

[c] Duncan Heaster

[dh@heaster.org](mailto:dh@heaster.org) [] [www.heaster.org](http://www.heaster.org)

## CHAPTER 1

1:1 *Paul, an apostle (not from men, nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead)*- Consider how in Galatians Paul uses so many negatives, as if his passion and almost rage at the false teachers is coming out: “An apostle *not* from men... the gospel preached by me is *not* man’s gospel... *nor* was I taught it... I did *not* confer with flesh and blood, I did *not* go up to Jerusalem... I do *not* lie... Titus was *not* compelled... to *false* brethren we did *not* yield... those ‘of repute’ added *nothing*” (Gal. 1:1,11,12,16,20; 2:3,4,6). The way he says “Ye have known God, or rather, are known of God” (Gal. 4:9) seems to indicate [through the “or rather...”] a very human and passionate touch in his writing, as if he was thinking out loud as he wrote. Throughout 2 Corinthians particularly his writing in places can be described as an inspired flow of consciousness.

Authority in spiritual ministry doesn't depend upon any human authorisation. Paul's authority is linked specifically to the fact God raised Jesus from the dead. That resurrection led to the great commission and the Lord's empowerment of all witness to Him as risen and exalted. But this empowerment is given not only to Paul. All demands for authorization of ministry, e.g. to perform baptisms or decide who to fellowship in the church, is therefore utterly missing the point. We are authorized by the Lord, and the great commission applies to us all. In any case, once we start arguing that only some are authorized to perform ministry, the question is raised as to *how* they are authorized. And the Bible is silent about that. All manner of secular power brokering philosophy comes into play, but Paul and anyone led by the Spirit of the risen Lord will have nothing to do with that.

1:2 *And all the brothers that are with me, to the churches of Galatia*- Those *sun* Paul may refer to brothers who supported Paul's position on the Law, which was going to be the burden of this letter. It was Paul who was the inspired author but he is making the point that there were other brethren who agreed with his position. The churches of Galatia could have referred to quite a few of the congregations Paul is recorded as founding in Acts; because he sees his responsibilities as being to his own converts and his letters are generally addressed to those he has converted. These groups were largely Gentiles. I have noted elsewhere, especially on Titus, Corinthians and 1 Timothy, that Gentile converts often brought with them immoral practices. Yet they became attracted to Judaism because their religious conscience could be more easily salved by obedience to a set of ritual requirements, and their more fundamental moral habits would then be left unquestioned. Legalism to this day remains incredibly attractive to those who subconsciously seek to justify themselves in immoral practices. This is why the Galatian letter begins with strong theological arguments against returning to the Law, and then moves on to tackle practical issues of immorality.

1:3 *Grace to you and peace from God the Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ*- Although Paul is going to upbraid them, he sincerely wishes them, as no mere formality, the peace with God which comes from His grace, rather than legalistic obedience to Jewish laws.

1:4 *Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us out of this present evil world, according to the will of our God and Father-* The Lord's death is presented as the supreme sin offering, which had an outcome in practice- separation from this present evil world. Judaism tacitly allowed the Gentile converts to remain effectively in that world, but with a conscience cosmetically salved by a few acts of ritual obedience. The purpose of the cross was so that we might be separated out from this present evil world. To remain in the world, to stay in the crowd that faced the cross rather than walk through the no man's land between, this is a denial of the Lord's death for us. See on Gal. 6:14. Paul had his inspired mind on the phrase in the Lord's prayer which requests deliverance from evil. Clearly enough, Paul didn't understand "the evil" to be a personal cosmic Satan, but rather the moral "evil" of this world and those who seek to persecute believers.

Much of Paul's writing is understandable on various levels. In some places he makes allusions to contemporary Jewish writings and ideas – with which he was obviously very familiar given his background – in order to correct or deconstruct them. This is especially true with reference to Jewish ideas about Satan and supposedly sinful Angels ruling over this present world. The idea of deliverance from this present evil world or age is an example. As more and more Jewish writings of the time become more widely available, it becomes increasingly apparent that this is a major feature of Paul's writing. The Jewish writings all held to the teaching of the two ages, whereby this current age was supposed to be under the control of Satan and his angels, who would be destroyed in the future age, when Messiah would reign and Paradise would be restored on earth (see 1 Enoch 16.1; 18.16; 21.6; Jubilees 1.29; T. Moses 1.18; 12.4). Paul frequently uses terms used in the Jewish writings concerning the Kingdom age, the eschatological age, and applies them to the experience of Christian believers *right now*. When Heb. 2:14 states that Christ killed the Devil in His death on the cross, this is effectively saying that the future age has come. For the Jews expected the Devil to be destroyed only at the changeover to the future Kingdom age. In 4 Ezra, "This age" (4.27; 6.9; 7.12), also known as the "corrupt age" (4.11) stands in contrast to the "future age" (6.9; 8.1), the "greater age", the "immortal time" (7.119), the future time (8.52). 4 Enoch even claims that the changeover from this age to the future age occurs at the time of the final judgment, following the death of the Messiah and seven days of silence (7.29–44, 113). So we can see why Paul would plug in to these ideas. He taught that Christ died "in order to rescue us from this present evil age" (Gal. 1:4; Rom 8:38; 1 Cor. 3:22). Therefore if the old age has finished, that means Satan is no longer controlling things as the Jews believed. For they believed that Satan's spirits "will corrupt until the day of the great conclusion, until the great age is consummated, until everything is concluded (upon) the Watchers and the wicked ones" (1 Enoch 16:1, cf. 72:1). And Paul was pronouncing that the great age had been consummated in Christ, that the first century believers were those upon whom the end of the *aion* had come (1 Cor. 10:11).

1:5 *To whom be the glory for ever and ever. Amen-* Christianity seeks to give eternal glory to the Lord Jesus; this is what we shall be doing eternally, and we must begin now. But Judaism devalued the role of Messiah. And we too can usefully assess teachings according to how far they give glory to the Lord Jesus.

1:6 *I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you to the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel-* Paul describes himself as having been called by God, by grace; and in this context he comments how *he* called the Galatians to the grace of

Christ (Gal. 1:6 cp. 15). His response to his calling of grace was to go out and preach, thereby calling men to that same grace, replicating in his preaching what God had done for him. True preaching reflects a certain artless selflessness. And so here Paul writes of his preaching to the Galatians in the third person: “him [Paul] that called you into the grace of Christ” (Gal. 1:6 AV). And likewise he talks about himself while at the Jerusalem conference, where he was given so clearly the ministry of converting the Gentiles, as if he hardly identifies himself with himself: “I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago... I knew such a man... of such an one will I glory, yet of myself I will not glory” (2 Cor. 12:1-4- the context makes it clear that Paul refers to himself, seeing that he was the one given the thorn in the flesh as a result of the revelations given to this “man”). In 1 Thess. 1:5 Paul could have written: ‘We came with the Gospel’, but instead he uses the more awkward construction: ‘Our Gospel came...’. He, Paul, was subsumed beneath the essence of his life work- the preaching of the Gospel.

And yet we could also argue that Paul had a way of turning things rather too personally. They had deserted the grace of Christ, yet Paul expresses this in terms of them turning away from him personally. This tendency to over personalize things, it could be argued, was at the root of so much of his pain with the Corinthians as expressed in 2 Corinthians.

"Deserting" translates *metatithemi*, literally 'handed over', implying there was some other hand at work. As there is no cosmic satan doing this, I conclude that this higher hand was God's, confirming them in the way they wished to go. Romans 1:26,28 speaks of God doing likewise, giving people over to the mindset they themselves desired. He confirms us in the path we wish to go.

1:7 *Not that there is another one; but there are some who trouble you, and want to distort the gospel of Christ-* A distorted Gospel was no Gospel. The Judaizers were not calling for a wholesale abandonment of Christianity; rather they were preaching a Judaized version of the Gospel which was so distorted that it was not a Gospel. We note from this that a belief system which merely names the name of Christ is not therefore acceptable just because it claims to be an interpretation of Christianity. The 'troublers' are described with the same word in Acts 15:7 concerning the Jewish Christians who went out from the Jerusalem ecclesia to urge the Gentile converts to be circumcised; and of the Jews in Thessalonica who troubled the crowds to persecute Paul. It would seem that the same elements were involved- Jews driven by jealousy and anger at the perversion of the Jewish faith, as they saw it, by Paul's message of Christianity. It was part of a well organized system of derailing the churches Paul founded, referred to by him at times as the 'satan', the adversary. The same word is used in Gal. 5:10 about some single individual who was the troubler in Galatia; as if in that locality they were controlled by a particularly charismatic and influential individual whom Paul leaves nameless.

1:8 *But though we, or an angel from heaven-* God can deceive people to confirm them in the way of understanding they wish to go in (Ez. 14:9; 2 Thess. 2:11). But this could simply be hyperbole. But perhaps the individual troubler of Galatia in 5:10 (and see on :7 above) was being presented as an angel, a Divine messenger. This would then enable us to understand 2 Cor. 11:14 as referring to the same individual troubling Corinth which the same Judaistic message- the satan there was apparently revealed as an Angel of light, and he had his followers; just as there was one specific 'troubler' in Galatia (Gal. 5:10) who had fellow 'troublers' (Gal. 1:7).

*Should preach to you any gospel other than that which we preached to you, let him be accursed-* Again it could be argued that Paul was over personalizing the issue by writing of the Gospel "which we preached to you". The *anathema* ("accursed") was a Jewish synagogue term meaning excommunication. This may be the closest we get in Paul's writings to a request to actually excommunicate anybody in a religious sense; and it was clearly necessary. Seeing he is not afraid to ask for someone to be excommunicated, it is noteworthy that he doesn't recommend it for dealing with the huge raft of immoral individual behaviour and other moral and intellectual failure which filled the early churches.

1:9 *As we have said before, so I now say again: If anyone preaches to you any gospel other than that which you received, let him be accursed-* The *anathema* (see on :8) was for those who were teaching a false Gospel. Paul's approach to his churches, full as they were of moral and doctrinal failure, was to insist that the platform be secured; it was the false teachers who were to be removed. But he exemplifies endless patience with the flock who had been misled or were simply weak in the faith. Paul often refers to the 'receipt' of the Gospel; he saw "the Gospel" as definable and something which was received upon hearing the preaching of it. And yet clearly there was no lengthy package of theology in view.

1:10 *For am I now seeking the favour of men or of God? Or am I striving to please men? If I were still pleasing men, I should not be a servant of Christ-* Although Paul made himself all things to all men, he didn't just seek to please men (Gal. 1:10; 1 Thess. 2:4). He sought their salvation and approached them in appropriate terms, but he didn't just seek to please them from a human viewpoint. He didn't cheapen the Gospel. The argument here suggests that serving *Christ* is being placed in opposition to serving *men*. Thus he sees one application of serving mammon as acting in a hypocritical way in order to please some in the ecclesia (Mt. 6:24 = Gal. 1:10).

1:10 *For am I now seeking the favour of men or of God? Or am I striving to please men? If I were still pleasing men, I should not be a servant of Christ-* Cultured, educated people in the first century presented themselves to others by means of an 'encomium'. This was a document or major speech which included five sections, clearly defined in the various manuals of rhetoric which survive, and which surely Paul would have been taught. The purpose of the encomium was to demonstrate how the person was an upright member of the community and worthy of honour within it. Students of the letter to the Galatians have detected these five sections of the encomium followed in an almost classic manner by Paul in Galatians 1:10-2:21:

1. Opening (*prooimion*) 1:10-12: Paul's Gospel
2. Lifestyle (*anastrophe*) 1:13-17: Paul as persecutor of the church and preacher of the Gospel. Gal. 1:13 uses the very word *anastrophe* ("way of life")
3. Achievements (*praxeis*) or "deeds of the body" 1:18-2:10- Paul's work in Jerusalem, Syria and again in Jerusalem
4. Comparison with others (*synkrisis*) 2:11-21- Paul and Peter; Paul and the Jews
5. Conclusion (*epilogos*)- 2:21 Paul and grace.

The encomium was essentially self-praise and self-justification within society. Paul almost mocks the encomium, by using its elements to show how radically different are the standards of thinking and behaviour for the Christian. In Gal. 1:15 Paul speaks of his birth (*genesis*), which in the usual encomiums would've been a reference to his family of origin, which as

we've shown was all important in a collectivist society. Paul never speaks of his parents, as would've been normal in an encomium- and seeing he was born as a free man, he could've made an impressive point at this stage had he wished. But the birth he speaks of is that which came from God, who gave Paul birth by grace. His place in God's invisible household was all important, rather than what family he belonged to naturally. An encomium would typically have a reference to a man's education- and Paul could've made an impressive case for himself here. But rather he speaks of how God Himself revealed Christ to him, and how his spiritual education was not through interaction with any other men of standing in the Christian community, but rather in his three years alone in Arabia (Gal. 1:18). It has been suggested that Paul actually coined a new Greek term in 1 Thess. 4:9, when he spoke of how he had been taught-by-God (*theodidaktos*). To claim an education 'not by flesh and blood' (Gal. 1:16) was foolishness to 1st century society. In the description of his "deeds", Paul could've made a fair case both as a Jew and as a Christian. But instead he spends Gal. 2:1-10 speaking of how he had laboured so hard to avoid division in the church of Christ, to teach grace, avoid legalistic obedience to the norms of Jewish society, and to help the poor. *These* were the works he counted as significant. It was usual in an encomium to speak of your courage (*andreia*) and fortitude. Paul uses the word *andreia*, again in conscious imitation of an encomium, but he relates it to how he courageously refused to "yield submission even for a moment" to the pressures to conform to Jewish societal expectations (Gal. 2:5). When it comes to the *synkrisis*, the comparison with others, he chooses to compare himself with Peter, who caved in to the pressures from the Jews, agreeing to act smart before men rather than God, whereas Paul says he withstood this and insisted upon a life of radical grace which paid no attention to what others thought of his appearances.

1:11 *For, brothers, I make known to you, as regards the gospel which was preached by me, that it is not from man-* The implication was that the Judaist opposition were claiming that Paul had just made up his interpretations and called it "the Gospel". Or perhaps there was some conspiracy theory that he was the agent of some other man. Whilst the Gospel was not "from man", *kata anthropos*, yet Paul uses that same term in saying that he can reason at times in that way, "after the manner of men", humanly speaking (3:15). But the core of the Gospel was from the Lord Jesus and not from men.

1:12 *For neither did I receive it from man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through direct revelation from Jesus Christ-* See on :1. As a rabbi, it was important to justify teaching by explaining that he had been taught it by some greater rabbi. Paul cuts right across these expectations (see on :10), and says that his message had not been taught to him. He had received it directly from the Lord Jesus, who is the central part of the message he preached.

1:13 *For you have heard of my manner of life in time past in the Jews' religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God and made havoc of it-* "Made havoc" is literally 'destroyed', and the same word is used in 1:23 of how he 'destroyed' "the faith". He draws a parallel between the church and the faith; for the true church is based upon the true faith. The same word is used of how he "destroyed" the Christians in Jerusalem (Acts 9:21). This clearly means he murdered Christians, including perhaps some of those who were converted in Jerusalem at Pentecost. This sort of behaviour was a way of life elicited by Judaism; and Judaism is therefore to be judged by its fruits as seen in Paul. Whilst repeatedly taking full personal responsibility for his actions, Paul sees that they had been elicited by Judaism, "the Jews' religion". To return to that was therefore serious indeed.

1:14- see on Mt. 15:2.

*And I advanced in the Jews' religion beyond many of my own age among my fellow countrymen, being even more exceedingly zealous for the traditions of my fathers-* Paul could have been such a high flyer; he profited (materially, the Greek could imply) in the Jews' religion above any one else. But he resigned it all. He wrote some majestic words which ought to become the goal of every one of us: "But what things were gain to me [materially?], those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss *for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord*: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ" (Phil. 3:7,8). As noted on :13, whilst not at all dodging his personal responsibility for his actions, he sees the murder and hatred towards Christians as the fruit of zeal for Judaism. The traditions of Paul's fathers [cp. "our fathers" when referring to the patriarchs] refers surely to Paul's rabbinic forefathers. Casuistic following of the implications of previous expositions and judgments of those who have gone before resulted in murder. This was the fruit of Judaism, and all belief systems are to be judged by their fruits.

1:15- see on Acts 18:18.

*But when-* "But when" suggests there was a specific time when God decided to call Paul to manifest His Son. But we should not too quickly assume that this time was on the Damascus road, for the Lord there made the point that Paul had been pushing against the pricks of conscience for some time. Perhaps the calling was at the time of Paul's birth, when the umbilical cord was cut and he was separated from his mother's womb. The calling of grace is an idea Paul uses in Romans to exemplify God's grace, and he thereby makes himself the parade example of grace to all believers. In Gal. 1:15,16, Paul speaks as if his calling to preach the Gospel and his conversion co-incided. He clearly understood that he had been called so as to spread the word to others. Paul uses the word *kaleo* to describe both our call to the Gospel, and the call to preach that Gospel (Gal. 1:15 cp. Rom. 8:30; 1 Cor. 1:9; 7:15; Gal. 1:6; 5:13; 2 Tim. 1:9). He doesn't separate his call from that of ours; he speaks of how God called "us" (Rom. 9:24; 1 Thess. 4:7). We may not all be able to live the life of itinerant preaching and spreading the word geographically which Paul did. And yet clearly enough Paul sets himself up as our pattern in the context of his attitude to preaching. Our lamps were lit, in the Lord's figure, so as to give light to others. We are mirrors, reflecting to others the glory of God as far as we ourselves behold it in the face of Jesus Christ.

*It was the good pleasure of God-* Our salvation was "not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, by... renewing of the Holy Spirit" (Tit. 3:5). Thus in Paul's case "it pleased (lit. 'willed') God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by His grace" (Gal. 1:15) - not Paul's works. Thus our obedience to the truth was "through (on account of) the Spirit" (1 Pet. 1:22). Against this must be balanced Rom. 10:17: "Faith cometh by hearing... the word of God". God's Spirit was involved in bringing about our calling, and is also present in the word by which we are called.

*Who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me through His grace-* Paul seems to have admired the humility John the Baptist manifested in his preaching, for he often alludes to John- perhaps because he heard him live. For he was living in Jerusalem at the same time as John's ministry. He knew he had been chosen from the womb for his mission, as John had

been (Gal. 1:15 = Lk. 1:15). There is also allusion to Jeremiah being likewise known from the womb. Paul felt he had been “separated unto the [preaching of the] gospel of God”; and he uses a word which the LXX uses for the separation of part of a sacrifice to be consumed (Ex. 29:24,26). The Greek word for “witness” is *martus*, from whence ‘martyr’. To witness to Christ is to live the life of the martyr; to preach Him is to live out His cross in daily life. Yet the Lord’s servant being called from the womb (Is. 49:1) was applied by Paul to himself (Gal. 1:15)- see on Rom. 8:31. Choice from birth, calling, ministry to the Gentiles all recalls the servant known from birth (Is. 49:1,5). This is one of a number of instances of where Old Testament Messianic Scriptures are applied to Paul in the context of his preaching Christ. He saw himself as in Christ, and so the Lord’s mission became his as it becomes ours.

1:16- see on Acts 9:20.

*To reveal His Son in me-* Saul of Tarsus must’ve seemed the most unlikely of men to convert to Christ. But he later refers to how God chose “to reveal his son in me”. The Greek word *apokalupto* means literally ‘to take the cover off’. The implication is that Christ is passively within each person, but has to be revealed in them, through response to the Gospel. The cover can be taken off every single man or women with whom we come into contact! The Galatians passage could equally mean that Paul was called as an apostle to ‘take the cover off’ Christ to others; and yet Paul felt his calling was to all people on earth, to the ends of the world (Acts 13:47)- to every single person of all the Gentile nations (Rom. 15:11; 2 Tim. 4:17).

*That I might preach him among the Gentiles-* To preach Christ is to reveal Him to men through ourselves- this is the purpose for which we are called, that our lamp was lit, to reveal Christ to others through us. And thus Paul could conclude by saying that he bore in his body [perhaps an idiom for his life, cp. the ‘broken body’ of the Lord we remember] the stigmata of the Lord Jesus (Gal. 6:17). The whole burden of his message was therefore the Lord Jesus, rather than theology or clever apologetic arguments.

*Immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood-* Paul’s attitude to his brethren seems to have changed markedly over the years. He begins as being somewhat detached from them; perhaps as all new converts are initially. We see the Truth for what it is, we realize we had to make the commitment we did, and we are happy to do our own bit in preaching the Truth. But often a real concern and care for our brethren takes years to develop. Paul seems to tell the Galatians that the Gospel he preached had not been given to him by men, because in the early days after his conversion he was rather indifferent towards other Christian believers; “(Paul) conferred not with flesh and blood” after his conversion, neither did he go to see the apostles in Jerusalem to discuss how to preach to Israel; instead, Paul says, he pushed off to Arabia for three years in isolation. He was unknown by face to the Judean ecclesias, and even after his return from Arabia, he made no special effort to meet up with the Apostles (Gal. 1). The early Paul comes over as self-motivated, a maverick, all too ready to fall out with Barnabas, all too critical of Mark for failing to rise up to Paul’s level of fearless devotion (Acts 15:39).

1:17- see on Acts 26:16-19; 1 Cor. 9:17.

