is the keeping of the sacrificial system or the keeping of the Ten Commandments—can’t justify us. Only faith in Christ’s sacrifice and God’s forgiveness for our sins—as well as Christ’s faith in us—justify us.

Paul goes on to say in Galatians 3:26–28:

“(Verse 26) For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. (Verse 27) For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. (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.”

Paul emphasizes again this all-important point: We have all been baptized into Christ and have put on Christ (compare Romans 6:1–6). There is no more separation between Jew and Greek—physical circumcision is not necessary for Gentiles to be accepted by God.

Paul concludes the chapter as follows, in Galatians 3:29:

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

Christ is Abraham’s Seed. If we are Christ’s, then we, too, are

Abraham's seed, through Christ. And as Abraham's seed, we are heirs together with Abraham. As James 2:5 explains, we are heirs of eternal life in the Kingdom of God when we love God. And the love of God is defined as keeping His commandments (1 John 5:3).

To be Abraham's seed and heirs, we also must have Abraham's faith—which was actually the faith OF Christ dwelling IN Abraham.

Obviously, we have not entered into our inheritance yet. We are heirs, but not inheritors. Still, we are to be living in such a way that we are no longer subject to this evil world, as Paul continues to point out in the subsequent chapters in his letter to the Galatians.



# Galatians, Chapter 4

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Paul states in Galatians 4:1-3:

“(Verse 1) Now I say, That the heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all; (Verse 2) But is under tutors and governors until the time appointed of the father. (Verse 3) Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world:...”

Some commentaries interpret this passage to mean that Paul is attacking the Ten Commandments, saying that they kept us in bondage. However, this is clearly not what Paul is talking about. He is not talking about any Old Testament laws here, but that we all were in bondage “under the elements” or “rudiments” of the “WORLD”—that present evil world that he had referred to in the first chapter of Galatians.

He makes similar statements in Colossians 2:8, 20 and also in Galatians 4:9, again talking about the elements or rudiments of the world, which he describes as “philosophy” and “empty deceit,” and the “tradition of men.”

Paul is talking about the way we lived before we were converted—following the rules, regulations, customs, traditions and philosophies of the world, which is presently ruled by Satan the devil.

Continuing in Galatians 4:4-5:

“(Verse 4) But when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, (Verse 5) To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.”

Christ had to be *made* UNDER the law—subject to its penalty—as Christ never sinned. He never was under the law—its penalty—due to His conduct; rather, He had to be placed or made under the law, so that He could pay the penalty of sin for us. We came under the law—its penalty—through our conduct, so Christ had to be MADE UNDER the

law, in order to redeem us who were under the law—its penalty.

And why?

To give us SONSHIP! The *Authorized Version* translates verse 5, erroneously, as “adoption” (compare, too, Romans 8:15), but the correct rendering is “sonship.” God is not only “adopting” us “as sons,” by granting us certain privileges and possessions, but He is reproducing Himself—His very divine nature (2 Peter 1:4)—in us. When we receive His Holy Spirit, we are BEGOTTEN sons and daughters of God, and when we are changed into spirit at the time of Christ’s return, we are then BORN AGAIN children of God—not just adopted children, but children with the very same NATURE and MIND of God (Philippians 2:5).

Continuing in Galatians 4:6–8:

“(Verse 6) And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. (Verse 7) Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ. (Verse 8) Howbeit then, when ye knew not God, ye did service unto them which by nature are no gods.”

Paul is not talking here about Jews, but he is discussing Gentiles who served idols, which by nature are not gods. It is God’s nature to BE God. It will be our nature—as His very children—to BECOME God. But those idols are not and will never be “gods,” by nature. People might declare them to be gods, and worship them as such, but they are not gods by nature.

Paul continues in Galatians 4:9–10:

“(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? (Verse 10) Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years.”

Paul is not talking here about Old Testament laws. The Galatians never kept these. But Paul said in verse 9 that they wanted to return AGAIN to the weak and beggarly elements of the WORLD. He says in verse 9 that they desired again to be in bondage to them. What he means is, they desired again to serve those beggarly elements or



rudiments—but in doing so, it would bring them again into bondage to them (compare Romans 6:16).

Paul then states in verse 10 that they returned to their former practice of observing days, months, times and years. These Gentiles had come to a knowledge of the true God upon conversion, but after that initial understanding, they returned to those “beggarly elements” (compare Galatians 4:9) that they had originally worshipped, by observing again “days and months and seasons and years” (verse 10). This practice cannot refer to God’s Sabbath and Holy Days, as those had not even been known, let alone observed, by the Gentiles before their conversion. Rather, Paul is talking here about pagan festivals and practices, which are known today as, or associated with, such observances as Christmas, Easter or Halloween.

In addition, Paul would not be addressing God’s Sabbath and Holy Days here, as those days do not come from “beggarly elements,” but were, in fact, initiated by GOD. Paul would NEVER have said that the Sabbath or the Holy Days were derived from “beggarly elements.”

Some claim that the converted Gentiles in Galatia had begun to keep the Sabbath and the Holy Days only because *Jews* allegedly induced them to do so, and that Paul was now opposing this practice. This claim is false, however, because we read in verse 9 that the Galatians turned AGAIN to the weak and beggarly elements. *The Galatians had RETURNED to what they had done BEFORE they became Christians.* Jewish influence on them AFTER their conversion is clearly NOT what Paul is addressing here.

