

## Galatians

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### **Paul's visits to Jerusalem**

1. The visit after he left Damascus (Acts 9:26-30; Gal 1:18-20)
2. The famine visit (Acts 11:27-30; Gal 2:1-10)
3. The visit to attend the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15:1-29)
4. The visit at the end of the second missionary journey (Acts 18:22)
5. The final visit that resulted in Paul's Caesarean imprisonment (Acts 21:15—23:35)

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### **I. INTRODUCTION 1:1-10**

#### A. SALUTATION 1:1-5

#### The Messenger

##### 1:1

- Since Paul was not one of the original twelve apostles (Matt 10:1-4), he had to assert his apostleship.
- In his pre-Christian life, he was known as Saul of Tarsus, the persecutor of the Christians (Acts 7:58; 8:1; 9:1).
- In his conversion on the road to Damascus, Christ addressed him as Saul (Acts 9:4).
- For the next nine years of his Christian life, he continued using the name Saul (Acts 9:17; 11:25; 13:1-2).
- At the beginning of his first missionary journey, he began to go by Paul (Acts 13:9, 13).
- Paul strongly asserted that he was an *apostolos* "apostle", which means one who is sent. The New Testament uses this word in two ways. In its more restricted sense, the word means someone who had received a special commission from the risen Christ (Paul and the Twelve apostles). In its more general sense it refers to those sent with a message from God, usually by a local church (as in Acts 14:4; 2 Cor 8:23; Phil 2:25). Here, he is using it to make himself equal with the Twelve.
- He denied that his apostleship originated with men, "not *apo* from' men". When he received his missionary calling while at the church in Syrian Antioch (Acts 13:1), the local church did not appoint him as apostle, but only recognized his calling.
- He also denied being appointed as apostle by any man.
- He stated that Jesus Christ, whom he described as equal with God the Father and raised from the dead by the Father, had commissioned him directly (Acts 9:3-6; 26:16; 1 Cor 9:1). Jesus Christ is put equal to God the Father, yet He is distinct. Paul had been commissioned *dia* "through the agency of" the risen Jesus Christ, in association with the Father.

##### 1:2

- Barnabas and the Christians in the church from which he wrote the letter were probably part of his companions, and stand united with Paul regarding his apostolic authority and message.
- The *ekklesias* "churches" of Galatia were probably the churches in the southern Roman province of Galatia (Iconium, Lystra, Derbe, and Pisidian Antioch), which Paul founded during his first missionary journey, rather than those in northern ethnic Galatia.

##### 1:3

- The greeting Paul used here and in most of his epistles was a combination of the commonly used Greek (*charis*, grace) and the Jewish (*shalom*, peace) salutations.

- *Charis* "grace" is God's unmerited favor, which He has bestowed on believers, apart from any merit of their own.
- *Shalom*, peace, defines not just the absence of hostility, but the totality of God's blessings.
- Peace always follows grace in Paul's salutations because that is their logical and temporal relationships. Receiving God's grace allows one to have peace with God and with man.
- The source of this blessing is from the first two Persons of the Godhead: *apo* "from" God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ.
- The three-fold title "Lord Jesus Christ" indicates His exalted rank (*Adonai*), His saving significance, and His divine commission (*Messiah*) respectively.

1:4

- Jesus Christ *ton dontos* "gave Himself" for our sins in two ways: 1) He gave Himself all through His earthly ministry as the Suffering Servant of God (Is 53), and 2) He gave Himself as the final sin offering on the cross.
- The use of the past tense "gave" shows that this occurred once and for all at the cross, and can never be repeated (Heb 10:12).
- Vicarious atonement is seen in the phrase, "for our sins". Jesus Christ died for sinners (Rom 5:8). God the Father "made Him to be sin for us" (2 Cor 5:21). In His death, Jesus Christ propitiated God (Rom 3:25). On the cross, just before He died, He emphatically stated, "It is finished" (John 19:30), *tetelesta*, "paid in full". He had completely and permanently paid the price for the redemption of sinful man.
- The purpose of His death is so that He might *exeletai* "deliver us (from danger) or to lift up out of (danger)" for Himself from this *enestotos* "present" *ponerou* "evil" *aionos* "age".
- The believer has been redeemed from the future judgment and rescued from the present satanic world system.
- A large part of the Galatians' problem was to a large extent one of failing to understand the character of redemptive history.
- Jesus Christ came as a man to do the will of God, who is His Father (Heb 10:7).

1:5

- When man acknowledges that the plan, provision, gift, and preservation of redemption for sinful man is all from God and for God's glory, then man is able to glorify God.
- Theology, the study of God, should always lead to doxology, worship and praise to God.

### B. DENUNCIATION 1:6-10

In these opening words Paul rebuked his readers for turning away from the gospel that he had preached to them and for turning toward a "different gospel."

1:6

- In every other one of his canonical epistles Paul commended his readers before launching into the main subject of his letter. Here he recorded no such praise or thanksgiving. Its absence stressed the seriousness of his readers' error and the urgency of his appeal.
- The best evidence points to Paul's writing Galatians before the Jerusalem Council, held in AD 49, and after he and Barnabas had evangelized Asia Minor on their first missionary journey (Acts 13—14). Consequently it had been only a few months since his readers had accepted the gospel that he had preached to them and had already turned from it.
- *Thaumazo* "I am amazed" signaled astonishment, rebuke, disapproval, and disappointment.
- *Tacheos* "quickly" also has the sense of "easily" (2 Thess 2:2; 1 Tim 5:22). The Galatian believers had quickly and easily accepted the message from the false teachers, most likely rather shortly after they had first come to believe the message from Paul.

- “That you are so quickly deserting” is 1) in the middle voice, which shows that the Galatians themselves were blamable for what was happening, and 2) present tense, which indicates that they were still in the process of changing and fully accepting the new message from the Judaizers. Although they had become observant of the ritualistic calendar (4:10), they had not yet submitted to circumcision (5:2).
- They were in the midst of deserting God, who had called them into the grace of Christ, and were turning to a *heteron* “another of a different kind of” gospel.

1:7

- This *heteron* gospel was not *allo*, “another of the same kind”, but was actually a false gospel.
- *Euangelion* “gospel” of course, means the good news of salvation by God into the grace of Christ.
- The false teachers were actually confusing them both mentally and spiritually, by questioning Paul’s apostleship and his message.
- The false teachers wanted to distort and pervert the gospel message, by adding works and legalism to the gospel of grace.

1:8

- Paul uses a third class conditional argument, which refers to a future situation which is extremely unlikely, yet possible.
- Even if Paul or his companions or an angel from heaven should distort the true gospel by preaching a gospel *para* “besides, contrary to” that which Paul had already preached to them, the false teacher should be *anathema* “accursed, under God’s judgment, delivered up to God’s wrath”.

1:9

- Now Paul uses a first class conditional argument, which refers to a situation which is already happening, and is assumed to be true.
- Paul now repeats himself, but makes the argument stronger.
- If *tis* “any, anyone no matter who” is preaching a gospel *para* “besides, contrary to” that which Paul had already preached to them, and someone is, the false teacher should be *anathema* “accursed, under God’s judgment”.

1:10 *Paul is Christ’s servant, not man’s*

- The use of the connective *gar*, “for” joins this with the preceding section.
- The false teachers evidently charged Paul with preaching to acquire the favor of his listeners, perhaps to gain a large number of converts to enhance his own reputation. They may have charged him with preaching “easy believism” since he advocated faith in Christ alone for salvation.
- Did Paul *arti* “at this moment” seek to win the approval of men, or God? He may have changed the method of delivery of his message, but his message always had the same content.
- Was Paul now trying to be a man-pleaser? No. Paul was not concerned with the evaluation of his ministry by men.
- Paul now uses a second class conditional argument, which refers to a situation which has already occurred, and is contrary to fact.
- Paul now states that if he was *eti* “still” trying to please men, and he isn’t, he wouldn’t be a *doulos* “bondslave” of Christ. Since he didn’t try to please men, he was a servant of Christ.
- *Doulos* also describes Moses (Josh 14:7), David (Ps 89:3), Elijah (2 Kng 10:10), and the Old Testament prophets (Rev 10:7; 11:18). It also describes Jesus Christ (Phil 2:7), Christian leaders (2 Tim 2:24), the apostles (2 Cor 4:5), James (James 1:1), Peter (2 Pet 1:1), and Jude (Jude 1). Furthermore it describes John (Rev 1:1), Christians (Acts 4:29; 1 Cor 7:22; Gal 4:7), Tribulation saints (Rev 7:3), and all believers (Rev 19:2, 5; 22:3, 6).

## II. PERSONAL DEFENSE OF PAUL'S GOSPEL 1:11—2:21

The first of the three major sections of the epistle begins here. We could classify them as Paul's personal history (1:1--2:21), doctrine and theology (3--4), and practical ethics (5:1--6:10).

### A. INDEPENDENCE FROM OTHER APOSTLES 1:11-24

This is the first of three subsections in Paul's autobiographical account, the historical portion of the epistle. It relates Paul's early Christian experience and his first meeting with the church leaders in Jerusalem. The other subsections record his meeting with the Jerusalem leaders over the scope and sphere of his missionary work (2:1-10) and his confrontation with Peter in Antioch (2:11-21).

#### 1. The source of Paul's gospel 1:11-17

Paul wants to prove that both his gospel and his commission to preach it came directly from Jesus Christ on the Damascus road (vv. 15-16), and did not come to him from any human intermediary, not even from a church.

#### 1:11-12 *The Gospel was revealed to him by Christ, not by man*

- Paul wanted *gnorizo* "to make known, to certify" four aspects about the gospel he preached.
- First, the gospel he preached was not *kata anthropon* "according to man or human standards". A message from man's standards would most likely emphasize the necessity of human works for salvation.
- Second, he had not *parelabon* "received" his message from any human source "of man". Paul denied receiving any part of the content of his message from anybody.
- Third, nor had he *edidachthen* "been taught" any of it from anyone. Although he had met with other apostles and teachers in Damascus, Jerusalem, and Antioch, none of them had instructed him.
- Fourth, Paul used a strong adversative, *alla* "but" to show the contrast between human and divine origin. His message came to him as a special revelation from Jesus Christ, and it most likely included a revelation about who Jesus Christ really is (subjective and objective genitives, respectfully).

#### 1:13-14 *Paul's past life in Judaism*

- Paul's *anastrophe* "conduct, manner of life, behavior" in Judaism had certainly not taught him the gospel.
- Before his conversion, he viewed the Christians as a heretical sect within Judaism that needed to be completely destroyed.
- "The church of God" refers to the body of believers who are mystically joined to Jesus Christ through their belief in Him as God, acceptance of His redemptive work for them through His perfectly sinless and obedient life and His death and work on the cross, and His resurrection from the dead.
- Paul manifested his hatred for the church in two ways: he violently persecuted and tried to destroy it.
- Paul was an unusually promising young man in Judaism before his conversion, who was *proekopton* "was cutting before, advancing" in Judaism, surpassing his contemporaries, and was more highly esteemed by those in positions of influence, which would have resulted in his being entrusted with more important assignments.

- He was extremely zealous for the “traditions of his fathers”, including the oral and written interpretations and teachings that grew out of the Mosaic Law.
- The whole point is that there was nothing in his religious background and preconversion life that could have in any way prepared him for a positive response to the gospel.

#### 1:15-17 *Paul's conversion and early ministry*

- What totally revolutionized Paul was God's choice to reveal Himself to him by His grace, and for God's own *eudokeo* “delight, pleasure”.
- Paul was *aphorisas* “separated, to mark off by a horizon or boundary” from his mother’s womb for ministry (cf Jer 1:5; Is 49:1-6) to the Gentiles. Paul must have seen his own ministry as integrally related to the work of the OT prophets and the Servant of the Lord, and in some sense even its culmination. The message of salvation is at last going to the Gentiles, of whom the Galatians are a part.
- God *kalesas* “called, referring to the effectual call of God whereby He affects our salvation” Paul, by His grace.
- God's purpose generally was *apokalupto* “to reveal or manifest” Christ *en* “in” Paul, resulting in knowledge.
- Specifically God's purpose was that Paul would become an apostle to the *ethnesin* “Gentiles, heathen”.
- Since his calling had been undoubtedly supernatural and abundantly clear, Paul did not need to consult with “flesh and blood”, any natural human being, with a view to be informed on a subject.
- After his conversion in Damascus, he went into Arabia and later returned to Damascus to preach as an apostle.

Paul's conversion can be understood as involving: 1) recognition of the risen Jesus as Messiah, Lord, and Son of God, 2) the experience of being justified by faith apart from works, 3) the revelation of the basic principles of the gospel, and 4) the call to be an apostle to the Gentiles.

#### 2. Paul's First Trip to Jerusalem 1:18-24

Continuing his thoughts, Paul was not dependent on the other apostles for his ministry any more than he was for the message he proclaimed. This explanation would have further convinced his readers of the divine source and authority of his message.