*Nor did I go to Jerusalem to those that were apostles ahead of me; but I went away into Arabia, and returned to Damascus-* As noted on :12, Paul resists the Rabbinic style of saying that his message is supported by the opinions of other learned men from the same religion

who had preceded him. This is the force of his statement that he did not go to see those who had been in Christ "ahead of me". Arabia could refer to various desert areas; we are left to imagine that this period in the wilderness formed his spiritual position by direct contact with the Lord Jesus. But it could also be read as a recognition of weakness- that instead of going to preach the Gospel he went instead into isolation. And thus he was glorying in his weakness as a qualification; see on :10. The return to Damascus, where he had almost been lynched and escaped it in a most humiliating way (2 Cor. 11:31-33), is really impressive; just as Paul returned to cities where he had been badly persecuted. Such was his care for his converts.

1:18 *Then after three years I went to Jerusalem to visit Cephas and stayed with him fifteen days-* The mention of three years may be another hint that he had not got on with witnessing to the Gentiles as he might have done; he is glorying in his weakness, as noted extensively on :10. "Visit" translates a term which can mean 'to learn from'; we see here Paul's humility. He as the literate, intellectual rabbi went to Jerusalem not to sit at the feet of some learned rabbi, but to be taught by an illiterate fisherman from Galilee. This again is a reversal of all the qualifications Judaism boasted in; see on :10.

1:19 *But none of the other apostles did I see, except James, the Lord's brother-* Judaism stressed which big names were supporting a position or individual, and Paul is consciously subverting this. See on :10. We likewise should be unashamed to subvert the peer review qualifications which are so popular these days. Observe how Paul counts James as an "apostle" although he was not one of the 12, perhaps anticipating the objection raised in Corinth that Paul was not really an apostle because he was not one of the 12.

1:20- see on Gal. 1:1.

*In what I am writing to you, before God, I do not lie!*- Clearly Paul's version of events was questioned. All manner of conspiracy theories and slander had arisen, as they do in the life of anyone who devotes themselves to preaching Christ in truth. The origin of the 'troublers' of 1:7 was likely Jerusalem (see note there). Paul is answering the objection that 'Jerusalem' did not support him by strongly agreeing with it- and insisting that he had higher authority than Jerusalem, namely, his direct relationship with the Lord Jesus.

1:21 *Then I came to the regions of Syria and Cilicia-* Cilicia was Paul's home area. Again, he may be glorying in his spiritual weakness, saying that he had returned to his roots rather than going out into the world as he had been commissioned. For Barnabus had to come to Tarsus and as it were drag Paul with him on his first missionary journey. Such boasting in weakness is a subversion of any attempt to present a humanly strong case for authority; see on :10. "Regions" translates *klima*, which according to Vine referred "originally to an inclination or slope of ground: the supposed slope of the earth from the equator to the pole". Here we have an example of scientifically incorrect terms being used in the Bible without correction; and this helps explain the language of demons being used in the Gospels regarding mental illnesses.

1:22 *But I was still unknown by face to the churches of Judea which were in Christ-* Paul speaks warmly of these churches in 1 Thess. 2:14, showing his eagerness to believe the best about others, with the love that believes all things. The churches which were in Christ suggests there were some 'churches' not in Christ. The term *ekklesia* was used for any

gathering or assembly, and referred to the synagogues in small town and villages, some of whom had become Christian, and thus become assemblies which were in Christ. Christianity would have spread by the conversion of such synagogue assemblies here and there. The Lord did not ask His people to leave the synagogue system as part of their acceptance of Him; He just predicted that the time would come when His converts would be thrown out of that system (Jn. 16:2). This reflects how there was no concept of guilt by association, no demand of breaking association with an apostate system. If Jesus was accepted as Christ and preached as such, then the systems antithetical to that would themselves cast out the Lord's people. The *angst* about separation from error which has blighted the body of Christ was therefore unknown in the first century church.

1:23 *They only heard say: He that once persecuted us now preaches the faith of which he once made havoc!*- See on :13 "made havoc". Paul had arranged their persecution without seeing their faces (:22). But he was a household name amongst the Christian synagogues (see on :22).

1:24 *And they glorified God in me*- The house churches in the area around Jerusalem ["Judea"] were obvious targets for Paul, who sought to drag Christians Jews into Jerusalem for punishment. They glorified not Paul but God's grace which had worked within Paul to bring about his conversion.

### Chronology of Paul's Life

#### Standard Chronology Of Paul's Life

AD 35 Paul's conversion  
 36-38 In Arabia (1)  
 38-43 Preaching in Damascus and Jerusalem  
 44-46 Working in Antioch and Syria  
 46-48 First missionary journey  
 49-50 Jerusalem Conference  
 50-52 Second missionary journey  
 53-57 Third missionary journey  
 57-59 Arrest- Jerusalem-Caesarea  
 59-62 To Rome; first imprisonment  
 63-66 Release; travels in Asia, Greece, Spain  
 64-68 Nero's persecution of the Christians  
 67 Arrest, imprisoned in a dungeon in Rome  
 68 Final trial; executed.

#### John Robinson's Chronology Of Paul's Life (2)

AD33 Conversion  
 35 First visit to Jerusalem  
 46 Second [famine-relief] visit to Jerusalem  
 47-48 First missionary journey  
 48 Council of Jerusalem  
 49-51 Second missionary journey  
 52-57 Third missionary journey  
 57 Arrival in Jerusalem  
 57-59 Imprisonment in Caesarea  
 60-62 Imprisonment in Rome

### Notes

(1) "Arabia" is from the word 'Arabah', and occurs in the LXX in Dt. 2:8; 3:17; 4:49 to mean simply the wilderness. Since Paul went there from Damascus, it has been suggested that he

mixed with the Damascene Essene group. There are extensive parallels between the Qumran texts and the letter to the Hebrews, which could lend support to this suggestion- as if Paul wrote to an audience he knew.

(2) J.A.T. Robinson, *Redating The New Testament* (London: SCM, 1976) pp. 52,53.

## CHAPTER 2

*2:1 Then after the space of fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, also taking Titus with me-* See chronology of Paul's life on 1:24. The events and agreement mentioned in 2:1-10 need not be identical with the council of Acts 15. It could've occurred at the visit of Acts 11:30. Paul's various visits to Jerusalem recorded in Acts are hard to mesh into what he writes in Galatians. It seems that his visit to Jerusalem of Acts 9:26 is that referred to in Gal. 1:18-21; and the visit spoken of in Gal. 2:1-10 is that of Acts 11:1-18 rather than that of Acts 15. The fact Titus wasn't compelled to be circumcised (Gal. 2:3) matches the outcome of Acts 11:18; and Paul's description of the meeting as private (Gal. 2:2) sounds more like the visit of Acts 11 rather than the public council of Acts 15. In a long and fascinating study, Paul Achtemeier makes a good case that the decree of Acts 15 was not "the *result* of the conflict in Antioch reported in Gal. 2:11-14, but the *cause* of that conflict"- Paul J. Achtemeier, *Paul and the Jerusalem Church* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2005) p. 58. This would mean that the advice Paul gave to the Corinthians about food which was contrary to the Acts 15 decree was actually given before that decree was given (1 Cor. 9:19-22; 10:32).

*2:2 And I went up there by revelation-* He means that he didn't go and attend a unity meeting from any political reasons, there was no human buying in or selling out. He was told by Spirit revelation to go there, and he did.

*And I laid before them the gospel which I preach among the Gentiles-* Paul says something similar in 1 Cor. 15:1, where he again declares to the Corinthians the content of the Gospel message he had preached to them. The content he summarizes in 1 Cor. 15:1 ff. is quite basic. The message of the Gospel was simple, not complicated.

*But privately before them who were of repute-* This is a lovely example of considering others' positions and being sensitive and wise. Paul didn't want to engage the well known names in public debate. He knew that human pride being what it is, they might be unable to humble themselves before others and accept what he was saying as right. He knew he was in the right, but he engaged them privately so that there would be no public showdown. He knew that if there were to be that, then the Lord's work might well be damaged and his overall work would be in vain if converts turned away because of division. The problem with those who know they are in the right is that they often feel thereby empowered to get involved in public debate and demonstration of the error of others; my earlier years were characterized by such wrong attitudes. Possession of truth is like driving a very powerful car. You don't drive it as fast as you can just because you have that car and you can drive it fast. We must consider the slowness of others. The Lord knew the truth about demons, but He used that truth appropriately. And Paul did likewise in this matter of Gentile inclusion and the passing of the Mosaic law. He considered his audience and their weakness, realizing that it is so hard for public figures to backtrack and admit being in the wrong. He sought an appropriate forum in which to engage them- and that was a private meeting. There's so much we can learn from this. The same word translated "repute" is found in 2:6,9 and James, Peter and John who were 'reputed' pillars of the church are clearly in view. We note that even believers of their standing were liable to find it hard to backtrack on publicly advertised positions. And Paul showed the grace to appreciate that, rather than launching a head on public attack on their positions. By contrast, Paul records how later, after Peter had privately agreed with Paul's position in Jerusalem, Paul had to publicly confront him at Antioch when Peter backtracked

on the private agreement (:11). There's a place for public confrontation, but only after private entreaty. Indeed the whole account here sounds like a parade example of following the Lord's advice in Matthew 18, to approach a brother privately and only then publicly rebuke him before the church.

*Lest by any means I should be running, or had run, in vain-* Unity and avoiding division is vital. Paul even argues in Gal. 2:2 that all his colossal missionary effort would have been a 'running in vain' if the ecclesia divided into exclusive Jewish and Gentile sections. This may be hyperbole, but it is all the same a hyperbole which reflects the extent to which Paul felt that unity amongst believers was vital.

*2:3 But not even Titus who was with me, being a Gentile, was compelled to be circumcised-* See on Gal. 1:1. Paul's comment that Gentile Titus was not compelled to be circumcised would suggest that actually, James and the Jerusalem elders were now compelling Gentiles to be circumcised.

*2:4 In view of the false brothers unknowingly brought in, who came in secretly to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus-* Did Judaizers pose as Christians and get baptized even, in order to infiltrate and undermine the Christian church? But "unknowingly brought in" translates a Greek word used for smuggling in; as if there were Judaists already embedded within the church who smuggled in others who they knew would purposefully disrupt the church. "Spy out" suggests a conscious, cunning plan; to observe the "liberty" and then subvert it, in order to return the community to bondage to the Mosaic law. This "Jewish plot", as Harry Whittaker labelled it, was perhaps Paul's thorn in the flesh; a group of Judaists who intentionally sought to derail his ministry of grace. I have expanded upon this at great length in "The Jewish Satan" in [The Real Devil](#). Peter was up against the same problem, when he writes of false teachers secretly entering in (2 Pet. 2:1). His usage of the same word as Paul here uses is a reflection of Peter's humility. For here, Paul is criticizing Peter for allowing this false teaching to enter unopposed. And Peter in his maturity realizes his error, and appeals to others not to repeat it. This is the humility of maturity in Christ.

*That they might bring us into bondage-* The term used in Acts 15:10 about the Judaizing element within the church, seeking to bring believers into the bondage of the Mosaic law. We naturally wonder why they went to such an extent in doing this. But this is all an essay in the power of legalism, and the way legalists consider that anything justifies the end of maintaining a traditional, legalistic system. Such defence of entrenched legalism is a psychological classic- it releases extraordinary energy and bitterness because of the belief that the end must justify any means. These same "false brothers" are referred to with the same word in 2 Cor. 11:26 as a group who literally endangered Paul's life. They were within the ecclesia. But legalists within ecclesias today show a similar hatred which the Lord judges as murder.

*2:5 We did not yield to them in submission-* Even though they "seemed to be somewhat" and were [in the eyes of some] "in repute" (Gal. 2:6 ASV). The same Greek word translated "subjection" is found in 1 Cor. 16:16; Tit. 3:1 and 1 Pet. 5:5 about submission to elders in the ecclesia. Paul's example shows that merely because an elder demands subjection, this doesn't mean we should automatically give it- even if others do. We should be "subject" to those who are in our judgment *qualified* to demand our subjection (1 Cor. 16:16); and "subjection" in

Paul's writings usually refers to our subjection to the Lordship of Jesus. Our subjection must be to Him first before any human elders.

*Even for a moment-* There would have been a temptation to just make a momentary acquiescence to the demands of the legalists. But such politics was not acceptable to Paul.

*So that the truth of the gospel might be preserved for you-* If we give in to legalists, then others lose the truth of the Gospel. The salvation of others can be affected by third parties. We really can make others stumble, and legalism is one of the most common forms of this happening. We enter the one body of Christ by baptism into the one body of the Lord Jesus (1 Cor. 12:13). We therefore have a duty to fellowship all who remain in the body (1 Cor. 10:16). Paul describes Peter as not walking according to the truth of the Gospel (Gal. 2:14) by effectively saying there were two bodies, of Jews and Gentiles, and only fellowshipping one of these groups rather than the entire one body. Paul says that this would mean that the truth of the Gospel would be lost. Paul put all the ecclesial politics behind him and withstood Peter "to his face". If we know "the truth" of Christ's Gospel, we will fellowship all those in Him and in that Truth. If we don't, Paul foresaw that ultimately "the truth of the Gospel" would be lost (Gal. 2:5). Tragically, in man-made attempts to preserve the Gospel's Truth the rest of the body has often been disfellowshipped. But by fellowshipping all the body, the "Truth" is kept!

*2:6 But from those who were reputed to be somewhat (whatever they were, it makes no matter to me, God does not accept man's person) they, I say, who were of repute added nothing to me-* The Greek is hard to translate. The idea, I suggest, is that when these brethren were "in conference" [AV] they had something added to them; but this meant totally nothing to Paul. This is indeed true to experience- when men, even brethren, come together, they can have an aura and power greater than the sum of their component parts. But this 'buzz' was seen through by Paul as he kept strictly to spiritual principle and would not be swayed by the power attached to men publicly together as it were on the platform.

*2:7 But on the contrary, when they saw that I had been entrusted with the gospel of the uncircumcision, even as Peter with the Gospel to the circumcision-* "The gospel of the circumcision" being given to Peter and that of the Gentiles to Paul evidently means 'the duty of preaching the gospel'. The Gospel is in itself the duty of preaching it.

I have noted throughout the commentary on Acts that Paul in fact went to the Jews in practice, and suffered because of it. So what he is saying here may be theory rather than practice.

*2:8 For he that worked through Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision, worked through me also to the Gentiles-* In Gal. 2:7,8, we read that Peter was given a ministry to preach to Jews, and Paul to the Gentiles. But in Acts 15:7 Peter says that God used him to take the Gospel to the Gentiles- and the implication of 1 Peter is that he had made many converts in Gentile areas of Asia Minor. The reconciliation of these statements may be that God changed things around- Peter's ministry to the Gentiles was handed over to Paul, and Paul's initial work amongst the Jews was not for him to continue but for Peter. And so the Father may work with us, too. My simple point is that we are each given our group or area of potential

responsibility for preaching, and we should be workers together with the Father and Son to achieve what they have potentially made possible for us. And we each, in God's master plan, have an area of opportunity opened up to us for us to preach in, and this area may be changed, reduced, moved or expanded according to our freewill response to God's desire to use us.

*2:9 And when they perceived the grace that was given to me, then James, Cephas and John, they who were reputed to be pillars, gave to me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship-* Yet the Lord promises each believer that we can become "pillars" in His future temple (Rev. 3:12). We will all therefore in spirit take on the position of elders. In no way are we to see Christianity as a spectator religion, with a group of specialists acting effectively as priests. We are all to enter the spirit of responsibility which goes with eldership.

*That we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcision-* James, the leader of the Jerusalem ecclesia, got Peter and John to join him in making Paul to agree to preach only to Gentiles, whilst they would teach the Jews (Gal. 2:9 NIV). This was contrary to what the Lord had told Paul in Acts 9:15- that he had been converted so as to preach to both Jews and Gentiles. And Paul took no notice of the 'agreement' they tried to force him into- he always made a priority of preaching first of all in the Jewish synagogues and to the Jews, and only secondarily to Gentiles. He did this right up to the end of the Acts record. Paul got drawn into politics in the church. Although he went along with the Acts 15 decree and even agreed to propagate it, he never mentions it in his writing or speaking, and later he writes about food regulations and the whole question of Gentiles and the Law as if he disagreed with it. Perhaps as he matured, he saw the need to speak out against legalism in the ecclesias rather than go along with it for the sake of peace.

We can ourselves so easily form into groups of brethren and ecclesias, papering over our differences as happened in Acts 15, adopting a hard line (as Jerusalem ecclesia did in Gal. 2:9 over Gentile believers), then a softer line in order to win political support (as in Acts 15), then back to a hard line (as in Acts 21). We ought to be men and women of principle. We look back at the senior brethren of those days arguing so strongly about whether or not it was right to break bread with Gentile believers, "much disputing" whether or not we should be circumcised... and it all seems to us such an elemental disregard of the clear teaching of the Lord Jesus and so many clear Old Testament implications. But there were background factors which clouded their perceptions, although they themselves didn't realise this at the time. And so it can be with us, if we were to see ourselves from outside our own historical time, place and culture, it would probably be obvious that we are disregarding some most basic teachings of the Word which we know so well. Like them, our blindness is because the environment we live in blinds us to simple Bible truth.

*2:10 Only they asked us to remember the poor, which very thing I was also zealous to do-* The Jewish poor at Jerusalem. Paul's attempts to do this via the Jerusalem poor fund weren't particularly successful; another indication that this compromise was not ultimately blessed by the Lord.

*2:11 But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned-* This is extreme language. Peter's name Cephas is used because he had reverted to his Jewish roots. Refusing to fellowship our brethren because of pressure from more conservative brethren can make us stand condemned. There is a *direct* relationship, in God's

judgment, between how we treat others and what will happen to us. This is to the extent that what we do to others, we do to ourselves. If we condemn others, we really and truly do condemn ourselves. Thus when Peter refused to fellowship Gentiles, Paul "opposed him to the face, because he stood condemned". Just as Peter had condemned himself by denying the Lord, so he had done again in refusing to fellowship the Lord's brethren. Realizing the seriousness of all this, Paul didn't just let it go, as many of us would have done in such an ecclesial situation. He realized a man was condemning himself; and so he risked causing a lot of upset in order to save him from this. Many of us could take a lesson from this.

The Peter who had come so far, from the headstrong days of Galilee to the shame of the denials, and then on to the wondrous new life of forgiveness and preaching that grace to others, leading the early community that developed upon that basis...that Peter almost went wrong later in life. Peter and the Judaizers makes a sad story. And as always, it was a most unlikely form of temptation that arose and almost blew him right off course. As often, the problem arose from his own brethren rather than from the hostile world outside. There was strong resistance in the Jewish mind to the idea that Gentiles could be saved without keeping the Mosaic law. And more than this, there was the feeling that any Jewish believer who advocated that they could was selling out and cheapening the message of God to men. Paul has to write about this whole shameful episode in Gal. 2. It becomes apparent that Peter very nearly denied the Lord that bought him once again, by placing on one side all the evidence of salvation by pure grace, for *all* men whether they be Jew or Gentile, which he had progressively built up over the past years. Paul, using Peter's old name, comments how Cephas seemed to be a pillar- but wasn't (Gal. 2:9). Paul "withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed" (2:11). Peter and some other Jewish believers "dissembled" and along with Barnabas "was carried away with their dissimulation", with the result that they "walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel" (2:12-14). Paul's whole speech to Peter seems to be recorded in Gal. 2:15-21. He concludes by saying that if Peter's toleration of justification by works rather than by Christ was really so, then Christ was dead in vain. Paul spoke of how for him, he is crucified with Christ, and lives only for Him, "who loved me and gave himself for me". These were exactly the sentiments which Peter held so dear, and Paul knew they would touch a chord with him.

Yet Peter very nearly walked away from it all, because he was caught up in the legalism of his weaker brethren, and lacked the courage to stand up to the pressure of the Judaizers on him. Peter had earlier stayed with a tanner, a man involved in a ritually unclean trade (Acts 9:43). This would indicate that Peter was a liberal Jew, hardly a hard-liner. His caving in to the Judaist brethren was therefore all the more an act of weakness rather than something he personally believed in. For it was Peter, too, who had gone through the whole Cornelius experience too! And many a humble, sincere man in Christ since has lost his fine appreciation of the Lord's death *for him* and the whole message of grace, through similar sophistry and a desire to please 'the brethren'. In some of his very last words, facing certain death, Peter alludes to this great failure of his- his second denial of the Lord. He pleads with his sheep to hold on to the true grace of God, lest "ye *also*, being led away (s.w. Gal. 2:13 "carried away") with the error of the lawless, fall..." (2 Pet. 3:17). Ye *also* invites the connection with Peter himself, who was led away by the error of the lawyers, the legalists- whereas his sheep had the error of the lawless to contend with. The point surely is that to go the way of legalism, of denying the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, is every bit as bad as going to the lawless ways of the world. Peter was carried away with the "dissimulation" of the Judaizers (Gal. 2:13), and he uses the same word when he appeals to the brethren to lay aside "all hypocrisies" (1 Pet. 2:1); he was asking them to do what he himself had had to do. He had been a hypocrite, in

living the life of legalism within the ecclesia whilst having the knowledge of grace. We may so easily pass this off as a mere peccadillo compared to the hypocrisy of living the life of the world 6 days / week and coming to do one's religious devotions at a Christian church on a Sunday. But Peter draws a parallel between his own hypocrisy and that of such brethren; this is how serious it is to bow to the sophistry of legalism. It may be that an unjust disfellowship ought to be contended, and we say nothing. Or that a sincere, spiritual brother who places his honest doubts on the table is elbowed out of being able to make the contribution to the community he needs to. In our after the meeting conversations and in our Sunday afternoon chats we can go along with such things, depending on the company we are in. And it seems just part of Christian life. The important thing, it can seem, is to stay within the community and keep separate from the world. But not so, is Peter's message. His ecclesial hypocrisy was just as bad as that of the worldly believer whom Peter wrote to warn. Paul seems to go even further and consciously link Peter's behaviour with his earlier denials that he had ever known the Lord Jesus. He writes of how he had to reveal Peter's denial of the Lord's grace "before them all" (Gal. 2:14), using the very same Greek phrase of Mt. 26:70, where "before them all" Peter made the same essential denial.