Some commentators point out that the “observation” that Paul is addressing here, is done in a superstitious way, which just does not fit when talking about God’s Sabbath and the Holy Days. It does, however, fit in connection with astrology and Gnostic speculations. Looking at it from that point of view, we can see that Paul was talking about an observation of times and seasons that were controlled by heavenly bodies and spirits.

When speaking of observation of times, Paul was aware of the following passages:

In Leviticus 19:26, we read: “Ye shall not eat anything with the blood: neither shall ye use enchantment, nor observe times.” We find the same prohibition in Deuteronomy 18:10: “There shall not be found among

you any one that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, or that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch." (Compare, too, Deuteronomy 18:14).

Literally, it means, "to observe the clouds." The study of the appearance and motion of the clouds was a common way of foretelling good or bad fortune.

This superstitious observation of times was often accompanied by lighting candles and decorating the doors with garlic. Its connection was clearly demonic. Note 2 Chronicles 33:6: "[Manasseh] caused his children to pass through the fire in the valley of the son of Hinnom; also he observed times, and used *enchantments*, and used *witchcraft*, and dealt with a *familiar spirit* [a demon], and with *wizards*: he wrought much evil in the sight of the Lord, to provoke Him to anger."

Paul also rebuked the Galatians for observing days. The Greeks, for example, did observe days to worship their dead. On those days, no work was to be done. Actually, both the Greek and the Roman calendars designated one-third of all the days as days of misfortune. On those days, one could not perform any political or legal activities, and the people were supposed to abstain from any private pleasures. One was not to engage in war on those days, or marry, or travel.

Paul also addressed the superstitious practice of observing months. The pagan world had set aside certain months for the worship of their gods. Pagan festivals were kept during the months of April and October to honor the goddess Apolla, while the highest Greek god, Zeus, was worshipped during the months of February and June. The month of April was also set aside for the worship of the god Artemis. The wine god, Baccus or Bacchus, was honored during the month of January.

Finally, Paul rebuked the Galatians for the observance of years. Indeed, certain years had been set aside for worship activities by the Greeks and the Romans. For example, the Olympic Games were celebrated at that time in certain yearly intervals, but they were accompanied with pagan worship and rites.

Paul continues in Galatians 4:11-12:

"(Verse 11) I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labor in vain. (Verse 12) Brethren, I beseech you, be as I am; for I am as ye *are*: ye have not injured me at all."

What does Paul mean in verse 12 with, “As I am”? Well, Paul did not worship idols and did not observe pagan practices. He says, according to the *Authorized Version’s* rendition: “I am as ye *are*”; but the word “*are*” was supplied by the translator, so the phrase would be better rendered as: “I am as ye *should be*”; that is, you should stay away from observing pagan practices, as I am not observing them either.

When Paul says, “Ye have not injured me at all,” he refers to the fact that when he came to them to preach the gospel, they did not reject him or did not inflict any harm on him. Why would Paul have even mentioned that possibility? The very next verse provides the answer—he is referring to his appearance.

He states in Galatians 4:13:

“(Verse 13) Ye know how through infirmity of the flesh I preached the gospel unto you at the first.”

Notice how the commentary of *Jamieson, Fausset and Brown* explains this passage:

“... how through infirmity—rather, as *Greek*, “Ye know that *because of* an infirmity of *my* flesh I preached,” ... He implies that bodily sickness, having detained him among them, contrary to his original intentions, was the occasion of his preaching the Gospel to them.”

*Adam Clarke’s Commentary on the Bible* states:

“The apostle seems to say that he was much afflicted in body when he first preached the Gospel to them...”

That Paul suffered indeed from an infirmity seems to be shown in passages such as 2 Corinthians 10:10; 2 Corinthians 12:7, and Galatians 6:11.

*Jamieson, Fausset and Brown* comment on Galatians 6:11: “Owing to his weakness of eyes (Gal. 4:15) he wrote in large letters. So Jerome.”

Continuing in Galatians 4:14:

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

*The Jamieson, Fausset and Brown Commentary* states:

“... my temptation—The oldest manuscripts read, ‘your temptation.’”

My infirmity, which was, or might have been, a 'temptation,' or *trial, to you*, ye despised not, that is, ye were not tempted by it to despise me and my message."

Paul continues to state in Galatians 4:15-17:

"(Verse 15) Where is then the blessedness ye spake of? for I bear you record, that, if it had been possible, ye would have plucked out your own eyes, and have given them to me. (Verse 16) Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth? (Verse 17) They zealously affect you, but not well; yea, they would exclude you, that ye might affect them."

*Albert Barnes' Notes on the Bible* says:

"They zealously affect you—the false teachers made a show of zeal toward the Galatians, or professed affection for them in order to gain them as their followers. They were full of ardor, and professed an extraordinary concern for their welfare—as people always do who are demagogues, or who seek to gain proselytes..."

"Yea, they would exclude you—Margin, 'Us.' ... The word 'exclude' here probably means, that they endeavored to exclude the Galatians from the love and affection of Paul. They would shut them out from that, in order that they might secure them for their own purposes.

"If the reading in the margin, however, should be retained, the sense would be clearer. They wish to exclude us, that is, me, the apostle, in order that they may have you wholly to themselves. If they can once get rid of your attachment to me, then they will have no difficulty in securing you for themselves.' ...