#### 1:18-19 *After three years Paul went to Jerusalem*

- It was three years after his conversion, not after his return to Damascus, that Paul finally revisited Jerusalem and met Peter, for the first time, and James (AD 37).
- *Epeita* “then, next” introduces the next event in Paul's experience chronologically.
- Three years after his conversion, Paul went to Jerusalem *historesai* “to see, become personally acquainted with” Cephas (Peter).
- Paul *epimeina* “stayed, remained, prolonged his visit” in order to get to see Peter.
- This visit was rather brief, lasting only “fifteen days”.
- Acts 9:26-27 may indicate the reason for the delay: the disciples in Jerusalem were afraid to meet Paul.
- On this visit Paul saw no other apostle *ei me* “except, but” James the Lord's brother. Is Paul referring to James as an apostle, or is he saying that he saw no other apostles, but did see one other leading figure in the Jerusalem church, namely, James the Lord's brother?
- James the Lord's brother, born of Mary and Joseph, did not accept his brother as the messiah during the earthly ministry of Jesus (John 7:5). He came to believe in Him, when he saw the resurrected Jesus (1 Cor 15:7). During the ten days between the ascension of Jesus and the day

of Pentecost, he was with the apostles in the upper room (Acts 1:13, 14). The apostle James had been killed by Herod (Acts 12:2). James the Lord's brother quickly rose in prominence in the church in Jerusalem and became one of the three main leaders (Acts 12:17; 15:13-23).

- If he had needed to work out a theology consistent with the teaching of the other apostles, extended meetings with all of them would have been necessary.
- One can reconstruct the events of this first visit by harmonizing this passage with Acts 9:23-30; 22:17-21; 2 Cor 11:32-33. With the Jews plotting Paul's life, his disciples helped him escape from Damascus by lowering him in a basket through a window in the city walls. Upon arriving in Jerusalem, Paul tried to meet with the apostles, but they were afraid of him. Barnabas vouched for Paul and introduced him to the apostles, which could include James. His brief time in Jerusalem was ended by another plot on his life by the Jews and a vision of the Lord in the temple instructing him to leave.

#### 1:20 *Paul affirms his testimony*

- Paul concludes the narration of the events of his trip to Jerusalem with a solemn affirmation as to its truthfulness.
- The truth of the gospel, as he preached it, was at stake in the truthfulness of what he said, as was the error of what the false teachers were proclaiming.

#### 1:21-24 *Paul's absence in Judea*

- Paul went north into *klimata* "the regions, districts" of Syria (above Judea, by way of Caesarea [Acts 9:30]) and Cilicia, the province of his hometown of Tarsus. He was there when Barnabas found him later (Acts 11:25). He ministered in Syria and Cilicia for between seven and eleven years.
- During this time, he *agnooumenos* "was becoming progressively unknown" by face to the Christians in Judea.
- Paul's reputation was spreading, and the Judean Christians were continually hearing reports of the change in him, the former persecutor of the church.
- They accepted these reports as true, and acknowledged that Paul was "now preaching the faith he once tried to destroy".
- They only knew him by reputation and thanked and glorified God for what He was doing through Paul.

### B. INTERDEPENDENCE WITH OTHER APOSTLES 2:1-10

Paul related other events of his previous ministry, specifically his meeting with the leaders of the Jerusalem church. He did this to establish that although he was not dependent on anyone but God for his message and ministry, he preached the same gospel the other apostles did. Paul now focused on the content of his message.

#### 1. After fourteen years 2:1-2

#### 2:1-2

- *Epeita* "then" after fourteen years introduces Paul's apparently next visit to Jerusalem. In trying to harmonize this visit with the book of Acts, there are two views. 1) Indicates 14 years from the first visit, and refers to the Jerusalem Council of Acts 15, having to assume that Paul did not mention the Famine Relief visit to Jerusalem from the church in Antioch of Acts 11. Proponents point out that Paul did not mention it because Paul did not meet with any of the apostles, but only the elders of the Jerusalem church. However, this was not a private meeting, but rather an open council. 2) Indicates 14 years from Paul's conversion and refers to the Famine Relief visit

to Jerusalem in Acts 11. This seems to better harmonize the details, and will be assumed as the background for this visit; however, many of the scholars are still divided.

- Barnabas accompanied Paul to Jerusalem. If Paul wrote this to the Christians living in South Galatia, they knew Barnabas as Paul's fellow missionary to them on Paul's first missionary journey.
- Paul and Barnabas were accompanied on this trip by Titus, who was a Gentile believer (v 3) and one of Paul's faithful disciples in ministry (Titus 1:4).
- This trip was made *kata apokalupsin* "in accordance with or because of a revelation". At least three possibilities have been presented. 1) God could have spoken by the Holy Spirit to the entire church in Antioch. 2) It could have been a direct revelation through a vision (Acts 16:9), an angelic visitation (Acts 27:23-24), or a direct verbal message (Acts 9:4). Or, most likely, 3) refers to the prophecy of Agabus, who prophesied by the Spirit that a famine would occur (Acts 11:27-28).
- While in Jerusalem, Paul took advantage of the opportunity to *anethemen* "set before someone, lay before someone for consideration" privately with the leaders certain aspects of his ministry and message which he was *kerusso* "presently preaching, proclaiming" among the Gentiles. He did not go to find out what to preach or to be corrected. He wanted to be sure the leaders in Jerusalem understood his position, and that he could count on their support.
- Paul refers to the leaders of the Jerusalem church as *tois dokousi* "to those who seem to be something, those which were of reputation, or those who seem influential". This occurs four times (2:2, 6a, 6b, and 9), and must include Peter, John, and James. Most likely Paul had adopted one of the slogans of his opponents, who had claimed the support of these leaders from Jerusalem.
- The reason Paul approached these leaders is explained as "in order to make sure I was not running or had not run in vain". Certainly, Paul was not fearful that his gospel was wrong, since he had gotten it by direct revelation from Jesus Christ. It seems rather that Paul feared that if he did not contact the Jerusalem apostles his opponents might undermine his ministry. He wanted to assure that they would recognize his converts as genuine Christians and fellow believers united in Christ.

## 2. Pressure at the meeting 2:3-5

### 2:3

- But even Titus, being a Greek, was not *enangkasthe* "compelled, forced" to be circumcised.
- Circumcision was a rite by which Gentile males became Jewish proselytes, and to Paul's opponents, circumcision had to be done to gain justification.
- Titus was a pure Gentile, not partly Jewish like Timothy (Acts 16:1, 3), and Paul regarded any yielding to Titus being circumcised as perverting the gospel of grace by adding works to faith.

### 2:4

- The pressure to have Titus circumcised came from opponents who are described in five ways. 1) They were false brothers, not even true Christians. 2) They were *pareisaktous* "smuggled in, secretly brought in". 3) They were not even supposed to be at the meeting, they "slipped in unnoticed". 4) They were critical spies, *kataskopesai* "to spy out", used of a spy who goes to a hill to look down on the camp of the enemy. They came in to spy out the "freedom, liberty" which was offered in Christ Jesus. 5) Their purpose was *katadoulosontai* "that they might reduce to slavery, bring to bondage" Paul and his associates by imposing circumcision as a condition for salvation.

### 2:5

- Paul, Barnabas, and Titus did not yield in submission, "even for an hour, a moment".

- To have done so would have undermined the “truth of the gospel”, which means “the integrity of the gospel, the doctrine of grace”.
- The truth of the gospel declares that man is incapable of saving himself, that man’s best efforts at righteousness fall short of the perfection required by God (Jas 2:10), and that salvation is a free gift of God granted to men who accept it solely on the merits of Jesus Christ, who died for sinners.

### 3. The leaders at Jerusalem contributed nothing 2:6-10

#### 2:6

- After discussing the test case of Titus, Paul now returns to the discussion started in 2:1-2.
- Others may have been impressed with the past position of the leaders of the church in Jerusalem.
- As in 2:2, Paul once again refers to the leaders as “those who seemed to be something, influential, those of high reputation”.
- Before Paul finishes his sentence, he pauses to make a parenthetical comment about the leaders, “what they *esan* ‘were formerly’ makes no difference to me; God ‘accepts no man’s person, shows no partiality’.”
- Paul probably does this, with a tinge of irony, in depreciation of the arrogant and extravagant claims which his oppressors, the Judaizers, were making for the Jerusalem leaders.
- Finishing out the sentence, Paul states that “those who seemed influential *prosanethento* ‘added, conferred’ nothing to me”. They contributed nothing to his authority or message.
- No man could have added any content or concepts to the gospel which Jesus Christ had revealed to Paul.

#### 2:7

- The connective, “But contrary” shows that the leaders not only did not add anything to Paul’s message, but they didn’t take anything away from him.
- *Idontes* “they saw, recognized, perceived, denotes an outward apprehension” that “God *pepisteumai* ‘had entrusted’ Paul with the gospel *akrobustias* ‘of, for the uncircumcised’, just as Peter had been entrusted with the gospel *peritomys* ‘of, for the circumcised’.”
- These are not two separate gospels, but one gospel with the two apostles having differing spheres of influence.

#### 2:8

- The leaders realized that the same God had called both of Peter and Paul as apostles, and was working through each of them. They were equal in authority.

#### 2:9-10

- James, Peter, and John, “the ones who seemed to be” *stylos* “pillars, tent-poles” unanimously took four steps. 1) They *gnontes* “perceived, understood, denotes an inward recognition” the “grace” given to Paul (v 9), which refers to his apostleship to the Gentiles (Acts 9:15; Gal 1:16; Rom 1:5; 12:3; 15:15; 1 Cor 3:10; Eph 3:8; Phil 1:7). 2) They gave to Paul and Barnabas the *he dexia* “right hand”, which was a commonly used symbol of trust, often employed in finalizing a treaty, *koinonias* “of fellowship”, which points to that which is shared and common to men and to God (1 John 1:3). 3) They agreed on their respective areas of ministry, and that they both preached the same message but with different approaches to different people. 4) They asked that Paul *mnemoneuomen* “continue to remember” the poor, which is either a reference to the poor saints in Jerusalem or simply to the poor in general.

Thus, this second visit to Jerusalem substantiates Paul's claim that he received both his gospel and his apostleship directly from the risen Lord. These events show the full recognition given by the leaders in Jerusalem to the gospel and apostolic office which already were Paul's prior to their meeting.

### C. CORRECTION OF PETER THE APOSTLE 2:11-21

Paul mentioned the incident in which he reproved Peter, one of the Judaizers' favorite apostles, to further establish his own apostolic authority and to emphasize the truth of his gospel.

#### 1. *The incident 2:11-14*

2:11

- At some time, Peter had come to Antioch and in Paul's view had acted inappropriately. The exact timing of this visit is unknown, since it is not described in Acts. If the previous event discussed was the famine relief visit of Acts 11, then Peter could have gone to visit Paul in Antioch either before Paul went on his second missionary journey (Acts 12:25-13:2) or shortly after the team had returned to Antioch (Acts 14:26-28). After the martyrdom of James, the brother of John, and after his own imprisonment and escape, Peter may have wanted to leave Jerusalem. If the previous visit represents the Council of Acts 15, then Peter could have gone to Antioch to visit before Paul started his second missionary journey.
- Paul *antesten* "opposed, stood against, withstood, implying a response to some perceived attack" Peter *prosopon* "to his face" on account of what was happening, for which Peter stood condemned.
- By Peter's own inconsistent actions he had made himself guilty.

2:12

- Peter *sunesthien* "was habitually eating" with the Christians at Antioch, who were both Jews and Gentiles, until some Jewish visitors came from Jerusalem (Acts 10:28; 11:3).
- This eating most likely involved both the Lord's Supper (1 Cor 11:20-34) and the love feast that preceded the communion (2 Peter 2:13).
- The visitors were from the group that believed Gentiles needed to undergo circumcision before they could become Christians, the Judaizers. They were not "from James" in the sense that James endorsed their views; he did not (v. 9). Perhaps they came from the same church as James.
- Peter *huppestellen* "gradually drew back, withdrew" and *aphorizen* "gradually separated" himself, so that although at the beginning of the meal he was seated with the Gentile Christians, by the end of his actions he was seated only with the Jewish Christians.
- Peter withdrew from the Gentile Christians out of fear of the Judaizers. He probably did not want to lose his testimony before Jewish members of his home church.

2:13

- Peter, who had a tendency to compromise his convictions when he was under pressure (cf Matt 16:16-23; 26:69-75; Mark 14:66-72; Luke 22:54-62; John 18:15-18, 25-27), was acting in a way that did not properly represent his beliefs – he was acting in a hypocritical manner.
- Jesus ate "with publicans and sinners", which can scarcely mean that he conformed to strict Jewish dietary Laws (Mark 7:19).
- The other Jewish Christians at Antioch quickly followed Peter's example and also *sunupekrithesan* "joined in hypocrisy with, acted hypocritically" with Peter and withdrew from the Gentile believers.
- Even Barnabas, who was such an early supporter of the Gentile missions (Acts 11:2-3) was led astray by their hypocrisy and withdrew.

- That Peter's actions had caused the defection of Barnabas was more than Paul could stand.

2:14

- It is frequently difficult to know whether to follow Matthew 18:15 or 1 Timothy 5:20 in dealing with people who need correction. Normally we should start with a private rebuke (Matt. 18:15) and then, if unsuccessful, we should proceed to public confrontation (Matt. 18:16-17). Paul may have done so before rebuking Peter publicly, but since the offense was public the rebuke also needed to be public. Solomon wrote, "Open rebuke is better than secret love" (Pv 27:5).
- Paul saw that they did not *orthopodousi* "walk in a straight line, in step, act rightly" according to the truth of the gospel.
- Paul criticized Peter for inconsistency, since he had been living like a Gentile, and not following all the Jewish dietary Laws, how could he now try to impose Jewish Laws upon the Gentiles.
- Peter had cast doubt on the truth of the gospel that God accepts Jews and Gentiles equally, and was playing into the hands of the Judaizers.
- Peter's actions must have been insulting his Gentile brethren.