The sad thing about Peter's reversion to the Judaist perspective was that it was an almost studied undoing of all the Lord had taught him in the Cornelius incident. There he had learnt that the Lordship of Jesus, which had so deeply impressed him in his early preaching, was in fact universal- because "He is Lord *of all*", therefore men from *all* (s.w.) nations were to be accepted in Him (Acts 10:35,36). God shewed him that he was not to call any man common or unclean on account of his race (Acts 10:28). But now he was upholding the very opposite. And he wasn't just passively going along with it, although that's how it doubtless started, in the presence of brethren of greater bearing and education than himself. He "compelled" the Gentile believers to adopt the Jewish ways, as if Peter was a Judaizer; and every time that word is used in Galatians it is in the context of compelling believers to be circumcised (Gal. 2:14 cp. 2:3; 6:12). So it seems Peter actually compelled brethren to be circumcised. And the Galatian epistle gives the answer as to *why* this was done; brethren chose to be circumcised and to preach it lest they suffer persecution for the sake of the cross of Christ (Gal. 5:11; 6:12-14). Consistently this letter points an antithesis between the cross and circumcision. The body marks of Christ's cross are set off against the marks of circumcision (Gal. 6:17); and the essence of the Christian life is said to be crucifying the flesh nature, rather than just cutting off bits of skin (Gal. 5:24). Peter's capitulation to the Judaizers, Peter's reversion to circumcision, was effectively a denial of the cross, yet once again in his life. There was something he found almost offensive about the cross, an inability to sustainedly accept its message. And he turned back to circumcision as he had earlier turned to look at John's weaknesses when told he must carry the cross. And we turn to all manner of pseudo-spiritual things to excuse our similar inability to focus upon it too.

Eventually Peter wouldn't eat with the Gentile brethren (Gal. 2:12). But he had learnt to eat with Gentile brethren in Acts 11:3; he had justified doing so to his brethren and persuaded them of its rightness, and had been taught and showed, so patiently, by his Lord that he should not make such distinctions. But now, all that teaching was undone. There's a lesson here for many a slow-to-speak brother or sister- what you start by passively going along with in ecclesial life, against your better judgment, you may well end up by actively advocating. It can be fairly conclusively proven that Mark's Gospel is in fact Peter's. Yet it is there in Mk. 7:19 that Mark / Peter makes the point that the Lord Jesus had declared all foods clean. He knew the incident, recalled the words, had perhaps preached and written them; and yet Peter acted and reasoned as if he was totally unaware of them.

Paul gently guided Peter back to the Cornelius incident, which he doubtless would have deeply meditated upon as the inspired record of it became available. Peter had been taught that God *accepted whoever* believed in Him, regardless of their race. But now Paul had to remind Peter that truly, God “*accepteth no man’s person*” (Gal. 2:6). The same Greek word was a feature of the Cornelius incident: whoever believes *receives*, accepts, remission of sins (Acts 10:43), and they *received*, accepted, the Holy Spirit as well as the Jewish brethren (Acts 10:47). With his matchless humility, Peter accepted Paul’s words. His perceptive mind picked up these references (and in so doing we have a working model of how to seek to correct our brethren, although the success of it will depend on their sensitivity to the word which we both quote and allude to). But so easily, a lifetime of spiritual learning could have been lost by the sophistry of legalistic brethren. It’s a sober lesson. And yet Peter in his pastoral letters (which were probably transcripts of his words / addresses) makes these references back to his own failure, and on the basis of having now even more powerfully learnt his lesson, he can appeal to his brethren. And so it should be in our endeavours for our brethren. Paul warned him that by adopting the Judaist stance, he was *building again* what had been destroyed (Gal. 2:18). And Peter with that in mind can urge the brethren to *build up* the things of Christ and His ecclesia (1 Pet. 2:5,7 s.w.), rather, by implication, that the things of the world and its philosophy.

2:12 *For before that certain men came from James, he would eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing those who were of the circumcision-* The whole nature of the agreement in Gal. 2:6-10 could be read as smacking of dirty politics- Paul could continue to convert Gentiles and not force them to be circumcised, but James and Peter would continue their ministry to the Jews, and Paul would get his Gentile converts to donate money to the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem. It all could be read as having the ring of a 'deal' rather than an agreement strictly guided by spiritual principles. James [not necessarily the same James who wrote the epistle] seems to have acted very ‘politically’. He sent his followers to pressurise Peter not to break bread with Gentiles in Antioch (Gal. 2:12). Then there was a conference called at Jerusalem to discuss the matter. There was “much disputing”, there wasn’t the clear cut acceptance of Gentiles which one would have expected if the words of Jesus had been taken at face value, and then James said ‘Nobody ever came from me telling any Gentile they must be circumcised and keep the Law. They are all welcome, just that they must respect some of the Mosaic laws about blood etc., and keep away from fornication’. This contradicts Paul’s inspired teaching that the Mosaic Law was totally finished. Gal. 2:12 records that James *had* sent brethren to Antioch trying to enforce the Law upon Gentiles! And then later, the Jerusalem ecclesia boasted of how many thousand members they had, “and they are all zealous of the law”. They then asked Paul to make it clear that he supported circumcision and keeping the Law (Acts 21:19-24). In passing, we note how hurtful this must have been, since Paul was bringing funds for their ecclesia which he had collected at the cost of damaging his relationship with the likes of Corinth. He meekly obeyed, perhaps it was playing a part in the politics in the church, although he had written to the Colossians and others that there was no need for any to be circumcised nor keep the Law, indeed these things were a denial of faith in Jesus.

2:13- see on Mt. 23:28.

*And the rest of the Jews acted hypocritically along with him, so that even Barnabas was led astray by their hypocrisy-* Peter uses the same word in warning his flock against hypocrisy (1

Pet. 2:1); knowing full well that he had publicly rebuked for being a hypocrite. In this we see the humility which made him a true elder, appealing to others not to make the same mistakes he had made.

Paul withstood the pressures of the 'circumcision party' within the early church, and rebuked Peter for caving in to them (Gal. 2:12,13). But then he himself caved in under pressure from the same group, and obeyed their suggestion that he show himself to be not opposed to the keeping of the Mosaic Law by paying the expenses for the sacrifices of four brethren.

2:14 *But when I saw that they did not walk straightly according to the truth of the gospel-* Gk. 'with straight feet', like the cherubim. Correct walk / behaviour is therefore related to the fact we have believed the *true* Gospel, i.e. we hold the right Gospel rather than the wrong one. The true Gospel was simple- believe in the Lord's death and resurrection and the salvation in Him, identify with it in baptism, and indeed it shall be true for us. In this lies the importance of doctrine. This is why Is. 29:13,24 speaks of repentance as 'learning doctrine'; Israel went astray morally because they allowed themselves to be taught wrong doctrine.

*I said to Cephas before all: If you, being a Jew, live as do the Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, why do you compel the Gentiles to live as do the Jews?*- Paul uses Peter's old name because he feels Peter has slipped back to his old positions and is at this time not living according to the Lord's hope and expectation of him, which was that he would be a rock, Peter, the rocky one.

2:15- see on Acts 23:6.

*We being Jews by nature and not sinners of the Gentiles-* Paul is using here terms well known within Judaism, appealing to people, as we should, in their own terms and language. But Paul returns to allude to this term "sinners" in :17. There he reasons that if we seek to be justified by the Law whilst in Christ, then we shall be left unredeemed sinners. Thus, he reasons, you who are so defiantly Judaistic are declared sinners, and even worse than ignorant "sinners of the Gentiles".

2:16 *Yet knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law-* Paul seems to be saying that their very reason for belief in Jesus for justification was because they knew there was no justification through keeping the Law. In our commentary on Acts 7, we sought to develop the idea that Paul was deeply touched by the inability of Law to save, and this led to the pricks in his conscience towards throwing himself upon faith in Jesus for justification. The motive for 'belief in Jesus' is therefore no mere agreement with an impressively interlinking set of theologies, but rather a desperate awareness that apart from Him, I cannot be saved from my sins. See on :19 *I through the law...*

*But through faith in Jesus Christ, even we believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law. Because by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified-* Like Abraham, we are justified by the faith in Christ; not faith in Christ, but more specifically the faith in Christ (Gal. 2:16). The use of the definite article surely suggests that it is our possession of the same doctrinal truths (the Faith) which Abraham had, which is

what leads to faith in Christ and thereby our justification. The life Paul lived was by the Faith of Christ; not simply by faith, as a verb, which is how grammatically it should be expressed if this is what was meant; but by the Faith (Gal. 2:20). There is an intended ambiguity in the phrase "the faith of Abraham" (Rom. 4:16); this 'ambiguous genitive' can mean those who share "the (doctrinal) faith", which Abraham also believed; or those who have the kind of belief which Abraham had.

2:17 *But if, while we seek to be made righteous in Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners-* See on 2:15 *Sinners of the Gentiles.*

*Is Christ then a servant of sin? God forbid!*- Christ would be bringing people into sin if He on one hand offered justification by faith in Him, and yet on the other, demanded obedience to the Mosaic law. "Servant", *diakonos*, means that "sin" is a personification. If Paul had believed in a personal Satan, surely this would've been the place to use that word.

2:18 *For if I build up again those things which I destroyed, I prove myself a transgressor-* The "things" of justification by the Mosaic law. The same word is used by the Lord in saying that He had not come to "destroy" the Law but to fulfil it (Mt. 5:17). Paul surely alludes here, and understood the Lord to be saying that He had indeed come to destroy the Law, but through fulfilling it; and that although He had not at that early point in His ministry destroyed the Law, yet He would do so- in His death. Paul thus sees his own part in the things which the Lord Himself achieved, just as we too can play our part in things like reconciling the world to God, which were personally achieved by the Lord's sacrifice.

2:19 *For I through the law died to the law, that I might live to God-* This is very much the language of baptism in Romans 6. Paul understood that at baptism, he had died, which meant that he was no longer bound to obey the law, but rather, more positively, he was obligated to "live to God". Peter makes the same point, probably also in a baptism context (1 Pet. 4:2,6). Paul says that "through the law" he had come to this position; and his autobiographical comments in Romans 7 suggest that it was through his experience of failure to obey the law that he was driven to throw himself upon Christ and death with Him. This was his point in 2:16- see notes there.

Galatians was one of Paul's earlier letters. In it, he speaks of his own baptism: "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live" (Gal. 2:19-21). Years later he writes to the Romans about *their* baptisms, in exactly the same language: "All of us who have been baptized... our old self was crucified with him... the life he lives he lives to God" (Rom. 6:1-10). He clearly seeks to forge an identity between his readers and himself; their baptisms were [and are] as radical as his in their import. Note how in many of his letters, especially Galatians and Corinthians, he switches so easily between "you" and "we", as if to drive home the fact that there was to be no perception of distance between him the writer and us the readers.

2:20- see on Mt. 27:26; 1 Cor. 15:10; Gal. 2:16.

*I have been crucified with Christ-* Another reference to his baptism and the subsequent life spent living out those principles in practice (see on :19). Rom. 6:6 uses the same term for baptism- "crucified with Him". This is the idea of co-crucifixion, and the word is used about the thieves being crucified with Jesus (Lk. 23:42). The repentant thief is a type of us all. We

died with Christ there; everything within us cries out that 'I would not have done this'. But we did. We through baptism are counted as having died and risen with Him. To be crucified is not so much a command we are to obey but a fact about our status in Christ which is to be believed. We count ourselves as dead to sin with Christ on the cross (Rom. 6:11).

*And it is no longer I that live but Christ living in me-* "I have been crucified with Christ: the life I now live is not *my* life, but the life which *Christ lives* in me; and my present bodily life is lived by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself up for me". The spirit of the risen Christ lived out in our lives is the witness of His resurrection. We are Him to this world. His cross affects our whole life, our deepest thought and action, to the extent that we can say with Paul, in the silence of our own deepest and most personal reflection: "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me" (Gal. 2:20).

*I live in faith-* The Gospel of the Lord Jesus isn't a collection of ideas and theologies bound together in a statement of faith. It is, rather, a proclamation of facts (and the Greek words used about the preaching of the Gospel support that view of it) concerning a flesh and blood historical person, namely the Lord Jesus Christ. The focus is all upon a concrete and actual person. Paul in Gal. 2:20 doesn't say: 'I live by faith in the idea that the Son of God loved me'. Rather: "I live in faith, the faith which is in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself up for me" (RV). Faith is centred in a person- hence the utterly central importance of our correctly understanding the Lord Jesus. We are clearly bidden see the man Jesus as the focus of everything.

*And that life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith which is in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself up-* A reference to the unique method of the Lord's death, consciously giving up His last breath in the words "Father into Your hands I commend my spirit", a life not taken from the Lord but consciously given up by Him. And that supreme act of self giving was "for me".

*For me-* There is the sustained implication that the personal relationship between Jesus and each of His followers is totally personal and unique. The Abrahamic covenant is made personally with every member of the seed "in their generations" (Gen. 17:7). The records of the renewing of the covenant to Isaac and Jacob are but indicators that this is the experience of each one of the seed. This means that the covenant love of God and the promise of personal inheritance of the land is made personally, and confirmed by the shedding of Christ's blood, to each of us. Paul appreciated this when he spoke of how the Son of God had loved him and died for him personally, even though that act of death was performed for many others (Gal. 2:20). This is one of the most essential mysteries of our redemption; that Christ gave Himself *for me*, so that He might make *me* His very own; and therefore I wish to respond in total devotion to Him and His cause, to make Him the Man I fain would follow to the end. And yet He did it for *you* and for *you*; for *all* of us His people. All the emphasis on fellowship and family life, good as it is, must never blind us to this ultimately *personal* relationship with the One who gave Himself for us. Each time a believer enters into covenant with Christ through baptism, blood is in a sense shed; the Lord dies again as the believer dies again in the waters of baptism. The Hebrew word translated 'to cut a covenant' is also translated 'cut off' in the sense of death (Gen. 9:11; Lev. 20:2,3; Is. 48:9; Prov. 2:21). Death and blood shedding are essential parts of covenant making. In Gal. 2:20, Paul wrote of "the son of God who loved me and gave himself for me"; and yet some years later he wrote in conscious allusion to this statement: "Christ loved *the church* and gave himself *for it*" (Eph.

5:25). He looked out from beyond his personal salvation to rejoice in the salvation of others. He learnt that it was God manifestation in a multitude, not individual human salvation, that was and is of the essence. And we follow a like path, from that day when we were asked 'why do you want to be baptized', and we replied something to the effect 'because I want to be in the Kingdom'.

2:21 *I do not make void the grace of God. For if righteousness is through the law, then Christ died for nothing!*- Strong language, but this is what all trust in legalistic obedience to law amounts to. We can frustrate the intention of God's grace, we can void or frustrate [s.w.] the will of God against ourselves by refusing baptism (Lk. 7:30). So much can be wasted, like the wine / blood of Christ pouring out on the earth unless we become new wineskins. "Make void" means literally to abrogate; perhaps the idea is that Paul had abrogated the Law, and not God's grace. And all this terrible waste of God's grace can come about, in the context of this chapter, by being pressured by legalistic brethren into rejecting salvation by grace alone.

## CHAPTER 3

3:1- see on Rom. 1:18; Gal. 4:16.

*O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you?*- Literally, 'cast the evil eye over you'. Paul didn't surely believe in such things, but like the Lord Jesus, he uses the language of the day without as it were footnoting the fact he doesn't literally believe in those things. Paul is writing to those who thought they were now going to be saved by obedience to the Jewish law. But Judaism taught that obedience to the Law shielded Judaists from the 'evil eye' and magic spells. Paul is saying that the opposite is, as it were, the case. They had been "bewitched" to return to the Law, and were thus under, as it were, the curse which comes to those who seek justification by it. He goes right on to talk about the "curse of the law" and how believers in Christ are saved from this (Gal. 3:10,13). His references to salvation from this "curse" must be read in the context of this opening play on the idea of being bewitched or under a curse.

*It was before your own eyes that Jesus Christ was openly displayed as crucified*- Gk. 'placarded'. When Paul preached to the Galatians, he placarded forth Jesus Christ crucified in front of them: his preaching of the Gospel involved a repeated and graphic portrayal of the crucified Jesus of Nazareth as a historical event (Gal. 3:1). We are "in Christ" to the extent that we *are* Christ to this world. In this sense He has in this world no arms or legs or face than us. Paul was a placarding of Christ crucified before the Galatians; to the Corinthians he was "the face of Christ" (2 Cor. 2:10 RSV). It was this marred visage of Paul which had impressed the Galatians with how much Paul was Christ-manifest: "Ye know how through infirmity of the flesh I preached the gospel unto you at the first. And my temptation which was in my flesh ye despised not, nor rejected; but received me as an angel of God, [even] as Christ Jesus" (Gal. 4). He could truly say in Gal 2:20: "I am crucified with Christ", and that before their eyes "Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth ['placarded'], crucified among you... for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus" (Gal. 3:1; 6:17). Thus to preach through cross carrying means sharing in the Lord's sufferings. It may mean being crucified by our brethren for it as He was, physical hardship and pain... but this is the ground of credibility for our witness.

It seems that Paul had gone through the process of crucifixion with them so realistically, that it was as if Christ had suffered before their eyes. If you have seen that, Paul says, and the vision remains with you, how can you turn away? And this is a powerful motivator for us too. The man who sees, really sees, something of the Lord's agony, simply won't turn away, doctrinally or practically. But if we turn away from the consideration, the motivation will not be there to keep on responding. In this sense the crucifixion record *almost* has a mystical power in it, if it is properly apprehended. Thus Paul could tell the Galatians that in him they had seen Jesus Christ placarded forth, crucified before their own eyes (3:1). Paul knew that when people looked at his life, they saw something of the crucifixion of the Lord. The Galatians therefore accepted him "even as Christ Jesus" (Gal. 4:14). He could describe his own preaching as "this Jesus, whom I preach unto you..." (Acts 17:3), as if Jesus was right there before their eyes, witnessed through Paul. As the Lord was Paul's representative, so Paul was Christ's. The idea of representation works both ways: we see in the Gospel records how the Lord experienced some things which only we have; and we show aspects of His character to the world which nobody else can manifest.

If we can rise up to all this, placarding forth the Lord's crucifixion sufferings in our lives, then there will be a power and credibility to our preaching which will be hard to resist. It was before the eyes of the Galatians that they saw in Paul, Jesus Christ crucified (Gal. 3:1). But the only other reference to the eyes of the Galatians is in Gal. 4:15- where we read that they had been so transfixed by Paul's preaching that they had been ready to pluck out their eyes. And where's the only other reference to plucking out eyes? It's in the Lord's teaching, where He says that if our eye offends us, we should pluck it out [Mt. 5:29- same Greek words used]. The connection is surely this: Paul's personal reflection of the crucified Jesus was so powerful, so compellingly real and credible, that it motivated his hearers to rise up to the spirit of the very hardest demands of the moral teaching of that same Jesus. Insofar as we genuinely live out the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus, our preaching of His radical moral demands will likewise be heeded. The crucified Christ that Paul placarded before their eyes was "the truth" (Gal. 3:1; 4:14-16); and the integrity and reality of that truth was confirmed by the congruence between the example of Paul, and the reality of the crucified Jesus whom he manifested to them. In Paul's body language, in his character, in his response to problems and frustrations great and small, in the way he coped with physical weakness, his audience somehow saw the crucified Christ. In the same letter, Paul reminds the Galatians how they had initially seen him preaching to them in a weak bodily state, and had seen Christ in him then (Gal. 4:13,14). He says in Gal. 3:1 that they saw Christ crucified in him. Perhaps the way Paul handled a sickness or bodily weakness which he then had, somehow reflected to his audience the spirit of Christ crucified.

