

Galatians

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Introduction

- 1) Galatia was a Roman province which would presently be located in central Turkey. Unlike most of Paul's letters, which were addressed to individuals or to the church in specific cities, this letter is addressed to the Christians of a large region.
- 2) Paul had evangelized this area during his first missionary journey. Some of the churches he founded in this region and that are most likely addressed in this letter were at Antioch, Iconia, Lystra and Derbe. The evangelization of the region is centered in the 13th and 14th chapters of the Book of Acts.
- 3) This was the region in which Paul was stoned by its inhabitants and left for dead. Acts 14:17-23 Paul also visited this area on yet another occasion before this letter was written. Acts 16:1-6
- 4) The letter to the Galatians was written by Paul probably during what is called his second missionary journey. Many believe that this is his first preserved letter. It was probably written from Corinth before the arrival of Silas and Timothy. This would explain why their names are not mentioned in the greeting of this letter. Acts 18:1, 5
- 5) The letter is one of severe rebuke. The Galatians were in danger of turning their backs on the truth of the gospel, specifically, that man is justified by faith apart from the law. The Galatians had turned their backs on the words of Paul and were going in the direction of the Judaizers.

John MacArthur describes the book of Galatians as "a flashing sword wielded by a burning heart." The book was instrumental in the reformation. Martin Luther said, "The epistle to the Galatians is my epistle. To it I am, as it were in wedlock." The message of the book is salvation by grace alone.

v1:1 Paul, an apostle, (not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead;)

Paul, knowing that he, as well as the doctrine he had laid down, was being challenged, emphatically states his apostolic authority in opening this letter.

- a) To state his apostleship in the opening of his letters is by no means unusual, in fact, it is his common greeting. However, with the parenthetical modifier he states beyond any doubt that his apostleship is indeed genuine as is his message.
- b) This emphatic statement proclaiming himself to be an ambassador of God and Jesus Christ set the tone of the entire letter, that is, his only letter in which the readers are not commended in some way.

* It becomes quickly apparent in this letter that the Judaizers had successfully convinced the Galatians that Paul was a second rate apostle. It was probably argued that unlike "the twelve," he did not receive his commission directly from God, but was a self-proclaimed apostle who had received the message from men. A message he had modified to gain influence and a following among the gentiles. The Judaizers pretended to represent the Jerusalem apostles. They viewed Christianity as a Jewish sect. Like the Jews, they inconsistently and insincerely espoused the law. Their motivation was to avoid persecution from the Jews and to maintain their superiority over the gentiles making them submit to Jewish law and culture.

- c) The greeting is confrontational for Paul immediately flat-out denies the words of the Judaizers and proclaims the exact opposite to be the truth.
- d) Paul states he was not commissioned or sent out by men, neither was he trained by men. He was an apostle in the truest sense, that is, trained and sent out by the Lord Jesus Christ.
- e) Paul reminds them that Jesus Christ was raised from the dead thus answering any objections that he could not have been directly commissioned by Jesus Christ having not even accepted the faith until well after Christ's death.
- f) He will fully explain his extraordinary calling and training later in this letter. A calling that made it necessary for him to defend his apostleship on more than one occasion *1 Cor. 15:8-10; II Cor. 12:11*
- g) The implication behind this first verse and the entire letter is that if Paul was trained and sent by Jesus Christ, then those who reject his message reject the truth of God. Paul leaves no room for compromise. The Galatians will have to choose. *1 Thes. 4:8*

v1:2 And all the brethren which are with me, unto the churches of Galatia:

This letter is addressed to the churches of Galatia. Most of these churches were probably founded by Paul during what is called his first missionary journey

- a) We see the problems which Paul addresses in this letter are not isolated, but widespread. We know of at least four cities in this area (see intro) in which Paul founded churches and whom he is now addressing. (In most of his letters the problems presented by the Judizers are dealt with by Paul)
- b) In agreement with Paul on the contents of this letter are other brothers in the faith who are with him. Some speculate that there may have been a delegation of Christians from Galatia who had brought Paul news of the defection from the truth of the gospel taking place in this region.

v1:3 Grace [be] to you and peace from God the Father, and [from] our Lord Jesus Christ,

This common greeting of Paul will probably never be more appropriate or more sincere as it is in this letter.

- a) Paul does not want them to have the false hypocritical peace of a system of works, but the true peace of God, that which passes understanding and is a result of accepting his unmerited favor or grace.
- b) Paul knows that it is only by the grace of God that the readers will be recovered from their folly and returned to the truth to enjoy true peace. This is his hope and his prayer for them.

v1:4 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:

Just as Paul uses a modifier in verse 1 to emphasize the genuine nature of his apostleship, so this verse serves as a modifier to the previous verse. Its purpose is to emphasize what had been accomplished in their behalf and the source of that great grace they now rejected.

- a) He immediately puts the full force of the gospel message before them. The Lord Jesus Christ willingly became the sacrifice for their sins. In so doing he delivered them from their present evil world. The word deliver means to rescue from what would otherwise be an impossible situation if not for the intervention of the rescuer.
- b) They were separated out from the present evil world. They were dead to it and

their life was hid with Christ in God. Col. 3:3 Going back to the law which energized the present evil world, Rom. 3:20, 5:19-20 obscured, marred and took away from their Deliverer and the grace afforded to them.

- c) All was done according to the will of God the Father. As Hendrichsen put it "*Let the trouble-makers bear in mind, therefore, that when they belittle the work of the Son, they make light of the Father also.*"

v1.5 To whom [be] glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Paul ends what can be called the introduction of this letter with a common expression of praise to God for the things he had done. Once again a short expression which we recognize as common in the letters of Paul takes on added meaning in this letter to the Galatians.

It was God who must get all the glory, all the praise and all the honor forever. It was God who planned salvation and God who had accomplished it. No man can ever claim to have earned it, supplemented it or contributed to it. Eph. 2: 8-10

v1.6. I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel:

At this point in the letter thanksgiving and gratitude is usually expressed to the readers accompanied by a prayer or doxology. In this letter, however, Paul abruptly begins the body of the letter expressing his total and complete amazement as to what had transpired in the short time that had passed since he had left them.

- a) Paul was literally dumbfounded. He had established this church. He had already "checked-up" on them once. Every indication is given that leadership had been established. The Galatians had given every indication that their calling had been effectual. They had shown great respect and affection for Paul (4:4)
- b) The word "removed" means "to transpose", to go over from one party to another. The confidence that they had once put into Paul and his message, they now put into others. Their minds had been turned from the truth to what Paul first calls another gospel or a different gospel.
- c) Not only did they alienate themselves from Paul, but more importantly from God whom as an apostle of Christ he represented. It was God who had called them into the grace of his Son and it was his grace which they now had at best obscured.

v1:7 Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ.

Paul clarifies his initial description of the new beliefs as being another gospel. It was not the gospel at all! The message of the Judaizers was not "good news".

- a) A Hendricksen puts it, "*it was a gospel only in name, not in reality.*" There is only one gospel which is the good news of God to man. What the Galatians now embraced was a perversion of that one true message.
- b) Nevertheless, false teachers had come in with their version of the truth and had been successful in confusing them. Their arguments seemed plausible and their influence was at best unsettling. They had changed the gospel of Christ, perverting it to fit their own ideas and to cater to their own prejudices.

v1:8 But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.

Paul had earlier emphatically stated that he is a true apostle. As an ambassador and messenger of God, he had been faithful to his calling and had delivered to the Galatians the one true gospel.

- a) Paul solemnly proclaims that if he himself, one of his companions, the other apostles, or even an angel descending from the heavenly realm should preach any other gospel, then such an individual or creature should be accursed.
- b) He speaks of the message that he had first brought to them and the message he had confirmed on his second visit. It had not changed or evolved and would never change. Anyone who would add to it, take away from it or change it in any way was guilty of preaching a perverted gospel. Deut. 4:6; Prov. 30: 5-6
- c) God's plan of salvation had been prophesied, fulfilled, revealed and proclaimed. 1 Peter 1:10-12 It could not be changed, being sealed by the death of Christ. Heb. 9:16-17
- d) It is believed that this is one of Paul's first letters. This shows that he already knew that the message was complete and that he would not receive any further revelation concerning the gospel message. He had delivered the full council of God. Any ideas of progressive revelation taking place through the church is false.

v1:9 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 goes from the hypothetical to reality. With a few subtle changes the thoughts expressed in the previous verse are greatly strengthened.

- a) That men were preaching another gospel to them has been established. Paul, in effect, pronounces those that were "troubling them" to be accursed. He does so as a true apostle and appointed representative of Jesus Christ.
- b) The wording changes from "which we have preached" to "that ye have received." The Galatians had been delivered by Paul's message. They believed it and accepted it. Would this conversion now be proved false? Would this curse fall upon them as well? (3:4)
- c) "As we have said before," does not refer to the previous verse, so must refer to a warning he had delivered to them in the past when he was with them. A warning they did not take to heart. His warning to the Ephesian elders comes to mind *Acts 20:29-31*

v1:10 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.

Based on his statements concerning the absoluteness of the gospel message, recounted in the last two verses, Paul, in the form of a question, tells the Galatians that it is God whose favor he seeks and not the favor of men.

- a) This verse is a response to unwritten accusations against Paul by his opponents which in effect stated that Paul preached one gospel to the Jew but another to the gentile that served his self-interests. In other words he was accused of telling people what they wanted to hear.
- b) By placing a curse on anyone who would change the message, including even himself, that he had originally delivered to them, all accusations that he is using the gospel as a political tool becomes of no effect. A so called "people pleaser" would not take such a definitive position.
- c) Furthermore, if he was in the business of pleasing men, he would not be the servant of Christ. His apostleship would be void. However, he is indeed the ambassador of Christ and not at liberty to speak on his own.

v1:11-12 But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught [it], but by the revelation of Jesus Christ.

In another strong statement, Paul certifies or “desires to make it perfectly clear to them” that the gospel he preached could not be traced backed to a human source.

- a) It was not after man, that is, it was not communicated to him by a man. Therefore, it could not have been invented by a man nor was it the interpretation of a man. It was not polluted by man’s ideas or philosophies, but was pure, having been the direct revelation of Jesus Christ.
- b) This does not mean that Paul was not familiar with the gospel. He learned the testimony of Stephen and probably countless other martyrs. In himself, however, he perceived these as blasphemy and a threat to Judaism.
- c) The word translated ‘revelation’ means “an unveiling of something which was secret.” On the road to Damascus it was Jesus Christ who directly unveiled the gospel that had been secret to his heart and to his understanding. Christ taught it to him. It was by the direct intervention of Christ by which Paul received it. Acts 9:3-16

“The experience, therefore, on the way to Damascus shed a flood of light on all the information which had been reaching Paul. It changed a vehement denial into rapturous conviction, vague outward awareness into marvelous insight” Hendrichsen

Gal. 1:13-14 For ye have heard of my conversation in time past in the Jews’ religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and wasted it: 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 Galatians were obviously familiar with the facts of Paul’s calling, but in light of their departure from the truth of the gospel message, Paul here begins to remind them of the extraordinary circumstances behind his conversion as proof that the gospel he preached in no way was of himself or any man.

- a) Judaism was once Paul’s life. He excelled in its teachings and had a great love for the traditions he believed were handed down to him. He was filled with pride and possessed a great zeal for his beliefs. Phil. 3:5-8
- b) His zeal was such that he relentlessly persecuted the church. The word translated ‘wasted’ refers to a country ravaged by an army or the death caused by wild beasts. Acts 8:3; Acts 22:35; Acts 26:11
- c) Paul’s point is that no human agent could have altered his former course. Paul’s knowledge of Judaism and the law was unsurpassed. He had killed his own people

who rejected the law. The implied question to the Galatians is, "Why the change?" "Would I turn my back on everything that was proved important to me to gain a following among gentiles?"

v1:15-16 But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called [me] by his grace, To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood:

The only plausible explanation was the divine calling and appointment that Paul had claimed. No human explanation made sense. Paul was set apart and called by God to preach the good news of Jesus Christ to the gentiles.

- a) Paul was sovereignly set apart by God before his birth according to God's good pleasure. Eph. 1:11 His calling was totally unmerited on his part, but was simply a result of God's grace in accordance with his purpose and will.
- b) Such a calling was not unprecedented as his opponents knew. Jeremiah and Isaiah were consecrated while still in the womb. Is. 49:1; Jer. 1:5 Esau and John the Baptist also illustrate the sovereignty of God. Rom. 9:11-13
- c) It is God's grace and mercy which is the enlightening agent. In God's time he chose to call Paul to his destiny. Paul received the immediate revelation of the gospel and the indwelling presence of Christ within him. His separation and calling were revealed to him directly by God.

v1:17 Neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me; but I went into Arabia, and returned again unto Damascus.

Paul continues to prove the authenticity of his apostleship and the divine inspiration of his message by detailing the events immediately proceeding his conversion. He did not go to Jerusalem to be instructed by the other apostles. They were not his superiors, but his equals. They shared the same calling.

- a) After his conversion Paul did not counsel with any human being.. During his short stay in Damascus, he makes it very clear that he was in no way instructed by men or sought the confirmation of men as to what had been revealed to him. Acts 9:18-23
- b) Paul went to Arabia which was a sparsely populated region of mostly desert. What went on in Arabia or how long he stayed is nowhere mentioned. It was most likely a time of preparation and reflection. Many believe it was during this time that he was "caught up" into heaven. II Cor. 12:1-4

v1:18-19 Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and abode with him fifteen days. But other of the apostles saw I none, save James the Lord's brother.

At least three years after his conversion (three years after his conversion or three years after he returned to Damascus?) Paul did go to see Peter. Paul's apostleship, ministry and teaching had already been established before seeing Peter.

- a) The words translated 'to see' means 'to get acquainted with or to visit' It in no way suggests Paul's purpose was to receive instruction. Acts 9:26-30
- b) During his 15 day stay the only other person of prominence seen by Paul was James the brother of Jesus. The term apostle is sometimes used loosely and doesn't always refer to only the twelve. 1 Cor. 15:5-7

v1:20 Now the things which I write unto you, behold, before God, I lie not.