"The main idea is clear: Paul stood in the way of their designs. The Galatians were truly attached to him, and it was necessary, in order to accomplish their ends, to withdraw their affections from him. When false teachers have designs on a people, they begin by alienating their confidence and affections from their pastors and teachers. They can hope for no success until this is done; and hence, the efforts... to undermine the confidence of a people in the ministry, and when this is done there is little difficulty in drawing them over to their own purposes.

"That ye might affect them—Their first work is to manifest special interest for your welfare; their second, to alienate you from him who

had first preached the gospel to you; their object, not your salvation, or your real good, but to secure your zealous love for themselves."

The commentary of *Jamieson, Fausset and Brown* adds the following regarding the phrase, "they would exclude you": "'They wish to shut you out' from the kingdom of God (that is, they wish to persuade you that as uncircumcised Gentiles, you are shut out from it), 'that ye may zealously court them,' that is, become circumcised, as zealous followers of themselves."

Continuing in Galatians 4:18–21:

"(Verse 18) But *it is* good to be zealously affected always in a good *thing*, and not only when I am present with you. (Verse 19) My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you, (Verse 20) I desire to be present with you now, and to change my voice; for I stand in doubt of you. (Verse 21) Tell me, ye that desire to be under the law, do ye not hear the law?"

Paul is not saying here that they desired to be under the law in the sense that they wanted to be under the penalty of the law. They did not desire to die because of their sins. But they seemed to desire to live again their old way of life (which brings forth death)—or they desired to follow wrong teachers believing that they must be circumcised in order to be saved.

But as we saw, circumcision does not justify us—nor do even the Ten Commandments. In violating just one of the Ten Commandments, we have sinned and incurred the death penalty. What saves us is Christ's sacrifice, by which God forgives us our sins and removes the penalty—but we can't keep on sinning so that grace may abound.

To put it differently, if we desire to break God's law of the Ten Commandments, we are again under the law; that is, under or subject to its penalty. Also, if we desire to obtain justification apart from Christ, we are still under or subject to the penalty of the law, as we can only become justified through Christ.

Furthermore, Paul is using the word "law" in different ways in verse 21. To be "under the law" means, under its penalty; when he then says, "hear the law," he means the five books of Moses.

Continuing in Galatians 4:22–24:

“(Verse 22) For it is written, that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondmaid, the other by a freewoman. (Verse 23) But he who was of the bondwoman was born after the flesh; but he of the freewoman was by promise. (Verse 24) Which things are an allegory: for these are the two covenants; the one from the mount Sinai, which engendereth to [brings forth] bondage, which is Hagar.”

Most commentaries will tell you that Paul is addressing here the Old and the New Covenant, and conclude that the Old Covenant with all its laws has been abolished. However, Paul is not speaking here about the Old Covenant. Rather, he is describing in **his allegory** (verse 24) two ways of life—a “covenant” with death and a “covenant” with life. When we are in Christ, we are no longer under the penalty of the law. We are no longer in “bondage” (verse 24) to death.

We read in Isaiah 28:15, 18 that carnal people made a covenant with death, thinking they could escape death even though they lived wrongly. But we can only escape death through our acceptance of Christ’s sacrifice.

Hagar’s son Ishmael was born according to the flesh. However, Sarah’s son Isaac was born according to promise, symbolizing, in **this allegory**, the gift of the Holy Spirit which would ultimately be in Isaac.

Paul could not have talked here about the Old Covenant, because at the time of Hagar, the Old Covenant under Moses was not even made.

Continuing in Galatians 4:25–26:

“(Verse 25) For this Hagar is mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children. (Verse 26) But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all.”

This passage shows too that Paul is not talking here about the Old Covenant. At the time of the Old Covenant, Jerusalem “which now is” was not part of it, nor was it even part of Israel’s possessions or territory.

When talking about “Jerusalem above”—the heavenly Jerusalem—Paul is referring to that city which God is building for His disciples, and which will descend to earth to become a dwelling place for the

Father and the Son and the born-again Spirit beings of the immortal God Family. This is the city with foundations for which Abraham, Isaac and Jacob waited (Hebrews 11:10). It signifies eternal life, as only immortal Spirit-born children of God will dwell in it.

“Jerusalem below” signifies death in Paul’s allegory, as at this point, no human made immortal lives there. The time of our immortality is still in the future. Those who live in the present city of Jerusalem are subject to death.

Continuing in Galatians 4:27:

“(Verse 27) For it is written, Rejoice, thou barren that bearest not; break forth and cry, thou that travailest not; for the desolate hath many more children than she which hath a husband.”

Paul shows that ultimately, all will be called to salvation, and most will qualify for the Kingdom of God and eternal life. Today, though, most are not called—hence the allegory of the heavenly Jerusalem being presently barren. But she will bring forth many children in the future—many more than a *physical* husband could produce. So, ultimately, life will triumph over death.

Continuing in Galatians 4:28–31:

“(Verse 28) Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise. (Verse 29) But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now. (Verse 30) Nevertheless what saith the Scripture? Cast out the bondwoman and her son: for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman. (Verse 31) So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman, but of the free.”

Paul is describing in **his allegory** our spiritual battle, which goes on in our mind. God’s Spirit in us wars against our flesh. Our flesh “persecutes” the Spirit of God and must therefore be cast out (compare James 4:4–5, 8; Romans 6:1–4; 8:5–9; and Colossians 2:11–13).

Paul also points out, in verse 31, that we are no longer children of the bondwoman—children of bondage to death—if we let Christ live in us. It is Christ who sets us free from sin and death.