The effort we should consciously make to allow the life of Christ to be lived in us, is a natural outflow of the basic doctrine: that Christ was our representative. If we love Him and the record of His life, we will see in Him and His living the essence of our own: the same betrayal, barriers with His family and all close relationships, the pouring out of the love of God to a world and people who misunderstood, who thought they understood but didn't, who were blind, who thought they saw, who only broke from the petty materialism of their lives to listen to Him because they thought they might get some personal benefit...all the time, He poured out His grace and the Father's love. And He kept on to the final unspeakable, unwriteable, unenterable agony at the end. And even there, we sense He was not gritting His teeth trying to be patient, trying not to sin...He was pulsating with a love for men, a care for Pilate (comforting him that another had a greater sin); concern for the women who wept crocodile tears, that they might really repent; praying for forgiveness for those who knew not [i.e., fully] what they did; preaching to the thieves in whispers, each word taking an agony of pain, heaving Himself up on the nails to get the air to speak it... To love one's neighbour as oneself is to fulfil the law (Gal. 5:14; Rom. 13:10); and yet the Lord's death was the supreme fulfilment of it (Mt. 5:18; Col. 2:14). Here was the definition of love for one's neighbour. Not a passing politeness and occasional seasonal gift, whilst secretly and essentially living the life of self-love and self-care; but the love and the death of the cross, for His neighbours as for Himself; laying down His life "for himself that it might be for us" in the words of Bro. Roberts. In Him, in His time of dying, we see the definition of love, the fulfilment of the justice and unassuming kindness and thought for others which was taught in the Mosaic Law. And we through bearing one another's burdens, through bearing with their moral and intellectual and spiritual failures, must likewise fulfil the law, in a voluntary laying down of our lives for each other (Gal. 6:2). And in this, as with the Lord, will be our personal salvation.

1 Cor. 11:26 AVmg. makes the act of breaking bread a command, an imperative to action: "As often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, shew ye the Lord's death, till he come". If we are going to eat the emblems, it is axiomatic that we will commit ourselves to shewing forth His death to the world, like Paul placarding forth Christ crucified in our lives (Gal. 3:1 Gk.). The Passover likewise had been a 'shewing' to one's family "that which the Lord did unto me" (Ex. 13:8), the redemption we have experienced.

3:2 *Let me ask you only this: Did you receive the Spirit by doing works of the law, or by hearing with faith?*- This is not a reference to receipt of the miraculous Spirit gifts; for only some received these in the first century. 3:5 is clear about the difference: "He that supplies to you the Spirit and works miracles among you". Not all had the miraculous gifts, indeed Paul downplays their importance in 1 Corinthians. But all the Galatians are spoken of as having 'received the Spirit'. I suggest this refers to the gift of the Spirit which all believers in Christ receive at baptism (Acts 2:38)- the internal power towards holiness and spirituality, Christ in us, His mind / spirit within us. The same words are used in Jn. 7:39 of how the Spirit was to be received once Christ was glorified and had poured out this gift upon His people. This Spirit is received by the believers, not by the world, and is *within* us (Jn. 14:17). The receipt of this Spirit means that we in our hearts can cry "Abba, Father" (Rom. 8:15). Later in our chapter here, Paul speaks of receiving the Spirit as receiving the blessing of Abraham (Gal. 3:14)- the blessing which in Acts 3:26 is defined as the power to turn us away from sin. Paul's immediate point here is that the Spirit was received by them not because they obeyed law, but because they had believed and been baptized into Christ. Gal. 4:6 is quite clear that the Spirit received by all the Galatian converts was a gift of Divine relationship within their hearts: "And because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father".

3:3 *Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit-* The reference is to having begun spiritual life at their baptisms by receiving the Spirit (see on :2).

*Are you now perfected in the flesh?*- The function of the Holy Spirit is to guide our spiritual development unto maturity or 'perfection'. Obedience to Law will not achieve this. The same word is used in describing how the Lord has "begun a good work [with]in you" and will perform or 'perfect' it until the day we meet the Lord (Phil. 1:6). This work is essentially *within* us. We are in a program of development, and attempting to justify ourselves by work will interrupt that program.

3:4 *Did you suffer so many things in vain? If it be indeed in vain-* The connection is with Paul's thought in Gal. 2:21 a few verses earlier- that if we are justified by works, then Christ has suffered in vain. And our sufferings, which are a sharing in His sufferings, will likewise be in vain. Paul several times uses this powerful idea of life "in vain". If we do not enter the Kingdom, if we refuse to be new wineskins, then the blood of the new covenant flows out wasted on the ground. All is vain, compared to salvation. This general attitude to life under the sun and all human endeavour is indeed powerful.

3:5 *Does he that supplies to you the Spirit*- As noted on :2, this refers to the gift of the Spirit in the hearts of believers after baptism. The same word for "supplies" is used in Col. 2:19 of how the Lord Jesus as the head of the body supplies nourishment to every part. The Lord Jesus is indeed an active Lord. He ministers psychological, spiritual strengthening to all parts of His body, which is the church.

*And works miracles among you, do it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?*- See on :2 *Did you receive the Spirit*. Note the present tenses. Despite the apostasy in Galatia, the Lord Jesus still actively ministered His Spirit and enabled miracles to be done, just as God did to an apostate Israel in the wilderness. Even in the first century, the work of the Spirit was not just confined to the miraculous gifts; thus "He that supplies to you the Spirit *and* works miracles among you" suggests that there was a non-miraculous work of the Spirit then. It seems clear that the miraculous gifts of the Spirit were not possessed by all first century believers; and yet the epistles often imply that all believers had received the Spirit (e.g. 2 Cor. 1:22). The resolution of this is in the fact that all believers then and now receive the non-miraculous effect of the Spirit. Indeed, Jude 19 suggests that 'having the spirit' could just refer to someone who is not "sensual", i.e. of the flesh. John was "filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb... (going) in the Spirit and power of Elias... waxed strong in spirit" (Lk. 1:15,17,80); but "John did no miracle" (Jn. 10:41). David associated having God's holy Spirit with having free fellowship with Him due to sins being forgiven, paralleling the holy Spirit with "a right spirit within me... a clean heart" (Ps. 51:10,12); and Paul spoke of God's willingness to forgive us as "the spirit of grace" (Heb. 10:29), i.e. His spiritual gift. Paul's reasoning in Gal. 3:5,6 is similar- the Spirit is ministered to us by faith, in the same way as Abraham's faith resulted in righteousness being imputed ('ministered') to him. Thus imputed righteousness is made parallel to the gift of the Spirit.

3:6- see on Phil. 3:6.

*Even as Abraham believed God, and that faith was imputed to him for righteousness*- His faith was weak, just as faith was weak in Galatia. See on Rom. 4:1-4,18,19. Paul's point in Rom. 4:3-5 is that Abraham was counted as righteous for his faith and not because of his works; the promises of the Kingdom salvation were made to him whilst he was uncircumcised.

3:7 *Know that they that are of faith, the same are sons of Abraham*- 'Of' in the sense of being the descendant of. Faith is the defining family characteristic of the Abraham family- and not race or physical descent. "The real descendants of Abraham are the people who have faith" (GNB).

3:8- see on Rom. 9:17.

*And the scripture, foreseeing that God would make the Gentiles righteous by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham*- Abraham was promised that "all the nations" [i.e. "the Gentiles"] would be blessed. Paul strains from this [so it could seem to those not used to rabbinic exegesis] that this blessing was not stated to be in response to any works- so it must therefore have been offered purely on the basis of faith. If they were to be given a blessing not on the basis of works, but on account of Abraham' singular seed, Jesus... then such

blessing would involve them being counted righteous, i.e. worthy of blessing, just because they believed this promise.

*When it says: In you shall all the nations be blessed-* This was 'preached to Abraham'; and he chose to believe it. It was spoken to him before he had done any works of obedience or before he had believed anything. He was told, effectively, that he would be blessed / saved. And he believed it. The Gospel likewise comes to us out of left field, as it were. We are promised that we shall be saved- and if we believe it, we shall be.

3:9 *So then, they that are of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham-* "With" translates *sun*, the idea being that believers are blessed by association with Abraham. And :27-29 explain that this is through baptism into Christ, who is Abraham's specific seed.

Verses 10-13 are a parenthesis concerning the curse of the Law. If read without the parenthesis, the flow of thought goes straight on: "They which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham (v.9)... that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles" (v.14).

3:10 *For as many as are of the works of the law are under a curse-* See on 3:1 *Bewitched you.*

*For it is written: Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do all things that are written in the book of the law-* The quotation is from the LXX of Dt. 27:26. The Masoretic text is different: "Cursed is he who doesn't confirm the words of this law to do them". This is an example of where so often the NT seems to prefer to quote the LXX over the MT. This has significant implications for any who insist upon the earth being 6000 years old as based upon the OT genealogies, for the figures are significantly different in the LXX.

3:11 *Now it is evident that no one is justified by the law before God! For, The righteous shall live by faith-* The thought is very similar to that in Romans. Rom. 2:13 uses the same phrase *para Theos* to reason that the *doers* of the law are justified before God; and nobody does the entire law. But here (as in Rom. 1:17) Paul uses a related but slightly different argument. He says that we are not justified by deeds "before God" because of the very existence of the concept of justification *by faith*; and he quotes Hab. 2:4 as an exemplification of this.

3:12 *And the law is not of faith-* Today likewise, legalism does not induce faith. It is our awareness of our disobedience and a deep sense of inability to be righteous which leads us to the faith which is a throwing of ourselves upon Divine grace and the Lord's cross.

*But: He that does the commandments shall live in them-* The 'living' in view, in the context, seems to be 'living eternally'; for Paul has just said that the righteous shall live [eternally] by faith (:11). He therefore understood Lev. 18:5 to mean that life eternal was possible through perfect obedience to the Mosaic law: "You shall therefore keep My statutes and My ordinances; which if a man does, he shall live in them". Notice that "in them" is added by the translators to make better sense of the simple statement that the obedient man "shall live". The truth of this interpretation is in the fact the Lord Jesus was indeed perfectly obedient to the Law and therefore lived for ever; He had to die for multiple reasons, but it was not possible that death should hold Him, seeing He had the right to eternal life through His perfect obedience; and therefore He was resurrected.

3:13- see on Acts 5:30.

*Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us- See on 3:1 Bewitched you.*

*For it is written: Cursed is everyone that hangs on a tree-* The idea is not that for some reason, being hung on a tree made a person "cursed". Those who had sinned unto death, according to the law of Moses, were "cursed" by that law; and those dead, legally cursed people were then hung on a tree. The point is that we have each become cursed by the Law of Moses through failing to completely obey it. And the perfect Lord Jesus was our representative; He there on the cross was and is everyman. It flows naturally from this that we would wish to immerse ourselves into His body there on the cross, identifying with Him, so that His resurrection can become ours. That is of course the meaning of baptism, but the spirit of that identification is to carry on through daily life and thought afterwards.

Note that Paul likens the Lord on the cross to the body of the criminal lifted up *after* death, not in order to lead to death (Gal. 3:13; Dt. 21:23)- as if he understood the Lord to have been effectively dead unto sin at the time the body was lifted up on the cross. It was as if the idea of the cross had been lived out throughout the Lord's life; He was dead as He lived, and dead to sin at the point that His body was lifted up on the tree.

3:14 *This was so that upon the Gentiles might come the blessing of Abraham in Christ Jesus, so that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith-* Paul was so positive about his Galatians, many of whom he says seemed to be departing from the Christian faith. He feared he may have "laboured in vain" for some of them (Gal. 4:11), but he writes of his expectations in a totally positive way: "Christ hath redeemed us... that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ: that we might receive the promise of the Spirit [i.e. salvation]" (Gal. 3:13,14). "For ye are *all* the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus; for as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ... then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (Gal. 3:27-29)- yet Paul could write this despite knowing his readers' lack of faith in Christ (Gal. 1:6; 3:1,3-5; 4:9,11,19,21; 5:4,7). "And because ye are sons... thou art no more a servant, but a son: and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ" (Gal. 4:6,7). "So then brethren we are not children of the bondwoman but of the free" (Gal. 4:31). If we believe that we ourselves will be there, we will spark off an upward spiral of positive thinking in the community of believers with whom we are associated. Think carefully on the Lord's words to the Pharisees: "For ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in" (Mt. 23:13). If we don't believe we will be there, we end up discouraging others.

3:15- see on 1 Cor. 15:57.

*Brothers, I speak in human terms. Though it be but a man's covenant, yet when it has been confirmed, no one makes it void, or adds thereto-* The confirmation of the covenant was 'previous' to the giving of the Law of Moses (:17). The confirmation was in the fact that God made an oath by Himself (Heb. 6:13-18); the promise itself, and then His word of oath, made two immutable things in which it was impossible for God to lie. The simple covenant of salvation was that anyone who believed the promises to Abraham and associated themselves with his seed will be eternally saved and blessed. Nothing has been added or subtracted from

that ever since it was given. The Lord's death was yet another act of confirming that covenant, and appealing to men and women to believe it and participate in it; but His life and death did not of themselves add anything to the salvation covenant promise given to Abraham, and which forms the basis of the Gospel. And likewise, the law of Moses did not void nor add to that covenant.

3:16 *Now to Abraham were the promises spoken, and to his seed. He did not say: And to seeds, in the plural, but in the singular: And to your seed, who is Christ!*- A case can be made that the whole New Testament is a form of *Midrash* on the Old Testament, re-interpreting it in the light of Christ. Paul so often employs the same literary devices found in the rabbinic *Midrashim*, e.g. *al tiqra* [read not thus, but thus- Gal. 3:16 is a classic example].

The promises were made to Abraham's future seed, the Lord Jesus. He did not personally pre-exist.

3:17 *This is what I mean; the law which came years afterward, does not annul a covenant previously ratified by God, so as to make the promise of no effect*- The confirmation of the covenant [s.w. :15 "confirmed"] was in that God swore it with an oath. The promise to save people who believed in His offer of blessing / salvation was absolutely certain. The logic of the argument here could suggest that actually, salvation was open to Gentiles in Old Testament times if they simply believed in the Abrahamic covenant. For it was not in any sense annulled; the Lord's death was simply an extra confirmation of it, and enabled believers to identify with the seed.

Gal. 3:15-20 stresses how the Law came after the promises to Abraham, and cannot disannul them. Reasoning back from Paul's writing, we can arrive at some understanding of what the Judaists were saying. Their position was that baptism of Gentiles into the Abrahamic covenant was fine, but they must keep the Law for salvation. Paul is pointing out that the promises to Abraham offer eternal inheritance in the Kingdom on the basis of faith and grace, and neither the Law of Moses nor any other form of legalism can change that fundamental basis. An appreciation of the promises will therefore root us in the wonder of salvation by grace, to the point that we will reject all forms of legalism whenever they are proposed in the ecclesia, and whenever our own flesh seeks to justify itself by works achieved rather than by humbly accepting forgiveness of sins. That the Lord's death took away the Law can be assented to us and passed by. But the RV of Romans draws a difference between "*the law*" and "*law*" without the article, i.e. legality. Because we are saved by grace, no legal code, of Moses or anyone else, can save us. Therefore we are free- but that freedom is so wonderful that we are under "the law of Christ", the rigid principle of always seeking to act as this Man would do, who freed us from law. Otherwise, we end up replacing one form of legalism [under Moses] with another, a set of laws given by Jesus. He *has* saved us in prospect, outside of any law. And we are to rejoice in this and yet respond to it. Dostoevsky's epic *The Brothers Karamazov* is really a parable of the terrible burden of this freedom and the forgiveness of sins. In it, Jesus returns to earth. He is arrested, and the Inquisitor visits Him in the middle of the night. He tries to explain to Jesus that people do not want freedom. They want security. He argues with Jesus, that if one really loves people, then you make them happy- but not free. Freedom is dangerous. People want law, not responsibility; they want the neurotic comfort of rules, not the danger of decision making and the burdens it brings. Christ, says the Inquisitor, must not start up this business about freedom and grace and the commitment and responsibility it demands. Let things be; let the church have its laws. And

will Jesus please go away. The life of grace to the extent that it must be lived is a radical confrontation- it creates the necessity of making pure freewill decisions to do and think acts of grace in response to God's grace. Grace has been presented as the easy way out. It isn't. It is far, far more demanding than legalism.

3:18 *For if the inheritance is of the law, it is no more of promise-* The inheritance of "the land of promise" was made possible *before* the Law of Moses was given. Israel were given Canaan on the basis of the promises to Abraham, and not the Law of Moses.

*But God has granted it to Abraham by promise-* Abraham was not given any set of laws he must obey. He was simply asked to believe, and go inherit the promised land. And the Gospel to us is really also that simple. Its very simplicity is why the demand for faith is so intense, and why people would prefer to slip back into some legal system, with a promised reward for obedience which can never be a certain hope because of our disobedience in some ways.

3:19 *For what, then, was the law? It was added because of transgressions-* The descendants of Jacob / Israel were not righteous, although they were God's people. The law of Moses was given to them "because of transgressions". And yet the very existence of the Mosaic Law generated sin, and thereby the experience of God's wrath upon His people (Rom. 4:15). So why were Israel given the Law? In some ways (and this isn't the only reason) to confirm them in their sinfulness. The original Mosaic Law was "holy, just and good" in itself (Rom. 7:12). But later, God gave Israel "laws that were not good" (referring to the Halachas of the Scribes?) so that they would go further away from Him (Ez. 20:25). He must have done this by inspiring men to say things which were genuinely communicated by God, but which were false.

*Until the seed should come to whom the promise had been made. The law was given through angels by the hand of a mediator-* The promise was made to the Lord Jesus, therefore, when as yet He did not exist. In this sense the promises were spoken to Christ, the seed of Abraham (:16). God's word of promise likewise spoke to us right back then in Abraham's time- even though we had not then associated with his seed.

3:20 *Now an intermediary implies more than one party, but God is one-* The oath of God to Abraham was a unilateral undertaking. He alone passed through the burning pieces. Likewise the mediation of the Angels implied two parties in a contract- but actually the covenant was unilateral, only God bound Himself by terms and conditions. He simply wanted to pass on the blessing to us. All we have to do is believe it and accept the covenant.

Reflect a moment upon the sheer power and import of the fact that the Father *promised* things to us, who are Abraham's seed by faith and baptism. The Law of Moses was a conditional promise, because there were two parties; but the promises to us are in some sense unconditional, as God is the only "one" party (Gal. 3:19,20). And as if God's own unconditional promise isn't enough, He confirmed those promises to us with the blood of His very own son. Bearing this in mind, it's not surprising that Ps. 111:5 states that God "will *ever* be mindful of His covenant". This means that He's thinking about the covenant made with us *all* the time! And yet how often in daily life do we reflect upon the fact that we really are in covenant relationship with God... how often do we recollect the part we share in the promises to Abraham, how frequently do we feel that we really are in a personal covenant with God Almighty? In Genesis 15, He made a one-sided commitment to Abraham. The idea of the dead animals in the ceremony was to teach that 'So may I be dismembered and die if I fail to

keep my promise'. Jer. 34:18 speaks of how Israelites must die, because they passed between the pieces of the dead animal sacrifices in making a covenant. But in Gen. 15, it is none less than the God who cannot die who is offering to do this, subjecting Himself to this potential curse! And He showed Himself for real in the death of His Son. That was His way of confirming the utter certainty of the promises to Abraham which are the basis of the new covenant which He has cut with us (Rom. 15:8; Gal. 3:17). Usually both parties passed between the dead animals- but only Yahweh does. It was a one-sided covenant from God to man, exemplifying His one-way grace. The Lord died, in the way that He did, to get through to us how true this all is- that God Almighty cut a sober, unilateral covenant with us personally, to give us the Kingdom. We simply can't be passive to such grace, we have no option but to reach out with grace to others in care and concern- and we have a unique motivation in doing this, which this unbelieving world can never equal. From one viewpoint, the only way we can not be saved is to wilfully refuse to participate in this covenant. The Lord laboured the point that the "unforgivable sin" was to "blaspheme the Holy Spirit" (Mk. 3:28-30; Mt. 12:31-37; Lk. 12:10). But it's been demonstrated that this is a reference to Jewish writings and traditions such as Jubilees 15:33 "where not circumcising one's child is unforgivable, because it is a declaration that one does not belong to the covenant people".

*3:21 Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid! For if there had been a law given which could give life, truly righteousness would have been of the law-* Under inspiration, Paul so often addresses the unspoken thoughts of his readers. If salvation was promised by faith alone under the Abrahamic covenant, then why ever introduce a law which was impossible to keep? This connects on the same large scale canvas with the question as to why God allowed sin, why there is even the concept of sin. And Paul speaks to these natural and obvious concerns. His answer is that we had to realize our desperation, our need, our hunger, our inability to achieve salvation by any other means- so that we would throw ourselves upon God's grace in Christ as it is presented in the Abrahamic covenant. Perhaps it was the lack of human interest in that wonderful covenant which led God to introduce the Mosaic Law- in order to thereby drive man to Christ. Likewise God uses human sin in order to bring us to Him. If there were no sin, no Law to place accent upon human desperation, then who would need Christ? How much less glory would be given to God and His grace if in fact there was no sin, if there had been no law... It was in this sense that the Law was a teacher / teaching slave to bring us to Christ. Not in that people understood the types and patterns as being Messianic; for here in Galatians 3, Paul says that mankind was "shut up" to all that; but rather in bringing us to know our desperation.

To be given life is paralleled with being given righteousness. Those without sin can live for ever; so the imputation of righteousness means eternal life.