Paul appeals to God for the truthfulness of this account. It was God who had delivered the gospel to him, so he could not appeal to any man to validate his claims. It's not unusual for Paul to make a solemn appeal to God in this way. Rom. 9:1

v1:21-24 Afterwards I came into the regions of Syria and Cilicia; And was unknown by face unto the churches of Judaea which were in Christ: But they had heard only, That he which persecuted us in times past now preacheth the faith which once he destroyed. And they glorified God in me.

After leaving Jerusalem, Paul went to the regions of Syria and Cilicia. This is confirmed in Acts 9:30 for Tarsus is the capitol of Cilicia. So his stay in Jerusalem was short and he did not visit any of the churches in the Judean region.

- a) Although they had not met him, the churches of Judea knew of Paul's conversion and were amazed. The man who had relentlessly persecuted them now preached the faith he had sought to destroy.
- b) They attributed Paul's conversion to God. They glorified God for working such a great change in this man. These facts support Paul's claim that he received his calling and message independently from the twelve, and yet, was accepted by them as well as those Christians in Judea.

v2:1. Then fourteen years after I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and took Titus with [me] also.

Fourteen years after the visit to Jerusalem mentioned in chapter 1 and approximately seventeen years after his conversion, Paul again went to the city of Jerusalem. This would be his third recorded visit to the city. The second visit, not mentioned in this letter, was a relief effort for the churches in the Judean region. Acts 11:29-30

- a) Paul has already shown that during the first seventeen years of his ministry he had very little contact with the other apostles, thus showing that he received his apostleship and message independently of them. During this time Paul had teamed up with Barnabas going on his first missionary journey, a journey in which he had evangelized this area of Galatia.
- b) Paul's purpose now, in recording this particular trip to Jerusalem to the Galatians, is to prove to them that the other apostles, whom the Judaizers now claim to represent, recognized the genuineness of Paul's calling, agreed with the gospel he proclaimed and had blessed his efforts up to that time, which included his work among the Galatians.

The visit to Jerusalem is known as the Jerusalem Council. A situation very similar to that which was going on in Galatia had occurred in the city of Antioch years before and prompted this visit and council to which Paul now refers. Judaizers, saying they represented the apostles, came to Antioch proclaiming the law was necessary for salvation. Paul stood up to these individuals. It was decided that the trip to Jerusalem be taken to resolve the matter. Acts 15:1-3

- c) The fact that Paul took Titus with him is important, for Titus was an uncircumcised Greek convert who as such was representative of the gentile regions Paul had evangelized. He was Paul's test-case so to speak.

v2:2 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.

Although delegated by the church at Antioch to go on this trip, Paul tells the Galatians that this decision was confirmed to him by God. This shows that he went independently, not needing or seeking the guidance and/or the approval of the other apostles, but simply to prove once and for all that the gospel he preached was indeed the one true gospel.

- a) Upon arrival in Jerusalem Paul met privately with "those that were of reputation." These probably were the apostles and elders of the church. To this

select group, Paul related the gospel he preached among the gentiles, chiefly, that the rite of circumcision and adherence to the law were not necessary for salvation.

Acts 15:4

- b) Paul sought this private meeting because he understood that the law was a volatile issue among the Jews. The law was a stumbling block to the Jew and remained so for the Jewish Christian. If Paul came to Jerusalem publicly preaching complete liberty from the law, he would have put the leaders of the Jerusalem church in a tough situation. He could have very easily undermined their efforts among the Jews as well as his own efforts among the gentiles.
- c) Paul desired a meeting of the minds strictly as to the law concerning the gentiles. He needed to be absolutely certain, hearing first-hand, that the apostles were not behind this movement to impose the law upon the gentiles, especially to the point of making it a necessary ingredient of salvation. If a confrontation on the issue had been necessary it would have been resolved in private to the benefit of all. The relationship between the law and the Jewish believer was not even on the table as a point of discussion.

* Some think that the repeated use of phrases as "to them which were of reputation," are used sarcastically by Paul and directed at the false teachers who must have themselves used this terminology when questioning his apostolic credentials. Paul used the same terminology explaining that "those which were of reputation" had agreed with him.

2:3 But neither Titus, who was with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised:

The leaders of the Jerusalem church were in agreement with Paul. Titus was not forced or encouraged in any way to be circumcised. He had returned to Antioch as he had left. He was proof that those at Jerusalem concurred, that he, as a gentile, was not to be circumcised and so subject to the law.

So Paul's argument to the Galatians is; "If Titus, a gentile such as yourselves, went to Jerusalem and met with the leadership of that church, and was not compelled to be circumcised, but accepted as a brother in Christ, then how can those now coming from Jerusalem, saying they represent the same men Titus personally met with, tell you that circumcision and adherence to the law are necessary.

v2:4 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:

The matter would have been taken care of in this private meeting, but in continuing to relate the events of the Jerusalem Council to the Galatians, Paul tells them that false brothers had infiltrated the meeting and challenged the leadership.

- a) They were secretly brought in, probably by sympathizers to their cause among the leadership. They came in to spy, that is, to find out through deceptive means that their leadership was giving their blessing to the gentiles concerning their freedom from the law.
- b) The private meeting became public as the false brothers issued a challenge. They sought to bring the gentiles under the bondage of the law to retain their superiority over them. This challenge and the outcome is recorded in Acts 15:5-19.

v2:5 To whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might continue with you.

Paul and those who were with him did not yield to this challenge in the least bit. Not for one moment. Not on any point did they submit or even compromise.

The truth of the gospel was at stake. It must and would continue in the form in which it was preached to the Galatians and all the gentiles. Men were no longer under the law, but under grace. This too was the conclusion of the Jerusalem leaders.

Acts 15:9, 11

v2:6 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:

This appears to be a rather harsh statement by Paul directed at the apostles and leaders of the Jerusalem church, however, any sarcasm on the part of Paul, is in reality directed to the false teachers who promoted these apostles at the expense of the apostleship of Paul.

- a) Paul simply tells the Galatians that what these men once were (Jerusalem apostles) or the experiences they might have had didn't affect his apostleship in the least. God doesn't care what a man was, but what a man is. God does not work within the human ideas of seniority and rank.
- b) He adds that in his dealings with men, they added nothing to his beliefs or to his message. They told him nothing he had not known. Paul assures them that they were in no way superior.

"Paul means to say that whatever was their real rank and standing, it did not in the least affect his authority as an apostle, or his argument. While he rejoiced in their concurrence, and while he sought their approbation, yet he did not admit for a moment that he was inferior to them as an apostle, or dependant on them for the justness of his views." Barnes

v2:7-9 But contrariwise, when they saw that the gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto me, as [the gospel] of the circumcision [was] unto Peter; (For he that wrought effectually in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision, the same was mighty in me toward the Gentiles:) And when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship; that we [should go] unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision.

On the contrary it was the Jerusalem apostles who were enlightened as to the calling and apostleship of Paul, especially in regards to the gentiles. Up to this point Paul must have been a curiosity to the other apostles. They learned more of him and his message than he did of them.

- a) The apostles did little to evangelize the gentile nations. They pretty much stayed in the Judean region working among the Jews or the circumcision. God had blessed this work through the agency of Peter and the others.
- b) At the same time God did not ignore the gentiles, but independently ordained Paul to the task of evangelizing the gentiles or the uncircumcised. He worked through the agency of Paul in a mighty manner rivaling Peter's work among the Jews.
- c) Implied is that this arrangement was the will of God. It became clear to both parties through the meeting in Jerusalem. It was God who "wrought effectually in Peter" among the Jews and God who "was mighty" in Paul as concerning the gentiles.
- d) Paul informs the Galatians that James, Peter and John, that is, those men of reputation, and the pillars of the Jerusalem church, those whom the Judaizers claim to represent, perceived or were enlightened to Paul's calling.
- e) These men acknowledged the unmistakable hand of God in Paul's calling and the divine favor that was bestowed upon him.. They agreed that he was to continue his work among the gentiles. They acknowledged Paul as the chief apostle of the gentiles. Giving the "right hands of fellowship" declared total and complete agreement and harmony.

It is stated that the evangelization of the Jews was entrusted to Peter, while the evangelization of the gentiles was entrusted to Paul. Obviously this division of responsibility overlapped. Peter was the first to preach to the gentile, while Paul always went first to the Jewish synagogue in the gentile cities he evangelized.

v2:10 Only [they would] that we should remember the poor; the same which I also was forward to do.

In fact, the Jerusalem apostles requested assistance from Paul, that is, that he would remember the poor among the Jewish Christians.

- a) These Jewish Christians had at first been relentlessly persecuted. Paul himself had led these persecutions and so was familiar with the situation. A famine had also taken place in the region and so these Jewish brothers were in need.
- b) Paul states that their request was unnecessary, for he had fully intended to meet their needs. As mentioned earlier his second recorded visit to Jerusalem was to bring to them a collection taken among the gentile churches.
- c) This request and subsequent collections would go a long way in promoting love and unity among the Jewish and gentile believers. The two peoples were now one in reality, but not in practice.

v2:11-12 But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed. 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.

Having established that the Jerusalem apostles were in complete agreement with the gospel that he preached to the gentiles, Paul will now relate to his Galatian readers another past incident involving Peter, a pillar among the Jerusalem apostles. The story will add proof to the independence of his apostleship, the truth of his message and the liberty they had in Christ.

- a) The city of Antioch served as the "home base" of Paul and Barnabas. The first and second missionary journeys started from this city. Paul had spent much time here and the full implication of the gospel message, namely, that Jew and gentile would come together to form one church appears to have been realized. Acts 11:26
- c) After the Jerusalem council and before the second missionary journey, Peter visited the city of Antioch. Acts 15:30-36 He was probably fascinated with the reality of Jew and gentile being joined together into one church body. After all, he was the first to reach out to the gentile in response to a vision from God. Acts 10:9-16
- d) Not withstanding the vision, but following the lead of the Holy Spirit, Peter found himself at the house of Cornelious who was a gentile. Acts 10:28-29 This experience stayed with him as Peter rose to the occasion at the Jerusalem council and related the conclusion to his experience finally realizing that not only could gentiles be saved, but should not be burdened with the law. Acts 15:7-11

- d) The phrase "a good while ago" shows that the Jew had done very little in the way of evangelizing the gentile since that time. Peter now came to Antioch and realized the full implication of the vision he had years earlier. He ate and fellowshiped with the gentiles obviously ignoring the restrictions of the law.
- e) The law remained a stumbling block to the Jewish believers. They did not believe that adherence to it was necessary for salvation or that the gentile should be burdened with it, however, the Jewish Christian did not abandon it. The law was their tradition, their heritage and their identity as a nation for thousands of years.
- f) It almost seems as though the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem believed that the church would consist of two factions, with Peter the apostle of the Jews and Paul the apostle of the gentiles. *Acts 21:18-20* James was an advocate of the law as was Peter, at least up to this point. (The letter to the Hebrews is an appeal to the Jewish believers to move-on in the knowledge of Christ)
- g) Peter enjoyed his new found liberty in Antioch until the unexpected happened. Christian Jews from Jerusalem came to Antioch and Peter found himself caught between the proverbial rock and a hard place. Peter's home was in Jerusalem. Now that he was not embracing the law he feared for his reputation. The apostle to the circumcision was living as a gentile.
- h) In fear Peter withdrew. The word "withdrew" is a military term which means, "to retreat in order to secure shelter and safety." Peter retreated to that which was comfortable for him, what he was used to, and the way that provided him the greatest safety.
- i) In a short time Peter had separated himself from the gentile believers. Paul openly confronted and opposed Peter, because he was wrong and deserved the blame.

v2:13 And the other Jews dissembled likewise with him; insomuch that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation.

Paul was of such influence and the law so deeply rooted in the Jew that they all separated themselves from the gentile believers into this "dual church." Amazingly even Barnabas was caught-up in what amounted to great hypocrisy.

The words used present the idea of separation, but also of concealment and hypocrisy. There was some type of cover-up going on. They were acting differently from what they really believed. Everything Paul had labored for in this city was being undone.

v2:14 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 is that Jew and gentile would come together in the grace of Jesus Christ to form one church. It was a message of unity and peace. Furthermore, it demanded conduct that was above reproach.

- a) Peter and the others were not walking in truth, light and honesty. Peter was using himself as an instrument of division and not unity. The law was not the only issue here, but also deceit and hypocrisy which was injurious to other true believers.
- b) The verse literally says Peter was not straight forward. He was not walking on a path parallel to gospel truth. When Paul became aware of this separation he rebuked Peter before them all. This was a public reprimand. 1 Tim. 5:19-20
- c) Any cover-up or concealment was now out in the open. Everyone was aware of his hypocrisy including those from Jerusalem. Peter had been living as a gentile.
- d) The word "compellest" means "moral persuasion." Peter didn't preach that the gentiles should live as do the Jews, but his behavior would lead them to that conclusion. Following the law was seen as acceptance while now conformity was viewed as inferiority.

v2:15-16 We [who are] Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles, 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 here includes, for the benefit of the Galatians, the discourse given at Antioch, which was directed toward Peter, Barnabas and the other Jewish Christians, directly addressing the relationship between the Jew and the law.

- a) Paul, including himself, states that as Jews they had been highly privileged above the gentiles as God's people. They had a knowledge of God and the law, and yet, they had rejected their former system as a means of justification.
- b) They had turned to Jesus Christ as the means of their justification. He reminds them that they had all, as Jewish Christians, come to the conclusion that it was by faith in Jesus Christ and not by the works of the law that they were saved. Peter boldly proclaimed this at the Jerusalem Council. Acts 15:11

v2:17 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.

Based on their belief that justification is by faith and not by the works of the law, Paul proceeds to prove that the logical conclusion to their actions of separating themselves from the gentiles and so again promoting the law, is to make Jesus Christ a minister or a promoter of sin.