## 2. The principle of justification 2:15-21

Whether these verses are a continuation of Paul's words to Peter, or are an explanation and elaboration primarily addressed to the Galatians, is impossible to determine. However, either way, the interpretation of these verses is not affected.

2:15

- Unbelieving Jews regarded Gentiles as "sinners." Paul ironically referred to them as that since Peter was discriminating against them by behaving as he had.
- "We Jews by nature, or by birth" refers to people like Paul and Peter, who were Jews by descent and religion, and who stood against the "Gentile *hamartoloi* 'sinners'."

2:16

- Even Jewish Christians knew that a man was not *dikaioutai* "justified, declared righteous, counted righteous" by God *ex ergon nomou* "as a consequence of performing works of the Law", but through *pisteos Iesou Christou* "faith in Jesus Christ" (seen as an objective genitive, in which He becomes the object of one's faith).
- Paul reminds them that all believers trust in Christ Jesus for their justification.
- The doctrine of justification can be described in seven ways: 1) its source is God (Rom 3:26; 8:30), 2) its essence is grace (Rom 3:24), 3) its means is faith (Rom 5:1), 4) its basis is the blood of Christ (Rom 5:9), 5) its position is in Christ (1 Cor 6:11), its divine agent is the Holy Spirit, 7) its evidence is works (Jas 2:21,24).
- Justification should not be confused with forgiveness, which is the fruit of justification, nor with atonement, which is the basis of justification. Rather, it is the favorable verdict of God, that one who formerly stood condemned has now been pardoned and granted a new status.

2:17

- Paul refuted the charge of the Judaizers that justification by faith led to Lawless behavior. He said this made Christ, in effect, a promoter of sin, which, of course, could never be.
- Here he may simply mean that when Law-abiding Jews like Peter and himself cease to look to the Law as the basis of their justification before God and find their justification in Christ, they put themselves effectively on a level with the "sinners of the Gentiles", and in that sense they have "been found to be sinners" against the Law.
- In other words, although it is true that in order to be justified in Christ it is necessary to abandon faith in the Law as a means of salvation, therefore, to become sinners in the sense of being

reduced to the level of the "Gentiles and sinners" of v 15, the conclusion does not follow that Christ becomes an agent of sin.

2:18

- Paul now uses the conjunction *gar* "for" to show the reason "it must never be" in v 17, and goes on to say that if he rebuilt the things which he had torn down, which was actually what Peter had been doing, he would be acknowledging that his former actions were wrong and that he had sinned against the Law.

2:19

- By attempting to obey the Law, Paul had actually *apethanon* "died" to the Law.
- The Law had shown him its divine purpose by demonstrating that he had broken the Law, was sinful, and stood guilty and condemned before God (Rom 7:8-13).
- By virtue of his incorporation into Christ (v 17) and participation in Christ's death Paul has undergone a death whereby his relation to the Law has been decisively severed and the Law has ceased to have any claim on him (Rom 7:4, 6).
- Since the vicarious death of Christ for sinners was by the Law (Gal 3:13), Paul's death to the Law through participation in Christ's death can be said to be *dia* "through (instrumental means)" the Law.
- Through death to the Law as the means of justification (salvation), he could become alive through faith in Christ Jesus to God.

2:20

- Paul has died to the Law because he has been *sustauroo* "crucified with" Christ, in the past and with continuing present effects. Only the worst criminals suffered crucifixion in Paul's day. When Christ was crucified on the cross, God identified every believer with His death; therefore all believers were crucified with Him. That crucifixion satisfied the penalty required by God for breaking the Law, and its effects are never changed.
- As a result of Paul's participation in Christ's death on the cross, he explains that the *zoe* "life" he now lives is not lived by him but by Christ who dwells in him.
- Believers have the privilege of living their lives *en sarki* "in the flesh, in their temporal physical bodies" by believing and relying on Christ. This refers not only to justification by faith, but also to sanctification which is accomplished by continuing in the faith in the Son of God.
- We can trust Him because He loved us and gave Himself up as a sacrifice for us.

2:21

- Paul concluded by affirming that he did not set aside the grace of God, as Peter had done by his behavior. Peter had nullified God's grace by implying that it was not enough. He did this by putting himself back under the Law, saying in effect that obedience to the Law must accompany grace to make it sufficient.
- If that is true, then Christ died needlessly.
- We know that righteousness does not come by obedience to the Law and Christ did not die in vain.

### **III. THEOLOGICAL AFFIRMATION OF SALVATION BY FAITH 3:1—4:31**

Paul here begins the theological section of the epistle. He first vindicates the doctrine of justification by faith alone (ch 3), and then he clarifies it (ch 4).

#### **A. VINDICATION OF THE DOCTRINE CH 3**

Here Paul explains the meaning of justification and sanctification by faith alone, as apposed to the false doctrine of justification by performing the works of the Law. He argus their validity from experience (3:1-5), from Scripture (3:6-14), and from logic (3:15-29).

1. *The experiential argument: they had received the Spirit by faith 3:1-5*

3:1

- Paul begins this section by identifying the Galatians as *anoetoi* "fools, those with no understanding, senseless", which is used in Scripture of people who disregard God's revelation (Luke 24:25).
- *Tis* "who (singular)" has *ebaskane* "to bring evil on someone by an evil eye, or to lead astray by evil deeds, bewitched" you?
- When Paul had first evangelized the Galatians, he had *proegraphie* "evidently set forth, to write before, publicly portrayed" before them Jesus Christ as *estauromenos* "crucified once and for all" in the past and with continuing results, probably referring to the fact of Jesus' death as the crucial event in salvation history.

3:2

- Paul now goes on to ask a series of four major questions in the next four verses, which when answered by the Galatians should help them realize that Paul was right and the Judaizers were wrong.
- How did you receive (past tense) the Holy Spirit? Was it by works of the Law or by faith?
- If the Judaizers were correct that justification came by works of the Law, then the uncircumcised Gentile converts could not have received the Spirit.
- However, the Galatians were "filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit" (Acts 13:52).
- The indwelling of the Holy Spirit takes place at the very moment of regeneration (Rom 8:9).
- Since the Spirit is the guarantee of final salvation (glorification; Eph. 1:13-14), and the Spirit comes to us by faith, glorification must depend on faith.

3:3

- How is God sanctifying you? Are the means of justification and sanctification different or the same?
- Their justification had been a work of the Holy Spirit in response to believing faith.
- *Enarxamanoi* "having begun", referring to their completed conversion experience, were they now going to rely on *sarki* "the flesh", referring to one's sinful human nature, the seat and vehicle of sinful desires, as the means to their sanctification?
- Their sanctification was also a work of the Holy Spirit in response to believing faith, and did not rely on works of the Law.

3:4

- Have your *epathete* "sufferings, experiences" been useless?
- Some of the hardships of Paul and Barnabas when they evangelized the area around Galatia are described in Acts 13:50-14:22.
- The sufferings of the Galatians are not mentioned, however, Paul had warned them to expect much tribulation (Acts 14:22).
- Although the term *epathete* could refer to experiences in general, in the present setting it appears best to take it as referring to actual hardships and tribulations.
- If the Galatians were truly still unsaved as the Judaizers claimed, why were the Galatians undergoing persecution? Obviously, the believers in Galatia would only suffer if the unbelieving Jews and Gentiles saw the presence of Christ in their lives (John 15:18-16:2).

- Paul knew that their sufferings had real spiritual cause and purpose, by his implication that their suffering had not been in vain.

3:5

- What accounts for the miracles you witnessed (Acts 14:3, 8-10)?
- Not only had the Galatians received the Spirit, but they also witnessed many other *dunamis* "works of power, mighty deeds, supernatural acts, miracles" from God which had accompanied Paul's preaching to the Galatians whereas presumably they did not accompany the preaching of the Judaizers.
- These "mighty deeds" were brought about by faith, not by works of the Law.

## *2. The Scriptural argument 3:6-14*

Next Paul appeals to Scripture to defend salvation by faith alone.

### *The blessing of faith 3:6-9*

3:6

- The Judaizers, in emphasizing the Mosaic Law, frequently appealed to Moses. Paul went back farther in history to Abraham, the father of the Jewish nation. He cited Genesis 15:6 to prove that God justified Abraham by faith, not because he kept the Law.
- It was Abraham's faith in God's promises which brought about the imputation and divine pronouncement of righteousness.
- Righteousness *elogisthe* "was accounted, reckoned" to Abraham by God.
- Abraham received this gift from God before he was circumcised (Gen 15:6; 17:9-27).

3:7

- The Old Testament offered the righteousness which God had reckoned to Abraham to his descendants.
- But how is a person related to Abraham, in order to receive this blessing?
- Paul argues that the spiritual sons of Abraham were not his physical descendants but those who believed God, whether they were Jews or Gentiles.
- The physical sons of Abraham are the Jewish people, to whom belong the promises from God of land and a nation.

3:8

- Paul next expounded Genesis 12:3 and 22:18 (LXX) to prove his point, that through Abraham all the nations of the earth would be blessed.
- We should understand this promised blessing to include salvation.
- God had *proeuangelisato* "preached the gospel beforehand" to Abraham.

3:9

- This is not to be understood as universalism, where everyone in the whole world will be saved, because a personal appropriation of God's gift is necessary for salvation.
- Hence, both Jews and Gentiles obtain righteousness through the means of faith in God, not by works of the Law.

### *The curse of works of the Law 3:10-14*

In this section Paul argues against the possibility of justification by works.

3:10

- Living under the Mosaic Law did not bring the blessing of justification but a curse, because to obtain God's blessing under the Law a person had to keep it perfectly, and no one could. Even one failure brought God's curse.
- Paul cited Deuteronomy 27:26 which states, "Cursed is everyone who does not abide by all things written in the Book of the Law, and do them".
- The whole Law taught that people cannot earn God's blessing.

3:11

- *Oudes* "no one without exception" *dikaioutai* "is being justified" *en nomoi* "in, by Law", designates the sphere or means by which no man could be justified.
- Paul further quoted Habakkuk 2:4, "The righteous shall live *ek pisteos* 'by faith'," which designates the sphere or means by which man could be justified.

3:12

- The Law is not *ek pisteos* "out of faith".
- Responding to the Judaizers' argument that both Law and faith are necessary for justification, Paul quoted Leviticus 18:5, "The one who does them (the statutes and ordinances of the Mosaic Law) shall live by them".
- This verse shows that they are mutually exclusive. They are two entirely different approaches to God.
- The Law requires works, but the gospel calls for faith.

3:13

- If the Law shows every person to be under God's curse, then how can we escape God's wrath?
- Christ paid the penalty for our sins and made justification possible for every person. He voluntarily took the wrath of God which was directed toward us and placed it upon Himself. He became the object and bearer of God's curse (2 Cor 5:21).
- First, Christ's redemptive work is a completed redemption, *exygorasen*, from *exagarazo* "redeemed (aorist active indicative)", which cannot be repeated in history (Heb 10:12).
- There are three verbs used to depict the biblical doctrine of redemption. 1) The first, *agorazo* means to pay the redemption price or to provide a ransom, used of purchasing slaves in the marketplace (1 Cor 6:19-20; 2 Pet 2:1; Rev 5:9-10). 2) The second, *exagarazo* means to buy out of the market, stressing the idea of removal (3:13; 4:4-5). 3) The third, *apolutroo* means to release or to set free (Tit 2:14; 1 Pet 1:18-19).
- Here the term "redeemed" is of the ransoming of a condemned sinner from the penalty of the Law which had been broken.
- Second, Christ's redemptive work is a personal redemption.
- Third, His redemptive work is a purposeful redemption. He redeemed us from the "curse of the Law", which is the curse pronounced on the Law-breaker by the Law (Deut. 27:26).
- Fourth, His redemptive work is a substitutionary redemption (Is 53:4-6). Using the Hebrew concept in which the person on whom the curse rests or the curse offering is identified with the curse itself, Christ redeemed us *genomenos* "by becoming" a curse *huper* "for us, in our behalf, in our place". Christ suffered vicariously in our place.
- The biblical proof-text follows. "Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree" (Deut 21:23). Criminals who had been executed because the Law had cursed them often had their corpses hanged on a tree or impaled as a public spectacle, but the Law required the corpse to be buried the same day to keep the land from getting further defiled.

3:14

- The two uses of *hina* "that, so that" show the two purposes of Christ's redemptive work, with the second purpose actually being a result of the fulfillment of the first purpose.
- The first purpose was so that the blessing of justification by faith which Abraham had received might be extended to all nations.
- The second purpose, which is a result of the fulfillment of the first purpose, was so that we might receive the promised Spirit who brings regeneration to all who believe and makes possible the life of sanctification.

### 3. *The logical argument: Law, covenant, and faith 3:15-29*

#### *The Law and the covenant 3:15-18*

3:15

- "With a man-made *diatheke* 'covenant', no one *athetei* 'invalidates, sets aside, makes void, or annuls' it or *epidiatassetai* 'adds a codicil, adds to it' once it *kekuromenen* 'has been ratified or validated'."
- Paul now turned to the objection that when God gave the Law He terminated justification by faith alone. He reminded his readers that even wills and contracts made between human beings remained in force until the fulfillment of their terms. Likewise the covenant God made with Abraham remains in force until God fulfills it completely.
- *Diatheke* "covenant, last will and testament" was first used in the LXX to translate the Hebrew word *berit* "covenant", which refers to the one-sided character of God's covenant with Israel. Another term *suntheke* was used in classical Greek for agreements between equal parties.