*3:22 But the Scripture imprisoned everything under sin, so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe-* See on :14. Sin occurs as a major theme in Paul's writings- not just in Romans, where he speaks so much about sin without hinting that a supernatural 'Satan' figure is involved with it. He sees sin as playing an almost positive, creative role in the formation of the true Christian, both individually and in terms of salvation history. He speaks of how the Mosaic law was given to as it were highlight the power of sin; but through this it lead us to Christ, through our desperation and failure to obey, "that (Gk. *hina*, a purpose clause) we might be righteoused by faith" (Gal. 3:24-26). The curses for disobedience were "in order that (Gk. *hina*) the blessing of Abraham would come upon the Gentiles" (Gal. 3:10-14); "the Scripture consigned all things to sin, in order that (Gk. *hina*)

what was promised to faith in Jesus Christ, might be given to those who have faith” (Gal. 3:22). Note that it was the Law, “the Scripture”, which consigned things to sin— not a personal Satan. My point is that sin was used by God, *hina*, ‘in order that’, there would be an ultimately positive spiritual outcome. Indeed this appears to be the genius of God, to work through human failure to His glory. This view of sin, which any mature believer will surely concur with from his or her life experience, is impossible to square with the ideas of dualism, whereby God and ‘sin’ are radically opposed, fighting a pitched battle ranging between Heaven and earth, with no common ground. No – God is truly Almighty in every sense, and this includes His power over sin. The life, death and resurrection of His Son were His way of dealing with it – to His glory.

*3:23 Now before faith came, we were held captive under the law-* Paul sees the Law as a prison house, a law which held us captive in bonds. In the first century, a person was defined not so much by their unique personal character, credit was not given for who they had become or stopped being... but rather by the place in society into which they were born. And so these group-oriented people came to live out the expectations of society- and so the whole process rolled on through the generations. It was continuity rather than change, tradition rather than transformation, which was valued. Change was seen as some kind of deviancy- whereas the Christian gospel is all about change! The past was seen as more glorious than the present and the future, a pattern to be followed- whereas the Gospel of the future Kingdom of God on earth taught that the best time is *ahead*. And so often Paul compares the "past" of our lives with the much better "now" in Christ (Gal. 3:23-27; 4:8,9; Rom. 6:17-22; Eph. 2:11-22; 5:8).

*Imprisoned until the coming faith would be revealed-* On one level, the Mosaic Law was a set of such intricate regulations that was almost impossible to keep. And yet it led men to Christ as a gentle slave leading the children to the teacher. I don’t think that the Law of Moses led people to Christ in the sense that they cracked the various types and worked it all out. There’s not one example that I can think of where an Old Testament character did this. Indeed it could appear from Gal. 3:23 and other New Testament passages that until Christ actually came, the Old Testament believers were “shut up unto the faith which should afterward be revealed”. Therefore the types etc. of the Law of Moses couldn’t have been perceived by them in the same way as we understand them. Hence the Lord’s comment that many righteous men had longed to understand the things of Jesus which the disciples saw and heard in reality. “In other ages” those things of Christ were not made known to men as they were revealed in the New Testament by the preaching of the apostles and New Testament prophets (Eph. 3:5). The Old Testament prophets even seemed to understand that the things they saw and wrote were not so much for themselves as for us (1 Pet. 1:12). Or as Paul says here in Gal. 3:23: “Before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith [in Jesus] which should afterwards be revealed”. The Law was a shadow created as it were by the concrete reality of Christ. We can look back and see it all now, but I don’t think the types predicted anything to the people of the time. So how then did the Law lead people to Christ? Was it not that they were convicted of guilt, and cried out for a Saviour? “The law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: that... grace might reign... unto eternal life by Jesus” (Rom. 5:20,21). This was the purpose of the Law. And thus Paul quotes David’s rejoicing in the righteousness imputed to him when he had sinned and had no works left to do- and changes the pronoun from “he” to “they” (Rom. 4:6-8). David’s personal experience became typical of that of each of us. It was *through* the experience of that wretched and hopeless position that David and all believers come to know

the true 'blessedness' of imputed righteousness and sin forgiven by grace. Perhaps Gal. 3:22 sums up what we have been saying: "The Scripture [in the context, this refers to the Mosaic Law] hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe". And Paul goes on to say in this very context that the law brings us unto Christ (Gal. 3:24). It brings us- not those who lived under the law. How does it do that? By convicting us of sin, 'concluding' us as being under the control of sin.

*3:24 So that the law became our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith* - The ultimate teacher must be the Lord Himself, not the pastor or speaking brother. The Law was a *paidagogos*, a slave who lead the children to the school teacher. And the teacher, Paul says, is Christ (Gal. 3:23-25). He uses the whole body to make increase of itself in love- not just the elders. As explained under 3:21, the law's bringing men to Christ was not in that people understood the types and patterns as being Messianic; for here in Galatians 3, Paul says that mankind was "shut up" to all that; but rather in bringing us to know our desperation, to highlight our sin, our chronic lack of steel within the soul to bring ourselves to obedience.

*3:25 But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor-* The idea could be that the "tutor" was in fact a slave who lead the child to the teacher, and remained with them until the teacher came. The terms "Christ" and "faith" are thus put for the same thing- 'justification by faith in Christ'. "Faith" is put for the object of that faith, which is Christ.

*3:26 For you are all sons of God , through faith in Christ Jesus-* The "all" suggests that as Christ is the son of God, so are we. For by being baptized into Christ, all that is true of Him becomes true of us. Entering the body of Christ carries this implication. We must aspire to be united, with neither Jew nor Gentile, male nor female etc., because "ye are all one man in Christ" (Gal. 3:28 RV). We "are all sons of God" (3:26 RV) because of our baptism into the Son of God. And so Paul goes on to reason that just as Christ was "the heir" (cp. "this is the heir..."), who is "lord of all", "even so we..." were kept under the law for a time (Gal. 4:1-3). The basis of our unity is that there is only one Jesus, and by being in Him we are living lives committed to the imitation of that same man. It's painless enough to read Gal. 3:27-29- that all those baptized "in Christ" therefore are in a status where there is neither Jew nor Gentile, no human barriers between us. But this is actually something we have to live out in life in order for it to become reality.

*3:27 For as many of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ-* Elsewhere Paul urges already baptized believers to clothe themselves with Christ, to put on [s.w.] the new man etc. Baptism is a putting on of the Lord Jesus, a union with Him; but it is something essentially ongoing. The Lord Himself spoke of sharing His baptism as being the same as drinking His cup, sharing His cross (Mk. 10:39); which, again, is a process. Likewise Peter saw baptism as not only the one off act, but more importantly a pledge to live a life in good conscience with God (1 Pet. 3:21). 'Obeying the truth' is not only at baptism, but a lifelong pursuit (Gal. 5:7). The whole body of believers in Christ are being baptized into the body of the Lord Jesus in an ongoing sense (1 Cor. 12:13 Gk.), in that collectively and individually we are growing up into Him who is the Head (Eph. 4:15). See on Col. 2:6; 1 Pet. 1:23.

3:28 *There can be neither Jew nor Gentile, there can be neither slave nor free, there can be no male and female- for you all are one in Christ Jesus-* For Paul to calmly teach that baptism into Christ meant that there was now no longer differentiation between male and female, slave and free, Jew, Greek or any other ethnic group- this called into total question all the first century understandings of society. Indeed, the idea that Gentiles could become spiritual "Jews", and that the Jews weren't the *real* children of Abraham, was an intentional reversal of the categories around which society had been built. Much of the early 'geography' of the first century involved stereotypical descriptions of ethnic and geographical groups, usually ending up with praising the Greco-Roman peoples as being superior in every way to all others. Yet this worldview, which was accepted even by the despised ethnic groups about themselves, had to be ended for those in Christ. Being in *Him* was to be their defining feature. This was equally radical for the Jews, who held themselves above these stereotypes about themselves. Contrary to what is often claimed, Paul went out of his way to show that contemporary views of women were unacceptable for those in the Lord. His teaching here is that in Christ, there is neither Jew nor Gentile, slave nor free, male or female, is surely conscious allusion to the Jewish traditional morning prayer for men: "My God, I thank thee that I was not born a Gentile but a Jew, not a slave but a free man, not a woman but a man". He is surely saying that for those in Christ, the Jewish male world-view is unacceptable.

It was hard psychologically for Jews to convert to Christianity. There were elements of Christian teaching which were a direct affront to Judaism. Part of being a Christian was to expect to be treated by the Jews in just the same way as they had treated Jesus. The Sabbath was replaced with keeping the first day of the week for worship; the food laws were reduced by Paul's inspired teaching to parts of "the weak and beggarly elements". The Jewish hatred of the Christians is revealed by the riots that ensued when the Gospel was preached in the synagogues, and in the persecution of the Christians at the hands of the Jews in Jerusalem, Damascus and in the Asian cities (according to the letters in Rev. 2,3). The insistence that Jewish converts be baptized would have been hard of acceptance; for Gentiles took just such a ritual bath when they converted to Judaism. For orthodox Jews to submit to baptism demanded a lot- for it implied they were not by birth part of the true Israel as they had once proudly thought. The Jews thought of Israel in the very terms which Paul applies to Jesus: "We Thy people whom Thou hast honoured and hast called the Firstborn and Only-Begotten, Near and Beloved One". The New Testament uses these titles to describe the Lord Jesus Christ- and we must be baptized into Him in order to be in His Name and titles. The Lord Jesus was thus portrayed as Israel idealized and personified, all that Israel the suffering servant should have been; thus only by baptism into Christ of Jew and Gentile could they become part of the true seed of Abraham, the Israel of God (Gal. 3:27-29). The act of baptism into Christ is no less radical for us in our contexts today than it was for first century Jews. All we once mentally held dear, we have to give up.

Gal. 3:27-29 explains that through baptism into the Abrahamic covenant, there is a special unity between all in that covenant. Slave and free, male and female, Jew and Gentile are all thereby united, as they were in the early church. David Bosch comments: "The revolutionary nature of the early Christian mission manifested itself, *inter alia*, in the new relationships that came into being in the community. Jew and Roman, Greek and barbarian, free and slave, rich and poor, woman and man, accepted one another as brothers and sisters. It was a movement without analogy, indeed a sociological impossibility". Likewise ecclesial life today can seem "a sociological impossibility", but through the power of the most basic facts of the Gospel preached to Abraham, this incredible unity is possible. As a nexus "without analogy", the true Christian community of itself ought to attract the attention of earnest men and women- just as

the Lord predicted. Our unity should be the basis of our appeal to men. And yet our divided state is a tragic witness against us in this regard. Because there is neither Jew nor Gentile in Christ means that in practice, amongst those that "have put on the new man [a reference to baptism into Christ]... there cannot be Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bondman, freeman [clear allusion to Gal. 3:27-29]. But Christ is all, and in all. Put on *therefore*... a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; forbearing one another and forgiving one another" (Col. 3:10-13 RV). *These things* are what the promises to Abraham are all about in practice! Because we are all now united in Christ in our status as Abraham's seed, *therefore* we must see to it that through kindness, patience etc. there really *is not* Jew and Greek, or division of any kind, between us.

3:29- see on Mt. 25:34.

*And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and the heirs according to the promise!*- The promise was made to two people- Abraham and his seed, the Lord Jesus. By being in Christ, all that is true of the seed is true of us. And so the paradox is fulfilled- the singular seed (:16) is also as many as the stars of the sky.

## CHAPTER 4

4:1 *But I mean so long as the heir is a child, he differs nothing from a slave, though he is lord of all-* The argument carries straight on from 3:29, where those baptized into Christ have been declared heirs along with Abraham. But Paul is saying that heirs don't receive anything "until the day appointed by the father" (:2). Inheritance in the first century wasn't necessarily received on the death of the parent. We think of the younger son in the parable demanding his inheritance whilst his father was still living. The father appointed a time or age at which the heir would receive the inheritance. Until that day, although the child was heir, even of absolutely everything ["though he is lord of all"], it was of no real meaning- the child had as much legal right to it as a slave. Children had no real value as persons- they were effectively treated as slaves. Many women were in the same position, which explains why the early critics of Christianity mocked it as a religion largely comprised of women and children. True Christianity is attractive today likewise to those who are seen by others as non persons.

The heir in view is the "seed" of chapter 3, the Lord Jesus, who is now "Lord of all". But Paul now argues as if the heir in view is everyone who was led by the law to become the seed of Abraham by faith. All that is true of the Lord is true of us personally.

4:2 *But the child is under guardians and stewards-* This continues the thought of 3:24; the Law was our tutor to bring us to Christ.

*Until the day appointed by the father-* Paul argues that the day of inheritance has now come. We were proven to be the true adult sons of our Father, God, when He sent forth the Spirit of adoption into our hearts (:6). "The day appointed" sounds very much like that of the Lord's second coming; but the point is that for those who have received the Lord Jesus now, He has 'come' into their hearts, and our experience of Him now is a foretaste of what we shall eternally experience in the Kingdom age. The implication of the argument is that in some sense, we are "heirs", inheritors, in that we are those who have now received the inheritance. This does not preclude a future, literal receipt of the land inheritance; but we have received the spiritual blessings promised Abraham, which Acts 3:26 interprets as the turning away of our hearts from sin.

4:3 *So we also! When we were children, we were held in bondage under the elementary principles of the world-* Paul paints a rather onerous picture of childhood. It perhaps reflected his own experience, but all the same as noted on :1, children were seen as non-persons in first century Mediterranean society.

Paul says that the Galatians formerly lived as enslaved to the "elements of the cosmos" (Gal. 4:3), also a phrase used in the Jewish apostate writings; "what by nature are not gods" (*tois phusei mê ousin theois*; Gal. 4:8,9). They are "weak and powerless elements" (*ta asthenê kai ptocha stoicheia*; Gal. 4:9). The system of Satan, sinful Angels, demons etc. which the Jews believed in, Paul is showing to now be non-existent and at the best powerless. The real background problem, Paul is saying, is not a personal Satan and a network of demons; rather is it the influence of the Mosaic law and Judaism. See on Col. 2:17.

4:4 *But when the fullness of the time came-* As if God carefully set a time period for the operation of the Mosaic law, just as He brought it into operation at a specific point 430 years after the covenant with Abraham (3:17). This idea of a specific time period is in keeping with

the analogy regarding a child being set a period of time to live under governors, until he receives the inheritance as a young adult. I discussed under Galatians 3 the whole reason why the Law was given; its intention was to highlight sin and grace, and to make men throw themselves upon God's grace in Christ when this appeared in the person of the historical Jesus. The time period was optimal for that purpose to be achieved; yet many preferred the Law and effectively rejected Jesus, or like the Galatians, accepted Him but then went to the Law. That shows how God carefully set up a potential, but people preferred not to make use of it. He prepared and put them through a course of education, if you like; but they didn't engage with it, didn't get it, and went their own ways.

*God sent His Son, born of a woman, born under the law-* The purpose for this was "that we might receive the adoption of sons" (:5). Paul has just explained in chapter 3 that by baptism into Christ, we are counted as Him. All that is true of Him becomes true of us; He was Abraham's seed, so are we. Paul is explaining how the heirs came to receive the inheritance. We became the full sons of God because God's Son was born and was human. As our representative, we can identify with Him by baptism (3:27-29) and thus become Him, as it were. Again note that the implication of the argument is that in some sense, we are "heirs", inheritors, in that we are those who have now received the inheritance. This does not preclude a future, literal receipt of the land inheritance; but we have received the spiritual blessings promised Abraham, which Acts 3:26 interprets as the turning away of our hearts from sin.

4:5 *That He might redeem those that were under the law-* To return "under the law" therefore makes the Lord's work vain (2:21). The Lord's death was primarily to save Israel, those under the law. This was the focus of His work; it was their general rejection of it which made the more universal aspect of His death more public, as it were.

*That we might receive the adoption of sons-* See on :4. Because He was human, of our nature, our representative, we can thereby be adopted as the sons of God- if we identify with Him. The proof this wonderful plan has been achieved is by the Spirit of adoption being sent forth into our hearts, whereby we are enabled to cry to God as 'Abba', 'daddy', just as God's only begotten Son did. The role of the Spirit is therefore crucial and cannot just be ignored or downplayed or manhandled to refer only to miraculous gifts in the first century. That is clearly not the reference here at all, for the Spirit is sent into our *hearts*.

4:6- see on Mk. 14:36; Rom. 8:15; Jude 20.

*And because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father-* Note this was said to the apostate Galatians. The work of God's Spirit was still active within them, and they were still to be treated as His beloved sons. Clearly at the point of commitment to Christ in baptism, the Spirit is sent into the heart of the believer; a psychological strengthening, enabling us to feel towards God as the Lord Jesus did, addressing Him as the Lord did: Abba, Father. This strange method of addressing God was characteristic of Jesus, and must've been very noticeable and provoked much wonder and comment. Thus we are being told that His characteristic personal style of relationship with the Father is now ours; and this is very much the idea of His discourse about the Comforter. See on 3:2.

4:7- see on Mt. 25:34.

*So you are no longer a slave but a son-* Paul is slightly stretching the bounds of the analogy here. He began by saying that we are heirs, but an heir who is a child is no better than a slave (:1). Now Paul is saying that under the Law of Moses, people were slaves. They had not received the inheritance promised by the Abrahamic covenant, even though it had been promised to them.

An advantage of reading versions that use “ye” and “thou” is that one can discern at a glance when ‘you’ plural and ‘you’ singular is being used. Gal. 3:26-29 speaks in the plural: “*Ye* are all the children of God by faith in Christ... and if *ye* be Christ’s [by baptism into Him], then are *ye* Abraham’s seed and heirs”. The very same ideas are then repeated a few verses later, but with the singular ‘you’: “And because *ye* are sons... wherefore *thou* art no more a servant but a son; and if a son [not ‘sons’], then an [singular] heir of God through Christ” (Gal. 4:6,7); and just to press the point home, he reverts to speaking of “you” [plural] in the subsequent verses. It’s as if Paul is talking generally, in the plural, of us all as a baptized community, heirs together of the promises, all in covenant relationship with God; but then he as it were swirls in upon us each individually; these promises really apply to us each one personally. And the outcome of this must be a deep seated joy and gratitude for God’s grace. The focus of Scripture and the Lord Jesus is upon individuals, not upon the building of a faceless and person-less social structure. Notice how often Paul talks of “you” or “ye”, and then focuses down to “thee” or “thou”- from the you plural to the you singular. Take Gal. 4:6,7: “Your [plural] hearts... thou [singular] art...”; or “Ye [plural] are all sons of God... thou art... a son” (Gal. 3:26; 4:7 RV). It all comes down to us personally...

*And if a son, then an heir of God through Christ-* We become legitimate heirs because the Lord Jesus was the "heir of all" (:1; Heb. 1:2), "heir of the world" (Rom. 4:13). Rom. 4:13,14 use the same language; it was the promise to Abraham which promised an inheritance. The Law of Moses didn't promise any inheritance. Another similarity with Romans is the idea of being an heir of God; He as our Father didn't die and thus pass us the inheritance; rather God decided to give us the inheritance after a period of preparing us, as we entered adulthood: "The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit, that we are children of God. And if children, then heirs- heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ. If so be that we suffer with him, that we may also be glorified with him". Here in Galatians, the same point is made- the receipt of the Spirit proves that we are God's children. Because we are identified with Christ's death, then we are joint-heirs with Him. Or as Galatians here puts it, we are heirs of God on account of Christ.

4:8 *However, at that time, not knowing God, you were in bondage to those that by nature are not gods-* This sounds as if Gentiles are being addressed. It's hard to decide to whom Paul is writing Galatians- whether to Gentile or Jewish Christians. Acts portrays Paul as going to cities in Galatia and preaching to Jews within the synagogue system. On that basis, we would assume that he is writing to Jewish Christians who are returning to the Law. This is why he speaks of how they have "turn[ed] back *again* to the weak and worthless elementary principles of the world, whose slaves you want to be *once more*" (:9). Likewise 5:1 "do not get entangled *again* in a yoke of bondage". The pronouns in 2:15 seem to connect Paul the Jew with a Jewish readership in Galatia: "*We* being Jews by nature and not sinners of the Gentiles... *we*...". On the other hand, the language here sounds as if the audience were once Gentiles; and in 5:2 he speaks as if they were being circumcised in order to be acceptable with God (although the Greek could mean that they were thinking that their circumcision

made them acceptable). However 6:12,13 definitely speaks of false teachers encouraging the Galatians to be circumcised: "who would force you to be circumcised... they desire to have you circumcised". Perhaps some were Jews, some Gentiles. Yet the argument seems to be that those under the Law, without faith in Christ, were not actually "knowing God" and were in bondage to false gods. This is far from the only place where Paul develops the paradox that Judaism is in fact a form of pagan idolatry (see on 3:1 and 4:25). At very least, Paul would be saying that the Gentiles amongst them, who had previously worshipped idols, were in the same position as Jews under the Law without Christ. However the kind of complex argument in 4:21 ff., using Biblical history as "law" and arguing in a strictly rabbinic style, makes us wonder whether the Galatian audience were in fact Jewish; for surely the power and nuances of the argument would be lost on any not highly familiar with the Jewish scriptures and style of Rabbinic reasoning; the references to desiring their circumcision in chapter 5 would then refer to desiring them to be circumcised in order to be saved.

Paul challenges the Galatians: "You who were enslaved to those who were not really gods... How can you turn back again to those weak and beggarly spirits (*stoicheia*), whose slaves you want to be once more?" (Gal. 4:8,9). Here he parallels demonic spirits with 'gods who are not really gods'. But note how Paul argues [under Divine inspiration] – "even if there are" such demons / idols... *for us* there is to be only one God whom we fear and worship. This in fact is a continuation of the Psalmists' attitude. Time and again the gods / idols of the pagan nations are addressed *as if they exist*, but are ordered to bow down in shame before Yahweh of Israel (Ps. 29:1,2,10; 97:7). Whether they exist or not becomes irrelevant before the fact that they are powerless before the one true God – and therefore it is He whom we should fear, trusting that He alone engages with our lives for our eternal good in the end. "Yahweh is a great King above all gods" (Ps. 95:3) shows the Divine style – rather than overly stressing that the gods / idols / demons don't exist, the one true God isn't so primitive. Neither were the authors and singers of Psalm 95. The greatness of His Kingship is what's focused upon – not the demerits and non-existence of other gods. To do so would be altogether too primitive for the one true God. And likewise with the Lord's miracles – God's gracious power to save was demonstrated, *this* was where the focus was; and its very magnitude shows the relative non-existence of 'demons'.