- a) Christ taught that what enters into a man does not defile him. Mark 7:15 He taught that all men that believe in him are saved. John 3:16 Peter's vision confirmed to him that all meats were now clean. These Jewish Christians, led by Peter, now felt guilt and shame in following the commands and example of Christ!
- b) If the law made the commands of Christ and the guidance of the Holy Spirit sinful, then those who adhere to the law made Christ a promoter of sin! The law, much of which was in the traditions of men that made God's word of no effect, was in opposition to the teachings and the Spirit of Christ. The division it was now causing in Antioch was proof.
- c) Christ is not a promoter of sin, so the problem had to be with the law. Peter, by his actions, was denying the teachings of Jesus Christ in favor of a system that he knew could not give justification of any kind. Peter once again heard the cock crow!

v2:18 For if I build again the things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor.

By turning their backs on the law as a means of justification and in turning to Christ, the power of the law over them was destroyed. The dispensation of grace had replaced that of the law with the death of Christ. Col. 2:14

In trying to empower or to again put the law into effect they prove themselves sinners. They were attempting to revive a covenant that had been fulfilled, which had served its purpose, and which by the command of God was fading away. A covenant that was incompatible with the new. Heb. 8:13

v2:19-20 For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God. 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 graciously continues his discourse in the first person stating that the law was lethal to him. Understanding the intended effect of the law, he was dead in it. The law led him to Christ through whom he is dead to the law.

- a) Being dead to the law he can now by grace through faith live unto God. As a regenerated man he can truly pursue the things of God or live unto God.
- b) This transformation from being under the law to being in a state of grace took place in his identification with Jesus Christ. The believer is crucified with Christ. He is thereby dead to the law, dead to sin, and freed from its power. In Christ he is a new creature. He is energized or empowered by Christ who lives within him.
Rom. 6:3-11
- c) In Christ, the penalty of the law was enacted and all of its conditions fulfilled. Believers are the purchased possession; having been given a heart of flesh, the believer can live to God's glory.

v21 I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness [come] by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.

Paul would not pursue a course that would tend to impede or nullify the grace of God extended to man in Jesus Christ. It was a grace extended to all men, meant to have free course. It was without attachments, the only requirement a repentant heart and a desire for righteousness.

- a) Implied is that those who did continue in the law did indeed frustrate the plan of the gospel. They at least marred the beauty of the message and at the worst nullified it completely.
- b) The bottom line is that if righteousness could have been attained by the law then there was no need for the death of Christ. The fact that Christ died proves the ineffectiveness of the law pertaining to righteousness.

This story proves to the Galatians that Paul's apostleship was independent to that of the twelve and that he enjoyed equal rank in his apostleship. It showed that Paul was not a manpleaser, but had stood up for the truth of the gospel to the point of confronting Peter. He shows that the question of the law had been dealt with in the past, but is still continued to frustrate the grace of God as it had in Antioch many years before. Finally it showed the Galatians the incompatibility of the law and grace. Rom. 11:6

v3:1. O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you?

Paul has so far defended the genuineness and the equality of his apostleship, as well as the truth of the gospel message he had delivered to the Galatians. With the example of the Jerusalem council and the story of his confrontation with Peter at Antioch, Paul is confident he has adequately defended his message and himself from the claims of the Judaizers. He will now directly address and appeal to these Galatian believers.

- a) For their recent fascination with the law at the expense of the grace which they had already experienced, Paul addresses them as fools. The word translated "foolish" does not refer to mental ineptitude, but has more of a connotation of mental laziness or carelessness. The idea is that they were a lot smarter than what they were now showing.
- b) The question "who hath bewitched you" conveys the same utter amazement as the phrase "I marvel" with which Paul first addressed the Galatians in chapter 1 (1:6). The idea is that they did not adopt these new views through reason, logic, or sound judgment. Paul sarcastically proclaims that there had to be another reason. Perhaps a charm or a spell of some sort had been cast upon them.
- c) The reason for his amazement was that he himself had clearly and plainly delivered the truth of the gospel to the Galatians. Paul states that he had made it so plain and covered it so thoroughly that it was as if Christ was crucified in their midst. If they would have witnessed the crucifixion with their own eyes they could not have understood it any better.

v3:2 This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?

Paul, still with an attitude, desires to put one question before them. "I want you to answer me one thing," he proclaims. He believed that their answer should be enough to settle the whole issue. He believes this should be a simple matter. The obvious answer should wake them from their spell and make their folly obvious.

- a) The question put to them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit because you kept the law or because you believed the message you heard me proclaim?" Paul takes them back to the beginning. "What initiated the change in your lives?" "In your hearts?"
- b) The Galatians were pagan Gentiles. They knew nothing of the law. The Holy Spirit was manifested in them simply by their belief in the message proclaimed to them by Paul. This was according to the design of God. 1 Cor. 1:21, Rom.10:17

- c) Paul implies that they had received the Holy Spirit even though he himself is confused by their behavior. He had seen it manifested in them. It is this power that had delivered them out of darkness that he wants them to remember.

1 Thes. 1:5

v3:3 *Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?*

Paul, still conveying his total and complete amazement concerning their actions, poses more questions to them, again with the goal of getting them to think and so to break the "spell" which they were under.

- a) Paul asks them if their vision had become so clouded or had they been so utterly careless with the truth they had received that they could think the course they are now on is the same road? How can they not know they are going the wrong way?
- b) They must remember that they had begun in the Spirit. The Spirit had delivered them from the flesh. How can the flesh now improve upon or make complete their life in the Holy Spirit?

"The apostle Paul calls this first owning of Christ and embracing the doctrine of faith, a beginning in the Spirit; their adding the necessity of obedience to the law of Moses, a being made perfect in the flesh; and argueth the unreasonableness of it, that their justification should be begun by a more noble, and made perfect by a more ignoble cause." Matthew Poole

v3:4 *Have ye suffered so many things in vain? if [it be] yet in vain.*

Remembering and reflecting on their beginning in the Spirit as well as all that they had been through because of the course they had followed in the Spirit, the question to the Galatians becomes, "Was it all for nothing?"

- a) The word "suffered" is neutral, so it can refer to good as well as bad experiences. The good would be the fruits or manifestations of the Spirit in their lives and their deliverance from paganism, while the bad would be the persecutions they would have suffered leaving their old lives behind. Acts 14:22
- b) In the middle of this "storm" of words, Paul offers them a glimmer of light when he states, "if it yet be in vain." Paul had not given-up on them, but wants the Galatians to make no mistake, they are now at the crossroads!

v3:5 *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?*

In what appears to be an afterthought, Paul proposes one more question to them for consideration which expands upon his reasoning in verse 2. "Did God who ministered to them in the Spirit and confirmed his work and presence among them in miraculous ways, do so by the law or through the gospel message?"

- a) Their answer or conclusion to the question should again be obvious. Paul came to them with the message of salvation by grace through faith. God confirmed this message with the manifestation of the Spirit within them as well as by miracles. Acts 14:8-10 Their conversion had nothing to do with the law.

v3:6. Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.

After appealing to the personal experiences of the Galatians as proof that salvation is not by works of the law, but through the hearing of faith, Paul will now prove it to them through the scriptures.

- a) Abraham was the father of the Jewish faith. He was a Gentile who was called out by God. Paul tells the Galatians that Abraham himself was saved by grace through faith. His simple belief in God was accounted to him for righteousness. Gen. 15:3-6

As believers, the Old Testament scriptures were now the heritage of the Galatians whether Jew or Gentile. No doubt the Judaizers, being more familiar with the scriptures, presented an erroneous interpretation to them. The Galatians knowing Christianity was rooted in Judaism were being deceived by those they perceived as experts in the law and covenants. Paul, without mentioning the arguments of the Judaizers, opens the truth of the scriptures to the Galatians in this letter.

v3:7 Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham.

That Abraham was saved or counted righteous by belief is the first building block of a proper understanding of the whole matter.

- a) This they are to know, to believe, and to commit to their hearts, for the true children of Abraham are those, who in like manner as Abraham, are counted righteous by believing and accepting the promise of God. Rom. 4:3-13
- b) The Jews looked to Abraham as their father because they were descended from him. They viewed him as the father of the law for the sign of circumcision was given to him. They erred in that they valued the sign over that which it represented. Christ himself called these individuals children of the devil. John 8:37, 39, 44-45

v3:8-9 And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, [saying], In thee shall all nations be blessed. So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham.

The scriptures confirm this. Being written thousands of years earlier they spoke of the Gentiles being justified by faith. This had been God's plan all along and now it had come about in Jesus Christ.

- a) This truth was spoken unto Abraham. *Gen. 12:3* He believed and was given understanding. *John 8:56* This truth which had been observed for so long because of pride, tradition, and interpretations of men was now again plainly revealed.
- b) Provision for the Gentile had been made in the promise to Abraham and had now come about in Jesus Christ. Faith in Christ is the common bond. The Jew had no advantage. All who believed were blessed along with faithful Abraham.

v3:10 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.

In contrast, Paul tells the Galatians that anyone who would seek to be justified by the law is doomed to destruction. He is again pointing out, with this contrast, that one is either under the law or under grace. The two are incompatible.

- a) Those under the law are doomed to destruction or cursed simply because the law demands perfect obedience. *Deut. 27:26, James 2:10*
- b) Once a law was broken there was no provision within the law to again gain a righteous standing. The curse or penalty was death. *Ezek. 18:20*

v3:11 But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, [it is] evident: for, The just shall live by faith. And the law is not of faith: but, The man that doeth them shall live in them.

Continuing to contrast the law with faith as a means of justification, Paul offers the best proof yet, namely, God had declared that it is only by faith that one can be justified in his sight. *Hab. 2:4*

- a) The law has nothing to do with faith; it is not of faith. It may justify a man in his own views or in the views of others, but never in the sight of God. The law is cold and impersonal simply demanding total and complete obedience.

- b) For the Galatians to go back to the law is to again trust in their own efforts, to gain and to maintain God's approval which Paul has proven is impossible. The law was not designed to impart righteousness.

v3:13 Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed [is] every one that hangeth on a tree:

Paul continues to demonstrate to the Galatians the incompatibility of law and grace. The law was a curse upon all men, for it required total obedience, pronouncing the sentence of death upon all who did not obey it in every point. (3:10)

- a) The law was totally inadequate as a means of justification and/or sanctification, for it provided no remedy. There was no way provided in it to escape its curse. It was a road of hopelessness and despair which all of mankind was destined to travel.
Rom. 3:9-20
- b) God, however extended His grace or unmerited favor to man, providing him a remedy outside of the law, to recover him from his hopeless position under the law. Paul identifies God's remedy to the Galatians as Jesus Christ, for he is the grace of God to man.
- c) Jesus Christ had redeemed them from the curse. The word translated "redeemed" in this verse refers to a purchase. It was used in reference to buying an individual out of slavery. He "bought the believer out of" the demands of the law; "bought the believer out of" his slavery to sin
- d) Jesus Christ accomplished this by taking the curse upon himself. He paid the penalty that the law demanded. The price was his precious blood as he gave his life to free his children who were held captive by sin. He perfectly met the demands of the law, and so, being personally free from its curse took the penalty of his children upon himself. Heb. 4:15, 7:25-27, Isa. 53:5-6, 11 Cor. 5:21

Paul appeals to the Old Testament to show the demands of the law were met and that Christ indeed was made a curse, for the manner in which he died bore witness to the guilt put upon him.

- a) Under the law, if one committed a sin worthy of death, he was usually stoned and then tied or hung on a pole of some sort. These were considered accursed of God. Deut. 21:22-23 Jesus hanging on a tree showed him to be accursed. He bore our sins in his body. 1 Pet. 2:24

v3:14 That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.

Jesus Christ redeemed them from the curse of the law so the blessing of Abraham, namely, righteousness and justification by faith, could come upon them. Until the law was dealt with the Gentile could not come in this way.

- a) Jesus Christ made the promises given to Abraham in regards to all the nations of the earth being blessed, a reality. The Galatians must understand that the law which they now again tried to revive had to be taken out of the way for the promise to be fulfilled and the blessing to be bestowed.
- b) Justified by faith, the Holy Spirit of promise takes up residence in the believers heart. He is the proof of our deliverance from the law and our righteousness in Christ. It is the Spirit that puts the seal of God upon the believer and who is our proof that we are God's purchased possession. *Eph. 1:13-14, Heb. 8:8-13*

If this Spirit of promise dwelt within them, it would bear witness with their spirit, that the words they now read were truth. It was the Spirit they received that delivered them from paganism, enabled them to endure persecution, and causes them to at first love the words of Paul. "Had they received the Spirit by works of the law or by the hearing of faith?" Experience as well as the truth and logic of Paul's argument should begin to stir their hearts.

v3:15 Brethren, I speak after the manner of men; Though [it be] but a man's covenant, yet [if it be] confirmed, no man disannulleth, or addeth thereto.

Paul uses an illustration of something which they all, as men, were familiar with (after the manner of men), to continue to prove to them the superiority of "the promise of the Spirit through faith" over the law. Paul continues to closely examine and explain the relationship between law and grace.

- a) Paul states that an agreement or contract made between two men is binding in the minds of just individuals. It cannot be voided or changed in any way after it has been ratified or confirmed. The point is, that if such covenants between sinful men are unalterable and binding Then how much more unalterable and how much more binding is a covenant initiated and confirmed by God.

v3:16 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.

The promises of God were given to Abraham and to his seed. Now, through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Paul explains that the seed is Jesus Christ and not the collective descendents of Abraham. The promises referred to are in *Gen. 22:17-19*.

- a) It is the descendents of Abraham in Jesus Christ who are as the sands of the seashore, that is, the collective army of believers throughout the ages who are the righteous through Jesus Christ. It is in Jesus Christ that salvation is offered to all men and so through whom all the nations of the earth are blessed. (vs. 7-9)

This is not a poor argument on the part of Paul based on a word that can be taken as either singular or plural, for it had been proved early on that the collective descendents of Abraham, after the flesh, were never intended with the rejection of his son Ishmael as well as the children of Keturah. It was narrowed down further with the rejection of Isaac's son Esau. The promise was never intended to be through the Jewish nation collectively as the One spoken of would come specifically from the tribe of Judah, then from the tree of Jesse and from the house of David, until to that house the One of promise was born. He was the One on whom the promise did rest and through whom they had become a reality.

v3:17 And this I say, [that] the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect.

Paul instructs the Galatians that the covenant between God and Abraham was confirmed or ratified by God 430 years before the law was given. It was the covenant in respect to Jesus Christ, that he would be a descendent of Abraham, and in Him the promises would be fulfilled.