## Galatians, Chapter 5

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In this chapter, Paul continues his allegory of the two covenants—the bondwoman and the freewoman—the way of death and the way of life.

He states in [Galatians 5:1](#):

“(Verse 1) Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.”

Paul is not talking in verse 1 about the Old Covenant or even the sign or covenant of circumcision (Acts 7:8), because the Galatians had never been part of the Old Covenant, nor were they part of the covenant of circumcision—so they could not AGAIN be entangled with the “yoke of bondage.”

Rather, Paul continues his theme of addressing two ways of life. He explains that we must walk by the Spirit, which sets us free, not by the flesh, which brings us into bondage.

To summarize Paul’s interesting points in **his allegory**: As we have to cast out the fleshly desires and our human nature, Abraham had to cast out the bondwoman and her son (Galatians 4:30). And why? Because the son of the bondwoman, who was born according to the flesh, persecuted the son of the freewoman, who was born according to the Spirit (verse 29). And Paul continues to allegorize by saying that this is also the case today (same verse).

How? It occurs when God’s Spirit in us wars with our flesh. Paul said that he did not do what he wanted to do, but that he gave in at times to his flesh, following its desires (Romans 7:13–25). As our flesh “persecutes” our Spirit-begotten minds, so we must cast out the flesh and its desires, including temptations which might originate with Satan or this world.

Paul had two ways of life in mind: He addressed those people who lived according to the flesh, while thinking that they could do so

without having to pay a penalty for their deeds—and those who lived according to the Spirit, having their eyes on the heavenly Jerusalem which would become their place of abode on a new earth when it would descend from heaven.

In his allegory, Paul compared Hagar and Ishmael with those who made a covenant with death. This would include all peoples who have not been called by God today to salvation, including, of course, the nation of Israel in the Old Testament. They all are or were “under death”—even though they might have hoped and believed that they were not, and that they were saved, as long as they lived in accordance with the dictates of their own hearts and conscience.

On the other hand, God is offering those whom He is calling in this day and age the opportunity to live a different way of life—they CAN live according to the Spirit of promise, but they must conquer their own flesh and “leave it behind” (compare Romans 6:1–4; 8:5–9; Colossians 2:11–13). As Abraham and Sarah, as well as Isaac, were called to salvation, so they had to separate themselves from everything, which stood in their way toward their salvation. This is also true for us today.

Beginning with the next verse, Paul returns to the false concept of physical circumcision as a requirement for our justification. He states in Galatians 5:2–4:

“(Verse 2) Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing. (Verse 3) For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law. (Verse 4) Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace.”

In these verses, Paul addresses those who were teaching the Galatians, that they must be circumcised to obtain justification and salvation. But Paul says in verse 2 that if the Galatians feel that they must be circumcised for their salvation, then Christ will profit them nothing and they have rejected grace (verse 4).

He then argues that if they think they must be circumcised as a necessary prerequisite for their justification, then they would be duty-bound to keep ALL of the law. They could never sin, as one sin would make them unjust or unrighteous. But in trying to do this, they reject

God's grace—the NEED for God's help and forgiveness.

Circumcision, as part of the law of Moses, would be useless even *in the thinking of those* advocating it, unless ALL of the law, including all of the rituals, washings and sacrifices, were also kept. In other words, those who insisted on circumcision as a necessary prerequisite for justification and salvation would be inconsistent unless they also taught the necessity to keep all the law, including all of the (temporary) sacrifices, rituals and washings. In trying to do this on their own, which attempt is destined to failure, they fell from grace. They rejected God's forgiveness for their sins.

Paul continues in Galatians 5:5:

“For we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith.”

We need God's Spirit in us in order to be able to please God. And when we sin, Christ's faith IN us makes us righteous. It is through Christ's faith that we can have the hope to be made righteous.

Continuing in Galatians 5:6:

“For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love.”

Paul says here that it is totally immaterial, for the purpose of obtaining salvation, whether one is or is not physically circumcised. Rather, Paul says it is necessary to have faith. Paul is not advocating or teaching dead faith, but he requires living faith—faith that is evidenced by works; faith that produces something—and it is love which motivates faith to manifest itself through works.

Continuing in Galatians 5:7–11:

“(Verse 7) Ye did run well; who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth? (Verse 8) This persuasion cometh not of him that calleth you. (Verse 9) A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump. (Verse 10) I have confidence in you through the Lord, that ye will be none otherwise minded: but he that troubleth you shall bear his judgment, whosoever he be. (Verse 11) And I, brethren, if I yet preach circumcision, why do I yet suffer persecution? then is the offense of the cross ceased.”

Notice that Paul speaks in verse 7 of the need to obey the truth. It is not enough to know the truth and to believe in it, but we must obey it. And so, we read of the obedience to the faith (Romans 1:5; 16:26; Acts 6:7). Just “believing” is not enough in Paul’s teachings.

Paul emphasizes again in verse 8 that God must call us into the truth (compare John 6:44, 65), and he warns in verse 9 against evil influences, comparing those with a little leaven, which leavens the whole lump. Referring to the annual Festival of the Days of Unleavened Bread, which picture leaven as being symbolic of sin and the unleavened lump as being symbolic of righteousness, Paul warns that just one unrepented sin, if it remains unchecked and not dealt with, can ultimately destroy our own life and it can negatively influence or “defile” the whole body of Christ—the Church of God.