4:9- see on Gal. 1:1.

*But now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God-* This is not Paul as it were correcting himself. "Rather" would be better rendered 'moreso'. God's knowledge of us is what results in our responding by seeking to know Him. Likewise Paul writes in Phil. 3:12 of grabbing hold of the Lord who had grabbed hold of him. It's not that God plays hard to get, and whoever figures out His word correctly will find Him, hidden behind a mass of theology and interpretation which we must get right. God is in search of man. He knows / recognizes us, and we in turn know Him. Understanding this puts paid to all intellectual pride in having 'found' God by our own searching of the scriptures. The initiative was with Him. Paul considers that coming to believe in imputed righteousness, salvation by faith alone rather than by works of the Law, was and is "to know God". Justification by works and legalism is an attitude that does not know God. For God is His grace and salvation by that grace.

*How can you turn back again to the weak and worthless-* Literally, 'poverty stricken, poor'. Paul only elsewhere uses the word in Galatians for the Jewish poor (2:10).

*Elementary principles of the world-* The Greek for "elements" is always used concerning the elements of the Mosaic Law.

*Whose slaves you want to be-* There is a tendency in human nature to actually desire servitude. We see it most clearly in the tendency to addiction which there is in us all. But that is just a very public, open manifestation of what is latent within us each. The call to radical freedom in Christ is such that when people really see it, they shy away from it. The Galatians are a parade example for all time.

*Once more-* See on :8.

4:10 *You observe-* The Greek word used is not the most natural nor obvious one to use if Paul meant 'You are now keeping the Jewish feasts'. The word is elsewhere only translated 'watching' or 'looking towards', as if they were considering keeping the feasts. Paul himself kept some Jewish feasts, so we must read him as meaning that they were considering keeping them as a means to salvation.

*Days and months and seasons and years-* "Sabbatical years, occurring every seventh year. Not years of Jubilee, which had ceased to be celebrated after the time of Solomon".

4:11 *I am afraid I may have laboured over you in vain-* The implication is that any labour is in vain if it does not result in a person entering God's Kingdom. And Paul knew that attempting to enter the Kingdom by obedience was doomed to failure. But see on 4:17 *They zealously seek you*. We too are surrounded by believers who are not completely certain of their salvation, because they have not fully accepted total salvation by grace through faith in Christ. Our labour too must be to persuade them of that simple, all demanding message of the true Gospel- and keep them believing it.

Paul feared he may have "laboured in vain" for some of them, but he writes of his expectations in a totally positive way: "Christ hath redeemed us... that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ: that we might receive the promise of the Spirit [i.e. salvation]" (Gal. 3:13,14). "I am afraid of you (i.e. what your position will result in for both you and me at the judgment?), lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain" (Gal. 4:11).

4:12 *Brothers I urge you to become as I am, for I also have become as you-* "As I am" may mean 'One who once believed in the necessary to keep the Jewish laws, but who ditched it'; and "become as you" may mean 'Become effectively a Gentile, saved by faith in the Abrahamic covenant'. This assumes he is writing to a Gentile audience- see on :8. Paul aimed to become as his audience: "to those without law, I became as without law" (1 Cor. 9:21). God in Christ became as us, indeed even in OT times He limited Himself in some ways, to be as we are. And we reflect that spirit by seeking to become as others are, that we might win them to Christ. This means that preaching is infinitely more than holding out a set of doctrinal truths and waiting for some curious passer-by to grasp them from us.

The way Paul *begs* us to follow him (e.g. "become as I am") indicates the degree of confidence he had in acceptance by his Lord, his certainty that his way to the Kingdom was valid (Surely he had been told this by some Divine revelation?). See on Phil. 1:10 and Gal. 4:29 *Persecuted him that was born after the Spirit*.

Paul plays powerfully upon the idea of the two selves when he appeals to the Galatians "be as I am; for I am as you are" (Gal. 4:12). At first hearing, this seems nonsensical- how can Paul beseech the Galatians to be like him, if he was already like them? Fact is, their behaviour was unlike him; yet he saw their spiritual selves as being like him. And he asks them to be that spiritual self which he perceived them to have. We likewise need to perceive our difficult brethren as having a spiritual self, which they need to live up to.

*You did me no wrong-* The aorist means 'To date you did me no wrong- don't do so now [by returning to the Law]'.  
'

4:13 *You know it was because of a bodily ailment that I preached the gospel to you at first-* William Barclay comments: "Paul never saw a boat riding at anchor or moored at a quay but he wanted to board her and to preach the gospel to the lands beyond. He never saw a range of hills in the distance but he wanted to cross them and to preach the gospel to the lands beyond". When Paul was in Pamphylia, he decided to go on to Galatia, where on account of infirmity of the flesh he preached to the Galatians (Gal. 4:13). The suggestion has been made that the low-lying Pamphylia was a source of malaria, which may have been Paul's "thorn in the flesh", and he therefore sought the uplands of Galatia. And yet he could easily have returned to Antioch. But instead, he went on, up into the highlands, to spread the Gospel yet further. The way there led up precipitous roads to the plateau; the roads were cut by mountain streams, prone to flash floods which often carried travellers to their death. And these roads were the haunt of bandits, who would murder a man just for a copper coin. No wonder Mark went back. But as William Barclay observes, "the wonder is not so much that Mark went back as that Paul went on". Although a sick man, he was driven by that desire to spread the Gospel further. Surely this is why his Lord was so pleased to open the hearts of the Galatians to the Gospel. The way the Holy Spirit controlled Paul's missionary itineraries is an example of how mission work is almost purposefully made difficult at times. Thus Paul was forbidden to go north into Bithynia, and from going Southwest into coastal Asia Minor- and there were good roads leading to those places from where he was, and it would've seemed they were the logical places to go and expand the work of the Gospel. But instead Paul was told to go diagonally, cross country, through the rough roads and passes of central Asia Minor, to Troas- from where he was told to go to Macedonia. And on the way through that wild mountainous area, it seems Paul became sick. And we follow similar paths in our witness, if it is truly God directed.

4:14 *And though my condition was a trial to you, you did not scorn or despise me, but received me as a messenger of God, as Christ Jesus-* Perhaps it was a test in that like many today, people prefer their preacher to be dashing, handsome, healthy and successful. Not a sick man, through whom the very picture of the crucified Christ was placarded before their eyes (see on 3:1). It was by Paul's manifestation of the crucified Christ through his sickness that they were persuaded of Christ; and specifically, of salvation by faith rather than works. For Paul's sickness likely left him without the possibility of performing works for salvation.

4:15- see on 2 Cor. 12:7.

*Where then is that satisfaction you felt?-* Not a good translation. The word is translated "blessedness" elsewhere, and always in the context of the blessing promised to Abraham being that of imputed righteousness (Rom. 4:6,9). They no longer felt that blessedness

because they were seeking their justification by acts of obedience rather than faith alone. If we truly believe in the blessing promised to Abraham, and have received it, we too will speak of that blessedness as the Galatian converts did. Note that the blessings promised to Abraham had been received by them, the fulfilment of them is not solely and only in the future; see on 4:1.

*For I testify, that if possible, you would have plucked out your eyes and given them to me-* It was before the eyes of the Galatians that they saw in Paul, Jesus Christ crucified (Gal. 3:1). But the only other reference to the eyes of the Galatians is in Gal. 4:15- where we read that they had been so transfixed by Paul's preaching that they had been ready to pluck out their eyes. And where's the only other reference to plucking out eyes? It's in the Lord's teaching, where He says that if our eye offends us, we should pluck it out [Mt. 5:29- same Greek words used]. The connection is surely this: Paul's personal reflection of the crucified Jesus was so powerful, so compellingly real and credible, that it motivated his hearers to rise up to the spirit of the very hardest demands of the moral teaching of that same Jesus. Insofar as we genuinely live out the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus, our preaching of His radical moral demands will likewise be heeded. The crucified Christ that Paul placarded before their eyes was "the truth" (Gal. 3:1; 4:14-16); and the integrity and reality of that truth was confirmed by the congruence between the example of Paul, and the reality of the crucified Jesus whom he manifested to them. In Paul's body language, in his character, in his response to problems and frustrations great and small, in the way he coped with physical weakness, his audience somehow saw the crucified Christ. In the same letter, Paul reminds the Galatians how they had initially seen him preaching to them in a weak bodily state, and had seen Christ in him then (Gal. 4:13,14). He says in Gal. 3:1 that they saw Christ crucified in him. Perhaps the way Paul handled a sickness or bodily weakness which he then had, somehow reflected to his audience the spirit of Christ crucified.

4:16 *So then have I become your enemy, by telling you the truth?*- Society and human existence was all about what others thought of you; appearances were all important, loss of face before your community was a fate worse than death, and the honour of your family or community was crucial. You had to be polite, say what was right in the ears of your hearers rather than what was true, never shame those in your 'group' by telling inconvenient truths, say what the others want to hear. Against this background, and it's a background not so strange for any of us today in essence, the commands to be truthful, even if it meant becoming the enemy of some because you told the truth (Gal. 4:16), take on a new challenge.

Gal. 3:1 remonstrates with the Galatians as to how they could not obey the truth when the crucified Christ had been so clearly displayed to them; clearly Paul saw obedience to the truth as obedience to the implications of the cross. There is a powerful parallel in Gal. 4:16: I am your enemy because I tell you the truth... you are enemies of the cross of Christ. Thus the parallel is made between the cross and the truth. We are sanctified by the truth (Jn. 17:19); but our sanctification is through cleansing in the Lord's blood. The same word is used of our sanctification through that blood (Heb. 9:13; 10:29; 13:12). Perhaps this is why Dan. 8:11,12 seems to describe the altar as "the truth". The cross of Jesus is the ultimate truth. There we see humanity for what we really are; there we see the real effect of sin. Yet above all, there we see the glorious reality of the fact that a Man with our nature overcame sin, and through His sacrifice we really can be forgiven the untruth of all our sin; and thus have a real, concrete, definite hope of the life eternal.

4:17 *They zealously seek you for no good purpose. On the other hand, they desire to exclude you- so you might go running after them-* The GNB may have it about right in paraphrasing: "Those other people show a deep interest in you, but their intentions are not good. All they want is to separate you from me, so that you will have the same interest in them as they have in you". Thus zeal is no sign of acceptability with God. Paul talks of how he is 'zealous over' [s.w.] his converts (2 Cor. 11:2). But the Judaizers were likewise 'zealous over' the same converts. They were involved in a political tug of war, and the Judaizers won, despite all Paul's work for them. I have often been involved in this kind of thing, and seen others involved in it, and my conclusion is that we need to do our part and not get involved in feeling personally wronged or fought against. I wonder if Paul was not completely mature in his attitude to the conflict; he was so personally invested in it that he felt that his work had been "in vain" if his converts went to Judaism (see on :11). My impression however after these kinds of experiences is that finally, nothing is in vain, no service of the Lord can be looked back upon as purely wasted time. Yet Paul speaks like this because he was overly personally invested in the conflict.

4:18 *But it is good to be zealous in a good matter at all times, and not only when I am present with you-* Paul recognized that their enthusiasm was greater when he was with them. And he says this is no bad thing- but it must continue. Such inspiration by human personalities is therefore not to be totally despised; the problem is that such zeal tends not to continue once those personalities are off the scene. See on :20 *I so wish*.

4:19 *My little children, of whom I am again in the pains of childbirth-* See on :17. I do wonder whether this kind of figure suggests Paul was taking it all rather too personally; for the converts were not born out of him personally, but from the Lord. But then it is also true that the work of converting others is ultimately personal and involves intense personal engagement.

*Until Christ be formed in you-* The Galatians had not *per se* left Christianity; they had adopted a version of Christianity which trusted in works for salvation. Paul understands this as meaning that Christ is no longer within them. This is the scary thing, as we survey our surrounding Christian scene in which so few seem solidly persuaded that if the Lord returns today, they will surely be saved because of their faith in His grace. It is having "Christ in you" which is "the hope of glory", the guarantee that we shall eternally live with Him (Col. 1:27). Here in Galatians Paul has expressed that truth in terms of the Spirit of Christ being placed within the believer as a guarantee of salvation (4:6), what Eph. 1:13,14 calls sealing with the promised Holy Spirit as " a guarantee of our inheritance, of the final redemption". But the Galatians no longer had this, because they sought salvation not by the Spirit but by obedience to the letter.

4:20 *I so wish I could be present with you now and change my tone, for I am in doubt about you-* The idea is that Paul felt that if he were present with them, then he would be able to change his upbraiding tone towards them because he would successfully persuade them to remain with grace rather than Judaism (see GNB). As noted on :18, Paul knew that his presence with them affected them positively. But if physical presence is required, then there is no depth of conviction. So many examples from church life flood to mind; of those who lived highly committed lives until influential figures passed off the scene, and then the commitment ended. It is only personal connection with the Lord Jesus which will provide lasting motivation right up until our last mortal breath.

4:21 *Tell me, you that want to be under the law, do you not hear the law?*- This kind of complex argument which follows, using Biblical history as "law", makes us wonder whether the Galatian audience were in fact Jewish, for surely the power and nuances of the argument would be lost on any not highly familiar with the Jewish scriptures; the references to desiring their circumcision in chapter 5 would then refer to desiring them to be circumcised in order to be saved.

4:22 *For it is written that Abraham had two sons. One by the handmaid, and one by the freewoman*- The allegory, like all such methods of presenting, is presenting history selectively; although it is axiomatic that history of itself is selective. Abraham had far more than two sons; he had others by Keturah and other handmaids, indeed it could be argued that he had them before the birth of Isaac and Ishmael. But the two sons are chosen here for the purposes of the allegory.

4:23 *However the son by the handmaid was born after the flesh, but the son by the freewoman was born through the promise*- The usual NT contrast is between flesh and spirit. Here it is between flesh and promise, because the promise in view is that of the Spirit.

4:24 *Such things contain an allegory. For these women are two covenants. One from mount Sinai, bearing children to bondage, which is Hagar*- The two sons are presented as being a slave and a freeborn son. This connects with the previous argument in 4:7; that we are no longer slaves under the Law, but sons. The tension between bond and free has been introduced in 3:28; in Christ there is no longer bond and free. And that is because we are "in Christ" and thus are all the free born children, the Son of God as He was. The argument in 3:27-29 is not so much that it simply doesn't matter of what gender, ethnicity or social status we are. Those things don't matter because we are Christ; all of us are Him. Who He was and is becomes who we are. He is the freeborn Son of God; and so we are too. Therefore there is no difference between bond and free because we are all free, the freeborn sons of God.

4:25 *Now this Hagar represents mount Sinai in Arabia, she corresponds to the Jerusalem that now is; for she is in bondage with her children*- It can be argued that Paul's extended allegory in Gal. 4:24-31 about "Jerusalem which now is" has some reference to the Jewish Christian elders in Jerusalem who had made the deal with him about making the Gentile converts keep at least some of the Jewish laws. The heavenly Jerusalem which is "free" would then be a reference to the freedom Paul felt for his Gentile converts; and the persecution of those born after the spirit would then be a sideways reference to the trouble he was experiencing from the Jewish-Christian attacks upon him. Paul observes earlier that "I speak after the manner of men: Though it be but a man's covenant, yet when it hath been confirmed, no one maketh it void, or addeth thereto" (Gal. 3:15). His speaking humanly was perhaps because he was tongue in cheek alluding to the human covenant of Acts 15, to which he believed the Jewish Christian elders in Jerusalem had "added" by still demanding that Christian converts lived in a Jewish manner.

Paul's argument is that Judaism was to be associated with Hagar and Ishmael; whereas every Jew was insistent that they were from the line of Isaac. Again, Paul is arguing that Judaism is in fact paganism (see on 3:1 and 4:8).

4:26 *But the Jerusalem that is above is free, which is our mother*- The Jews believed that "as the navel is found at the centre of a human being, so the land of Israel is found at the centre of

the world... Jerusalem is the centre of the land of Israel, the temple is at centre of Jerusalem, the Holy of Holies is at the centre of the temple, the ark is at the centre of the Holy of Holies... which spot is the foundation of the world... the holy city... is also the mother city". This was all consciously countermanded in Hebrews, where each of these features of the temple is shown to have been surpassed in Christ; and it is the *Heavenly* Jerusalem which is now "the mother of us all" (Heb. 12:22; Gal. 4:26). And of course Gal. 4 drives home the point that it is the "Jerusalem which is above" which is the true Jerusalem, whereas the earthly Jerusalem and temple are in fact now to be associated with bondage and Abraham's illegitimate seed. This language of Hebrews and Galatians was just as tough on the Romans, who considered *Italia* as the "mother of all lands", and Rome to be the mother city. Paul's language was geared to provoke his readers to decide strongly one way or the other.

4:27 *For it is written: Rejoice, O barren one who did not bear; break forth and cry aloud, you who were not in labour! For the children of the desolate woman will be more than those of the one who has a husband-* Abraham's relationship with Hagar doesn't really sound like marriage. And yet she is called "the one who has a husband", as if God recognized the relationship even though it was less than ideal.

4:28 *Brothers: We, as Isaac was, are children of promise-* Note the warmth of the language. These "brothers" had chosen Judaism, and Paul has just told them that Christ must be formed in them again seeing they are devoid of the Spirit, not experiencing the promised "blessedness", and had effectively precluded themselves from salvation by seeking to achieve it by works. He felt his work for them had been in vain. And yet Paul now speaks of them as if they are saved, and his full brothers. Likewise he says that the Lord still ministers the Spirit to them and ministers amongst them (3:5). It could be argued that Paul's protestations about the Galatians were exaggerated and reflective of how he had become far too personally invested in them. Or it could be that as with the Corinthians, he accepts them as his brethren in Christ by status, assuming their salvation because it was not for him to condemn them; whilst at the same time openly facing their failures and addressing them.

4:29 *But as then, he that was born after the flesh-* Identifying Ishmael with the Judaizers and those who sought to obey the Mosaic Law was highly provocative. Their attempts at super righteousness were in fact effectively paganistic. See on 3:1 and 4:8.

*Persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, so also it is now-* Birth after the Spirit would refer to the Lord Jesus and all in Him. The language of persecuting naturally suggests what Paul himself had done to Him and those born after the Spirit. Hence he wishes the Galatians to make the same huge change which he had made (:12). Birth after the Spirit may well allude to Jn. 3:3-5. It is the Spirit which is used in our figurative conception. This is the vehicle through which God shows His grace, in beginning spiritual life in one but not another.

4:30 *However, what does the scripture say-* Sarah's screaming indignation can be well imagined. Consider which words were probably stressed most by her: "Cast out *this* bondwoman and her son: for the son of this bondwoman *shall not be heir* (just hear her voice!) with *my* son, even with *Isaac*" (Gen. 21:10). This is in harmony with her previous bitterness and aggression to Hagar and Abraham. Her attitude in implying that Ishmael was *not* the seed is gently rebuked by God in his subsequent words to Abraham concerning Ishmael: "He *is* thy seed" (Gen. 21:13). *And yet Sarah's* words are quoted in Gal. 4:30 as

inspired Scripture! Here we see the wonder of the God with whom we deal, in the way in which He patiently bore with Sarah and Abraham. He saw through her anger, her jealousy, the pent up bitterness of a lifetime, and he saw her faith. And he worked through that screaming, angry woman to be His prophet. According to Gal. 4:30, God Himself spoke through her in those words, outlining a principle which has been true over the generations; that the son of the slave must be cast out, and that there must always be conflict between him and the true seed. Sarah in her time of child-birth is likened to us all as we enter the Kingdom, full of joy (Is. 54:1-4); and yet at that time she was eaten up with pride and joy that she could now triumph over her rival. And yet Sarah at that time is seen from a righteous perspective, in that she is a type of us as we enter the Kingdom. God's mercy to Sarah and Abraham is repeated to us daily. See on Heb. 11:11.

*Cast out the handmaid and her son, for the son of the handmaid shall not inherit with the son of the freewoman-* Hinting at the need to eject the Judaist false teachers from within the church? Paul warns that the Galatian Jews had suffered so much but in vain, seeing they were returning to the Law (Gal. 3:4). It is no accident that Gal. 4:25 draws the contrast between the two Jerusalems- perhaps a reference to the Jerusalem ecclesia, who had returned to the bondage of the law, and the spiritual Jerusalem. And now Paul goes so far as to say that the Legalists must be cast out of the true ecclesia (Gal. 4:30). Circumcision shielded from persecution in Galatia (Gal. 6:12) in that it was the Jews and their "false brethren" who infiltrated the ecclesias (Gal. 2:4), and who were responsible for the deaths of many of the first century apostles and prophets. This suggests that the circumcision party within the ecclesias was linked with the Roman and Jewish authorities, and therefore 'satan' is a term used for them all. It got beyond dirty politics in the church.

Paul here quotes the bitchy, unspiritual words of Sarah in Gen. 21:10 with approval and as "scripture". God surely did not approve of her hot tempered nastiness; but He worked through that as we should see to work through others' sin and weakness, and try to incorporate it into a far greater narrative.