- a) This covenant was confirmed and repeated by God many times and in many ways. It was confirmed to Abraham in solemn rites. Gen 15:5-10, 17 The covenant was confirmed by the oath of God. Heb. 6:13-18 It was confirmed in that it was repeated to both Isaac and Jacob. Gen. 26:4, 28:14 This final confirmation being 430 years before the giving of the law.
- b) Finally, it was confirmed in Christ, the covenant being likened to a last will and testament. It had its full force or was put into effect with the death of Christ. Heb. 9:16-17 And yet, in the councils of God, He was slain from the foundations of the world. Rev.13:8

"Believers who lived before the cross and never knew any of the specifics about Jesus were nevertheless forgiven and made right with God by faith in the anticipation of Christ's sacrifice, whereas believers who live after the cross are saved in looking back to it. When Christ shed his blood, it covered sins on both sides of the cross. The Old Covenant goes to the cross; the New Covenant comes from it. On the one hand faith pointed forward, whereas on the other it points back" John MacArthur

- c) The point of this verse is that the giving of the law could not make the promise, initiated and confirmed by God, void. The law, says Paul, can neither be a supplement to the promise or a substitute for it. Rom. 4:13

v3:18 For if the inheritance [be] of the law, [it is] no more of promise: but God gave [it] to Abraham by promise.

Paul hypothetically states, that if the inheritance, which is representative of the righteousness of salvation of God's people, is obtained by following the law, then it cannot be a result of the promise to Abraham and his seed. Conversely, if the inheritance is indeed of the promise, then it cannot be obtained or bestowed through the law.

- a) Paul has proven and here concludes that God declares the inheritance to be by promise. Any attempt on the part of the Galatians or any other to somehow include the law is a grave error. The conclusion is that the law and the promise, merit and grace are incompatible concepts. Rom. 4:2-5, 11:6

"The principles between the two types of inheritance are incompatible. One is by God's law and man's works and the other by God's grace and man's faith. Not only that, but the abilities to fulfill the covenants are of an infinitely different order. Man cannot succeed in perfectly keeping the law, and God cannot fail in perfectly keeping the promise. Because the covenant of promise is complete, the covenant of law can in no way improve or change it." John MacArthur

v3:19. 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.

If the covenant of promise was before the law, and if it was superior to the law, and if it was the vehicle through which God desired righteousness to be given, then the logical question becomes, "Of what purpose is the law?" "Why was it instituted?" "Is it not also of God?"

- a) Paul's simple answer, which he will go on to explain in detail, is, "Because of sin." It was because of sin. Its purpose concerned sin. It provided a more acute knowledge of sin, increased or excited man's sin, and yet at the same time outwardly restrained sin. As can be seen its purpose had nothing to do with righteousness.
- b) It was a temporary arrangement or covenant until Jesus Christ would come, to whom the promise was made. The law had purpose in the plan of God, but was to come to an end with the fulfillment of the promise. Rom. 10:4

- c) Paul adds that the giving of the law involved two types of mediators, namely, the angels and Moses, again showing it inferior to the promise in which God dwelt directly with man.
- d) The mediation of angels as to the law is not fully explained in scripture. God was with Moses in the mount when the law was given, but in this verse and others in the New Testament we find out the angels played some intermediary role. Acts 7:37-38, 53, Heb. 2:2
- e) That Moses stood between God and the people as a mediator is clear. Moses repeatedly spoke to the people the word of God, warning them and at times even "bargaining" with God on their behalf. Deut. 5:5

v3:20 Now a mediator is not [a mediator] of one, but God is one.

Commentators argue that this is a very difficult verse to properly translate and offer many opinions as to the exact interpretation. It no doubt modifies the previous verse, in particular, that Moses played the role of a mediator when the system or covenant of law was given to him (vs.19)

- a) A mediator, by definition, stands between two parties. Moses, and then the Jewish priesthood stood between God and the people administering the law. It was a two way agreement. Very basically, the people would keep the law and God in return would grant them life. Deut. 5:33
- b) The contrast is to the promise in which God acted as a single party. God gave a promise and the obligation was upon himself to fulfil it. It was unconditional. The promise was given to Abraham and to his seed, which was Jesus Christ. God, in effect, entered into a covenant with himself to redeem man.
- c) The results of the promise (Jesus Christ) could in no way be tied to the covenant of the law. They were separate. One was an unconditional promise of God, the other a conditional agreement in the hands of a mediator. The covenant made with Moses could not void or be added to the promise made to Abraham. (vs 15) The promise was in effect and binding long before the law was given. (vs 17)

v3:21 [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.

Paul, thoroughly familiar with the logic of the Judaizer, anticipates their defense, listing their erroneous conclusion in the form of a question. Was Paul saying that the law worked against the promise or was contrary to the promise? Was he implying, as the

Judaizers reasoned, that God was contradicting himself by initiating the law after the promise was given?

- a) With the emphatic, "May it never be," Paul refutes the accusation that this is the logical conclusion to his arguments. The promise and the law may be separate, but they are not contradictory. They may be incompatible as to righteousness, but very compatible as to the plan of God.
- b) The law could not impart life; it could not justify a man or bestow righteousness upon him. If the law was designed by God for this purpose, then righteousness would have been by the law. If righteousness was by the law, then it would indeed be contradictory to the promise, in effect, offering two separate means of salvation. It would also have rendered the death of Christ unnecessary.
- c) Paul was smart enough to know that God could not contradict himself, and so his arguments, unless twisted, suggest no such thing. The promise and the law, both established by God, had a different purpose in his plan. The purpose of the promise was to impart life, it was the error of his opponents and of the Jewish nation as a whole that believed the law shared the same purpose and so sought to reconcile it with the promise.

v3:22 But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe.

Paul begins to present a true picture of the law to the Galatians. The scripture, through the law contained within, concluded all to be under sin. This was the declaration of God pronounced upon and made known to man by the word. *Ps. 130:3, 143:2, Is. 1:5-6, Rom. 3:10-20*

- a) Declared to be unrighteous, literally shut up on all sides by sin, and with no chance of escape, the promise, representative of God's righteousness, was given to those who would believe, that is, to those who would have faith in Jesus Christ.
- b) The scriptures exposed the law to be a dead end in regards to righteousness, so that the promise would shine forth as a beacon, cutting through the darkness of sin and hopelessness and leading men to Christ.

"The law discovered their wounds, but could not afford them a remedy: it showed that they were guilty, because it appointed sacrifices and purifications, which were manifestly insufficient to take away sin: and therefore the great design of it was that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to those that believe, that being convinced of their guilt, and the insufficiency of the law to effect a righteousness for them, they might be persuaded to believe on Christ, and so obtain the benefit of the promise." Matthew Henry

v3:23 *But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed.*

Before righteousness by faith in Christ was fully revealed or before the way of faith was clearly manifested, the Jew was a prisoner of the law. Paul explains to the Galatians that to be under the law was not something to be desired.

- a) With the word "we", Paul includes himself, for he had experienced first-hand what it was like to be under the hand of the cruel "jailer" which was the law. He was a prisoner to its demands being constantly in violation of it and oppressed by its guilt. Under the law, he was on death row awaiting the just sentence of the law to be carried out. Rom. 7:24
- b) Paul, as representative of the Jew in general, remained confined in this prison until the way of faith was fully revealed. The idea again is that the hopeless situation produced by the law was meant to open their eyes to the way of escape provided. Rom. 7:25

The way of faith was always present. As we have seen Abraham was saved by faith. Paul in this verse speaks of the general effect that the law had upon the Jew. The Jew in his despair brought about by the law could have thrown himself upon the mercy of God looking forward to the promised Messiah. Instead they chose to relieve the guilt brought about by the law by devising teachings and traditions, convincing themselves they could attain righteousness by meeting the laws demands as they perceived them.

"Not only from the viewpoint of the history of redemption, but even in a personal way throughout all times, before faith comes, every person is, in the deepest sense, kept in custody of the law of God and the burden of sin. Every human being either continuously lives as a captive slave chained under the judgment of God's immutable, universal; law, the demands of which he must pay by eternal death and hell, or he lives by faith as utterly free from judgment as a redeemed child of God under his sovereign and eternal grace." John MacArthur

v3:24 *Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster [to bring us] unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.*

Paul, seeking to clearly explain to the Galatians the purpose of the law, employs another example which his readers could all relate to, that being the schoolmaster.

- a) The word translated "schoolmaster" had a very different meaning in the original language. He was not a teacher, or at least this was not his primary responsibility, but, as Hendricksen explains, "... is the man – generally a slave – in whose custody the slaveowner's boys were placed, in order that this trusted servant might conduct

them to and from school, and might, in fact, watch over their conduct throughout the day. He was, accordingly, an escort or attendant, and also at the same time a disciplinarian."

- b) So the law served as an escort and a disciplinarian, readying and preparing us for instruction, leading us to the teacher who is Christ, that we might learn of justification by faith.

v3:25 But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster.

The arrangement described above was obviously temporary in nature. The boy grew, lessons were learned and upon his graduation into adulthood the schoolmaster was no longer needed, and so, relieved of his duties.

- a) Likewise, when one came to faith in Christ, the law was no longer needed. It had served its purpose. It had accomplished the desired effect. The idea is that there is no more need for the law. They, as believers, as graduates, could move on in faith, the path that the law had led them to.

v3:26 For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.

Paul, based on all that had said, and assuming that they indeed had come to faith in Christ, proclaims to these Galatians that they are the children of God. They had come of age, in their belief they had all of the privileges of a son who had entered adulthood.

- a) With the phrase "for ye all," Paul states that the Jew and Gentile alike are sons of God, that is, equal heirs of the promise by faith alone. They may not have been under the exact same schoolmaster or their schoolmaster may not have employed the exact same methods, but through the grace of God they had arrived at the same place.
- b) They had received sonship, there was no need for them to go back to being under a schoolmaster. Such a course of action would make no sense. *John 1:12*

v3:27 For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

With the phrase "for as many of you" Paul again stresses the fact that through faith in Christ they are all on equal footing, enjoying the same grace and privilege.

- a) They have been immersed into Christ, that is, both Jew and Gentile. They have taken on his characteristics and share in his sonship. They have been placed into one church having put on Christ. They have on the same clothes or the same uniform. Christ is their common bond with whom they are identified.

v3:28 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.

The message of oneness and equality in Christ stated positively in the prior verses is here stated in the negative for added emphasis. Paul lists some of the ways people were distinguished in that day with the message that in Christ, such distinctions are unimportant.

- a) The Jewish men used to pray, "I thank God that thou hast not made me a Gentile, a slave, or a woman." There is no room for such prejudices in Christ. God is not a respecter of persons. All believers are indwelt by the same Holy Spirit of God. *1 Cor. 12:12-14, Rom. 10:11-13*

v3:29 And if ye [be] Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

Paul has proven and here in summary declares that believers are the children of Abraham and the inheritors according to the promise. It is the same declaration he made in verse 7.

- a) The Judaizers were in error for they misinterpreted the scriptures. The Jew now had no advantage, the law had served its purpose, and all that were of faith were one in Christ as the true children of Abraham. *Rom. 8:14-17*

V4:1-2 Now I say, [That] the heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all; But is under tutors and governors until the time appointed of the father.

Paul expands upon the analogy of a child becoming an adult. He continues to give the Galatians a true picture of the purpose of the law within the Jewish system, and so, to illustrate to them that the law had fulfilled its purpose. To attempt to adapt it into their lives as Christians would be as illogical and ridiculous as again trying to become a child as his illustration will show.

- a) His illustration is one that they were all familiar with, that is, both Jew and Gentile. It was an example that could readily be understood. They would all agree that an heir, even though he be in principal the master of the estate, if he was underage, was as powerless as a servant. He had no control over the estate and in a very real sense was a prisoner within it.
- b) In fact, he is even under some of the servants who are his guardians or teachers. (3:24-25) The father of the heir in his wisdom set-up this situation for his son's own welfare. Lessons had to be learned and a time of preparation necessary. No responsible individual would leave an estate in the hands of a child.
- c) As Matthew Poole states, "... so the time of the law being as it were the time of believers nonage, those who lived in that time were used as servants." The true heirs lived under the Mosaic economy, a system which they could not completely understand, but continued in it in faith. *II Cor. 3:13-16*

V4:3 Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world:

So the Old Testament, or the Mosaic economy when they were under the law, was representative of their childhood or the time before they were of age. It was a learning period, the law representing the guardians and instructors preparing them for adulthood. Their understanding was limited. All they needed to know was to obey.

- a) With the word "we" Paul includes himself as an heir once under the Mosaic system, as one who was once a child and in bondage. They were under the "elements of the world" which refers to the physical nature of all the do's and don'ts of the law.
- b) The idea Paul is impressing upon the Galatians, both Jews and Gentiles, was that the law was a preliminary step or period. It was a spiritual childhood so to speak. It was useful, having a definite purpose, but was a temporary situation.

v4:4 But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law,

In accordance with the illustration, "The fullness of time" is representative of "the time appointed of the Father." It was the day of liberation when the child was considered a man and was afforded all of the rights and privileges that went along with his new status. It was the day that marked an end to the temporary but burdensome arrangement. It was a day of graduating to something better and more fulfilling.

- a) So on this day, determined by God in eternity past, He sent his Son, the Seed, upon whom the promise rested. As Matthew Poole puts it, "*it is when that time came in which God had designed to bring his people into the most perfect state of liberty, which in this life they are capable of.*"
- b) The fact that he was "sent forth" by the Father shows that He had existed before his birth. He was with God and in fact was God. John 1:1 He is eternal within Himself and so able to cover all sin throughout all time.
- c) He was made or born of a woman showing that He was a man, truly sharing in our nature. His dual nature perfectly qualified Him to eternally fill the office of Mediator.
- d) Finally, Jesus Christ was born under the law, that is, subject to it as were all men. Perfectly fulfilling its demands, He was not subject to its curse, but voluntarily and vicariously took the curse upon Himself. (3:13)

"In subjection to it, that in Him all of its designs might be fulfilled and by His death the whole might be abolished, the law dying when the Son of God expired upon the cross."
Adam Clarke

v4:5 To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.