In verse 10, Paul expresses his conviction that he has confidence in them “through the Lord,” that they will not continue to disobey the truth. This echoes his statement in Philippians 1:6 (“Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ”). This is remarkable, considering the extent to which the Galatians had slipped back into old habits and wrong pagan practices. But Paul makes clear that God is not giving up easily on people—and neither should we.

Paul also explains in verse 11 that if he was to preach the necessity of circumcision to obtain justification, he would not suffer persecution from false brethren. But since he preached instead the “cross”—the death of Christ—he was persecuted because that message was offensive to them. The “offense of the cross” conveys the truth that Jesus had to DIE so that through His grace, we can obtain forgiveness, justification, righteousness and salvation. This very concept was offensive—a stumbling block and foolishness—for Jews and Greeks who were looking for miraculous “signs” and intellectual “wisdom” (compare 1 Corinthians 1:22–23).

Continuing in Galatians 5:12–13:

“(Verse 12) I would they were even cut off which trouble you.  
(Verse 13) For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty;  
only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love  
serve one another.”

Paul's wish in verse 12 regarding those false teachers who perverted the truth most likely means "that the authors of these errors and disturbances were [to be] excluded from the church" (*Albert Barnes' Notes on the Bible*).

In verse 13, Paul reiterates again that we have been called to true liberty—freedom from unnecessary burdens and pagan customs, as well as from Judaism or the restrictive traditions of the fathers, and especially from sin and death. But he emphasizes that our freedom does not give us a license to sin, by letting sin rule in our fleshly members.

*Albert Barnes Notes' on the Bible* explains it this way: "You are called to liberty, but it is not liberty for an occasion to the flesh. It is not freedom from virtuous restraints, and from the laws of God. It is liberty from the servitude of sin... not freedom from the necessary restraints of virtue."

Rather, Paul states that we must overcome sin—which is always selfish—with outgoing love by serving others.

Continuing in Galatians 5:14:

"(Verse 14) For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."

Having introduced in the previous verse "love," which IS the keeping of God's commandments (1 John 5:3), Paul continues to summarize the law as love toward neighbor. He speaks of "all the law," as it relates to our relationship with man.

*Albert Barnes' Notes on the Bible* states: "The apostle of course here alludes to the Law *in regard to our duty to our fellow-men*, since that was the point which he particularly enforces."

The last six of the Ten Commandments show us how to love our neighbor. In Romans 13:8–10, Paul writes: "Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law. For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law."

*Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible* states regarding Romans 13:8:

"Love is a debt. The law of God and the interest of mankind make it so... [Paul] specifies the last five [actually, last six] of the ten commandments, which he observes to be all summed up in this royal law, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself..."

"... it is a sin not only to devise evil against thy neighbour, but to withhold good from those to whom it is due; both are forbidden together... This proves that love is the fulfilling of the law... for what else is that but to restrain us from evil-doing, and to constrain us to well-doing? Love is a living active principle of OBEDIENCE to the whole law."

The *New Bible Commentary: Revised*, agrees, stating: "This conclusion does not invalidate the Ten Commandments in the interest of a nebulous, existential 'Love, and do as you please'... Love... is the spirit in which we are to keep the law; but we need the law's particulars and prescriptions to give body and definition..."

*John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible* writes:

"... to love one another... is the only debt never to be wholly discharged; for though it should be always paying, yet ought always to be looked upon as owing... For he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law... of the decalogue; that part of it particularly which relates to the neighbour; the second table of the law... for fulfilling the law means DOING it, or acting according to it; and so far as a man loves, so far he fulfils, that is, DOES it..."

Continuing in Galatians 5:15-18:

"(Verse 15) But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another. (Verse 16) This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. (Verse 17) For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would. (Verse 18) But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law."

Paul describes again (especially in verse 17) two ways of life, as he had done earlier in his allegory of the two covenants. We can choose

to walk in the Spirit (verse 16), which will motivate and empower us to KEEP the law of love, and when we do, we will not fulfill the lust of the flesh which will induce us to sin and to break the law (compare 1 John 3:4: "Sin is the transgression of the law.").

But if we chose, instead, to walk in the flesh, we don't show love, but selfishness, and we will engage in biting and devouring one another (verse 15). *Vincent's Word Studies* adds: "Partisan strife will be fatal to the Christian community as a whole. The organic life of the body will be destroyed by its own members."

And *Albert Barnes' Notes on the Bible* says: "... in their contentions they would destroy the spirituality and happiness of each other; their characters would be ruined; and the church be overthrown. The readiest way to destroy the spirituality of a church, and to annihilate the influence of religion, is to excite a spirit of contention."

To walk in the Spirit and not in the flesh is a constant struggle, as Paul explains in verse 17. There is a battle going on in our minds between God's Spirit and our fleshly desires. And as Abraham had to cast out the bondwoman, so we have to cast out those fleshly desires. When we are led by God's Spirit and do the things which are pleasing in God's sight, we are no longer "under the law" (verse 18). When we walk after the Spirit and are led by it, we will keep the law. And since and as long as we don't break it, we are not under the penalty of the law.

Continuing in Galatians 5:19-21:

"(Verse 19) Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, (Verse 20) Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, (Verse 21) Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God."

Far from teaching the concept of "once saved, always saved," Paul admonishes the Galatians to remember that we won't inherit the Kingdom of God, if we refuse to walk in the Spirit and rather choose to live in and by the flesh. Paul had introduced the gospel or good news of the Kingdom of God early on in his letter, and now he explains that

we won't inherit eternal life in the Kingdom of God, if we practice sin by breaking the law.