4:31 *Therefore brothers, we are not children of the handmaid but of the freewoman-* But Paul has been arguing that the Galatians were in fact "children of the handmaid". He is therefore asking them to be in practice what they were by status, having been baptized into Christ.

## CHAPTER 5

5:1- see on Gal. 5:11.

*For freedom did Christ set us free-* Romans 6 compares baptism to a change of masters. The point has been made that this is a reference to manumission, whereby a 'redeemer' gave a 'ransom' to a god, which meant that a slave was freed from his master and became a free man, although he was counted as a slave to the god to whom the redeemer had paid the ransom. Indeed, *lutron*, one of the words translated "ransom" with regard to the blood of Christ, has this specific meaning. Deissmann comments: "When anybody heard the Greek word *lutron*, "ransom", in the first century, it was natural for him to think of the purchase money for manumitting slaves". This means that when we come to understand the atonement, we understand that the price has been paid to free us from slavery into the service of God. We are in the position of a slave who suddenly discovers some gracious benefactor has made the longed for payment of ransom. And so he goes free, but is willingly and eagerly in slavery to the god to whom his redeemer had paid the price. In our case this is none other than the One, Almighty God of Israel. And the ransom is the precious blood of Christ, which thereby compels our willing slavery to the new Master. There are other references to manumission in Gal. 5:1,13 RV: "For freedom did Christ set us free... ye have been called unto freedom" and in the references to our being bought with a price, i.e. the blood of Jesus (1 Cor. 6:20; 7:23). And this is the horror of 2 Pet. 2:1- "denying even the Master that bought them [out]". To turn against their gracious redeemer was the ultimate sick act for a slave freed through manumission. And this is the horror of turning away from the Lord. The death of Christ for us is thereby a warning to us of the end of sin and therefore the need to change.

The world, Paul told the Romans, seeks to push us into its mould (Rom. 12:2 J.B. Phillips). And this is increasingly true, as people crowded together catch the same bus each day to arrive at roughly the same time, reading the same newspapers, watching the same soap operas... automatic lives. Yet the real self created in the believer is ultimately *free*. For freedom did Christ set us free. The new person, the essential you and me, is characterized by sudden, creative welling up to the Father's glory. This doesn't mean that we have no habits-regular prayer, Bible study, meeting together etc. are all part of the new person. This is why the elderly, the infirm, the chronically shy, experience the flowering of the person, the sense of new life even in the face of the outward man perishing daily; because their inward man, their real self, is being so strongly infused with power (2 Cor. 4:16). This explains why the graph of spiritual growth in any person is not a smooth upward curve; it is a very jagged line. Our true person asserts itself in those moments of totally free choice to serve our Lord. But we so easily allow our lives to slip back into the automatisms which define our internet personas.

The spirit of life in Christ sets us free from sin (Rom. 8:2); but Gal. 5:1 simply says that "Christ" has set us free [the same Greek phrase] from sin. The Man Christ Jesus is His "spirit of life"; the man and His way of life were in perfect congruence. They always were; for in Him the word was made flesh. There was 'truth' in His very person, in that the principles of the God of Truth were perfectly and totally lived out in His person and being. Back in 1964, Emil Brunner wrote a book, whose title speaks for itself: *Truth As Encounter*. Truth is essentially a person- the Lord Jesus. Truth is an experience, a way of life, a total assurance of forgiveness and salvation, a validation of the new man created within us, in a way so deep, and so strongly felt, that all else appears as falsehood compared to that surpassing 'truth'.

*Therefore, stand fast, and do not get entangled again in a yoke of bondage-* "Again" would suggest to me that the audience was largely Jewish; but see the discussion at 4:8. The allusion is to the "yoke" of life in Christ; Paul seems to be saying that we cannot wear two yokes. We cannot be saved by faith alone, and also by legal obedience.

*5:2 Behold, I Paul say to you: If you receive circumcision-* There is strong reason to think that Paul was writing to a Jewish readership; see on 4:8. So we may need to read in an ellipsis here: 'If you receive the idea that circumcision is required for salvation'. He certainly was not saying that 'circumcision' were not profited by Christ; he means that some attitude to circumcision would lead to not being profited by Christ. But it is equally credible that even Gentile converts to the free salvation in Christ would be tempted to accept Judaism and a mass of regulations. Because this puts salvation under question, and means that the response required of us is so much less. Whereas if we are saved by grace through faith, regardless of our obedience or disobedience ratio, then this is so wonderful that it requires our total response. Every part of our thinking and living becomes subservient to this driving passion of gratitude and joy.

*Christ will profit you nothing-* The argument of Galatians is also found in Romans, here at Rom. 2:25: "For circumcision indeed profits, if you be a doer ['keeper'] of the [whole] law". Here in Gal. 5:3, Paul likewise goes on to reason that relying on circumcision [obedience to one Mosaic law] requires obedience to the entire law. This is the danger of focusing on obedience to just one law; if we think obedience on one point is so critical for salvation, then we require ourselves to in fact keep the entire legal package. And that is the case to this day; salvation is offered either to those who keep the entire law of Moses, or to those who fall in faith upon Christ, believing we are in Him and saved by identification with Him alone. And yet it is a common tendency amongst believers to focus upon one particular act of obedience to commandment and turn this into a shibboleth issue. Be it women wearing head coverings or divorce and remarriage, the same mentality can be evidenced as regarding circumcision in the first century.

*5:3 Yes, I testify again to every man that receives circumcision, that he is a debtor to do the whole law-* God uses language differently to how we do because He can read motives. Paul and many other Jewish Christians were circumcised, but Paul is reasoning in the letter to the Galatians that the true Jewish believer was not under an obligation to keep the Law: "For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision" (Gal. 5:6). Therefore "every man that is circumcised" in Galatians 5:3 must mean 'every man who trusts in circumcision or wants to undergo it'. Some modern paraphrases support this, but the point is that what God actually said was that "every man that is circumcised... is a debtor to do the whole law" (see Greek text). Those words are just not true if taken out of context; we need to appreciate that God is speaking from the perspective of knowing men's motives. Paul doesn't mean that every circumcised man is a debtor to keep all the Law. He means that every man who is circumcised *in order to be saved* is a debtor to keep all the law.

5:4- see on Gal. 6:14.

*You are severed from Christ if you would be justified by the law! You are fallen away from grace-* Some texts read "Christ is become of no effect". Whichever reading is correct, the implications of attempting salvation by obedience are pretty severe. Christ's death was to no

purpose, He died in vain; or, in allusion to the Lord's parable of the vine in Jn. 15, we are severed from Christ because we have severed ourselves. This would come about by no longer believing that being "in Him" was important for salvation.

*5:5 For through the Spirit, by faith, we ourselves eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness-* The contrast is between the way of the Spirit by faith, and keeping the law- in order to attain "the hope of righteousness", a term allusive to a term used in Rabbinic Judaism for the reward of the obedient. Paul has explained that the Spirit is sent forth into the hearts of those who simply and totally believe the promise to Abraham of blessing and salvation (3:2; 4:6); indeed, the gift of the Spirit is itself one aspect of the blessing promised, it is the foretaste and guarantee of the future inheritance of the earth which has been promised (Eph. 1:14). "We ourselves" may be a reference to Paul and those with him. For the Galatians had stopped trusting in that gift of the Spirit, they had left off faith in God's grace and replaced it with attempts to attain "the hope" by their own works. This is why the Galatians were now not behaving well; their attempt to achieve salvation by works actually made them sin more. Hence Paul now goes on to talk about practical issues and the need to overcome sin by life in the Spirit rather than steel willed obedience. This more practical section of the letter is not at all divorced from the earlier argument about the crucial need to trust in the word of promise and be transformed by the Spirit- rather than seeking justification by works of obedience.

*5:6 For in Christ Jesus, neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything, but faith working through love-* Paul has argued in 3:27-29 that for those "in Christ" by baptism, gender, social status etc. mean nothing- because they have taken on His identity. The choice is between being completely obedient to the Mosaic Law- or faith in Christ. That faith operates through love. Love is the primary fruit of the Spirit (:22). If we go the path of faith in Christ alone [and there is no other option, because we have all failed to be totally obedient to the law]- then the Spirit operates in our hearts (3:2; 4:6). And the overall work of the Spirit is the fruit of love, in all its dimensions (:22). And so a path is set up: Faith- Receipt of the Spirit- Love. In this sense, faith operates through love.

Reading the Greek another way, "Faith is wrought by love" (Gal. 5:6 RVmg.) in that the fruits of the Spirit reinforce each other in an upward spiral. Faith leads to humility, and vice versa. Realizing we of ourselves are insufficient results in humility, which in turn develops faith. Hence Prov. 20:6 comments that a man of faith will not "proclaim his own goodness".

*5:7 You were running well. Who hindered you from obeying the truth?-* This suggests that obeying the Truth is not just in baptism; it is an ongoing motivation to keep running the race of practical life in Christ. See on 1 Pet. 1:22. "The truth" is used here for faith in the simplest, most fundamental truth- that the promised Kingdom of God really will be ours if we believe in Christ. All schemes of salvation by works are a form of not obeying the Truth.

*5:8 This persuasion came not from him that calls you-* The idea of having been called both by and to *grace* is quite a big theme with Paul (Gal. 1:6,15; 5:13). They had not been called to this legalism.

*5:9 A little leaven leavens the whole lump-* The problem in Galatia had been caused by a very small group ("the one who is troubling you", :10) or an apparently insignificant doctrine. But it was destroying the whole community; although this was because the idea of salvation by

works was so attractive. The Lord had spoken of the teaching of the Pharisees as "leaven" (Mk. 8:15). In the more immediate context, Paul may mean that once you demand legal obedience to one law, in this case circumcision, then this leads to a need for obedience to the entire Law. The idea being that small beginning has huge consequences.

*5:10 I have confidence in the Lord that you will take no other view than mine-* Paul is both despairing and confident about them within a chapter or so. We get the impression that he had over invested in them personally and was taking it all too personally. Hence he speaks here of them taking "no other view than mine", which sounds rather as if he has personalized the whole thing in a wrong way.

We can however read Paul's confidence as an imputing of righteousness to the Galatians, and recognizing their status in Christ. Recognizing others as being "in Christ" imparts an altogether higher quality to our relationships. The cynicism and negativity which we naturally bring to many inter-personal encounters is taken away by a deep recognition that our brethren are indeed in the Lord. Having noted that the Galatians did not any longer "believe the truth", Paul can say that he has "confidence to you-ward in the Lord" (Gal. 5:10 RV). Because they were "in the Lord", he could hope against all human indications, that they would indeed rise up to an imitation of the Lord in whom Paul believed them to be. And so we have to ask ourselves, whether we indeed have that "confidence" about others, because we know them to be "in the Lord"? Or do we judge them after the flesh...?

*And the one who is troubling you will bear the penalty, whoever he is-* This would imply that the whole Judaistic campaign in Galatia was led by one person, the little / small leaven which was influencing the whole lump. "Whoever he is" connects with the spirit of 2:6: "But from those who were reputed to be somewhat (whatever they were, it makes no matter to me, God does not accept man's person) they, I say, who were of repute added nothing to me". We could assume that the individual was of some respect within the churches of Galatia.

5:11- see on 1 Cor. 1:23; 9:17.

*But I brothers, if I still preach circumcision-* The more you read between the lines of Paul's letters, the more evident it is that his very own brethren almost unbelievably slandered him. Thus the Galatians whispered that Paul still preached circumcision (Gal. 5:11), probably basing that nasty rumour on the fact he had circumcised Timothy. See on 1 Tim. 5:19.

*Why am I still persecuted?-* Paul's persecution of Christians was done to him. This was not just Divine poetic justice for the sake of it; it was practically to enable him to understand those brethren whom he had killed and tortured, in order to prepare him for eternal fellowship with them in God's Kingdom.

*Then has the stumbling-block of the cross been done away-* The cross is described as a *skandalon*, an offence (Gal. 5:11). Either we stumble (are offended) on it, or we stumble and are offended in the sense of spiritually falling away. Either we share the Lord's cross, shedding our blood with His "outside the gate" of this world; or we will share the condemnation of those whose blood is to be shed in destruction outside the city (Rev. 14:20). It's Golgotha now, or later. The cross makes men stumble; either falling on that stone and being broken into humility, or the uncommitted stumbling at the huge demand which the cross implies. Paul had all this in mind when he wrote of the lust / affections of the flesh

(Gal. 5:24), using a word elsewhere translated "sufferings" in the context of Christ's cross. The sufferings, the lust, the cross of the flesh... or the cross of the Lord Jesus.

5:12 *I would that they that unsettle you-* A mild translation; the same word is used of how Paul had turned the Jewish world upside down by his preaching (Acts 17:6). We catch a sense here of how destabilizing all these arguments were; people had had their lives and world turned upside down by the Gospel, and were not having their new world turned upside down again by false teachers.

*Would even go beyond circumcision and emasculate themselves-* This contains a play on words which may seem quite inappropriate to us; so much so that many a Bible translator and expositor has had problems with it. The idea is that Paul wishes that the circumcision party would go further and fully emasculate themselves. This just isn't the way men would use language if they wrote the Bible uninspired by God. See on Lk. 17:37.

5:13- see on Jn. 8:32.

*For you, brothers, were called for freedom-* This goes back to the allegory of the two sons. We are children of the free woman. But whilst all men pay lip service to a love of freedom, very few really want it once presented with it. To believe we really are saved and shall be saved by grace when the Lord returns... and that great salvation is independent of our sins and obedience... this is the ultimate freedom, and we shall be granted that freedom in a more material sense when our natures are changed and we enter God's Kingdom at the Lord's return. The way the Galatians turned away from freedom is so instructive as to the real nature of human thought and essential preference.

*Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh-* No Greek word represents "use"; the idea is that the freedom to law which we are called to is not an opportunity for fleshly behaviour, but rather that freedom paradoxically ends up in service to others, because the work of the Spirit produces love as its summary fruit (5:22).

*But through love serve one another-* The Spirit produces love (:22), and that love is itself a motivating and activating power. Hence the GNB: "Let love make you serve one another".

5:14 *For the whole law is fulfilled in one word, in this: You shall love your neighbour as yourself-* Mt. 5:17 = Gal. 5:14. Christ fulfilled the Law by His supreme love of His neighbour (us) as Himself, by dying on the cross. That was where and how the Law was fulfilled. Paul is arguing that if we are in Christ, then all that is true of Him is true of us. So there is no need to try to keep the Mosaic Law. The Lord Jesus Himself doesn't keep it- because He fulfilled it. Paul's argument has been that those who believe in salvation by grace are given the Spirit, which has the supreme fruit of love (:22), which in practice makes us serve one another (:13). And by doing so, we fulfil the essence of the Law.

To love one's neighbour as oneself is to fulfil the law (Gal. 5:14; Rom. 13:10); and yet the Lord's death was the supreme fulfilment of it (Mt. 5:18; Col. 2:14). Here was the definition of love for one's neighbour. Not a passing politeness and occasional seasonal gift, whilst secretly and essentially living the life of self-love and self-care; but the love and the death of the cross, for His neighbours as for Himself. In Him, in His time of dying, we see the

definition of love, the fulfilment of the justice and unassuming kindness and thought for others which was taught in the Mosaic Law. And we through bearing one another's burdens, through bearing with their moral and intellectual and spiritual failures, must likewise fulfil the law, in a voluntary laying down of our lives for each other (Gal. 6:2). And in this, as with the Lord, will be our personal salvation.

The Old Covenant's command to love one's neighbour as oneself was in the context of life in Israel. One's "neighbour" referred to others belonging to the Covenant people; not to those in the 'world' of the surrounding nations. New Testament quotation of this command totally supports this view; under the New Covenant, we must love those *within the ecclesia* as we love ourselves (Gal. 5:14). 1 Cor. 6:1 (R.V.) speaks of brethren within the ecclesia as "neighbours". Again, this is not in itself proof that we should not give to (e.g.) famine relief. But it surely indicates that we are misguided in thinking that such action is fulfilling this command. However, there is copious evidence within the Law that Israel were to be considerate and concerned for the Gentile world around them. But there is no Biblical evidence that Israel preached a social Gospel to them.

*5:15 But if you bite and devour one another-* Since the Galatians left trusting in Christ for salvation and turned to their own works, they began biting and devouring each other. And so it is in legalistic, works based communities. Arguments arise about technicalities and the exact nature of obedience or disobedience; and because salvation is seen to depend upon these issues, the divisions are indeed bitter and passionate.

*Take care that you are not consumed by one another-* The unbelieving world will finally destroy themselves, brother against brother (Zech. 14:13). If we bite and devour each other, we may be consumed by each other (Gal. 5:15)- this is the same idea of brethren killing brethren, and the world killing itself. Israel were condemned to destruction by brother being dashed against brother (Jer. 13:14). Indeed, biting and devouring each other is a quotation from Is. 9:19,20 LXX (although not apparent in the AV), where Israel in their judgment for unfaithfulness would bite and devour each others' bodies in the siege. Paul is saying that if we bite and devour each other with our words (and we are all guilty of this at times), we are acting as the condemned. If we do this, we may well be consumed of each other- and this *may* have a terribly literal fulfilment, in that as the world destroys every man his neighbour in the confusion of the last day, so the rejected may do the same, living out the bigotry and passive anger they felt towards each other in their ecclesial life. This all needs some meditation. For there are very few of us not caught up in some division, personality clash, biting or devouring.

*5:16 But I say, walk by the Spirit and you shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh-* Having quit trusting in grace for salvation, the Galatians found that their flesh lusted against the spirit to the extent that they just couldn't do the things they knew they should and which obedience they now so desperately desired- because they were not led of the spirit, they were still under law (Gal. 5:18). They didn't have a spiritual way of life, instead they were just trying to keep certain specific commandments, and they found they just couldn't live a victorious spiritual life.

How to not sin is perhaps one of our most fundamental questions. The answer the legalists gave was: 'By obedience'. But that throws the question only a stage further back. How? Paul has said that if we really believe we will be saved, then we will be; and the promised

inheritance is by grace and not obedience to a set of laws. Those who believe this will give their whole lives in joy and response to that great salvation; they have no set of laws to follow, but the Spirit of Christ will be put into their hearts which leads them to "love", which outworks in lives of service to others. Thus they will lead lives 'walking by the Spirit', living life in that sphere of being and thinking; this is the way to not fulfil the lusts of the flesh. Those who try to battle each temptation in their own strength will find themselves torn by the conflicting desires and passions which destroy so many religious people and make them nothing less than neurotic. Joy and peace as promised by the Lord will just not be realized by them. The Galatians are really a parade example; they switched over to trying to defeat each lust and passion as it arose, without the help of the Spirit and without the assurance of being secured in Christ by grace. And they started to fail, miserably. The misery of their position is well described in :17.

*5:17 For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh. For these are contrary to each other. You may not do the things you would like to!- See on :16. I read this not so much as a global truth, true of all men; but more as a description of the Galatians' miserable, neurotic position. Hence talks here about "you" rather than "we"; whereas elsewhere in this letter he at times uses "we" in associating himself with a situation. They were unable to overcome the flesh because they were doing so in their own strength and had neglected the operation of the Spirit, which was given commensurate to a person's total surrender to and identification with Christ. The leading of the Spirit means that we are not under law- it's not a question of struggling with white knuckles against temptation; but rather of following the Spirit's leading. See on :24 *With the passions and the lusts-**

*5:18 But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law-* If we are not justified by obedience but by faith, then we have no law. *Sin per se* is not now something to be avoided or dodged by a steel will. But this doesn't mean we are free to act as we wish; the whole wonder of being certain that we are going to be in the Kingdom, and are at this moment acceptable with the Father and Son... this demands our all. We cannot be passive to such faith and hope.

The Greek word behind "led" doesn't so much mean that the Spirit goes ahead and we follow. The word is usually translated 'to be brought'. The Spirit brings us through to salvation- if we allow it. The word is used so often in Acts of Paul being 'brought' to various places; his ministry was truly one led by the Spirit. There are many connections between Galatians and Romans. Paul uses the word of how the grace of God leads us to repentance (Rom. 2:4), and of how those led by the Spirit are the sons of God (Rom. 8:14). This is the identical context to the argument here in Galatians. We who are God's sons in that we have identified with His begotten Son are given the Spirit in our hearts (Gal. 4:5). The gift of God's Spirit makes us part of the family, we think and act as do the Father and Son. The Lord Jesus was of our nature exactly so that He could bring / lead [s.w.] many sons unto glory (Heb. 2:10). The Lord's humanity was necessary so that we might be able to identify with Him. He as God's Son enables us to also be "sons".

The same contrast between the Spirit and the Law/flesh is seen in Rom. 8:2–3: “The Law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the Law (of Moses / sin) could not do...”. The Law indirectly encouraged the “works of the flesh” listed in Gal. 5:19–21, shown in practice by the Jews becoming more morally degenerate than even the Canaanite nations, and calling forth Paul’s expose of how renegade Israel were in Romans 1.