Being divine, and yet, born of a woman; being under the law, but perfectly fulfilling its demands, Jesus Christ was qualified to redeem the children of God from their fallen nature and the sin that excited it.

- a) This redemptive act of Jesus Christ marked the day of liberation. The old economy being fulfilled had passed away and the children known of God received full status as sons and heirs. They were not sons after His nature as was Christ, but sons of divine adoption. Rom. 8:3-4
- b) So through this analogy, Paul has shown the Galatians that in Christ, through the promise, they had all the rights and privileges of sons. Sonship had been realized. The law represented the ignorance and bondage of youth from which the promise had liberated them. Would an adult again seek the restrictive nature of youth? Paul gives them a true and proper view of the law.

V4:6 *And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.*

The Galatian believers were indeed sons, adopted by the Father. Their adoption a result of the fact of their redemption from the law. The proof of their sonship was the Spirit of His Son who resided in their hearts.

- a) It is the Holy Spirit within them, with whom Paul, through these written words, is attempting to connect. It is the Holy Spirit, quenched by their ignorance and sin, whom Paul is appealing to. It is the Holy Spirit that cries out to the Father from their innermost parts.
- b) The Galatians know the Spirit. It was this Spirit that gave them the right to approach the God of the universe with such familiarity, that is, as a son approaches his dad. It was the Spirit within them that had changed them, given them a love for the truth, a longing for holiness, and would enable them to persevere in the truth. Paul had earlier proved that they had received this Spirit of the promise through faith. (vs 14)

"With respect to this adoption it is rather useless to look for human analogies, for it surpasses anything that takes place on earth. It bestows upon its recipients not only a new name, a new legal standing, and a new family relationship, but also a new image, the image of Christ. Earthly parents may love an adopted child ever so much. Nevertheless, they are, to certain extent, unable to impart their spirit to that child; but when God adopts, He imparts to us the Spirit of His Son." Hendricksen

V4:7 *Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.*

Paul summarizes his argument and in doing so personalizes it. He tells each and every Galatian believer, as individuals, that they are no more a slave, but a son. This is the position they hold according to the promise of God, ratified 430 years before the law, and fulfilled by Jesus Christ. The Spirit of God within them attesting to these great truths.

- a) Furthermore, Paul tells them they are heirs of God. This refers to all the favor, rights and privileges that a son enjoys. Believers hold a favored status with the God of the universe and are promised the inheritance of heavenly glory.

Rom. 8:14-18, 23

V4:8. *Howbeit then, when ye knew not God, ye did service unto them which by nature are no gods.*

Up to this point, Paul has been addressing the Jewish law for it is the system the Galatians

have recently decided to attempt to incorporate into the Christian faith. Now, however, Paul will remind the Galatians of their former lives as pagan Gentiles, his intent being to force them to compare their former religious experience with being under the law.

- a) As pagan Gentiles, the Galatians did not know the one true God. They knew nothing of the law of the Jews, and yet, they too were in bondage. The phrase "did service unto them" denotes slavery. They too were slaves to various systems of religion, and what's more, slaves to gods that didn't even exist. Their gods were imaginary, but their slavery to them very real. *Rom. 1:21-25*
- b) The idea is that their servitude was even worse than that of the Jew and so the knowledge and freedom they had gained from the gospel message should be all the more precious to them.

V4:9 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?

A great change had taken place. They were delivered from ignorance and bondage through the gospel. They now knew the one true God, more precisely, they were now known by God.

- a) It was God who had reached down and had extended His mercy. It was God who had revealed Himself to them, redeemed them, and made them to be heirs.
- b) With a spirit of surprise and indignation, Paul asks them how they can again desire bondage. How can they again desire to return to a system very similar in nature to what they had been delivered from?:
- c) The system of law they now had turned to was weak in that they, like their pagan customs, had no power in them to justify or save them. It was beggarly or poor in that it could not impart sonship and the spiritual riches of being an heir.
- d) The idea once again is that the position they enjoy in Christ through the promise is infinitely superior to anything they had in the past. It was the ultimate, the best that God could give according to his plan. Would they reject it and go back into a state of ignorance and bondage?

V4:10 Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years.

The extent to which the Galatians had begun to substitute or supplement law and ritual in the place of the simple gospel message of salvation by grace through faith is seen. Paul specifically mentions their observance of days, months, times and years.

- a) The Galatians now evidently believed that observing Sabbath days, feasts of the new moon, festival seasons and special years of jubilee could gain and/or secure God's favor. They were most likely falling into all the ceremony and ritual involved in these observances.
- b) The true meaning of Christ and the freedom He represented was at best being obscured. It was time to awaken and recover themselves from the "bewitching" influence the Judaizers had upon them. Col. 2:16-23

V4:11 I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain.

With what Paul has said, it appears that the Galatians, under the influence of the Judaizers, had adopted the Jewish calendar of worship. They had put themselves in bondage to all the ceremony and ritual called for by the Jewish law. Paul reflecting on their present state, breaks from the teachings and examples that have dominated this letter and addresses them in a more personal manner.

- a) Paul has already expressed his amazement as to the sudden turn these Galatians had taken. (1:6) Employing sarcasm, he has suggested to the Galatians that he is hard-pressed to come up with a reason for their behavior. (3:1) It is interesting to note that when Paul speaks of doctrine, he is full of hope, including them with himself as sons and heirs. (3:25) However, when he reflects upon their behavior he experiences a godly fear for them.
- b) So Paul is confident. He writes this letter in confidence, but yet, he is also fearful. He believed he knew these Galatians, but their behavior produces doubt. The possibility exists that everything he thought he had accomplished here would turn out to be so much wood, hay and stubble.
- c) Paul had already attempted to reach these Galatians by questioning if everything they had been through for the gospel's sake was for nothing (3:4) Now he asks them if he himself had wasted his time. It is this thought that provokes this personal appeal.

V4:12. Brethren, I beseech you, be as I [am]; for I [am] as ye [are]: ye have not injured me at all.

Paul makes a sincere appeal to the Galatians. He literally begs them, as brothers in the faith, to immediately get off the path they are on. He desires them to embrace Christ alone as to righteousness and in so doing to dispel his fears.

- a) With the phrase "be as I am", Paul pleads with them to turn their backs on the

Jewish law as a way of righteousness and sanctification. Paul had done this, counting all of his supposed righteousness by the law to be so much garbage in view of Christ. Phil. 3:4-8

- b) With the phrase "I am as ye are", Paul refers to the Galatians as Gentiles. They did not know the Jewish law and yet had embraced Jesus Christ as their righteousness through the gospel message. In renouncing the law, Paul had in effect become as a Gentile. Acts 21:21 Paul was the apostle of the Gentiles. (Hendricksen and MacArthur translate this verse, "I am become as ye are")
- c) The irony is apparent. Paul who possessed a Jewish "pedigree" that even opponents envied, renounced it all for Christ, while the Galatians who possessed the knowledge of Christ now sought those very things that Paul had abandoned.
- d) Paul abruptly changes the emphasis to his personal relationship with them. He assures them that they had done no wrong. He does not write this letter out of personal hurt. He had not taken their defection from the truth personally, but writes out of concern and love for them.

V4:13-14 Ye know how through infirmity of the flesh I preached the gospel unto you at the first. And my temptation which was in my flesh ye despised not, nor rejected; but received me as an angel of God, [even] as Christ Jesus.

Paul reminds them of his initial visit to them, appealing to the past. These are the memories he had of them. Paul desires to arouse in the Galatians the emotion and the memory of the bond that once existed between them. These were the good times, the happy times.

- a) Paul did not come to them as some powerful figure, but preached the gospel in sickness and weakness of body. They had every reason to reject him, but did not. On the contrary, they overlooked his infirmities and treated him with the same respect they would have rendered a divine being. This is what Paul remembers of them. II Cor. 10:10, 12:7-9
- b) In these times the sick were usually rejected. Diseases were more likely to be disfiguring or disabling and the symptoms of the illness repulsive. Illness was also generally looked upon as a judgment or not being in a favorable position with the gods. This was even the Jewish mindset. John 9:2, Acts 28:3-4

Appeals to a better past in order to stir up love and dedication in the present is not uncommon in the scriptures. The writer to the Hebrews attempts to get them to remember their past. Heb. 10:32-33 Christ in His instruction to the church at Ephesus also calls on them to remember their former behavior. Rev. 2:4-5

V4:15 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.

The Galatians, when Paul first came to them, embraced the gospel message with great joy and satisfaction. They considered themselves blessed and viewed Paul, as the one who brought those blessings, himself blessed.

- a) They viewed and accepted him as a true messenger from God. Such was their affection for him that they would have given him or done anything for him even if it meant a great loss to themselves. Such was the value placed upon the message he had brought them. Such was the effect that the gospel message had upon them.
- b) Some believe the reference to the eyes simply represent the fact that the Galatians would have been willing to give up the thing most dear to them for Paul. Others believe it is a direct reference to the ailment he was suffering from. Either way the point is that the Galatians had the greatest affection for him as a messenger of God.
- c) The question asked is basically, "What happened?" "Where is the affection that you had for the good news I brought as well as for me personally as your mentor and friend?" "What has changed between us?"

V4: 16 Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?

Their feelings for Paul had changed simply because of the new "friends" and doctrines they had embraced. Paul had not changed in the least. He was the same man they had thought so highly of, preaching the same message that had provided them with such joy.

- a) Now they would consider him an enemy for the truth he held onto? They had forgotten their joy. They had abandoned the truth. They had rejected Paul, forgetting his ministry among them.
- b) Paul would not compromise the gospel to appease the Judaizers. (2:5) He would not compromise the gospel to keep peace with another apostle. (2:11) So he would not compromise the gospel to keep dear friends such as the Galatians. He stood upon the truth. Could they now consider him an enemy?

V4:17. They zealously affect you, [but] not well; yea, they would exclude you, that ye might affect them.

Turning his attention to the false teachers, Paul exposes them as the real enemies, directly questioning their motives and accusing them of being deceitful to accomplish their own agenda.

- a) The word translated "affect" means "to seek." It was often used in the sense of a man courting a woman. These individuals were zealously courting the Galatians as a man would pursue a woman he desires. They came to the Galatians with an excitement, expressing concern for them.
- b) The phrase "not well" indicates that their "suitor" is full of bad intentions. They are indeed being courted, but the motives of these individuals are self-seeking.
- c) With the phrase, "they would exclude you," Paul suggests that the true intentions of these individuals is to isolate them, that is, to alienate them from Paul and the simple message of salvation that he preached. In so doing, these individuals would receive the love and esteem of the Galatians. This is what they were truly after employing deceitful means to get it.

The analogy of a man courting a woman is a good one. Paul, the honest suitor with the best of intentions, driven by a genuine love is set up to look bad by the deceitful suitor whose only intent is satisfy his own lusts. This is the picture Paul is painting.

V4:18 But [it is] good to be zealously affected always in [a] good [thing], and not only when I am present with you.

Paul had earlier proclaimed, "ye have not injured me at all." In the same spirit he wants them to understand that his words against the false teachers are not born out of jealousy. He has no desire to possess them or claim them as his own.

- a) Paul tells them it is a good thing to be eagerly courted or sought after, but always and only in a good thing. That is, of those who come in truth with godly intent. They could listen to and love other men of the truth as they once did him. He did not seek to be the sole benefactor of their affection or their sole source of truth.

V4:19. My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you,

Demonstrating his genuine and sincere feelings, Paul makes an emotional appeal to the Galatians calling them his little children. Paul often affectionately refers to those who came to Christ through his ministry as his children. He views himself as a parent, both a father and a mother, to stress his love, concern, and sincerity toward believers.

- a) His words, however, also reflect the amazement he felt concerning the present situation in Galatia. Paul had already suffered great trouble in bringing Christ to them. He likens the process to labor pains which had once turned to great joy upon their conversion and subsequent growth in Christ.

- b) He marvels for the labor pains had unexpectedly returned. It seems unnatural to Paul. He is perplexed. Nevertheless, he will endure until they truly take on the likeness of Christ.

v4:20 I desire to be present with you now, and to change my voice; for I stand in doubt of you.

Paul desires to be with them. He desires to be able to change the opinion he now has of them. He would much rather be writing a letter of commendation than of rebuke. He would much rather be filled with confidence in them rather than a feeling of persistent doubt.

- a) He could gauge the situation better if he was there, if he could talk to them directly. Maybe it wasn't as bad as he had been led to believe. Maybe a letter of such harshness was unwarranted.
- b) Under the circumstances, with himself being so far removed from them at present, he remains in doubt. MacArthur translates the word used for "doubt" as "being at wits end." Paul remains perplexed, confused and amazed. The impression given is again that he doesn't know exactly what to make of the situation and so wishes he could be present.

v4:21. Tell me, ye that desire to be under the law, do ye not hear the law?

Paul will attempt for the final time in this letter to convince the Galatians that the law is not the answer, but only another dead-end, that is, just another form of bondage. Turning to the scriptures, he will again show them only the children of promise are the true children of Abraham and of God.

- a) Paul basically issues a challenge to those who desire to be under the law, to truly listen to what the law has to say. Paul is not here speaking of the letter of the law, but uses the term in its broadest sense. The first five books of Moses were labeled "the law" by the Jews. Paul will take a story from the book of Genesis, the first of these books, and impart to them spiritual truth.

Paul is writing this letter under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Many, if not all, of the happenings in the Old Testament were representative of a greater spiritual truth. Historical events in this way, had a double meaning. Many of the "hidden truths" are explained to us by the writers of the New Testament. Many others, I believe, are not. In the rest of this chapter, Paul will reveal to us the spiritual truth hidden in the story of Isaac and Ishmael. It is important to take these comparisons or allegories only as far as what we are told in the scriptures. *II Peter 1:20*

V4:22 For it is written, that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondmaid, the other by a freewoman.

Paul reminds the Galatians that Abraham had two sons and that each had a different mother. This fact will be the center of his contrast between what amounts to two separate lines proceeding out of Abraham.