### **THE FOUR SEEDS OF ABRAHAM IN SCRIPTURE**

#### **Natural Seed**

All physical descendants of Abraham

Gen 12:1-3, 7 (Jews)

#### **Natural-Spiritual Seed**

Believing physical descendants of Abraham (believing Jews)

Is 41:8; Rom 9:6, 8; Gal 6:16

#### **Spiritual Seed**

Believing non-physical descendants of Abraham (believing Gentiles)

Gal 3:6-9, 29

#### **Ultimate Seed**

Jesus Christ

Gal 3:16; Heb 2:16-17

3:16

- The promises made to Abraham extended to his descendants as well as to him personally. They even extend to Christ, the descendant of Abraham, showing that God continued to fulfill the Abrahamic Covenant through Christ. The Mosaic Law did not supersede or replace the Abrahamic Covenant.
- The Hebrew word *zera* "seed, offspring" is a collective singular that can refer either to one descendant or many descendants. Paul explained that the seed God had in mind in Gen 13:15 and 17:8 was the one descendant, the ultimate Seed, Jesus Christ.
- Hence, Christ was the ultimate Seed in whom the promises to Abraham would reach their culmination, and through whom believers become the spiritual seed of Abraham, allowing them to be recipients of the blessings promised to Abraham.

3:17

- The Mosaic Law had come into existence long after the Abrahamic Covenant had been established.
- The covenant with Abraham had been repeated on several occasions: to Abraham (Gen 12:1-3; 13:14-17; 15:1-21; 17:1-14; 22:15-18), to Isaac, his son (Gen 26:2-4,24), and to Jacob, his grandson (Gen 28:13-15; 35:9-12; 46:2-4).
- Paul states that the Law was not given until 430 years after the ratification of the covenant by God, which had been originally given to Abraham (Gen 12:1-3).
- Now, there is a problem with the "430 years". The actual time from the original ratification of the Abrahamic Covenant (Gen 12:1-3) until the giving of the Law at Mt Sinai was around 600 years. There have been a number of possible solutions presented. 1) Paul was following the LXX of Ex 12:40, which gives 430 years for the time in Egypt and Canaan. However, this does not actually solve the problem, but just transfers the problem from Gal 3:17 to the LXX of Ex 12:40. 2) Paul was just understating the time duration for his argument. This seems very unlikely. 3) The best solution is the realization that the 430 years probably began with God's reiterating the promises to Jacob at Beersheba as he left Canaan to settle in Egypt (in 1875 BC; Gen 46:2-4) and probably ended with the giving of the Mosaic Law (in 1446 BC; Ex 19). This solution seems to best fit all of the texts.
- Whatever purposes are attributed to the Law, it could not have been intended to alter or nullify the basic provisions of the unconditional promises made by God to Abraham.

3:18

- Since the later Law cannot alter or nullify God's unconditional covenant to Abraham, the promises contained in it must remain in effect.
- The "inheritance" refers to what God promised to Abraham and his descendants, including the blessings, which include the implication of justification by faith. Reception of this did not depend on obedience to the Law, since God has *kecharistai* "freely given, unconditionally guaranteed" to provide it.
- Since the Abrahamic covenant is still valid, which includes the blessings, including the gift of justification by faith, one could not insist that he must place himself under the Law in order to inherit the provisions of the promises made to Abraham.

#### *The purpose of the Law 3:19-22*

So far, Paul has given strong reasons for the Galatians to resist the pressure to submit to the Law. However, did the Law have any value? Paul now argues that the Law had a very definite, though limited, place in the salvation-historical purposes of God.

3:19

- "Why then the Law?" Paul's answer is that it "*prosetethe* 'was added, placed before' *charin* 'because of (showing cause or purpose)' transgressions until the Seed to whom the promise referred had come."
- The phrase "because of transgressions" has been understood variously: 1) to restrain transgressions; 2) to identify transgressions; 3) to multiply transgressions or increase the awareness of sins, thus showing humanity its need of a savior (Rom 3:20; 4:15; 5:20); 4) to provide a way of dealing with transgressions, namely, in the sacrificial system 5) and, most likely, to turn sin into transgression, that is, the Law makes it clear that every sin is a sin against God, in need of atonement.
- Paul clarified that the Law was only a temporary measure, which had a beginning "was added" and an end "until the Seed", Christ came.
- The function of the Law was to point people to Christ, not to provide for all time the way the people of God should live.

- Angels and Moses, who stood between God and the Israelites, mediated the Mosaic Covenant (Deut 33:2, LXX).

3:20

- Paul now continues his thought that a mediator never acts for himself but stands between two or more parties. This creates a sense of remoteness and lack of intimacy when a mediator stands between the two parties, as in the Mosaic Covenant.
- However a mediator is not necessary when the covenant is unilateral, as when God made the unconditional Abrahamic Covenant.
- Paul's point seems to be with the inferiority of the Law because of its indirect introduction to the people.

3:21

- Another question now arises, "Is the Law against the promises of God?" Paul answers, *me genoito* "certainly not! God forbid!"
- Paul demonstrates this by using a hypothetical situation which is contrary to fact.
- "For if a Law had been given that *zoopoiēō* 'could make alive, impart life, raise from the dead (always used of a work of God or the Spirit)', then righteousness would certainly have come *ek* 'by belonging to a realm or sphere of' the Law."
- The purpose of the Law was never to provide justification.
- The Law, for all its invaluable and indispensable service in salvation history, remains "Christotelic", in that Christ is the *telos* "goal" of the Law (Rom 10:4).

3:22

- The Law served as a mirror to show people their sinfulness and that they are the slaves of sin.
- Paul states that *he graphē* "The Scripture" has *sugkleiō* "confined, imprisoned, shut up" all things under sin.
- The phrase "the Scripture" is probably best taken as a synonym for "the Law."
- The Law's role, therefore, was to imprison the entire creation, *ta panta* "all things, all men", under the power, sway and condemnation of sin (Rom 3:9).
- The purpose is *"hina* 'so that' the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe."
- God meant to preclude every other means of salvation than the fulfillment of the promise in Christ.
- The whole Old Testament (v 22), not just the Law (v 21), showed that people are sinners and incapable of saving themselves.

*The relationship of Law and faith 3:23-29*

3:23

- If v 22 stated that the Scripture shut up "all things," the entirety of the old creation, under the power of sin, the present verse maintains that those who were anticipating the realization of the promise were themselves subject to the Law's imprisoning role.
- These are not totally different ideas, being imprisoned by sin and the Law, for the Law contained the standards which had been transgressed proving that sin had been committed.
- This imprisonment was in effect until the coming "the faith", that is, belief in Christ *apokaluphthenai* "would be revealed".

3:24

- Paul pictured Israel before the advent of Christ as a child.

- In Paul's day it was common for children between age six and puberty to be under the care of a pedagogue. The pedagogue protected them from evil influences and demanded their obedience.
- "The Law was a *paidagogos* 'disciplinarian, custodian, guardian, taskmaster' until Christ came.
- The pedagogue was a slave who led a youth to and from school and saw to his care, protection and discipline.
- The Law is something Israel should have been glad to dispense with.
- The ultimate aim of the Law's tutelage was that "we might be justified by faith".
- Christ is the end of the Law (Rom 10:4).

3:25

- The coming of Christ ushered in a new era.
- Now that faith has come, we are no longer under the supervision of the Law.

3:26

- The conjunction *gar* "for" that begins v 26 indicates that the following assertion is as much the basis of the argument just completed as its conclusion.
- Now all who trust in Christ Jesus are *huioi* "adult sons" through faith.
- In the OT, Israel, and Israel only, was the son(s) of God (Exod 4:22-23; Deut 14:1; Isa 43:6; Jer 31:9).
- The Law no longer plays a role in defining and delineating the family of God.
- It is now faith in Christ Jesus that makes one a son of God.

3:27

- Paul now explains how the Galatians became the sons of God, as indicated by the "for" which begins the sentence.
- They were able to exercise faith in Christ and thus become God's children because of their baptism into Christ by the Holy Spirit that takes place at the moment of salvation (1 Cor 12:13).
- When Roman children reached son status their fathers gave them a special toga that identified their status. Paul compared that putting on of the toga to putting on Christ.
- Also, in several passages in the OT the change of clothes stands for the experience of God's salvation (2 Chr 6:41; Job 29:14; Ps 132:16; Isa 52:1; 61:10; Zech 3:3-5).
- At conversion the sinner puts off the filthy rags of self-righteousness and puts on the righteousness of Christ (Isa 64:6; 1 Cor 1:30).

3:28

- The work of the Spirit has united all believers without distinction into the body of Christ (1 Cor 12:13).
- Paul makes a threefold affirmation which corresponds to a number of Jewish formulas in which the threefold distinction is maintained, as in the Morning Prayer in which the male Jew thanks God that he is not a Gentile, a slave nor a woman, since they were disqualified from several religious privileges which were open only to free Jewish males.
- Paul was not saying that all distinctions between people have ceased. Obviously people are still either Jews or Gentiles, slaves or free, and male or female. His point was that within the body of Christ all are united.
- His emphasis was on believers' unity in Christ, not their equality with one another.
- He is here making a theological statement about the fundamental equality of both men and women in their standing before God, he is not making a social statement about the interrelationships in their daily lives.

3:29

- This section concludes with the statement that all who belong to Christ are the seed of Abraham and heirs in accordance with the promise made to him.
- For the Judaizers no one could claim descent from the patriarch who was uncircumcised and non-observant with regard to the Law.
- Paul refers to believers here as those who are *Christou* "of Christ", which indicates not only possession but also membership into a special fellowship in which the King reigns over His people and takes them under his protection (Isa 44:5).
- In such a way, believers belong to Christ and He determines their identity and their life-conditions.

#### B. CLARIFICATION OF THE DOCTRINE CH. 4

Whereas in chapter 3 Paul dealt mainly with justification, in chapter 4 his emphasis was primarily on sanctification.

##### *1. The domestic illustration: contrast between sonship and servanthood 4:1-11*

##### *Childhood versus full sonship, 4:1-7*

4:1

- As long as the heir of the estate is a child, he is no different than a slave, even though he is potentially master of all.
- Apparently, Paul was thinking of *patria potestas* in Roman law, whereby the head of a household exercised absolute power over all persons and property in a family. A minor under *patria potestas*, even though the heir of the entire property, he legally was not differentiated from a slave.

4:2

- For the appointed time he is under the direction of *epitropous* "guardians" and *oikonomous* "managers of the house, stewards".
- But when the time set by the father elapses, the child becomes an adult and assumes the right to do with the property whatever he pleases.

4:3

- Similarly people before coming to Christ by faith were under bondage *ta stoicheia tou kosmou* "to the elemental things of the world".
- These "the elemental things of the world" could denote several things. 1) the "elemental substances" of which the cosmos is composed: earth, air, fire and water; 2) the heavenly bodies or powers which influence or even determine human destiny: sun, moon, stars, angels, demons; 3) the "elementary forms" of religion.
- Hence, as Paul has stated, people before coming to Christ by faith were under bondage. In the case of Jews their bondage was to the Law, and in the case of Gentiles it was the restraints of pagan religion.

4:4

- The incarnation of the Son brought the "fullness of the time", marking the end of the present age and ushering in the new age.
- *Pleroma* can refer to "that which fills", but here seems to signify the filling up of the time, thus "the right time" in salvation-history according to the purpose of God.

- At the properly appointed time, God *exapesteilen* "sent forth with a commission" His only Son. The word "sent" comprises two thoughts: the going forth of the Son from the place He had been (His pre-existence), and His having divine authority.
- The reality of the incarnation is emphasized in the statement that Jesus, was *genomenon* "made, born". This term may denote His virgin birth, while *gennao* is used to depict natural birth, although both terms are used of Jesus. More likely *genomenon* is used to signify the passing from one state to another.
- It appears that Paul's point is more to refer to both Christ's divine nature and His human nature.
- Paul also points out that Jesus was born under the Mosaic Law.

4:5

- The intention of Jesus' birth of a woman, under the Law, is stated by the two purpose clauses now presented.
- In the first case, the death of Christ is for the purpose of obtaining the *exagorazo* "redemption" of those who were under the Law (cf 3:13).
- This redemption from the Law, in turn, was accomplished for the purpose of granting adoption as sons.
- Therefore, God sent His Son to free those children whom the Law held in bondage and to elevate them to the status of full sons.

4:6

- An accompaniment of adoption, making us sons of God, is the inner testimony of the Spirit, sent from both the Father and the Son, who assures the believer of his sonship.
- The Holy Spirit indwells the "heart" of the believer. The "heart" is the seat of the will (Prov 4:23), the seat of the personality, the inner man (Eph 3:16).
- The indwelling of the Spirit motivates believers to approach God as *Abba* "Father". To address God as *Abba* is a peculiar blessing of the new covenant, as underscored by the fact that there appear to be no real Jewish precedents for the practice. Our relationship with God can be intimate rather than formal.
- It the Spirit who cries out to God on behalf of the believer.

4:7

- Paul can tell the Galatians that they are "no longer" slaves because, in point of fact, the Gentiles among them once were just that when they were in bondage to beings that are "no gods", while the Jews were in bondage as well, to the Law.
- The conclusion of the matter is that the Galatians are no longer slaves but sons and heirs.
- Believers are born from slavery into the family of God as children, but at the same moment, are adopted as full-grown sons, being granted the position of being full heirs.
- Their inheritance is that which was promised to Abraham in its totality (3:16).

*Pagan servanthood, 4:8-11*

Paul now comes to stress in rather shocking terms that life under the Law is no better than his readers' former bondage to idols.