And so, Paul lists numerous sins—sinful conduct—which, if practiced as a way of life and not bitterly repented of, will keep us out of the Kingdom of God.

We would like to quote from *Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Bible*, in order to perhaps convey a better feel for the kind of SINS Paul is listing here:

**“Adultery**—Illicit connection with a married person [and, we might add, illicit connection of a married person with a married or unmarried person].

**“Fornication**—Illicit connection between single or unmarried persons...

**“Uncleanness**—Whatever is opposite to purity; probably meaning here... unnatural practices; sodomy, bestiality.

**“Lasciviousness**—Whatever is contrary to chastity; all lewdness.

**“Idolatry**—Worshipping of idols; frequenting idol festivals; all the rites of Bacchus, Venus, Priapus, etc., which were common among the Gentiles.

**“Witchcraft**—... in all spells and enchantments... drugs were employed... So spells and incantations were used sometimes for the restoration of the health; at others, for the destruction of an enemy...

**“Hatred**—Aversions and antipathies, when opposed to brotherly love and kindness.

**“Variance**—Contentions, where the principle of hatred proceeds to open acts; hence contests, altercations, lawsuits, and disputes in general.

**“Emulations**—Envy...; that is strife to excel at the expense of another; lowering others to set up one's self; unholy zeal, fervently adopting a bad cause, or supporting a good one by cruel means...

**“Wrath**—Turbulent passions, disturbing the harmony of the mind, and producing domestic and civil broils...

**“Strife**—Disputations... or strife about words.

**“Seditions**—Divisions into separate factions...

**“Heresies**—Factions; parties in the Church... scandals, offenses or stumbling-blocks.

**“Envyings**—Pain felt, and malignity conceived, at the sight of



excellence or happiness. A passion the most base and the least curable of all...

**“Murders—**... Murder signifies the destruction of human life; and as he who hates his brother in his heart is ready to take away his life, so he is called a murderer...

**“Drunkenness—**... even the cares of the world, when they intoxicate the mind...

**“Revellings—**Lascivious feasting, with obscene songs, music, etc....”

*Albert Barnes’ Notes on the Bible* concludes that those who practice these things will not inherit the Kingdom of God, as they “*are not children of God, and therefore cannot inherit the kingdom which belongs only to the children of the Divine family.*”

Continuing in Galatians 5:22-23:

“(Verse 22) But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, (Verse 23) Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.”

When we exemplify the fruit of the Spirit, we are not violating the law of God. The law of God is not against the fruit of the Spirit; it does not say: You must not have love, faith or joy.

*Albert Barnes’ Notes on the Bible* states:

“Against such there is no law—That is, there is no law to condemn such persons. These are not the things which the Law denounces. These, therefore, are the true freemen; free from the condemning sentence of the Law, and free in the service of God. Law condemns sin.”

Notice, too, that the characteristics listed are all called the “fruit,” not the “fruits” of the Spirit. When we are led by God’s Holy Spirit, ALL of these characteristics should be present.

We would like to quote again from *Adam Clarke’s Commentary on the Bible* to convey a better feel for the characteristics of the fruit of the Holy Spirit in the life of a Christian:

**“Love—**An intense desire to please God, and to do good to mankind; the very soul and spirit of all true religion; the fulfilling of the law...

**“Joy—**The exultation that arises from a sense of God’s mercy communicated to the soul [the person] in the pardon of its iniquities, and the prospect of that eternal glory...

**“Peace**—The calm, quiet, and order, which take place in the justified soul [person], instead of... doubts, fears, alarms, and dreadful forebodings... Peace is the first sensible fruit of the pardon of sin...

**“Long-suffering**—... bearing with the frailties and provocations of others, from the consideration that God has borne long with ours... bearing up also through all the troubles and difficulties of life without murmuring...

**“Gentleness**—Benignity, affability; a very rare grace, often wanting... A good education and polished manners, when brought under the influence of the grace of God, will bring out this grace with great effect.

**“Goodness**—The perpetual desire and sincere study, not only to abstain from every appearance of evil, but to do good to the bodies and souls of men [that is, the entire being, including body and mind and spirit] to the utmost of our ability. But all this must spring from a good heart—a heart purified by the Spirit of God...

**“Faith**—... here used for fidelity [or faithfulness]—punctuality in performing promises, conscientious carefulness in preserving what is committed to our trust, in restoring it to its proper owner, in transacting the business confided to us, neither betraying the secret of our friend, nor disappointing the confidence of our employer.

**“Meekness**—Mildness, indulgence toward the weak and erring, patient suffering of injuries without feeling a spirit of revenge... the entire opposite to anger.

**“Temperance**—Continenence, self-government, or moderation, principally with regard to sensual or animal appetites. Moderation in eating, drinking, sleeping, etc.”

Continuing in Galatians 5:24:

“(Verse 24) And they that are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with the affections [or passions] and lusts.”

When we were baptized in Christ, our old man died. It was crucified with Christ so that we can live as a new man or person. When we came out of the watery grave, we received the Holy Spirit of the Father and of Christ to walk in it, in newness of life.

Paul goes on to say, in Galatians 5:25–26:

“(Verse 25) If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.

(Verse 26) Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another."