- a) Ishmael, the first born, was born of Hagar, the slave of Abraham's wife Sarah, who gave her to Abraham so that he would not be without an heir.
Gen. 16:2-3, 15 Isaac, on the other hand, was the offspring of Abraham and Sarah.
Gen. 21:2-3

V4:23 But he [who was] of the bondwoman was born after the flesh; but he of the freewoman [was] by promise.

Paul contrasts the circumstance behind the births of these two sons of Abraham. His point is to show that from the beginning there was a marked difference between the two. They did not share the same rights and privileges as sons of Abraham, but were treated differently.

- a) Ishmael was born of a slave, and so, born into bondage. He was born after the flesh, that is, under completely natural circumstances. In fact, he was the product of Abraham and Sarah taking matters into their own hands, and so, attempting to force the hand of God.
- b) Isaac, on the other hand, was born in accordance with a promise of God. God intervened in the natural order of things, and so, the conception of Isaac was a miraculous event. Rom. 4:18-20, Heb. 11:11-12 So Ishmael is the son of the flesh and the son of bondage, while Isaac is the son of promise upon whom when all the rights and privileges rested.

V4:24 Which things are an allegory: for these are the two covenants; the one from the mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is Agar.

Paul begins to enlighten his readers to the spiritual truths hidden in the story of Ishmael and Isaac. Each of Abraham's sons, together with his respective mother, were representative of the two covenants. "These are the two covenants," that is, representative of the covenants in a very real and precise sense.

"That is called an allegory, when one thing is learned out of another, or something is mystically signified and to be understood further than is expressed. The scripture hath a peculiar kind of allegories, wherein one thing is signified by and under another thing."
Matthew Poole

- a) Hagar, according to the allegory, represents the law. It was given by God on Mount Sinai and became that system or covenant of bondage. Just as Hagar, a slave, could only bear children destined to slavery, so those under the law were slaves to it.

V4:25 For this Agar is mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children.

Hagar is indeed a true representative of Mount Sinai and so the law. It is located in Arabia and was not in the land of promise. It was a temporary stop in the desert which in itself represented a time of wandering and searching.

- a) Furthermore, Paul makes a connection between Hagar, Sinai and the earthly Jerusalem. The phrase "answereth to" means "is in the same rank with" or "is in correspondence to." Paul is saying that Jerusalem, at the time he wrote this letter, was like Mount Sinai or was the modern day representative of Sinai, being the seat of those under the law. It proceeded out of Sinai or was fathered by Mount Sinai.

The Jews, and likewise the Judaizers, were the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. They believed they were of the patriarchs. The spiritual, however, does not always mirror the physical as is here the case. When the Jews reasoned with Christ that Abraham was their father, his reply was that their true or spiritual father was the devil. Here, in like manner, Paul tells them that those that are of the law are not of Isaac, but the offspring of Hagar the slave. This is a connection they would have never made, their eyes blinded to the spiritual, being in bondage to the physical. Again, these things are spiritually discerned. *Rom 9:6-9* It is only the Holy Spirit that can open their minds to these truths, the Holy Spirit that Paul believed dwelt within them.

V4:26 But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all.

In contrast to the earthly Jerusalem is the Jerusalem that is above or the heavenly Jerusalem. Paul contrasts the physical and earthly to the spiritual and heavenly.

- a) Sarah, in accordance with the allegory, is representative of the promise. It was given to Abraham and confirmed to Sarah in the bearing of Isaac when she was well past her childbearing years. It is the system or covenant of freedom. Sarah gave birth to the heir as those that are now of the promise are free and the children of God.
- b) Sarah and the promise are representative of the heavenly or spiritual Jerusalem which is the church. Those of the promise enjoy the freedom of the gospel message. They are no longer in bondage to the physical, that is, to the beggarly elements of religion, but have the righteousness of God.

- c) The phrase "mother of us all" again points to the fact that descent was unimportant. This heavenly Jerusalem consists of Jews and Gentiles losing their separate identities to become one. (3:28) They are the spiritual children of Sarah. (3:7) *Phil. 3:20, Heb. 12:18-24*

V4:27 For it is written, Rejoice, [thou] barren that bearest not; break forth and cry, thou that travailest not: for the desolate hath many more children than she which hath an husband.

In regards to heavenly Jerusalem, the mother of us all, Paul quotes the prophet Isaiah and through the Holy Spirit shows the prophecy to have a dual meaning. The prophecy was given not only to the historical Jerusalem, but also to the spiritual.

- a) In its historical sense it was given to comfort the Jews in captivity in Babylon. Their cities desolate, being forsaken for a time by their husband (God), would again rise to prominence. *Is. 54:1, 6-9*
- b) Paul now interprets this prophecy in regards to the heavenly or spiritual Jerusalem. The Gentiles, barren and desolate without a husband, would have many more true children inhabiting the spiritual city than would the Jews, who had a husband all along. The city would be inhabited by all those adopted by God according to the promise. Children by the gospel.

V4:28 Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise.

The conclusion of the allegory is that believers were, as Isaac, the children of promise. It follows that those of the law, as Ishmael, were the children of bondage. This was the spiritual meaning behind the account of Isaac and Ishmael taken out of the book of the law. If they listened, this is what the law itself concluded. (vs. 21)

"Every believer, like Isaac, is supernaturally conceived, miraculously born, and the offspring of God's promise to Abraham fulfilled in Christ." John MacArthur

V4:29 But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him [that was born] after the Spirit, even so [it is] now.

Paul continuing to reflect on the account of Isaac and Ishmael, compares the relationship that existed between these two sons of Abraham, representing the two covenants, to the relationship that now exists between those of the promise and those of the law.

- a) The relationship is one of persecution. Ishmael resented Isaac and persecuted him. *Gen. 21:9* There was also "bad blood" between Hagar and Sarah.

Gen. 16:4-5 In the same way those of the law persecute and try to force their views upon those of the promise.

The Jews persecuted the Christians, while the Judaizers tried to at the least, make Christians conform to the law. To this day those who believe in salvation through religion or works hate those of the promise who have the righteousness of God by grace through faith. It is interesting to note that even the physical descendants of Ishmael and Isaac (Arabs and Jews) are at odds in accordance with this verse.

V4:30 Nevertheless what saith the scripture? Cast out the bondwoman and her son: for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman.

Paul appeals to the scriptures as to what their course of action should be according to all he has said. The scriptures were to be their authority. Going back to the beginning of the matter, how was the situation handled between Isaac and Ishmael?

- a) The bondwoman and her son were cast out. The son of the slave would not share the inheritance with the son of the free. Gen. 21:10-12
- b) The Galatians are to cast off the bondage of the law. Law and grace cannot dwell together for they are incompatible and the relationship antagonistic. It is also implied that they are to cast out the false teachers from among them.

V4:31 So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman, but of the free.

In confidence, Paul addresses them as brothers. He tells them that they are not of the bondwoman, but of the free. They are identified with Sarah and not Hagar, they are of the promise and not the law. They are all free in Jesus Christ. John 8:36

v5:1. Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.

The word "therefore" refers back to all the logic and arguments Paul has so far presented to the Galatians in this letter. Based on what has been said, Paul exhorts those who are the children of the promise to stand fast in the message through which they had received their freedom. As Hendricksen puts it, the Galatians "*are now encouraged to maintain that freedom and to interpret and apply it properly.*"

- a) In Jesus Christ they were liberated from the law and so were free from its curse as well as its demands. They were therefore to be unwavering and firm in these truths. They were to walk in the benefits of this grace that had been freely given to them.
- b) Stated negatively, they are not to involve themselves in the law from which they were set free. They were not to involve themselves in the "weak and beggarly elements" in which there was no power to save or to sanctify.
- c) The yoke was put upon the necks of the oxen binding them together when work was to be done. It symbolizes a heavy load or burden from which one would desire to be free. Matt. 11:28-30 They are not to be entangled again, that is, to put on the yoke that God in his mercy had generously removed.
- d) The word "entangle" suggests the far reaching effects their present course of action would have on them. It would literally "wrap them up" touching every aspect of their lives, and could not be controlled or easily undone.

v5:2 Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing.

Paul, who was himself circumcised, and who, in effect, was once a doctor of the law, solemnly proclaims to them out of experience and with all apostolic authority that by giving themselves over to the Jewish law, of which circumcision was the binding sign, they would in effect nullify every advantage he had described to them which belongs to those of the promise.

- a) "I Paul say unto you." There can be no doubt as to his position. To those who were saved among the Galatians, by adopting the law, they would continue to live in a manner inconsistent with the faith they proclaimed. They would continue to quench and grieve the Spirit of God while at best stunting any Christian growth.
- b) Those who were not saved among the Galatians would never attain righteousness by the law and the grace of the gospel would never benefit them. They would go back to a dead-end very similar to what they had been delivered from.

A "christ" who is a part of a system has no power to save or to sanctify. It is a "christ" who is controlled, and not in control. Jesus Christ is King of kings and Lord of lords, any system that attempts to restrain Him is in opposition to Him.

v5:3 For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law.

Paul, in the same solemn tone, testifies with all apostolic authority as to the nature of the beast which is the law. Most of the Galatians were not familiar with the law and so did not have a proper understanding of it. Paul here references what he had explained to them in chapter 3.

- a) He wants them to understand that those who choose to put their trust in the law are obligated by the law itself to follow it perfectly. They do not have the liberty to pick and choose what aspects of the law they would incorporate into their Christian lives, for in the law there is no liberty. (3:10, 21)
- b) The Galatians were being compelled to be circumcised by the Judaizers. Paul explains to the Galatians the meaning of this sign. It was a testimony that one was obligated and bound to the law. It was the sign that made a Jew, a Jew.
- c) This is where the line is drawn. In the case of the Galatians it would show what path they had chosen. Stand firm in your liberty or be circumcised. The two are in opposition. Bondage or freedom?

v5:4 Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace.

Paul continues to try to get them to see the incompatibility of the law and grace. Law and grace cannot be mixed. It is an either/or proposition. Try as they might, the Galatians cannot be under the law and be of Christ at the same time. Under the direction of the Judaizers they were convinced that it was indeed possible.

- a) If they embrace the law, believing that in keeping it they are justified, Christ becomes of no advantage to them. If they are justified by the law, then Christ is dead in vain, that is, his death was unnecessary. (2:21)
- b) If they were justified by the law, then they are cut-off from grace. Again, the two cannot rightfully co-exist. Paul is demonstrating to them that in embracing the law they are rejecting Christ and the grace He bestows. Hopefully, this thought will shock them into a right way of thinking. It will clear their confusion.

- c) Peter would have never considered Christ a minister of sin, however, Paul pointed out to him that by his actions that is exactly what he was saying. (2:17) In the same way, these Galatians would never dream of abandoning Christ, but Paul; informs them that is exactly what they are doing by embracing the law.

No one has ever been justified by the law, Christ did not die in vain, and no true Christian has ever fallen from grace. Paul is not here concerning himself with eternal security, but is contrasting the two systems, to prove their incompatibility to these misguided individuals.

v5:5 For we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith.

In contrast to those who would seek righteousness by the law; to attain righteousness through their own efforts, are the true believers who, in faith, eagerly await the fullness of the righteousness that was promised to them.

- a) The righteousness of Christ is imputed to the believers account solely by the grace of God. This righteousness will never be perfectly manifested in the flesh and so remains a hope to the believer.
- c) However, it is a sure hope, for the Holy Spirit dwells in the believer representing a "down payment" or a pledge from God that righteousness and redemption will be completed in the believer in due time. So, since the hope of the believer is sure his wait becomes an expectation of the promise to be fulfilled in him by faith.

Rom. 8:23-26

v5:6 For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love.

Paul explains and enforces the fact that in Christ ceremony and ritual are meaningless. Outward form merits nothing. In Christ, Jew and Gentile come together to form one people in faith.

- a) Faith is what is important and true faith is manifested in love. It is a working faith. Christ proclaimed to the woman at the well that the time would come when men would worship in spirit and in truth. This had come to pass with his death, resurrection and the giving of the Holy Ghost.
- b) Paul contrasts to the Galatians the difference between working for righteousness and working out of a position of God imputed righteousness. True works are a product of a changed heart. The true work of faith is love. One now serves in love and not for payment.

"Love needs neither the prescriptions nor the proscriptions of the law, because its very nature is to fulfil the laws demands. The person who lives by faith works under the internal compulsion of love and does not need the outward compulsion of the law." John MacArthur

v5:7-8 Ye did run well; who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth? This persuasion [cometh] not of him that calleth you.

Once again Paul takes the Galatians back to the not so distant past when they were walking wholeheartedly in the truth of the gospel. Borrowing a form from the athletic games that refers to a footrace, he reminds the Galatians that they had gotten off to a good start. They had burst from the blocks" so to speak and were well on their way to a victorious finish.

- a) The amazement and surprise in Paul is evident as he again asks the same basic question, "What happened?" The word "hinder" means to "cut-off" or "drive back". With the race in mind the idea is that someone had gotten in their way, interfering with them.
- b) With the word "who" Paul is not interested in identity as much as he is inquiring as to the authority or status of these individuals. He is asking the Galatians who these men were that could so easily turn them from the truth and turn them away from Paul. Who were these men that could so easily undermine his apostolic authority?
- c) The truth they chose not to believe was that they were saved by grace alone through faith alone and so were free of the law in Christ. Paul assures them that the belief they had now embraced was not of God. It was not of the Spirit he believed dwelled within them.

v5:9 A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump.

Paul makes use of a proverbial saying to complete his point. The proverb is that although a small amount of yeast is introduced into a lump of dough it is not long until it invades and influences the entire mass. Christ compared the teachings of the Pharisees to leaven.

- a) Paul seeks to use it in the same way referring either to the doctrines of the Judaizers or to the Judaizers themselves as leaven. The idea is that a few individuals or a small amount of false doctrine had taken its course and had now influenced the entire group.

v5:10 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.

Through the clouds of doubt that Paul had for these Galatians a ray of hope shines forth. Paul expresses his confidence that they will return to the truth. His hope and confidence in them is through the Lord. If they are Christ's they will recover and all will work for the good. Phil. 1:6

- a) Paul has confidence that they will embrace the pure gospel and would be like minded with him as opposed to identifying with the doctrine of the Judaizers. He is confident that their spirit would bear witness with the words of this letter.
- b) Paul is also confident that those that trouble them, that is, those who distort the gospel message of grace will be held accountable. They will be judged according to the truth and righteousness of God, whether they be a teacher, an apostle or an angel from heaven. (1:8) II Pet. 2:9

v5:11 And I, brethren, if I yet preach circumcision, why do I yet suffer persecution? then is the offence of the cross ceased.