4:8

- This verse opens with a strong adversative, *alla* "however" or "but," followed by a temporal adverb, *tote* "then, formerly" which sets up the contrast that will follow in v 9. Paul was drawing a sharp distinction between the pre-Christian past of the Galatian believers and their present status as adopted sons in the family of God.
- Paul now takes the Galatians back to their pre-Christian time, when they did not know God.

- Here is one the clearest indications that those to whom the argument is addressed were mostly Gentiles who were being induced to observe the Law as the token of their sonship. They are characterized by their former ignorance of the God of Israel (Ps 79:6; Jer 10:25; Eph 2:12; 2 Thess 1:8). Knowledge of God is a recognizably OT attribute of his people. Israel's great privilege was to acknowledge and thus render obedience to the God of the covenant (Deut 4:39; Ps 9:10; 46:10; Isa 43:10).
- Prior to their becoming Christians, they *edouleusate* "served as a slave, were slaves", and their worship was directed to beings (gods) who by nature are not gods. In reality, they were actually worshipping Satan and his demons (1 Cor 10:20).

4:9

- As pagans they *ouk eidotes* "did not know" God, but now they *gnontes* "have experientially and personally known" God.
- So that the Galatians' knowing God was not in any way attributed as a product of their own efforts, Paul adds "or rather to be known by God". The Galatian believers had been *gnontes* "known" by God and made the objects of his saving grace.
- As in amazement, Paul proceeds to ask them how they *epistrephete* "could be in the process of turning back" again to the weak and worthless *stoicheia* "elemental things of the world".
- Also, *thelete* "they willed, wanted, desired" to become slaves all over again.

4:10

- Paul laments that some of the "weak and poor elements" have especially attracted the Galatians' attention: "Days, months, seasons and years."
- By "days" he would certainly have in mind the sabbath and possibly even the day of atonement, if the Judaizers were going so far as to press for its observance.
- "Months" would probably have reference to the offerings at the beginning of each month (the new moon), according (Num 10:10; 28:11-15).
- The "seasons" or "special times" are likely the "appointed feasts" of Israel (Lev 23 and 25).
- As for "years" go, Paul was probably referring to the sabbatical year (Lev 25:1-7) and the year of Jubilee (Lev 25:8-24).
- Paul himself observed the Jewish feasts after his conversion (1 Cor 16:8; Acts 20:16). However he did so voluntarily, not to satisfy divine requirements. He did not observe them because God expected him to do so but because they were a part of his cultural heritage. He also did so because he did not want to cast a stumbling block in the path of Jews coming to faith in Christ (1 Cor 9:19-23).

4:11

- Because these people have advanced so far and so quickly in becoming observant Jews, Paul can only fear for them that his labors on their behalf have all been in vain.
- Paul would actually have labored over the Galatians in vain if they had really reverted from the true gospel of grace to legalism.

## 2. The historical illustration: contrast between Paul and the Galatians 4:12-20

Paul appeals next to his past contacts with the Galatians and calls on them to remember his past visits to Galatia.

4:12

- Paul can address them as "brothers" because they became and still were members of God's new family just as they found themselves, simply by believing the gospel he had proclaimed to them.

- This verse presents us with the first imperative (command) in Galatians: "Become as I am; for I also have become as you are".
- The *imitatio Pauli* theme recurs with some frequency in the writings of the apostle.
- Paul had become as his readers were in the sense that he had lived among them as a Gentile, not under the Mosaic Law. He now called on them to understand that justification by faith excludes such additions as observance of the Law and to live independent of the Law as he did.
- He goes on to mention that in his past visit to them, they "had not wronged him", but had fully accepted him and his message.

#### 4:13

- Paul informs them that he might have gone elsewhere on his mission, but it was *dia* "because of" the "weakness in (his) flesh" that he had diverted to Galatia on his *to proteron* "first, former" visit.
- Many scholars have tried to identify his ailment, but not enough information has been given for us to be dogmatic. Whatever it was, the Galatians knew to what Paul referred.

#### 4:14

- The Galatians had put up with some form of bodily ailment which Paul had which could have been a "trial" to them, without *exouthenesate* "despising him, treating him as nothing" nor *exeptusate* "spitting him out or rejecting him" because they valued the gospel that he brought them.
- But far from reacting as others might have, the Galatians welcomed him as an angel, messenger, of God.
- And not merely as an angel, but he was received as Christ Jesus himself.

#### 4:15

- In recalling the Galatians' uncommonly warm welcome of him, Paul now asks, "What then has become of the *makarismos* 'blessing' you felt?"
- *Makarios* connotes a state of well-being that results from being rightly related to God.
- The Galatians had responded to the gospel and Paul in this way, so much so that, had it been possible, they would have been willing to have their eyes transplanted and presented to Paul as an offering of love.

#### 4:16

- If Paul came to them in a supreme act of friendship and was received by them as a friend, has he suddenly become their enemy by telling them the truth?
- "Speaking the truth in love" (Eph 4:15) is both an antidote to false teaching and a worthy means of building up the body of Christ. This was Paul's approach from the beginning of his ministry in Galatia, and it also marked his present intervention in the crisis that occasioned this letter.
- The "truth" is at least threefold: 1) Paul's Law-free gospel of "no distinction" between Jew and Gentile, which brought such wrath upon his head by those under the Law; 2) his warnings to the Galatians that, in their foolishness, they could lose everything that has been procured in Christ; 3) his characterization of the Judaizers as false brothers and apostates with regard to God's purposes in Christ.

#### 4:17

- The false teachers *zelousin* "manifested a zeal, great concern, interest" in the Galatians.
- However, it was not really done for the good of the Galatians or the good of the gospel.
- As Solomon warned, "the kisses of an enemy are deceitful" (Prov 27:6).
- Their intention was "to shut you out in order that you *zeloute* 'may be zealous, make much' of them".

- In other words, the Judaizers were seeking to shut the Galatians out of the sphere of Paul's influence and gospel so the Galatians would be dependent on them.

4:18

- Paul now affirms here that it is always good to be *zēlousthai* "courted zealously, eagerly sought" *en kabō* "in a good cause, for a good purpose", both while he was with them and even now in his absence.
- Paul himself had zealously sought to gain converts in Galatia, and in turn he had been eagerly courted by these disciples.
- His message was "good" because it was the gospel given to him from Christ.

4:19

- The very fact that Paul can still address the Galatians as *teknia mou* "my children" shows his heart. They may be in revolt against him, but he still is their spiritual father (1 Cor 4:14,17; 2 Cor 6:13; 12:14; Phil 2:22; 1 Thess 2:11).
- Paul felt as if he was going through labor pains all over again for them, just as he had done when he had initially evangelized Galatia.
- The idea of "labor pains" appears in the LXX in apocalyptic contexts having to do with a coming cataclysm, as being like the anguish of a woman giving birth (Isa 13:6, 8; Jer 6:24; Mic 4:10), all three depicting Israel's removal into exile.
- In these texts there is the association of the anguish of childbirth with the passing of an old order and the coming of a new.
- The NT takes up the same imagery in apocalyptic passages (Matt 24:8; Mark 13:8; Rom 8:22; Rev 12:2; 1 Thess 5:3), all occupied with the end of the age as transpiring through labor pains.
- Paul might have thought that his labor pains were at an end after his first visit when he brought them to birth in Christ, but now he has to endure agony all over again until Christ is finally *morphothei* "formed" within them (Col 1:27).
- *Morphothei* denotes the development and outward display which properly represents the inner nature.
- This is precisely the thrust of 2 Cor 5:17: "So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new".
- It is Paul's person and preaching, not that of his detractors, which is bringing this about. Therefore, he is willing to suffer again the agony of childbirth until Christ is finally fully formed in them.

4:20

- Paul's wish to be present with the Galatians is based upon his desire to change the tone he has necessarily had to assume with them in this letter.
- Their irrational desire to become slaves to the Law and followers of the legalistic false teachers perplexed him.
- Paul did revisit the Galatians at a later date (Acts 15:36-16:5).

### 3. The biblical illustration: conflict between Isaac and Ishmael 4:21-31

Seeing that so much of the argument thus far has been derived from the promises to Abraham, we are not surprised that for one last time Paul returns to the Abraham narrative of Genesis. Paul now endeavours to reinforce his argument by means of an allegorical interpretation of the Genesis story of Hagar and Sarah, with their respective sons Ishmael and Isaac in order to convince the Galatians that they were in danger of joining the wrong branch of Abraham's family.

4:21

- While the Judaizers constantly appealed to the books of Exodus, Leviticus, and Deuteronomy, Paul goes all the way back to Genesis.
- Paul asks the Galatians that since they desire to be under law (the principle of legalism), if they listen to the Law (Mosaic Law), meaning to read it, study it, understand it, believe it, and obey it.
- He is asking for a response from them.
- Paul was challenging the Galatians, who claimed to value the Law so highly, to consider what it taught.
- What Paul is building up to is v 30 and the Law's demand that the slave woman and her son, that is, the Judaizers, be cast out from among the Galatian believers.

4:22

- He pointed out two contrasts between Ishmael and Isaac. First, Ishmael's mother was a slave, but Isaac's mother was free. These conditions affected the status of their sons in Abraham's household (Gen 16).
- Now Abraham had more than two sons, but only the two mentioned are important for his illustration.
- According to texts from the ANE, such as the Code of Hammurabi, a childless wife could give (and in some cases, such as the Nuzi texts, was required to give) her husband a slave girl for the production of children, and could subsequently demote her again to slave status if she tried to become equal with the wife. However, the slave girl could not be sold.

4:23

- The second contrast between Ishmael and Isaac was that Ishmael was born *kata sarka* "according to the flesh (referring to the sinful, fallen nature of man), naturally", but Isaac was born supernaturally in answer to God's promise (Gen 18:9-13).
- Paul here recognizes the same opposition between reliance on self ("according to the flesh") and reliance on God ("through promise") as exists between those who would be justified by legal works (Judaizers) and those who are justified by faith.

4:24

- Paul then interpreted these events figuratively. He acknowledged the historicity of the events. He saw in this story an illustration of the conflict between Judaism and Christianity, legalism (nomism) and spirituality. He was calling allegory what we refer to as analogy.
- The Mosaic Law given to the Jewish people at Mt Sinai is represented by the slave mother Hagar.
- Those who are under the Law are in bondage to the demands and penalties of the Law.

4:25

- Hagar, who had been associated with Mt Sinai in the previous verse, is now also associated with Arabia.
- Now, it is pointed out that Arabia is not part of the land promised to Abraham.
- In addition, Hagar represents the present Jerusalem (type), which is in bondage just as the slave mother.
- The Judaizers could have accepted a certain identification of Mt Sinai with Jerusalem because, of course, it was the Law given on Mt Sinai that led eventually to the establishment of the capital city with its temple worship.

4:26

- Paul completes his argument stating that Sarah represents the heavenly city of Jerusalem, the final destiny of departed believers, which is free. Sarah is also the mother of all true believers.

- For Paul, Law and promise are in opposition, therefore, he argues, the people of the Law belong to Hagar's family, for she "is from Mount Sinai, bearing children for slavery", while those who believe the gospel are the children of Sarah, the free woman.
- In an ironic twist, Paul is claiming that some of the Galatian believers, by desiring to embrace the Mosaic Law, were returning to Egypt instead of pressing on to the Promised Land, which is all the more ironic since the Law was given in the context of Israel's liberation from Egypt (Ex 19-20).
- To Jews Paul's interpretation must have seemed preposterous. It was crystal clear that they were Sarah's offspring, while Hagar's descendants were Gentiles.
- The notion of a heavenly Jerusalem (antitype) is familiar from Jewish apocalyptic thought, according to which there was an ideal form of Jerusalem in the purpose of God, waiting, as it were, in heaven to be revealed at the end time (cf Ex 25:9, 40).
- What is distinctive about Paul's "Jerusalem above" is that it is not only a future reality but is present already, with the revelation of Christ in Galatia. This is the city where Christ presently dwells and from which He rules (Eph 1:20; 2:6; 4:10; Phil 3:20).

4:27

- The quotation from Isaiah 54:1 predicted that Israel, which was comparatively barren before the Babylonian exile, would enjoy numerous children in the future.
- The quotation is especially appropriate as it comes at the beginning of a section in which the Lord comforts the exiles by reassuring them that once again he would take them for his wife (Isa 54:4-8) and that a new beginning would soon commence (54:9-10). When the exiles return, she will be overflowing with inhabitants; the abandoned one will become the fruitful mother-city (Isa 1:26)
- Paul applied this prophecy to Sarah. She would have greater blessing and more children in the future than in the past, children of the promises, namely, all true believers including Christians.

4:28

- Believers are similar to Isaac in that they experience a supernatural birth and are part of the fulfillment of God's promise.
- The Galatian believers are the promised children by virtue of divine intervention, not submission to the Law.
- Therefore they should not live as enslaved sons.

4:29

- If the Galatians really are the Isaac-like children of God, "born according to the Spirit," then they must count on *dioko* "continuous persecution" from the Ishmael-like sons of Hagar, "born according to the flesh" (Gen 16:12-16; 21:5-10).
- Legalists always persecute those living in liberty.
- Paul states that the persecutors, like Ishmael, are born in accordance with the flesh, while the persecuted, like Isaac, are born in accordance with the Spirit.

4:30

- Paul climaxes this section by stating that believers should exclude legalists from their midst since legalists have no inheritance with the legitimate sons of God.
- As Abraham cast Ishmael out of his household, so the Galatians should cast the Judaizers out of the church.
- The Galatians are obliged to heed the biblical injunction to purge the camp of its adversaries.