The commentary of *Jamieson, Fausset and Brown* explains verse 25 as follows, in quoting the original Greek:

"If we live... BY the Spirit, let us also walk... BY the Spirit' ... 'Life by (or 'in') the Spirit' is not an occasional influence of the Spirit, but an abiding state, wherein we are continually alive, though sometimes sleeping and inactive."

Paul admonishes us in verse 26 not to be or become vain glorious—"boasting of our attainments; vaunting ourselves to be superior to others; or seeking honor from those things which do not possess moral good; in birth, riches, eloquence" (*Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Bible*).

Paul says that they are not to "provoke one another." In other words, they are not to "provoke those whom they regard as inferiors by a haughty carriage and a contemptuous manner toward them. They look upon them often with contempt; pass them by with disdain; treat them as beneath their notice; and this provokes on the other hand hard feeling, and hatred" (*Albert Barnes' Notes on the Bible*).

Also, we are not to envy one another either, perhaps on account of their superior wealth, rank, talent, or learning (compare *Albert Barnes' Notes on the Bible*).



## Galatians, Chapter 6

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After explaining how not to treat our fellow man and especially our brethren in the church, Paul continues to explain how we *are* to treat them—and how we might be able to help them when they need help.

He states in Galatians 6:1-2:

“(Verse 1) Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such a one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. (Verse 2) Bear ye one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.”

When we are “spiritual” and are led by God’s Spirit and are therefore displaying the characteristics of *meekness*—which is part of the fruit of the Holy Spirit—then we are in a position to help a brother who is *overtaken in a fault*. Paul is not speaking of false brethren and teachers who, living in sin, had come in to destroy the body of Christ, but Paul is referring to a brother who has slipped and needs help—perhaps without even recognizing it—to get back on track.

We are told to “consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching” (Hebrews 10:24–25, New King James Bible).

Before We talk to a brother who is overtaken in a fault, we ought to make sure that we pray first to God for His wisdom and intervention (1 John 5:16). And then, we ought to show “compassion” and “fear” and “humility,” when we try to help and correct our brother, knowing that unrepented sins may grow like cancer (Jude 22–23; 2 Timothy 2:16–26). In doing this, we will bear “one another’s burdens.” When we are called upon to help in such a way, we must not shrink back from such responsibility (Proverbs 24:10–12; 27:5–6; 28:23).

At the same time, Paul warns us *not to forget our own weaknesses*,

including the possibility that we could also slip. Otherwise, we might be tempted to deal with the erring brother too harshly and severely (compare James 2:13).

When we follow Paul's admonitions of helping others who are in need of help, then we will fulfill the law of Christ. Christ came to fulfill the law, by filling it up with meaning, showing the original spiritual intent. He showed us how to love God and neighbor to the fullest extent. This we can only do when Christ's Spirit lives in us.

Christ told His disciples, in John 13:34: "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another." He added in John 15:12: "This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you."

In order to love each other AS Christ loved us, we need to have God's love in us—which we receive through the Holy Spirit living in us. Compare Romans 5:5, 8–10.

Continuing in Galatians 6:3–5:

"(Verse 3) For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself. (Verse 4) But let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another. (Verse 5) For every man shall bear his own burden."

Paul is pointing out, in verse 3, that those who think they could not slip in the same way as their brother in verse 1, should realize that they, too, could sin in the same manner (compare 1 Corinthians 10:12; see also Romans 11:20).

*Albert Barnes' Notes on the Bible* explains:

"They who feel secure, and think it impossible that they should sin, are not safe. They may be wholly deceived, and may be nothing, when they have the highest estimate of themselves. They may themselves fall into sin, and have need of all the sympathy and kindness of their brethren... He deceiveth himself—He understands not his own character."

When we think that our own strength, talents and accomplishments will save us from sin, we need to realize that we "are nothing" apart from God (verse 3).

In addition, Paul is telling us in verse 4 that we are to prove or

examine our own work—how we are doing in light of God’s Word and His law—and that we should not compare ourselves with others (see 2 Corinthians 10:12–13). When our ways are in harmony with God’s standard, then we can rejoice, based on our lives, rather than on the fact that we think, comparatively speaking, that we are not doing as badly as others (see Luke 18:9–14, especially verse 11). Others are not our standards. We are *not to compare* ourselves with the brother who slipped and whom we are to help, but we are just to look at ourselves when evaluating how *we* are doing.

In the same context, Paul says in verse 5 that we all shall bear our own burden. Is this a contradiction to verse 2, where Paul said that we are to bear one another’s burden? No. Notice the following explanation by the *Jamieson, Fausset and Brown Commentary*:

“For... each man shall bear his own ‘burden,’ or rather, ‘load’ (namely, of sin and infirmity), the *Greek* being different from that in [verse 2]. This verse does not contradict [verse 2]. *There he tells them to bear with others’ ‘burdens of infirmity’ in sympathy; here, that self-examination will make a man to feel he has enough to do with ‘his own load’ of sin, without comparing himself boastfully with his neighbor.* Compare [verse 3:] Instead of ‘thinking himself to be something,’ he shall feel the ‘load’ of his own sin: and *this will lead him to bear sympathetically with his neighbor’s burden of infirmity.*”

Also, in realizing our own burden of sin, we appreciate that because of God’s grace, we can obtain help from God and forgiveness of sin and a good and undefiled conscience (Hebrews 10:22). We should always remember that we can lighten our burden by taking Jesus’ load upon us—knowing that His yoke is “easy” and His burden is “light” (Matthew 11:28–30). And as this applies to us, it applies likewise to our brother who slipped and fell.