Paul continues to address the Galatians concerning those that "hindered them from obeying the truth." Those who's influence "leavened" this entire church and who now continued to "trouble them." From this particular verse it appears that those individuals spread false accusations concerning Paul's stand on circumcision.

- a) The charge seems to be one of inconsistency, that Paul was an advocate of circumcision when it was in his best interests, that he himself was circumcised and had himself circumcised others since his conversion. Acts 16:3
- b) It is true that Paul generally complied with the customs of the Jews when he was with them. Possibly he encouraged others to be circumcised under circumstances similar to that of Timothy, however, he never advocated circumcision as a requirement of salvation or that a Gentile should submit to the rite.
- c) Instead of going into a detailed explanation as to some of his past decisions, Paul answers the charge with a question. If Paul had preached circumcision as the Judaizers alleged, then why was Paul persecuted by the Jews?
- d) If the message Paul preached included circumcision then the cross would no longer be a stumblingblock to the Jew. The cross would no longer be the end of the law, but a supplement to it. Christianity could become another Jewish sect. The two could co-exist as they did in Jerusalem.

- e) The fact that Paul was hated and persecuted by the Jews bore witness to what he indeed taught and believed, that the cross was the end of the law and all believers were one in Christ without distinction. Any thought that Paul was an advocate of circumcision was nonsense.

v5:12 I would they were even cut off which trouble you.

Paul loved the Galatians and had such a passion for the church of Jesus Christ that he had zero tolerance for those who would come against it, especially those who would contaminate it from within through false doctrine.

- a) The Judaizers were a prime example. They professed to be Christians, but promoted what amounted to another gospel. (1:6-7) They would follow Paul from city to city as a pack of scavenging dogs peddling their false doctrine, seeking whom they could devour. *Phil. 3:2*
- b) The hate Paul has for this doctrine as well as his frustration with these individuals who promote it surfaces, as he directs one of the harshest statements in the scriptures to these individuals who are undermining his work in Galatia.
- c) He basically says that he wishes those that were troubling them with the law and this doctrine of circumcision would castrate themselves. He wishes they would all make themselves eunuchs so their folly would be exposed.
- d) The idea is that if the Judaizers believe that the physical act of circumcision is so pleasing to God, then why don't they go all the way, make the ultimate sacrifice, and so really please God. Paul shows in dramatic fashion the fallacy of a works system. Where does one stop? Is sacrificing ourselves the ultimate work as in some pagan religions?
- e) Some commentators prefer a milder interpretation simply suggesting that Paul wishes these individuals would be cut-off or excluded from the church, however, the word used was commonly tied to castration and since the topic is circumcision the stronger interpretation is most likely correct.

v5:13. 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 previous statement totally dismisses those that were mixing the doctrines of Christ with the law. They had nothing in common with Paul. In his inspired opinion they followed another gospel and should therefore be accursed if they continued in it. (1:8)

- a) In opposition to those who were a trouble to them and children of bondage according to the gospel they preached, Paul addresses the Galatians as brothers who have been called to liberty. However, just as his opponents had a false view of the law, so also did they have a false view of liberty in Christ.
- b) Paul's opponents, not understanding the influence of the Holy Spirit within a believer, interpreted liberty from the law as a license to sin. They believed that without the restraining force of the law sin would run rampant. Surely, they believed, liberty promoted sin. Paul, they concluded, was a teacher of lawlessness. *Rom. 3:8, Jude 4*
- c) Paul instructs the Galatians as to the correct view and understanding of liberty. With liberty came responsibility. Even freedom is subject to abuse. They were not free to cater to the flesh for it is their flesh that they were delivered from. They now had the freedom not to sin. They were delivered from the law which excited sin.
- d) Christian freedom is subject to and governed by love, that is, love for God and for others. The believer is given a heart of flesh and the indwelling Holy Spirit. He is not called to lawlessness, but to have the mind of Christ. *Phil. 2:2-5*
- e) Sin is selfishness while love is selflessness. As MacArthur puts it, "*Christian freedom takes believers to an even higher level than simply opposing the flesh. Position in Christ frees his followers through love to serve one another. His freedom is the paradoxical freedom of loving subservience.*"

v5:14 For all the law is fulfilled in one word, [even] in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

Paul continues to enlighten the Galatians as to their Christian duty to love. The law of love has been written in their hearts. The cold letter of the law, fulfilled in Christ, is given life and meaning in the believer.

- a) The Christian is not in bondage to the law and no longer subject to its curse, but himself fulfills the law in Christ as he loves. The love within the Christian incorporates the law and is itself a manifestation of the Holy Spirit in the believer. *Matt. 22:37-40, Rom 13:8-10*

v5:15 But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another.

Having reminded them of their responsibility to love, Paul warns them against turning upon one another. The language paints the picture of two wild beasts fighting with such ferocity that both sustain fatal wounds.

- a) Although the exact situation including numbers and percentages is not known, it can rightly be assumed that at least three factions now existed in the church. The Judaizers and their followers; those who had remained faithful to the truth all along; and those who viewed grace as a license to sin. To the dismay of the other two groups, each enjoys a certain amount of influence within this professing church.
- b) It is also safe to assume that this letter would have some influence on this church. Paul warns them that any healing process must be governed by the love they are called to exhibit as believers. If love rules this church will have a chance to be healed.

v5:16 [This] I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.

Paul's instruction to the true believer is to walk or to live in the Spirit, that is, to let the Holy Spirit of God within them guide and control every aspect of their lives. In this way, and only in this way, will they enjoy success even over their fleshly lusts.

- a) The word translated "walk" refers to a controlled and habitual way of life. It is therefore progressive with each experience adding to the next. It is the process of sanctification or of maturing in Christ. *II Peter 1:5-8*
- b) They knew this Spirit within themselves and witnessed its workings in the apostle Paul. (3:2, 5) They are to submit to this Spirit of Christ within them and let it be the controlling influence in their lives. The Christian plays an active role which involves will and effort.

"This is not merely a command; it is the statement of an important and deeply interesting truth – that the only way to overcome the corrupt desires and propensity of our nature, is by submitting to the influences of the Holy Spirit. It is not by philosophy; it is not by mere resolutions to resist them; it is not by the force of education and laws; it is only by admitting into our souls the influence of religion, and yielding to the guidance of the Holy Spirit of God." Barnes

v5:17 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.

Paul plainly spells out the conflict between the Spirit and the flesh implied by the instruction given in the previous verse. The Spirit and the flesh are incompatible and contrary to one another. They are in opposition to each other.

- a) With this fact in mind, if they do not submit to the Holy Spirit or walk in the Spirit as previously stated a great conflict takes place in the inner man. The flesh can no longer have free reign because of the Spirit and the Spirit cannot have free reign if provision is made for the flesh.
- b) A type of "spiritual treadmill" is the result. The individual cannot do the things that he would, either good or evil. As the JBF Commentary states, "*Verse 17 contemplates the inability both for the accomplishing the good we 'would,' owing to the opposition of the flesh, and for doing the evil our flesh would desire, owing to the opposition of the Spirit in the awakened man, until we yield ourselves wholly by the Spirit to 'walk by the Spirit.'*"

v5:18 But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law.

The answer is to again submit to the Spirit. Such action would relieve the conflict, for the Spirit can overcome and control the flesh. The purpose is not that the lust of the flesh would disappear, but that it would not be fulfilled.

- a) Putting themselves under the law excites the lust of the flesh. This was the design of the law as Paul explained previously. Submitting to the Spirit, they are not under the law for the two are mutually exclusive.

v5:19 Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are [these]; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness,

Paul instructs the Galatians to "walk in the Spirit" and "to be led of the Spirit." In so doing they "would not fulfill the lust of the flesh" and would make manifest the fact that they "were not under the law." (vs 16, 18) The law and the flesh are tied together in that an atmosphere of law provides fertile ground for the works of the flesh.

Rom. 7:2-14

- a) The proponents of the law put their faith in the works of the flesh. Paul will demonstrate to them the true nature of the works of the flesh. These things are the eventual end of those who trust in the flesh for righteousness. These things in whole or in part are the end of those who are under the law.
- c) Before beginning his list of the works of the flesh (which obviously is not all inclusive) Paul states that these things are plainly seen. They are known and have

been experienced by all in their corrupt human nature. Again, Paul is trying to get them to see the fallacy of trusting in their flesh. *Rom. 3:20*

- c) This "sin list" is not in any particular order, but is given in definite groupings, the first of which is sexual sin. This is probably an area in which the Galatians were particularly susceptible for most pagan religions encouraged all sorts of illicit behavior.
- d) Adultery is sex where one or both partners are married to another. Fornication refers to sex outside of marriage. Uncleaness is a more general term that can refer to any sort of impure thought, word, or deed. Lasciviousness denotes a lack of restraint in this area, that is, a bold callous attitude as to be without shame or concern.

v5:20-21 Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told [you] in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.

The second group relates to religion, or man's concepts on how he can approach God or tap into the spiritual realm. Generally, it is man's attempt to control God and/or the spiritual realm.

- a) Idolatry is the worship of man-made objects or things, while witchcraft has to do with magic and sorcery of any kind. Witchcraft had to do especially with the use of mind altering drugs and practices that would put someone "in-touch" with the spiritual realm.

The third and largest group of "works of the flesh" relate to human relationships or their interactions with each other.

- a) Hatred is an attitude of gross ill-will toward another. It can lead to variance which is the strife and conflict that hatred breeds.
- b) Emulations are jealousies. It is a manifestation of hatred born in covetousness, a resentment of someone's blessings that we perceive as being undeserved.
- c) The list continues with wealth which refers to anger, ill-temper, and hostility. Strife denotes a constant readiness to act out one's anger, that is, to be argumentative and prone to physical violence.

- d) Seditions have to do with dividing into practices for evil or misguided purposes. It is rebelling against authority. Heresy is propagating false doctrine, that is, literally attacking the truth of God.
- e) The third grouping concludes with envy and murder. Envy is basically jealousy taken to another level. It is being obsessed over another's possessions or good fortune to the degree that a malicious act may result. Murder is the ultimate of malicious acts, it is the ultimate in hatred.

A fourth group consists of drunkenness and revellings. It is out of control behavior. It no doubt referred to the drunken orgies encouraged by many pagan religions.

1 Peter 4:3-4 This group represents the insatiable desires of our flesh for general trouble and mayhem.

So these are the works of the flesh. These are the things which our flesh naturally generates in the absence of the controlling Spirit. Many of these behaviors are practices under the disguise of religion. 11 Peter 2:18-22, 11 Tim. 3:2-5

- a) Paul had told them before and here reminds them that such behaviors are inconsistent with one who professes Jesus Christ. The word "do" means "to practice" which in turn means a continual, ongoing and habitual behavior. Those that practice these things are not of the Spirit, but of the flesh and will not inherit the kingdom of God. 1 Cor. 6:9-11
- b) Hopefully, as the Galatians read the list given above, they were appalled. These are the behaviors they were delivered from and sought to avoid. They had been led to believe the answer to controlling these behaviors was the law. Paul told them these are the works of the flesh and so can't be controlled by the flesh. The law would merely excite their flesh all the more.

v5:22-23 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.

The answer is to walk in the Spirit and to be led by the Spirit. They will hopefully see that the list of behaviors and virtues Paul will now list are the very things they desire in their lives. Paul sets up a contrast for them between the things of the flesh and the fruit of the Spirit.

- a) The fruit of the Spirit is naturally produced or proceeds from the Spirit who indwells a believer. These virtues do not latently exist in a man, but come directly from the Spirit of God within him.

- b) The word fruit is singular which seems to indicate that all of the virtues come in one package. All these virtues will be manifested in the behavior to some degree. Since they are produced in one package the list is simply multiple manifestations of one fruit. Therefore, they are related to one another and overlap.
- c) Love is the all encompassing virtue, in fact, in many ways it is synonymous with fruit, for from love all of the other manifestations flow. (v 14) 1 Cor. 13:13 Love is the mark of a Christian. 1 John 3:14 Jesus Christ is the supreme example of the love of God just as he is the supreme example of all virtue.
- d) Joy and peace are the result of being right with God. They are deep down and heart felt virtues which have little to do with our physical situation. In fact, many times these virtues are the strongest when our outward circumstances are at there worst. 1 Peter 1:7-9
- e) Longsuffering is just that, suffering long. It is patience under trying circumstances. It is being always in a state of contentment. Col. 1:11 Gentleness is kindness. It is having a mild-mannered disposition. It is being polite and approachable at all times.
- f) Goodness is being morally upright in every way. It is uprightness that earns the respect of others. Rom. 5:7 Faith or faithfulness is the ability to believe and to remain trustworthy to our calling and our duty. Faith is the vision and assurance that enables the believer to go on.
- g) Meekness is strength under control while temperance is self-control. The Christian is to bring his mind and body under subjection to Christ. 11 Cor. 10:5
- h) The reason that if they are led of the Spirit they are not under the law (v 18), is that against the fruit of the Spirit there is no law. The whole purpose and design of the law is fulfilled in those who have the Spirit. As Lightfoot puts it, "*Law exists for the purpose of restraint, but in the works of the Spirit there is nothing to restrain.*"

v5:24 And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.

Paul reminds the Galatian believers, that in Christ, They are dead to the afflictions and lusts of the flesh. Their flesh has been crucified or executed through their identification with Christ. They have been freed from the bondage of sin and death.

- a) In Christ the victory is sure, but not fully realized within each individual believer. MacArthur has an interesting analogy comparing the flesh to a chicken with its head cut off. The death blow has been delivered, but the chicken will continue to

run, flop around, and then twitch till the last nerve finally succumbs to the inevitable.

v5:25 If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.

So the flesh is crucified in the sense that the death blow was delivered by Christ upon the cross. Positionally the believer lives in the Spirit. He is a citizen of heaven and no longer of this world. Paul exhorts them to walk in the Spirit, that is, to live a life that is in harmony with the position they hold.