4:31

- Paul concluded his argument by reminding his readers of the very basic and drastic difference between himself and the Galatians, who were children of faith, and the legalists, who were children of the flesh.
- The Judaizers were trying to get the Galatians to submit to the Mosaic Law to merit something from God. This approach is antithetic to grace, which acknowledges that people cannot merit God's favor and simply trusts in God to deliver what He has promised.

In this passage Paul contrasted faith and works as methods of obtaining God's favor. Works express the Christian's gratitude to God for His grace. They do not make us more acceptable to God or make God love us more than He would if we did not do them. In Christ, believers have been set free from bondage and are no longer slaves, but free sons.

#### **IV. ETHICS: LIFE IN THE SPIRIT 5:1–6:10**

Paul's apostolic calling and his doctrinal message were both under severe attack by the Judaizers in Galatia. Thus it was necessary for him to set the record straight, to rehearse the historical events of his missionary labors, in order to secure a proper foundation for his theological exposition. In the closing section of Galatians Paul draws out the implications of the doctrine of justification by faith alone and describes what it meant for the believer who had "died to the Law" now to "live for God" (2:19). The energizing principle of Christian ethics, then, is union with Christ and life in the Spirit. Justification by faith is not a morally barren doctrine. We are justified by faith, a faith that is active in love leading to holiness. Freedom from the Law is in the Spirit, who enables the believer to bear the "fruit of the Spirit" (5:22-23) and live a life well pleasing to God.

##### A. BALANCE IN THE CHRISTIAN LIFE CH. 5

Having ruled out the Mosaic Law as a regulatory standard for Christian behavior, Paul proceeded to explain how God does lead us. The indwelling Holy Spirit now leads us.

##### *1. Living without the Law 5:1-12*

Paul warns his readers not to think that they could satisfy the demands of the Mosaic Law by obeying only a few of its commands. Only complete compliance satisfies its demands.

5:1

- The Galatians were in danger of returning to slavery, not to the slavery of their pagan past, but to the slavery of the Mosaic Law. The false teachers were evidently telling them that they needed to submit to circumcision to be truly acceptable to God.
- Paul begins this new section with the connective *oun* "therefore, for", showing that this section builds on the foundation laid in everything already written by Paul to the Galatians.
- Paul states, "In the freedom, in which Christ has set us free, stand firm".
- "The freedom (liberty)" refers to the believer having no obligation to any system of legalism which is required for justification or sanctification. He is no longer under the Law, but under grace (Rom 6:14).
- However, a believer is always under the moral law of God (1 Cor 9:21), the laws of the family (Eph 5:22-6:9), and the laws of the government (Rom 13:1-7).
- This freedom is achieved only by Jesus Christ through His obedient life, death, and resurrection.
- This freedom by Christ *eleutherose* "has set us free", pointing to an accomplished event in the past. Provisionally, this occurred at the cross, but practically it occurred at conversion.

- Based upon this freedom which the believer has in Christ, Paul commands (an imperative) the believer to "*Stekete* "Stand firm", therefore, and do not *enechesthe* "submit, be burdened" again, to a yoke of slavery."
- *Stekete* "stand firm" means to take a stand and keep on standing.
- *Enechesthe* was used of trappers who put out snares to catch their prey.
- The yoke was used in current Jewish writings in an honorable sense for the obligation to keep the Mosaic Law, and the Judaizers may well have urged the Galatians to "take the yoke of the Law" upon themselves.
- While the mosaic Law was an oppressing yoke, the life live by the Spirit is liberating.
- The imperative, "Stand firm," not only does not contradict the indicative, "Christ has set us free," but in fact results from it. The indicative of their Christ-won freedom secures the imperative of their Spirit-led obedience and victory.

5:2

- Paul now began to attack the Judaizers' teaching about circumcision. Insistence on circumcision was a central feature of the false gospel that the Judaizers were promoting and was the practice around which the controversy centered.
- According to Acts 15:1–2, the Judaizers believed that acceptance of this ancient Jewish ritual was absolutely necessary for salvation and incorporation into the people of God.
- Whenever Paul wanted to make a strong assertion, he would begin with the words, "I Paul" (2 Cor 10:1; Eph 3:1). The addition of the imperative "Look" strengthens the seriousness of the following statements.
- Paul now uses a third class condition (1:8), and states that "if you accept circumcision (or allow yourselves to be circumcised), Christ will be of no advantage to you."
- First, this implies that the Galatians have not yet been circumcised as a practice or way of life.
- For the Galatians to accept this false gospel and the practice derived from it would mean that they had rejected God's all-sufficient provision for salvation through faith in Jesus Christ and his finished work on the cross.
- For the Galatians to reject the cross of Christ by going forward into Judaism by accepting circumcision as a means of salvation would be the same as their sliding backwards into the paganism of their former life.

5:3

- Paul now amplified what he had just said concerning the consequences of the Galatians' acceptance of circumcision.
- Paul states, "Every man who *peritemnomenoi* 'allows himself to be circumcised, accepts circumcision' that he is obligated to keep the whole Law."
- Accepting the Jewish ritual of circumcision carried with it a further all-encompassing obligation -- the necessity of observing the law in its every detail.
- He who submits to circumcision as a legal requirement, necessary for salvation, accepts thereby the principle of salvation by Law-keeping, which implies salvation by keeping the whole Law.
- This legal approach to salvation would separate them from Christ since what He did was provide salvation as a gift of grace. They would fall away from the grace method of salvation if they chose the Law method.
- For the Galatians then to accept circumcision and all that it implied was for them to throw away the precious gift of freedom and step back onto the unceasing demands of self-justification by keeping the whole Law.

5:4

- Paul here repeated and intensified his warning by pointing out that all those who *dikaiousthe* "seek to be justified, are being justified" by the Law are in reality *katergethete* "alienated, severed, cut off" from Christ and *exepesete* "have fallen away from" grace.
- Paul was saying that those who had renounced the way of justification God has established and, instead, had chosen the way of obedience to the Law, had become debtors to fulfill perfectly all of the commandments of the Law had been "severed from Christ", that is, removed from his sphere of operation and "hence completely cut off from relations with him."
- To be cut off from Christ in this sense is to have "fallen away from grace."

5:5

- In contrast to those who are being allured by the law as the realm of their justification, "we by the Spirit through faith eagerly await the hope of righteousness."
- Both faith and the Spirit are set forth as eschatological realities in contrast to the Law, now obsolete, that can do nothing to effect our standing with God.
- Both justification by faith and the bestowal of the Holy Spirit upon the church are eschatological events. They signal the shattering of the old broken-down structures of human existence and the breaking in of God's new *aeon* "age".
- By the Spirit and by faith we believers *apekdechometha* "eagerly await, receive from out of" *elpida dikaiosynes* "the hope of righteousness", which is the expectation of the final public acknowledgment by God of the believer as justified and righteous.
- The believer already has been granted righteousness by the Spirit and by faith, which gives him hope for the future.

5:6

- The Christian fellowship embraced both circumcised and uncircumcised, and made no difference to their new existence "in Christ Jesus".
- Being "in Christ Jesus" is never fully explained by Paul, but appears to have the sense of being in union, being in the closest possible relationship with Him, existing with His sphere of influence.
- If the former identity markers have now become obsolete, what really does matter for those who are "in Christ Jesus" is "faith working through love."
- Note that in vv 5, 6 Paul united the three basic Christian virtues: faith, hope, and love. The Holy Spirit makes all three possible.

5:7

- Paul here compared the Christian life to the running of a race, an athletic image found in many of his writings (1 Cor 9:24-27; Phil 3:14; 2 Tim 4:7).
- He equates their spiritual progress up to the present (Acts 14:22-23) with the running of a race.
- "You *etrechete* "were running, had started running" well." The image is of an athlete who dashes from the starting line with great vigor.
- They had begun in the Spirit and had been proceeding in the Spirit (3:3; 5:16).
- "Tis 'Who (singular)' *anekopse* "hindered, cut in front of" you from obeying the truth?"
- In the illustration of the athlete, this would picture a runner starting out well, and then having a second athlete suddenly cut in front of him, causing him to break stride or stumble.
- Spiritually, this happened to the Galatian believers.
- The result of the interference was disobedience to the truth. They were now trying to finish the race by legalism and self achievements rather than by faith and the Spirit.

5:8

- What was the success of the Judaizers?
- Paul answers that "This *peismone* 'persuasion' is not from Him who calls you."

- "This persuasion" refers to the Judaizers' efforts to introduce legalism into the churches in Galatia.
- In contrast to Paul, they must have been physically attractive, eloquent in speech, and able to put on a good show, so much so that the new believers in Galatia were persuaded to abandon the gospel of grace for their new theology of salvation by the Law and human merit.
- Such persuasiveness, no matter how effective, is not from the "one who called you," an expression always used in Paul with reference to God (cf 1:6).
- If the persuasion does not come from Him who has called them, it is implied that it comes ultimately from his great adversary, whoever the human agents were who put obstacles in their path, Satan (cf. 1 Thes 2:18).

5:9

- Paul's opponents had not overturned the whole system of salvation by faith alone but were only making a seemingly minor adjustment to it -- the imposition of the harmless rite of circumcision. But even a seemingly slight deviation on such a fundamental matter of the faith can bring total ruin to the Christian community.
- Paul quotes a proverbial saying, "A little leaven leavens the whole lump."
- The use of leaven or yeast as a symbol of festering corruption probably derives from the Old Testament prohibition against its use during the seven days of Passover (Ex 12:14–20; Deut 16:3–8).
- Given that the circumcision party was composed of former Pharisees (Acts 15:5), Paul may be in touch with the warning of Jesus that his disciples were to beware of "the leaven of the Pharisees" (Matt 16:6, 11; Mark 8:15; Luke 12:1).
- Paul was concerned for the believers in Galatia, for he knew the permeating and corrupting effect of false teaching, which had already begun to take effect.

5:10

- Now, suddenly, there is an abrupt change of mood as Paul declared his confidence that the Galatians would after all "take no other view," that is, that they would not ultimately capitulate to the false teaching that was being presented to them with such persuasion.
- Paul states that he has confidence in the Lord that the Galatians will take no other view than his.
- He firmly believed that they would ultimately obey what he had taught and written them.
- Paul's confidence toward the Galatians was rooted in the reality of the love of God and the faithfulness of Jesus Christ, which in turn is the basis for the perseverance of the saints.
- While Paul expressed confidence in the perseverance of the true believers in Galatia, he was unsparing in his denunciation of those who had thrown them into such confusion.
- Paul states that the leader of the Judaizers, whoever he might be, would receive his judgment from the church and God.
- Earlier Paul admonished the Galatian believers to expel the false teachers from among them (4:30).
- Here he spoke of the final judgment that will be meted out by God himself at the return of Christ.
- These are the only two sanctions the New Testament acknowledges for heresy: church discipline and divine judgment.

5:11

- Evidently a part of the confusion stemmed from a false accusation that Paul's opponents had circulated about him, in which they must have accused him of still promoting circumcision.
- For Paul it was perfectly acceptable for Jewish believers in Jesus to have their infant sons circumcised so long as no salvific significance was attached to this ethnic ritual.
- His basic rule of thumb was that a Christian should order his life according to his condition when God called him (1 Cor 7:18–19).

- Some have also seen in this verse a veiled reference to another incident in Paul's ministry. When Timothy joined Paul and Silas on their missionary tour, Paul had his young friend circumcised so that he would have greater access to the Jewish communities on their evangelistic mission (Acts 16:3). Timothy's mother was Jewish, and Paul no doubt justified this act along the line of the principle of accommodation, "To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews" 1 Cor 9:20.
- Timothy would have been considered a Jew. His father, however, being a Greek, would not have had his son circumcised; and the local Jews were aware of this. So Paul had Timothy circumcised. Paul always worked through the Jewish synagogues where possible. To have had associates be of Jewish lineage and yet uncircumcised would have hindered his effectiveness among the Jews.
- Paul must have felt some sting in this accusation or else he would not have responded to it so abruptly. "If I am still preaching circumcision," Paul asked, "why am I still being persecuted?"
- In Paul's preconversion days, he probably would have "preached circumcision" as an essential component of his own zealous Judaizing efforts.
- Now Paul adds the preaching of the cross to his reasoning. The preaching of the cross was very much a *skandalon* "offense" to the Jews, and one could hardly preach Christ and circumcision concurrently.
- The word *skandalon*, "offense," literally means "a trap, a source of embarrassment, a stumbling block that inevitably provokes a negative reaction."
- The cross is a scandal to the world, because it is the prime example of God's using something weak and despicable, shameful and cursed, to display his overcoming grace and redemptive victory (1 Cor 1:18–31).
- By reducing his message Paul could have removed the offense of a crucified Christ, but a crossless Christianity leaves men and women helpless in the face of sin and death.
- Paul's gospel was a stumbling block for two reasons: it presented a crucified Messiah and it advocated a way of salvation by faith, apart from circumcision and the Law.