In Galatians 6:6–10, Paul goes on to introduce a related topic, that of doing good:

“(Verse 6) Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him [share with him] that teacheth in all good things. (Verse 7) Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. (Verse 8) For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.

(Verse 9) And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. (Verse 10) As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith."

The *Jamieson, Fausset and Brown Commentary* explains the connection between what Paul said in the previous verses, and what he is saying now:

"From the mention of bearing one another's burdens, he passes to one way in which those burdens may be borne—by ministering out of their earthly goods to their spiritual teachers... Each shall bear his own burden; BUT I do not intend that he should not think of others, and especially of the wants of his ministers."

*Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Bible* adds:

"Contribute to the support of the man who has dedicated himself to the work of the ministry, and who gives up his time and his life to preach the Gospel. It appears that some of the believers in Galatia could receive the Christian ministry without contributing to its support. This is both ungrateful and base... It is unjust."

But Paul's admonition is not limited to supporting the ministry. God expects all of us to do good unto all when we have opportunity—especially unto our spiritual brethren. Again, in verses 7 and 8, Paul points out the incongruity between the way of our flesh and the way of God's Spirit in us.

**WE WILL REAP WHAT WE SOW!** When we sow to our flesh by following the demands of our flesh—including a refusal to do good—then we will ultimately reap of our flesh destruction. If we sow to God's Spirit in us by following its lead and doing good without wavering or hesitation, and not losing heart, then we will inherit of the Spirit eternal or everlasting life.

Continuing and concluding in Galatians 6:11–19:

"(Verse 11) Ye see how large a letter I have written unto you with mine own hand. (Verse 12) As many as desire to make a fair show in the flesh, they constrain you to be circumcised; only lest they should suffer persecution for the cross of Christ. (Verse 13) For neither they themselves who are circumcised



keep the law; but desire to have you circumcised, that they may glory in your flesh.

“(Verse 14) But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world. (Verse 15) For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature. (Verse 16) And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God. (Verse 17) From henceforth let no man trouble me: for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus. (Verse 18) Brethren, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen.”

Paul concludes his letter by re-introducing themes and concepts, which he had discussed throughout his letter. Pointing at his own sickness and physical infirmities (verse 11), and apparently also at his wounds that stemmed from the many beatings which he had to endure (verse 17; compare 2 Corinthians 11:23–25), he emphasizes that part of his persecution resulted from his message of the cross and the fact that circumcision is no longer required (verses 12, 15).

Paul also points out that those who require circumcision so that they don't have to endure persecution (verse 12), don't keep the law themselves (verse 13)—that is, not all the law, and most certainly not the Ten Commandments.

Paul continues to explain that the essence of the message of the gospel of the Kingdom of God is HOW we are able to inherit the Kingdom. It has to do with HOW WE WALK (verse 16); that we must live as a “new creature” (verse 15); that the world is crucified to us and we are crucified to the world (verse 14); and that we are now the Israel of God (verse 16); that is, spiritual Israel—as distinguished from the Israel according to the flesh.

As spiritual Israelites and spiritual Jews, we are to have the same faith of Christ that Abraham had. Further, and most importantly, inheriting the Kingdom of God and obtaining salvation have to do with the fact that God the Father and Jesus Christ forgive us our sins; and justify us; and make us and keep us righteous—by GRACE (verse 18).

As long as we follow the lead of the Holy Spirit in us, we will keep God's law and obtain mercy when we slip (verse 16). Jesus Christ will forgive us upon our repentance, and His blood will cleanse us from all sin and all unrighteousness (1 John 1:7, 9).

And so, as Paul started with the concept of grace (Galatians 1:3), so he ends with it in the very last sentence of his letter. The correct understanding of grace is so very important. It is not license to sin, but it is God's help for us to be able to live apart from sin.

# Conclusion

The highly misunderstood biblical concepts of how to attain justification, righteousness, and salvation, and whether there is a conflict between law and grace, have led to terrible consequences. Millions are deceived in thinking that they no longer have to keep the Ten Commandments and certain statutes and judgments, while others assume that they can earn their salvation by trying on their own to obey God. Then there are those who despair because they think that their sins could never be forgiven, focusing on their shortcomings and concluding that they could never be saved.

Paul's letter to the Galatians makes clear that we cannot qualify for God's Kingdom without His grace. He also explains that certain rituals, including sacrifices, washings and circumcision, are no longer necessary, and they most certainly cannot justify us. At the same time, Paul shows that we must strive to obey God—that we must leave behind the ways and wrong customs of this world and that we must overcome the temptations of our flesh.

If we think that we can never “lose” salvation—no matter how we live—then we are wrong. If we think that we must justify ourselves and make ourselves righteous, we will fail. If we think that it is our faith alone that will justify us and make us righteous, then we are misled. But when we allow the faith of Christ, dwelling in us, to justify us, and when we permit the living Christ to fulfill the righteous requirements of the law in us, then we will succeed.

Yes, we are duty-bound to keep God's spiritual law, but it is God's grace that enables us to do so. And yes, we will, from time to time, miss the mark and violate God's law and sin, even after conversion, but it is God's grace that will grant us forgiveness and enable us to continue—until the day of Christ's return.



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**The following booklets are available, upon request:**

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The Keys to Happy Marriages and Families

And Lawlessness Will Abound...

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Is That In the Bible? — The Mysteries of the Book of Revelation

The Book of Zechariah — Prophecies for *Today!*

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