- a) It is in the realm of human responsibility to properly appropriate the provision God has given. The believer is to seek, find, use and develop the fruit which the Spirit gives or brings to the believer. If they walk in the Spirit the flesh will become as the "twitching chicken."

v5:26 Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another.

Paul seems to warn them as to the ends of following the law. In addition to everything he had said, it also will tend to divide, creating a type of "caste system" among them as it had among the Jews.

- a) Those that were more disciplined or simply had more human resolve would better keep the law outwardly and be filled with pride. This would set-up a competition between individuals as well as groups as to who was the most spiritual. The weaker groups and individuals would be driven to envy.
- b) They should not be desirous of such a system that would put the individual over the group. A system that would put personal accomplishment over the welfare or growth of all. A system that in reality focused on the physical or upon outward appearance while ignoring Spirit and truth.

v6:1. Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.

Paul instructs the spiritual among the Galatians believers as to their duty toward their fallen brothers. It probably pertains to those whom had fallen into the legal bondage of the law, and by means of this letter were repentant and sought to be restored into the truth.

- a) The spiritual are not necessarily the leaders, but those who had continued through much adversity to remain faithful to the truth. They had never ceased to walk in the Spirit, live in the Spirit, and to manifest the fruit of the Spirit. They had stood fast in the liberty wherewith Christ had made them free.
- b) Concerning those who were at fault, it says that they were overtaken. The word usage suggests that these individuals did not deliberately sin or even plan to sin, but as Hendricksen puts it, *"embarked upon a devious course before even realizing to the full extent the ethically reprehensible or injurious nature of the act."*
- c) This is what has been implied in this letter several times, namely, that the Galatians didn't fully understand what they were getting into in adopting the law. A good part of this letter deals with Paul explaining to them the ramifications of putting themselves under the law.
- d) If true reconciliation was to be accomplished, a spirit of love and service needed to prevail. As Paul had already spelled out to them, the alternative was destruction. (5:13-15)
- e) The word translated "restore" literally means "to put a dislocated bone back in place." The spiritual are to restore those who were at fault with a spirit of meekness or gentleness and in view of their own shortcomings and weaknesses. If not for the grace and strength of the Spirit afforded to them, they could have just as easily been the ones who needed to be restored.
- f) Paul reminds the spiritual that "pride cometh before the fall." They are not above temptation and if not governed by a spirit of meekness and love will in fact open themselves up to temptation. 1 Cor. 10:12

v6:2 Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.

Restoration demands involvement. It is the responsibility of the spiritual to "carry with endurance" the burdens of their weaker brothers. In so doing they fulfil the law of Christ which is love.

- a) In this case, the burdens of those seeking restoration maybe shame, guilt, and/or a feeling of inadequacy. The spiritual are to lighten their load by helping them to shoulder it with genuine forgiveness and loving instruction.
- b) All must realize that "they are all in this together." They form one body. They must realize that if one member of the body is afflicted it affects the entire body. Restoration of a brother is a benefit to all.
- c) In a more general sense, all believers are to "esteem others better than themselves." They are to "look upon the things of others" which is loving involvement and the bearing of burdens. Phil. 2:3-4

v6:3 For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself.

Paul warns them of self-conceit which is the opposite of bearing one another's burdens, is not born in love, and will be a hindrance to any attempted restoration of a brother.

- a) If any think themselves superior because they did not get caught up in this false doctrine of the Judaizers, then he is himself deceived, being ignorant of his own character having forgotten the true source of his strength.
- b) Such will not be interested in restoring their brother, but will be quick to judge, condemn, and lord their supposed superiority over others. They will be as the Pharisees
- c) God hates an attitude of pride and conceit. Rom. 6:16-17 Without Jesus Christ a man can do nothing. No man possesses any innate goodness or superiority. All man is what he is by the grace of God. Rom. 12:3

v6:4 But let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another.

Comparing ones self with others fosters pride and conceit. A Dutch proverb states, "He who mirrors himself in the mirror of another persons conduct mirrors himself gently." God does not grade on a curve, so with such judgment a man again deceives himself.

- a) Every man should examine himself in light of the absolute standards of God contained in the word and according to the law of Christ, which is love. The Holy Spirit bearing witness with the believers heart and conscience should be the source of the believers joy.
- b) Those who were spiritual, who did stand fast in the liberty of Christ cannot rejoice

or find self-approval at the expense of their fallen brothers. If they judge themselves righteously they will see that any boasting on their part will be boasting in the Lord. 11 Cor. 10:12, 17-18

v6:5 For every man shall bear his own burden.

The reason for such proper self-examination is that every individual will ultimately be judged by God's standards and not his own. Every individual will stand before the judgment seat alone, being accountable for his own actions, bearing his own burden.

- a) This verse does not contradict verse 2 in which the word "burden" refers to trials and temptations which come upon us in this life. The law of Christ commands believers to unite in shouldering these burdens. How well we fulfill this command becomes a part of the burden or load which was entrusted to us which we will carry to the judgment seat. 1 Cor. 3:8

v6:6 Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things.

Paul addresses the Galatians as to both the duty and importance of providing financially for the pastor-teachers. It is not unusual for Paul to abruptly change the subject as he nears the end of his letters. Possibly, the talk of burdens brought to mind the burdens being carried by these men.

- a) According to some, the idea of voluntary giving was revolutionary. The Jews were taxed to support their priests, while the Gentiles paid fees to support their pagan religions. If this was the case a reminder was necessary.
- b) The word "communicate" means "to share". The idea is, that a type of partnership should exist between the teacher and the ones who are taught. The teacher provides spiritual insight and wisdom, sharing the good things of the word, while the congregation shares all good things, that is, material gifts or things of sustenance, with the teacher. 1 Cor. 9:11, 14; 1 Tim. 5:17-18; Heb. 13:16-17

v6:7-8 Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. 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.

Paul relates this specific partnership between teacher and congregation to a more general, but immutable law of God. That the following principle is unchangeable is seen in the solemn warning given. God is not mocked or more literally, "One cannot turn up the nose at God."

- a) The rule can be observed in nature. The type of seed planted will produce that type of plant. If a man plants a corn seed, he will get a corn plant. More generally it is the universal rule of cause and effect.
- b) Paul informs the Galatians that the same rule in effect concerning spiritual matters. If a man sows or invests in the things of the flesh, he will reap the things of the flesh, but if he invests in the things of the Spirit, he will reap the things of the Spirit.
- c) The harvest of the flesh are temporary things and pleasures, having no lasting or significant value. They are the things that tend to corrupt and in fact compete with the things of the Spirit. The harvest of the Spirit is everlasting. They have infinite value to the soul and are in fact the fruit of the Spirit.
- d) Although Paul is speaking primarily of how one uses his wealth or money, the principal also applies to how one invests his time. Does he invest his time in the things of the flesh or in the things of the Spirit.

"Of course, there is a much wider application of the principle to our lives; because all that we do is either an investment in the flesh or the Spirit. We shall reap whatever we have sown, and we shall reap in proportion as we have sown. II Cor. 9:6 The believer who walks in the Spirit and 'sows' in the Spirit is going to reap a spiritual harvest. If his sowing has been generous, the harvest will be bountiful, if not in this life, certainly in the life to come." Warren Wiersby

v6:9 And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.

Paul warns the Galatians of two inherent dangers or errors on the part of the Christian as to spiritual sowing. They must not become discouraged and eventually give-up when results, or in accordance with the analogy, the harvest, is not immediately realized.

- a) For the farmer who sows the seed, the harvest is a long time in coming. In that time much work is required and many obstacles must be met and overcome until the harvest is safely in the barn.
- b) In the same way sowing to the Spirit or well doing can seem like a futile and thankless endeavor. As Barnes puts it, *"There is so much opposition to the best plans for doing good; there is so much to be done; there are so many calls on their time and their charities; and there is often so much ingratitude among those whom they endeavor to benefit, that they become disheartened."*

- c) The believer must persevere in well-doing for in due season, that is, in God's time he shall reap. *1 Cor. 15:58* (Paul demonstrated perseverance in well-doing with these Galatians)

v6:10 As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all [men], especially unto them who are of the household of faith.

Finally, Christian service and benevolence is to be rendered unto all men. The opportunity to do good is to always be taken advantage of and is, in fact, to be considered a privilege in the mind of the believer.

- a) The believer is a "light unto the world." *Matt. 5:14-16, 44-45* He is to contribute his time and resources to the welfare of all men, however, his first priority is always to other believers.

v6:11. Ye see how large a letter I have written unto you with mine own hand.

Paul, in what appears to have been intended as a conclusion to this letter, states that he has written it in his own hand.

- a) In Greek, this sentence is somewhat ambiguous. Does Paul refer to the length of the letter or the size of the letters with which he wrote? The answer to this question determines whether he personally wrote the letter or simply the closing, beginning with this verse. Both views have their respective arguments, however, it is impossible to know for sure.
- b) The important thing is that Paul personalized this letter in some special manner. He wanted to show his deep love and concern for them, while emphasizing the importance of the decisions they were about to make.

v6:12 As many as desire to make a fair shew in the flesh, they constrain you to be circumcised; only lest they should suffer persecution for the cross of Christ.

This verse begins what appears to be a post script. Paul decides he is not quite ready to close. He takes one final shot, so to speak, at his opponents by exposing their true character and motivations.

- a) The Judaizers urged or compelled the Gentile Christians to be circumcised to prove their zeal for their age old external rites and customs and so to avoid persecution from the Jews.
- c) They saw the merit in Christ, but were not willing to pick up their cross and to

follow Him. They feared rejection and persecution from their families, their friends, and their nation. They were more concerned with making a good impression, keeping the peace and gaining status on what they perceived as a new Jewish sect.

"It is not so much even Christ himself who is the problem here, as Paul expresses it, for a Christ who is a teacher (but only a teacher) can well be assimilated by Judaism or by any other religion. The difficulty is the cross, because the cross speaks of the necessity of a divine death as the only solution to the sin of man." Boice

v6:13 For neither they themselves who are circumcised keep the law; but desire to have you circumcised, that they may glory in your flesh.

Paul had told them that those who were circumcised were a debtor to do the whole law, so the Judaizers themselves were under the curse. They themselves did not keep the law, for no man could. Yet they sought to put these Gentiles under the law.

- a) Their motivations were selfish. The Gentiles were spiritual trophies. The Judaizers could boast that they had brought the Gentiles into the Jewish fold. Possibly that they had taken these individuals away from the renegade, Paul. Again, in order to prove their zeal for Judaism and its preservation..
- b) These individuals were not true Christians or true Jews, but had taken some middle ground. The rite of circumcision became a meaningless ritual, even to them. It had been rendered by them as a sign of their success, their belief in the law, and a means to avoid persecution.

v6:14 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.

In contrast to the Judaizers who gloried in their accomplishments in the flesh, while avoiding the ramifications of the cross, Paul could glory only in the cross. He could not even consider glorying in anything else.

- a) Compared to Christ and the effect He had produced in the heart and soul of Paul, to glory in anything else was inconceivable to him. Paul had experienced the power of the cross which liberated him from the world. The world's praise and approval were no longer important for he was crucified or dead unto the world. (2:20), *1 Cor. 1: 23-25*

"I desire no higher honor than to be saved by the Son of God. It is the exaltation of my nature, and shows me more than anything else its true dignity, that one so great and

glorious sought my redemption. That cannot be an object of temporary value which he sought by coming from heaven; and if there is any object of real magnitude in this world, it is the soul which the eternal Son of God died to redeem." Barnes

v6:15 *For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature.*

Still in contrast to his opponents, Paul proclaims that in Jesus Christ the external rite of circumcision has been rendered meaningless. God takes no pleasure in the form of the flesh, but in the spiritual condition of a man.

- a) The regenerated man, the new spiritual nature of the believer is called, by Paul, the new creature. The flesh being crucified, both the circumcision and the uncircumcision are now one new man. *Eph. 2:15, II Cor. 5:17* Circumcision is of the world, but the new creature is by the cross of Christ.

v6:16 *And as many as walk according to this rule, peace [be] on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God.*

Paul identifies those who live or walk in accordance with the rule he has just stated as being the true believers. He pronounces the blessing of peace and mercy upon them.

- a) The rule he speaks of is the gospel message. It is the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ and through it being crucified or dead to the world. It is placing the cross above all as the only means of salvation and righteousness. It is being born again, living in the world as a new creature in Christ.
- b) Such will experience the true peace of standing righteous before God, for they will have experienced His infinite mercy as manifested in Jesus Christ and the cross.
- c) Believers are described by Paul as the Israel of God. They are the true Israel or the spiritual Israel as opposed to the Israel of the flesh who are the Jews. Physical form or position has no bearing on salvation or righteousness. (3:27-29) The promise or Abraham is upon those who are of faith. (3:6-9) The Israel of God is made up of those who walk in faith according to the Spirit. *Rom. 2:28-29, 9:6-8*

v6:17 *From henceforth let no man trouble me: for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus.*

Paul states that from now on no one should trouble him. He has, in this letter, firmly stated his beliefs and has defended those beliefs against those who would question him.

- a) His opponents had met with success in Galatia by questioning Paul's apostolic authority, his motivations and his sincerity. Paul has answered all of their accusations and once again appeals to the persecution he has suffered for the sake of the gospel. (5:11)
- b) All of Paul's scars were received as a direct result of his stand in the truth. For his belief and proclamation that Jesus Christ offers the only way of salvation through the cross. The Jews had the mark of circumcision upon their flesh which bound them to the law, but Paul bore the scars of persecution on his body which bound him to Jesus Christ, who preceded Paul in suffering at the hands of the world for the sake of God's truth. 11 Cor. 11:24-28

v6:18 Brethren, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ [be] with your spirit. Amen.

Paul closes affectionately calling the Galatians brothers. Paul held no ill will toward them whatsoever. (4:12) He does not take their error personally, but longs for them to come back into the fold.

- a) Paul wishes upon them the grace or favor of Jesus Christ, realizing it is only His grace, bearing witness with their spirit to the truth, that will once again return them to the right path.

Amen!