5:12

- Paul now wished, no less, than that the circumcisers, "those who are *anastatountes* 'unsettling, disturbing' you, would *apoksontai* 'castrate, mutilate, cut themselves off, have themselves made eunuchs'."
- Some scholars see this castration as referring to the ritual of sacral castration practiced by the priests of Cybele, a mother goddess (Magna Mater) and the focus of a thriving mystery cult in Asia Minor. The castration of the Cybeline priests was part of an annual ritual in which the dying and rising of Attis, the consort god of Cybele, was reenacted. One of the major centers for the worship of Cybele was at Pessinus, a leading city in North Galatia.
- More likely, it is possible to interpret Paul's remark with reference to the verse from the Pentateuch, "No one who has been emasculated by crushing or cutting may enter the assembly of the Lord" (Deut 23:1). In the LXX the words used to translate "the assembly of the Lord" are *ekklesia Kuriou*, "the church of the Lord."
- To be excluded from the church was to be excluded from Christ, placed under a curse, and anathematized, reiterating the anathema in 1:6-9.

## 2. Law of Love 5:13-15

5:13

- There were two distinctive temptations facing the Pauline congregations in Galatia.
- First, their coming to Christ had brought an exhilarating freedom from such slavery of their pagan religions, but it also had produced a moral insecurity, which legalism helped pacify.
- Second, libertinism, an extreme form of antinomian (anti-Law) teaching that held that freedom from the law meant release from all moral restraints.

- “For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as *aphormen* ‘an opportunity’ for the *sarx* ‘flesh’, but through love serve one another.”
- Christians are free because they have been called by God. The purpose of God’s calling is to set them free from enslavement to sin and its penalty (John 8:34-36), and from the bondage of legalism, whether of the Mosaic Law (3:13) or their former pagan religions (4:8-9).
- *Aphormen* means a starting point, opportunity, or pretext. Hence, this freedom must not provide an opportunity for the flesh to assert itself in opposition to the will of God.
- *Sarx* “flesh” in Paul is a complex term meaning various things depending on the context in which it is used. Elsewhere in Galatians Paul used this word to refer to human life in its material dimension, our physical body, or to that which is merely human as opposed to spiritual or divine (2:20; 4:29). However, throughout Gal 5–6 flesh is used as an ethical term with a decidedly negative connotation. Flesh refers to fallen human nature, the center of human pride and self-willing, the arena of indulgence and self-assertion, that which is opposed to the Spirit.
- Paul warned the Galatians that they must not turn their freedom into license or use it as an occasion to gratify their fleshly desires, **but to see it as a call** to unity in Christ and to loving service within the believing community.

5:14

- Paul now says that the entire Law is *pleroutai* “summed up, fulfilled” in a single *logos* “word, commandment”: “Love your neighbor as yourself” (Lev 19:18).
- Without relapsing into legalism, Paul was exhorting the Galatian believers to demonstrate their faith energized by love and leading to holiness.
- The rejection of Law-keeping as a means of justification does not alter the fact the Law gives believers a useful guide to the way one should live.

5:15

- Apparently the believers who advocated grace and the believers who advocated Law bitterly opposed one another in the Galatian churches.
- Paul warned, “if you keep on biting one another and tearing one another to pieces, take care lest you be annihilated by one another.”
- Paul cautioned both sides to love one another or they would consume each other.
- All three verbs Paul used to describe their fighting among one another (biting, devouring, being destroyed) were commonly used in Hellenistic Greek to suggest wild animals engaged in deadly struggle.
- Paul spoke as a pastor to all of the believers in Galatia, warning them against continuing strife and mutual destruction.
- It is the works of the flesh, among which are dissensions and factions, that had produced the fractured fellowship and broken unity Paul here noted.

### *3. Living by the Holy Spirit 5:16-26*

Just as justification is not achieved by any self effort, so also sanctification is a provision from God through the power of the Spirit. The basic meaning of *hagiazō* “sanctify” is “to set apart.” There are four stages to sanctification. 1) Preparatory sanctification is the work of the Spirit quickening within the sinner a need for salvation (2 Thess 2:13). 2) Positional sanctification occurs at the moment of salvation when the believing sinner is reckoned righteous and imputed God’s righteousness (1 Cor 6:11). 3) Progressive sanctification is the work of God whereby He progressively sets the believer apart from the temptations of the world, the flesh, and the devil (John 17:17; Eph 5:26). 4) Consummate sanctification, also known as glorification, whether from physical death or the Lord’s return, results in a total separation from the sin nature and its effects (Rom 8:30).

Here in this section, Paul used four distinct verbs to designate the Spirit-controlled life of the believer, all of which are roughly equivalent in meaning: to walk in the Spirit (v 16), to be led by the Spirit (v 18), to live by the Spirit (v 25a), and to keep in step with the Spirit (v 25b).

5:16

- "But I say, *peripateite* 'walk, and keep on walking' by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh."
- In v 13 Paul exhorted the believers in Galatia not to use their freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, and now he informs them that walking by the Spirit is the way to avoid fulfilling the flesh's desires.
- Walking by the Spirit means living moment by moment submissively trusting in the Holy Spirit rather than in self.
- Three characteristics will distinguish the Spiritual walk. 1) Since the Spirit is grieved when a believer deliberately and consistently sins (Eph 4:25-32), the believer walking in the Spirit will not do the things that grieve the Spirit (Eph 4:30). 2) The believer will not "quench the Spirit" (1 Thess 5:19), by not allowing the Spirit to express Himself through the life of the believer. 3) The believer will be filled with the Spirit (Eph 5:18-21).
- To the extent that we walk by the power of the Spirit, we will *ou me* "not at all" carry out our fleshly, sinful desires.
- The more we think about our dependence on Him the more consistent we will be in trusting in Him and in walking by the Spirit.
- For Paul, to walk in the Spirit means to go where the Spirit is going, to listen to His voice, to discern His will, to follow His guidance.
- The promise is that to the extent that a believer walks in the Spirit, he will not fulfill the *epithumia* "desire, lust" of the flesh.
- Unless the flesh-driven impulse is denied, this "desire of the flesh" (1 John 2:16) will attain its logical end in the destruction of the individual (Jas 1:14-15). This is why those who practice "the works of the flesh" will not inherit the kingdom of God (5:21).

5:17

- Twice before in Galatians we have encountered an explicit antithesis between spirit and flesh. In 3:3 Paul asked how the Galatians who had begun with the Spirit could possibly think that perfection in the things of God could come by means of the flesh. Then in 4:29 the births of Ishmael and Isaac are sharply contrasted in terms of their origin in the flesh, that is, human self-will as opposed to the Spirit, that is, promised and initiated by God.
- Here in 5:17 flesh and Spirit are portrayed as two warring forces locked in mortal conflict within the life of the believer.
- Paul states, "for the flesh desires against the Spirit and the Spirit against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other."
- The conflicting entities are God's Holy Spirit within the believer and the believer's sinful human nature.
- We experience conflict whether we side with the Spirit against the flesh or with the flesh against the Spirit.
- Since the desires of flesh and Spirit are in conflict with each other, the result is that the believer is prevented from doing the things that he wants to do -- the flesh opposes the Spirit when he wants to follow the Spirit, and the Spirit checks the flesh when he wants to give in to the flesh.
- So long as we remain in this present life, we never outgrow or transcend the spiritual conflict Paul described in this passage.

5:18

- "If you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law."

- This statement is a first class condition, indicating that Paul assumed the statement was true for the sake of his argument.
- In this case Paul seems to have believed that the Holy Spirit does indeed lead every Christian (vv 24-26). The question is, will we follow His leading and walk after the Spirit (v 16) or will we walk after the flesh? The "if" in this sentence has the force of "since."
- Since the Spirit leads the believer, life in the Spirit stands in irreconcilable conflict with existence under the Law.
- However, believers are now energized to fulfill the true intention of the Law precisely because they have been set free from the Law by the possession of the Spirit.
- The Spirit leads the believer to do the moral will of God. He does this primarily through Scripture by helping believers understand the will of God as He has revealed it. Also, He motivates believers to do what is right, and He provides the power to obey God (Phil. 2:13).

#### 5:19

- In 5:19–26 Paul developed further the conflict between flesh and Spirit in terms of two distinctive listings of ethical qualities -- the first a series of malevolent acts Paul described as "the works of the flesh"; the second, a somewhat shorter series of traits collectively described as "the fruit of the Spirit."
- Paul did not contrast the works of the flesh with opposing works of the Spirit. The works of the flesh are the products of fallen human beings in their devising, conniving, and efforts at self-actualization.
- There is an obvious and important difference in the way the two lists are structured. Paul's list of sins is deliberately defined as plural in number, works of the flesh, a seemingly random assortment of terms with no inherent consistency or logical sequence, which is reflective of the chaotic nature of evil. The fruit of the Spirit, however, is noticeably singular. There is one fruit of the Spirit that manifests itself in nine graces nicely grouped into three well-balanced triplets: (1) love, joy, peace; (2) patience, kindness, goodness; (3) faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.
- Only those redeemed by grace can bear the fruit of the Spirit, and the Law of God will not bring them into condemnation, although neither will it spare them from accountability, at the second coming of Christ.
- *Sexual sins*  
Immorality, fornication (*porneia*, all types of forbidden sexual relationships)  
Impurity, uncleanness (*akatharsia*, all moral uncleanness in thought, word, and deed)  
Sensuality, licentiousness, indecency debauchery, lasciviousness (*aselgeia*, the open, shameless display of these sins).

#### 5:20

- *Religious sins*  
Idolatry (*eidololatria*, worship of anything but God)  
Sorcery, witchcraft (*pharmakeia*, attempts to aid the powers of evil)
- *Societal sins*  
Enmities, quarrels, hatred (*echthrai*, hostilities)  
Strife, discord, variance (*eris*, antagonism)  
Jealousy, envy, emulation (*zelos*, self-centered animosity)  
Outbursts of anger, fits of rage, wrath (*thymoi*, temper eruptions)  
Disputes, strife, factions selfishness, selfish ambition (*eritheiai*, putting others down to get ahead)  
Dissensions, divisions, seditions (*dichostasiai*, disputes over issues or personalities)  
Factions, heresies, party spirit (*haireseis*, divisions over issues or personalities)

#### 5:21

Envyings, jealousies (*phthonoi*, wrong desires to have another's possessions)

- *Intemperate sins*  
Drunkenness, drinking bouts (*methai*, excessive use of intoxicants)  
Carousings, revelings, orgies (*komoi*, parties involving excessive eating and drinking)
- *Other sins*
- Paul warned the believers in Galatia here, as he had when he was with them, that people who *prassontes* "habitually practice" such sins will not inherit the kingdom of God (cf 1 Cor 6:9-11; Eph 5:5).
- Christians may fall into some of the sins listed above when they fail to walk by the Spirit, but such should not be the general pattern of their lives.
- Paul did not sound his warning in order to instill despair in struggling Christians. Rather he wanted the believers to see the heinous character of sin and so be led by the Spirit to repentance and mortification of the flesh.
- Paul does not threaten that there shall be excluded from the Kingdom of God all who have sinned, but all who remain impenitent. The believers themselves are heavily burdened, but they return to God and strive to walk by the Spirit.

5:22

- The listing of the sinful acts in the catalog of evil was disorderly, chaotic, and incomplete, corresponding to the random and compulsive character of sin itself.
- The character traits contained in the list of grace appear in harmony, balanced and symmetrical, corresponding to the purposeful design of a life filled with the Spirit and lived out in the beauty of holiness.
- Note that Paul called what issues from our sinful human nature "deeds" or "acts" (v 19), but he called what issues from the Spirit "fruit" (v 22).
- "Fruit" is singular suggesting the unified Christ-like character that the Spirit produces.
- *Mental or God-ward qualities*  
Love (*agape*, self-sacrificing affection for others)  
Joy (*chara*, deep-seated gladness regardless of circumstances)  
Peace (*eirene*, inner quietness and repose regardless of circumstances)
- *Interpersonal or other-ward qualities*  
Patience (*makrothymia*, forbearance even under provocation)  
Kindness (*chrestotes*, benevolence and graciousness)  
Goodness (*agathosyne*, constructive action reaching out to others)
- *General or self-ward qualities*  
Faithfulness (*pistis*, reliability, trustworthiness)

5:23

Gentleness (*praytes*, acquiescence to authority and consideration of others)

Self-control (*enkrateia*, ability to master oneself)

- There are Laws against the deeds of the flesh because they are destructive, but there are none against the fruit of the Spirit because it is edifying (cf Rom. 8:1).
- The Law is not against those who walk by the Spirit because in principle they are fulfilling the Law.
- This sort of pleasing conduct to God does not come about by placing people under the Law, but by walking by the power of the Spirit.

5:24

- For Paul, as we have seen already, the Law and the flesh belong to the same pre-Christian order.
- But the cross of Christ severed Paul's relation to the Law only as he himself was crucified with Christ, thus becoming dead to the Law that he might live to God (2:19-20).

- The cross also severs the relation of believers to the flesh only as they reckon themselves to have been crucified in the historical crucifixion of Christ.
- Therefore it is inconsistent for us to return to the flesh, whose *pathemata* "passion" are the outward expression of inner *epithymiai* "desires."
- We need to continually crucify the flesh by choosing to yield to the Spirit (vv 16, 18, 25; Rom. 8:13; Col. 3:5).
- The basic demand of Christian discipleship is that we take up our cross daily and follow Christ (Luke 9:23).
- Paul adds to this image that we must not only take up our cross and walk with it, but actually make sure the execution takes place.

5:25

- "Since (or 'if', another first class condition that states a condition true to reality) we live by the Spirit," an accomplished fact, "let us *stoichomen* 'keep in step', with the Spirit," an exhortation to obedience.
- *Stoichomen* emphasizes being in a row, suggesting keeping in harmony with some norm or standard.
- Living by the Spirit is similar to walking by the Spirit. The former looks at the Spirit as the source and sustaining power of the believer's spiritual life, whereas the latter views Him as the regulative principle in the believer's conduct.
- The way for the believer to avoid the sins of the flesh is not to reverting to keeping the Mosaic Law, but to bring his life into conformity with the will of the Spirit who produces the fruit which pleases God.

5:26

- This is an important transitional verse connecting Paul's discussion of the Christian life with the specific situation in the churches of Galatia.
- "Let us not become *kenodoxos* 'conceited,' provoking one another, envying one another."
- *Kenodoxos* "conceited," refers to the attitude of being puffed up with pride, arrogant, boastful, "setting value on things not really valuable," or "glorying in vain things."
- Such an attitude belongs to the world of the flesh, not to the life of the Spirit.
- The key to being fruitful as a Christian is being submissive to the Holy Spirit, following His leading, and walking in dependence on Him (cf John 15:4-5).

## B. RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE 6:1-10

Being free from the Mosaic Law does not mean being free from responsibility. In this section Paul explained various responsibilities that believers have to one another. Paul said spirituality is evident in personal relationships (vv 1-5) and in the use of money (vv 6-10).

### *1. Toward sinning Christians 6:1*

6:1

- "Brothers, if anyone is caught in any sin, you who are *pneumatikoi* 'spiritual' should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted."
- The word for "caught" means literally to be "detected, overtaken, surprised", someone suddenly entrapped or discovered in an unseemly situation or act.
- The "spirituals" should probably be understood in the same kind of positive sense Paul used it in 1 Cor 2:15–3:4. There the apostle contrasted the "spiritual" believers at Corinth with those who

were *sarkikoi*, "fleshly," worldly minded, that is, those who had to be fed on milk instead of meat because they were spiritually immature.

- Here, then, "those who are spiritual" are identical with those Christians who walk in the Spirit, are led by the Spirit, and keep in step with the Spirit.
- Those who are spiritually minded, that is, those whose lives give evidence of the fruit of the Spirit, have a special responsibility to take the initiative in seeking restoration and reconciliation with those who have been caught in sin.
- The word *katartizo* "to put in order, to restore to its former condition", is used elsewhere in the New Testament (cf Matt 4:21; Mark 1:19) for "the mending or overhauling of nets," and was also a part of the medical vocabulary of ancient Greece, where it meant "to set a fractured or dislocated bone."
- Restoration should follow the one given by Jesus in Matt 18:15–17, and should be done with sensitivity and consideration and with no hint of self-righteous superiority.

## 2. Toward burdened Christians 6:2-5

6:2

- "Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the Law of Christ."
- All Christians have burdens, which will differ and vary in kind depending on the providential ordering of our lives, and which God does not intend for us to carry by ourselves in isolation from our brothers and sisters, but to bearing one another's burdens and so fulfill the Law of Christ.
- In view of the context probably the burden Paul had in mind was an excessive burden of particular temptation and struggle with the flesh (cf Rom. 15:1).
- Throughout the earlier part of Galatians, Paul frequently pictured Christ and grace opposed to Law and works, showing conclusively that justification can never be achieved by observing the requirements of the Mosaic Law, which can only be done through faith in Jesus Christ, who in His atoning death on the cross bore the curse of the Law and now freely offers salvation for all who believe.
- The "Law of Christ" encompasses the whole of Jesus' teaching personally while He was on earth and through His apostles and prophets following His ascension (cf Acts 1:1-2), and reproduced within his people by the power of the Spirit (cf Rom 8:2).

6:3

- Paul warns, "If anyone thinks he is something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself."
- The Galatians were not to think of themselves more highly than they ought (cf Rom. 12:3). If they did, they would be unable to fulfill the Law of Christ by bearing one another's burdens or restoring those who had been overcome by some sudden temptation.
- Pride is sinful, can lead the erring believer into further sin, and leads to self-deception.

6:4

- It is not for one believer to assess or judge the ministry of another. Each one is answerable to God.
- "But let each one *dokimazo* 'test, prove' his own works."
- The word *dokimazo* is the word used for the fiery testing of gold so as to determine its purity.
- True spiritual testing involves submitting one's thoughts, attitudes, and actions to the will of God and the mind of Christ revealed in Holy Scripture.
- This kind of honest scrutiny will issue in confession, not competition, in humility, not in vainglory.

6:5

- In 6:2 Paul instructed the Galatians to "carry each other's burdens." Now in 6:5 he said that each one "should carry his own load."

- Paul was using two different words to refer to two different situations.
- The word translated “burdens” in v 2 is *bare* which refers to a heavy load, an oppressive weight, which one is expected to carry for a long distance.
- The word for “load” in v 5 is *phortion*, which is used elsewhere to refer to a ship’s cargo (cf Acts 27:10), a soldier’s knapsack, or a pilgrim’s backpack.
- We are to bear one another’s burdens which are too heavy for a single man to bear, but there is one burden which we cannot share – the future reckoning that every Christian must make before the judgment seat of Christ.

### 3. Toward teachers 6:6-9

6:6

- Here is a specific example of mutual burden-bearing.
- “Anyone who *katechoumenos* ‘receives instruction’ in the word must share all good things with his instructor.”
- Under Judaism pupils paid a tax, and the teachers’ pay came through the Jewish government. The Galatian Gentiles customarily paid fees for services rendered.
- The concept of voluntary giving out of love for the teacher was new and different.

6:7

1. This verse contains three aphoristic statements presented in the Greek text one after the other in staccato-like fashion: “Be not deceived ... God’s not mocked ... what you sow, you will reap.”
2. The warning, “be not deceived” is a strong expression that Paul used twice in 1 Corinthians, in both cases as an introductory formula to a severe warning concerning the consequences of immoral behavior (1 Cor 6:9; 15:33).
3. The word *mykterizein* “mocked” means literally to “turn up the nose in mockery or contempt.” The Old Testament references are mostly to the mocking of God’s prophets. Only once is this graphic word applied to a blasphemous mocking of God by the people, resulting in God’s wrath (Ezek 8:17, 18).
4. God cannot be mocked! There will be a payday someday because “a man reaps what he sows.”

6:8

- Paul moved on from his general statements about the impossibility of cheating God and the indelible law of sowing and reaping to apply these truths to the Galatian situation in terms of his earlier antithesis between flesh and Spirit.
- Paul stated that “he that sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap *phthora* ‘corruption, decay’; but he that sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap life everlasting.”
- The word *phthora* “destruction, decay, corruption” conveys the idea of a putrid corpse in the process of decomposition, referring to the certainty of judgment, the harvest of destruction and death, the inescapable and eternal outcome of sowing to the flesh.
- As the works of the flesh issue in corruption and death, the fruit of the Spirit yields the harvest of eternal life.
- The term “eternal life” has two different though related meanings in the New Testament. On the one hand, the New Testament writers spoke of it as a gift that one receives by faith (John 10:28). However it also refers to the quality of the believer’s life that depends on the extent to which he walks with God in fellowship (John 10:10). In this second sense, some believers experience eternal life to a greater extent than other believers do. It is in this second sense that Paul spoke of eternal life here.

6:9

- The condition for this reward of eternal life is that *me eklusmai* "we not grow weary, not faint, not give up."
- Paul here admonished the believers in Galatia to persevere in the faith by doing good, knowing that at the *kairo* "proper time, fullness of time" God will fulfill His promise and bring to pass the consummation of all things in accordance with the good pleasure of His own will.
- Doing the good in this sense is the same thing as fulfilling the Law of Christ or sowing to the Spirit.

#### 4. *Toward all people 6:10*

6:10

- The two particles that open this verse, the inferential *ara* "then" followed by the transitional *oun* "therefore" signal that Paul was about to bring to a conclusion the ethical exhortations he had presented in his letter.
- Just as the time of reaping will come "at the proper time," so now we must make good use of the present "opportunity" to sow to the Spirit rather than to the flesh.
- The freedom of the believer is a freedom of service in the moment of opportunity.
- The time for harvest is divinely set. Because this is true, as we have opportunity, let us faithfully fulfill the ministry God has given us to do.
- "Let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the household of faith."
- Although some scholars try to tie this in to the Jerusalem relief fund, most likely Paul was here simply pointing to the special responsibility all Christians have to help alleviate the suffering of their needy brothers and sisters in Christ.

## **V. CONCLUSION 6:11-18**

In this final section, Paul summarized some of his more important points, and also appealed to his readers again to urge them to follow through and to put into practice what he had taught them.

This concluding subscription varies from Paul's usual epistolary practice in several ways. 1) It is longer than most, containing a summary recapitulation of the main themes Paul had pursued throughout the letter. 2) There are no expressed greetings from Paul or anyone else. 3) Paul didn't offer a doxological confession of praise, nor reiterate his desire to see the Galatians soon, nor request their prayers on his behalf.

In these verses history, theology, and ethics are interwoven in a convincing summary of the key points Paul had been trying to make throughout the letter.

6:11

- It was a common convention of Hellenistic letter writing that a secretary or amanuensis would prepare the main body of the letter while the sender would append his signature and perhaps a few closing words of benediction as a way of attesting the contents of the letter and assuring the reader of his full endorsement.
- We gather from other comments in Paul's letters that it was customary for him to dictate his letters orally to an amanuensis and then add a personal postscript and signature in his own hand at the end of the epistle (cf 1 Cor 16:21; 2 Cor 10:1; 2 Thess 3:17; Col 4:18).
- Most scholars believe that here in 6:11 is the place in Galatians where Paul took the stylus from the hand of his secretary and finished off the letter in his own handwriting using, for some reason, unusually large letters to which he drew attention in this verse.

- Paul probably wanted to underscore and reemphasize both the central message of the letter and his own personal investment in it.

6:12

- Throughout Galatians Paul waged a steady campaign against a group of false teachers, commonly known as Judaizers, who had sown great confusion among the apostle's recent converts by teaching that becoming Jewish was necessary for salvation.
- They insisted that Gentile believers submit themselves to circumcision as a necessary prerequisite for belonging to the covenant people of God.
- The issue at stake was not circumcision per se but rather the salvific significance the false teachers had attached to this ceremony.
- Paul accused the Judaizers that it was for the purpose of making a good impression outwardly in the flesh that they wanted the believers in Galatia to be circumcised.
- Paul did not deny that there was an element of sincere conviction among his opponents, but he did claim that there was a more self-serving motivation at work as well. They wanted to boast about how many Gentile believers they had converted into Jewish proselytes.
- The word *euprosopein* "to make a good impression outwardly, in the flesh," is used nowhere else in the New Testament, and only attested elsewhere among recently discovered papyri documents from 114 BC.
- Paul suggested one additional motivation for the insistence of his Jewish Christian opponents that the Gentile believers in Galatia undergo circumcision. They did this, he said, in order to "avoid being *diokomai* 'persecuted' for (because of) the cross of Christ."
- "The cross of Christ" refers to the whole doctrine of justification by faith alone that Paul had been defending in this epistle.
- If the Judaizers could persuade the Gentile believers to accept circumcision, that might preserve the Jerusalem church and its daughter-churches in Judea from reprisals at the hands of Zealot-minded militants for being linked with uncircumcised Gentiles. Those who refused to require circumcision from Gentile converts were liable to be persecuted.
- To follow Jesus Christ faithfully and to proclaim his gospel unflinchingly is to invite persecution.

6:14

- In contrast to the false teachers, who boasted and bragged about their own accomplishments and who were especially proud of their success in winning over Gentile believers to the requirement of circumcision, Paul declared in the strongest possible terms that the only possible ground and object of his own boasting was the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ.
- The Cross was a symbol of shame. Because of the Cross the world had been crucified to him and he to the world. The "world" refers to the world system that in its basic values and orientation is alienated from God.
- To be crucified to the world, then, means to walk in the light, to bear the fruit of the Spirit, and to live in the freedom with which Christ has set us free.

6:15

- Paul declared that neither circumcision nor uncircumcision had any value but only being a new creation in Christ mattered (cf 2 Cor. 5:17).
- This new condition comes by faith in the One who died on the cross as the substitute for sinners.
- The new birth comes to those who put their faith in Christ alone (John 3:16).

6:16

- Paul wished for God's peace and mercy for all who *stoichesousin* "walked by, kept in line with" the *kanon* "rule, measuring rod, canon, rule of faith" he had expounded, namely, faith apart from works.

- Most scholars believe that Paul was here referring to the principle of justification by faith alone.
- Especially he wished this for the "Israel of God." This unusual title refers to saved Jews.
- "Israel" always refers to physical Jews everywhere else in the New Testament (65 times).
- The church is never called a "spiritual Israel" or a "new Israel."

6:17

- "Let no one cause me trouble," Paul said to the Galatians -- that is, stop harassing me and trying to undermine my ministry because my apostolic labor has already been validated by Christ -- not only on the Damascus Road but also in my suffering and affliction, the signs of which are evident for all to see.
- In closing Paul appealed to his readers to end the controversy in Galatia that had caused him so much trouble and distraction as Christ's bonds slave. He cited the scars he had received as the target of persecution, in contrast to circumcision, as his final proof of his devotion to Christ (cf Deut. 15:17).
- When Paul said that he carried around in his body the death of Jesus (cf 2 Cor 4:10) and that he constantly bore the Lord's brand marks, he was referring to the actual scars of persecution and marks of physical suffering he received throughout his apostolic ministry because of his unflinching witness for the gospel.

6:18

- Here Paul concluded his letter with a second benediction, this one a prayer for the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ to be with the Galatians, whom he again called his brothers.
- "Your spirit" means "you." As in no other of his epistles, he bid farewell by referring to his readers tenderly as "brethren."