5:19 *Now the works of the flesh-* The Galatian fixation with works actually led them to do the works of the flesh. The greatest barrier against grace is our own psychology of works; our belief that even what is good about us, in our character and in our deeds, is a result of our own unaided effort. Not for nothing does Paul contrast the works of the flesh with the fruit of the Spirit in Gal. 5:19,23). As William Barclay noted: “A work is something which a man produces for himself; a fruit is something which is produced by a power which he does not possess. Man cannot make a fruit”. It’s because of this that works are so glorified in society; it’s why the elderly and weak are somehow despised because they’re not ‘productive’ of ‘works’. Grace therefore cuts right across the way our rationalistic society, whether Marxist or capitalist, worships productivity. Our tendency to value, indeed to worship, human works leads to great frustration with ourselves. Only by realizing the extent of grace can we become free from this. So many struggle with accepting unfulfilment- coping with loss, with the fact we didn’t make as good a job of something as we wanted, be it raising our kids or the website we work on or the book we write or the room we decorated... And as death approaches, this sense becomes stronger and more urgent. Young people tend to think that it’s only a matter of time before they sort it out and achieve. But that time never comes. It’s only by surrendering to grace, abandoning the trust in and glorying in our own works, that we can come to accept the uncompleted and unfulfilled in our lives, and to smile at those things and know that of course, I can never ‘do’ or achieve enough.

*Are manifest, which are these- fornication, uncleanness, sensuality-* The works of the flesh are already manifest- although they will be manifested again at the day of judgment (Lk. 8:17; 1 Cor. 3:13). The children of God and of the devil in the ecclesia are already manifest, in a sense (1 Jn. 3:10). See on Gal. 6:4. However it could be that Paul is saying that these works of the flesh were manifest, were now visible, amongst the Galatians since they had focused upon legal obedience rather than total faith in Christ's salvation. In chapter 3, he had argued that the Law entered in order to emphasize sin and drive sinners to a desire for participation in the promises to Abraham and the need for identification with the seed to whom those promises were made.

5:20 *Idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousies, wraths, factions, divisions, parties-* Gal. 5:20,21 lists anger and divisiveness along with adultery and witchcraft- as all being sins which will exclude from the Kingdom. Indeed, the list in Gal. 5:19,20 seems to be in progressive order, as if one sin leads to another, and the final folly is division between brethren. See on 1 Cor. 11:18. The focus upon works raises issues of obedience, disobedience and thereby the need for exact definition of Divine requirements. This all results in division between believers, unlike a following of the way of the Spirit.

5:21 *Envyings, drunkenness, revellings and such like. Of which I forewarn you now, even as I did previously forewarn you-* This would imply that Paul's earlier teaching of the Galatians included sober warnings about the list of moral issues contained here.

*That they who practise such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God-* The question was how to inherit the Kingdom, and Paul has been reasoning that the Law offered no inheritance; but the promises to Abraham did. And yet those who live in sin shall not inherit the Kingdom. The implication seemed to be that the Law and trusting in it actually leads to behaviour which will exclude from the Kingdom. And this fits with Paul's earlier argument in Galatians 3, that the Law was given in order to magnify sin and lead sincere people to abandon it for faith in Christ as the seed of Abraham.

5:22 *But the fruit of the Spirit is love-* It can be argued that the fruit of the Spirit is love, and the subsequent eight characteristics are the outworking of love. The Spirit is that given to believers upon acceptance of Christ (4:5). See the comments on 5:6 regarding how faith in Christ alone, rather than legal obedience, therefore works out through love. The role of the Spirit in Christian life is utterly fundamental, and it is a feature of legalistic groups that they place little emphasis on the gift of the Spirit. Typically the position amounts to: 'The miraculous gifts of the Spirit are not for today, therefore the Spirit plays no role, and we must get on and be obedient to law'. These positions go hand in hand- but according to Paul, they are close to a false Gospel; although it is true that the external miraculous manifestations of the Spirit are not seen in our age.

*Joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness-* The influence of continually hearing *God's* word should be that *our* words are likewise truthful and trustworthy. The fact that the Bible as God's word is true has implications for our own truthfulness. *Pistos* is listed as a fruit of the spirit in Gal. 5; but the idea it can carry is not so much of faith in the sense of belief, but of faithfulness, loyalty, reliability, utter dependability. If this is how God's words are to us, then this is how we and our words should be to others.

The description of love in 1 Cor. 13 are similar to the outline of the fruits of the Spirit here. These are all portraits of the man Christ Jesus. The clearest witness to Him "therefore consists in human life in which his image is reproduced". The connection with the total character of the Lord Jesus is because the Spirit we have been given is His Spirit (4:5), the power to become like Him.

5:23 *Meekness, self-control. Against such there is no law-* We are not under any law now (:18), telling us what to do; nor is there any law telling us what not to do. We are to wholeheartedly respond to the assurance of salvation. The way of living in and breathing in the Spirit is wholly positive. Such a life naturally takes up all our psychological energy so that there is no space left for temptation to have much power. This without doubt is how the Lord 'managed' to be sinless.

5:24 *And they that are of Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh-* Who in their own strength could say they have done this? Only those who have identified with Christ in baptism, so that with Paul they can say "I have been crucified with Christ" (2:20). The same language is used about our identity with Christ in baptism in Romans 6. This is only true by status; and we are to really believe the status that we have "in Christ".

*With the passions and the lusts of it-* In the same way as Jesus crucified the Law (Col. 2:14) by His death on the cross, so the early church should crucify the Law and the passions it generated by its specific denial of so many fleshly desires: "They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections (AV mg. "passions") and lusts". This seems to connect with Rom. 7:5: "When we were in the flesh the motions (same Greek word, 'affections' as in Gal. 5:24) of sins, which were by the Law, did work in our members". "When we were in the flesh" seems to refer to 'While we were under the Law'. For Paul implies he is no longer 'in the flesh', which he was if 'the flesh' only refers to human nature. The end of the law means that passions and lusts are ended with it- if we have identified with Him who ended the law. This would be further encouragement to read the description of the passionate struggle

between fleshly lusts and righteousness in :17 as speaking of how things were with the Galatians, rather than how things have to be for all believers.

*5:25 If we live by the Spirit-* The gift of the Spirit is not an overpowering force which forces us to obedience. We must allow it to work; clearly the Galatians had turned away from it, towards justification by their own strength.

*Let us also walk in step with the Spirit-* An allusion to Ezekiel's vision of the wheels of the cherubim on earth being in step with the Angel-cherubim above them. Our spirit bears witness with God's Spirit- we know that our way of life is in harmony with Him, our spirit is His, and thereby we know that we are His children and united with the eternal life and now eternal spirit of His Son (Rom. 8:16). The way of life we live in Christ is an eternal life, an eternal spirit; in this sense we are living the eternal life, the life we will eternally live. This is how crucially important it is to be living the truth as a way of life. Go through your life and see how you can construct this ambience within it.

*5:26 Let us not become vainglorious, provoking one another, envying one another-* It would seem that since seeking to be obedient to the Law as a basis for salvation, the Galatians were experiencing much inter-personal conflict- of the type which is commonly seen in legalistic Christian communities. See on :19 *Manifest*. Legal obedience provokes all manner of questions of interpretation and comparison with others; and it also engenders pride and vainglory. The way of the Spirit, of salvation by faith in grace, produces humility; and the proof of which way is right is seen in the characters produced in those who believe the two schools of thought. Jealousy, irritation, provocation etc. are the ideas carried by the various Greek words used here- and such are the fruits of communal legalism.

## CHAPTER 6

6:1 *Brothers, even if a man is caught in any sin-* The Greek literally refers to a fall; and the fall in view is the falling from faith in grace of 5:4.

*You who are spiritual-* Paul has been lamenting how the Galatians generally have left the way of the Spirit, granted to believers who have fallen upon Christ as Abraham's seed in faith alone. Paul seems to be advising the minority who remained faithful to that calling as to how they should deal with the many who were "at fault" in having rejected grace for legalism.

*Restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, looking to yourself-* "Restore" is elsewhere translated "perfect". God is at work to perfect or literally 'mend' His people (s.w. Heb. 13:21; 1 Pet. 5:10). But He does so through our efforts. Our attempts to restore others therefore have His full co-working behind us. Note that like the parable of the lost sheep, the assumption is made that we will be successful in the restoration. We are to approach all such attempts, difficult and awkward as they are, with the full hope that there will be a positive outcome.

*Lest you also be tempted-* Recognizing, in this context, that the temptation to legalism is every man's struggle. It's easy to forget this when dealing with legalistic brethren.

6:2 *Carry one another's burdens-* I have suggested on :1 that the particular fault or fall which is in view is the return to Jewish legalism. The demands of such legalism are called "burdens" in Mt. 23:4; Lk. 11:46 and particularly in this context Acts 15:28 "no greater burden". Those who were spiritual, led of the Spirit, were not themselves burdened; but they were to enter into the feelings of those who had burdened themselves with unnecessary burdens. This was the spirit of Paul when he wrote that to those under the law, he made himself as if under the law: "To them that are under the law, I became as one under the law (though I am not under the law), that I might gain those that are under the law" (1 Cor. 9:20). We wonder whether in fact Paul has in view Christians who had returned "under the law", for he has used that phrase about the Galatians in 5:18. It's too easy to shrug at the mental torments some get themselves into, thinking 'Well that's their problem'. It is, but we are to walk those burdened miles with them in order to restore them.

*And so fulfil the law of Christ-* If we understand 'the law of Christ' in the same sense as 'the law of Moses' then we have missed the crucial message that is in Christ; we have merely exchanged one legal code for another. His is a spirit of grace which specifically, legally demands nothing and yet by the same token demands our all. And so in all our living and thinking, we must constantly be asking 'What would Jesus do? Is this the way of God's Spirit? Is this how the law of love teaches me to act? '. To live the life of the Spirit, to construct in daily living an ambience of spiritual life, is therefore a binding law. Living according to the spirit / mind / example of Jesus will mean that we naturally find the answers to some of the practical dilemmas which may arise in our lives.

6:3 *For if a man thinks himself to be something when he is nothing, he deceives himself-* Paul has just warned at the end of chapter 5 about the vainglory which comes from legalistic obedience. The basis of salvation is that we realize that we are "nothing", and on that basis come to the Lord for justification by grace through faith alone, knowing we have no obedience to show. Even if we have obeyed some points, such as circumcision, if we have not always obeyed the entire law, then we are nothing. Paul applied the term to himself when arguing that although he has "nothing" yet he "possesses all things" (2 Cor. 6:10) - a

reference to the promises to Abraham and his seed, and the language he uses in Gal. 4:1 about our inheritance- the heir who has nothing in hand shall possess all things if he associates with the one true Heir, the Lord Jesus.

6:4 *But let each man test his own work*- In the context of arguing about works, Paul is inviting those who trust in works to put those works through the tests he has just spoken out in his argument about works. Whilst it may be hard to believe, this says that we can prove / test / judge our own works, and thus have rejoicing in ourselves. Although self-examination is fraught with problems, and even our conscience can be deceptive at times (1 Cor. 4:4), there is a sense in which we can judge / discern ourselves now. We can judge brethren and find them blameless (1 Tim. 3:10; Tit. 1:6,7)- all the language of the future judgment (1 Cor. 1:8; Col. 1:22). We cannot personally condemn them, but we can judge their behaviour against the judgments of God as revealed in the word. Some know the judgments of God against certain sins, and yet still do them, in the blindness of human nature (Rom. 1:32). Israel chose to be oblivious of what they well knew; there was no (awareness of) God's judgment in their way of life (Is. 59:8; Jer. 5:4) and therefore they lacked that innate sense of judgment to come which they ought to have had, as surely as the stork knows the coming time for her migration (Jer. 8:7). Judas knew in advance of judgment day that he was condemned (Mt. 27:3).

*And then shall he have his boasting in regard to himself alone, and not of his neighbour*- Perhaps this is sarcasm. Given his argument about the inadequacy of works, Paul may be saying that of course nobody can boast in their works. For at the end of chapter 5 he has criticized the vainglory of legalists in their few good works. The "boasting" later on in this chapter (6:13) was of the Judaist brethren. And Paul teaches against all such boasting: "But far be it for me to boast" (:14).

But the words are also capable of being read as a statement about how self-examination brings us face to face with our essential loneliness in a healthy way: "For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself. But let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another" (Gal. 6:2-4). It is possible to have rejoicing in ourselves alone when we know we have a clear conscience before the Father. But this can only come through being genuinely in touch with oneself; the person who is subsumed within an organization, who is totally co-dependent rather than an individual freely standing before the Father... such a person can never reach this level of self-knowledge. The N.I.V. says: "Then he can take pride in himself, without comparing himself to somebody else". We are treading a terrible tightrope here, between the deadly sin of pride on the one side, and the sin of devaluing our own God-formed personality on the other. Only a person in touch with him or herself can have the rejoicing or pride in one's clear conscience [cleansed, of course, by grace in Christ] of which Paul speaks here. Paul seems to have in mind the words of Job when he speaks of how he will in the very end behold God with his own eyes, "and not another" (Job 19:27).

Not only are we to perceive the value of others, but of ourselves too. Gal. 5:26; 6:4 RV make the point that we shouldn't be desirous of *vainglory*, but of "his glorying in regard of himself alone". Secured in Christ, justified in Him, we can even glory in who we are in His eyes. We can be so sure of His acceptance of us that there is such a thing as "the glorying of our hope" (Heb. 3:6)- all ours to explore and experience.

6:5 *For each man shall carry his own burden*- I have argued on :2 that the burdens in view are those of keeping the Jewish Law. Even if we try to walk with others on their burdened, legalistic road- we may not succeed. And finally they will have to carry their own burdens.

By our words we will be justified or condemned. The false prophets were judged according to their words: "Every man's word shall be his burden" at the day of Babylonian judgment (Jer. 23:36). Gal. 6:5 alludes here in saying that at the judgment, every man shall bear his own burden- i.e., that of his own words. And those words, in the context, would have been statements and demands concerning obedience to law. These positions will be cited back to me at the day of judgment.

6:6 *One who is taught the word must share all good things with the one who teaches*- It could be that Paul now addresses some practical issues in Galatia. However, he has urged them not to abandon him and to return to him personally, and to resist the influence of others who were trying to replace his influence. I have suggested throughout that perhaps he was taking it all rather too personally. It could be that this teaching is another example. He was the one who had taught them the word, as he had often reminded them throughout the letter. Perhaps he is hinting that they ought to be sending him material support, and indeed, they had a duty to do that. The "good things" would appear from :10 to be the 'good' of generosity to those in need, whether in the world or within the family of faith. By doing so, they would *de facto* be declaring their loyalty to him rather than some other unnamed individual who was seeking to have them as his disciples and to poison them against Paul (5:10).

If the "good things" refer to the things taught by the teacher, then we learn that even though some may be shepherds, they are still sheep; and they are leading others after the Lord Jesus, "the chief shepherd", not after themselves. And they should remember that Gal. 6:6 requires "him that is taught in the word" to share back his "good things", his knowledge in Christ, with his teacher. This is possibly the meaning behind the enigmatic Eph. 3:10- the converts of the church declare the wisdom of God to the 'principalities and powers in the heavenlies', phrases elsewhere used about the eldership of the church. The shepherd is to learn from his sheep- a concept totally out of step with the idea of leadership in 1st and 21st centuries alike.

6:7 *Be not deceived*- The natural connection is with the warning in :3 to the self-righteous, self-congratulatory Judaists not to deceive themselves- by thinking that a few acts of legal obedience such as circumcision were the way to salvation. Paul here uses the same word the Lord often uses in warning that in the last days, the believers must be careful not to be deceived; as if Paul saw the collapse in Christ-centered faith as a sign of His return. John uses the same word about the deceivers who were seducing his converts to return to Judaism (1 Jn. 2:26; 3:7). The "deceivers" are described as being "especially of the circumcision" (Tit. 1:10). This warning not to be deceived is similar to the message of :1- that those with the Spirit should seek to restore those who had turned to Judaism, but considering themselves lest they also be tempted (see notes there).

*God is not mocked*- To assume our obedience to commandment can save us is to mock God, connecting us with the Jews who mocked the Lord Jesus on the cross, at the very time He ended the Law and confirmed the new covenant of gracious salvation.

*For whatever a man sows, that shall he also reap*- Knowing the terror of the Lord at the judgment, knowing that Christ will come, Paul sought to use this to persuade men, such as

the believers at Corinth, to quit their sloppy attitude to God's Truth. Properly apprehending the reality of judgment to come makes us see the eye of the tiger, grasp the real issues of spiritual life, see the real essence of cross carrying Christianity. We will *believe* that whatever we sow, that we will reap; and we will therefore live accordingly. "*That*" shall he also reap is emphasized by the Greek. Those who trusted in works would reap what they had sowed- their few paltry works. Nothing more would be added; the Lord's all necessary righteousness would not be imputed to them, for they thought they didn't need it, like the man who entered the wedding without a provided garment.

*6:8 For he that sows to his own flesh-* We have noted throughout Galatians that Paul considers those now trusting in their own works to be effectively pagan, Ishmael's children rather than Isaac's; and children of the flesh (Gal. 4:29). Sowing to the flesh was by seeking justification through their own works. And they would reap the result of that at judgment day. 'Sowing to the flesh' is alluding to Eliphaz's description of Job in Job 4:8. Eliphaz interprets Job's downfall as an example of "they that plow iniquity, and sow wickedness, reap the same" (Job 4:8). The conscious connection between these passages shows that Job was seen as a type of the Jewish, self-righteous, often Judaist-influenced, members of the ecclesia. However, the same passage also has connections with Job 13:9, where Job accuses the friends of mocking God- Paul has just spoken of how the Judaizers were mocking God (:7). Gal. 6 is saying that those who show themselves to be outwardly wise (:3), "making a fair show in the flesh (constraining) you to be circumcised" (:12), are mocking God. Thus the sweet-talking Judaizers infiltrating the believers in Galatia correspond to both Job and the friends. Job learnt the lesson which all Judaists have to learn.

*Shall of the flesh reap corruption-* At the day of judgment, the faithful shall have their corruption swallowed up into incorruption (1 Cor. 15:42,50). But the rejected will not be changed- they will remain in "corruption", because they reaped exactly what they sowed. Which was their own works and their own effort to attain salvation. Significantly, Col. 2:22 uses the same word about how the Jewish commandments are to corrupt [AV "perish"]. This is where legal obedience ends up.

*But he that sows to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap eternal life-* As noted on :1, those who trusted in grace by faith and not works were filled with the Spirit. Trusting in the operation of the Spirit and not our own works is therefore 'sowing to the Spirit'. But the majority of New Testament references to "he that sows" are to the Lord Jesus as He features in the sower parable- nearly 40 such references! And it is He who will 'reap' at judgment day (Mt. 25:24,26), sending forth His reapers who are the Angels. The idea of reaping of the Spirit is a continuation of the connection with 1 Cor. 15:42-44, which speaks of the resurrection as corruption receiving incorruption, and the flesh being turned into Spirit. So the reference is to the Lord's work at the resurrection and judgment. Paul is cleverly changing the focus of the well known saying that a man reaps what he sows. Indeed, if a man sows to the flesh by trusting in his own works, he will reap corruption. But the Lord Jesus sows to the Spirit, and those who respond to the Spirit He gives will be reaped by Him unto eternal life. Thus the true believer in Christ will not be doing works thinking that a reward will be received for them at judgment day. Rather are we to allow and follow the work of the Spirit, the sowing of the sower, the Lord Jesus; and He shall reap us into life eternal.

*6:9 And let us not be weary in doing well-* Paul is balancing his position by emphasizing that he is not at all teaching that we should not do works. Those works, however, are motivated by

a response to the great and saving grace we have been shown. The Galatians had grown weary of the great response to grace; and had preferred therefore to seek justification by works, for that actually demands less "doing well".

*For in due season-* At the day of judgment. We have noted the allusions to 1 Cor. 15, which presents that as the time of reaping and incorruption. See on :10 *As we have opportunity*.

*We shall reap, if we do not give up-* We as well as the Lord Jesus shall reap (see on :8 *But he that sows to the Spirit*). The problem was that the Galatians were indeed 'giving up'. They were giving up their understanding of salvation by faith without works, and instead going for salvation by works. But their well doing, their good works, were in fact decreasing! They were giving up sowing to the Spirit! This is such a powerful point. Those who are truly grateful for salvation by grace alone will respond far more enthusiastically than those who think their good deeds can secure their salvation. The same Greek word for "give up" is used in Heb. 12:3 about the Hebrew believers who were also returning to the Law likewise being tempted to 'give up' or "faint".

6:10 *So then, as we have opportunity-* This is the same word *kairos* that has just been used in :9 regarding the "due season" or time when we shall reap what we sowed. And that day is the future day of judgment. But each "opportunity" or "time" is in fact judgment day for us. For in essence, judgment is now.

*Let us work that which is good toward all men-* Paul is not saying 'Don't work! You don't need to, under grace!'. Rather he is urging belief in the wonder of salvation without works of obedience, knowing that belief in this will result in a life and heart being totally gripped for Christ. No way can we be passive to it. And we will indeed work what is good for all men. The "good" is to be connected with the "good things" of :6; see note there.

*And especially toward those that are in the family of the faith-* The believers generally belonged to house churches, which were part of the *patria* of God (Eph. 3:15). They belonged to another household, a household which they perceived by faith- the household of faith. No wonder Celsus complained that Christianity led its followers into rebellion against the heads of households. Doubtless he was exaggerating, but the idea of having another head of house, another *patria*, was indeed obnoxious to a slave owning society. This is why the language of slavery permeates so much of the New Testament letters; for according to Christianity's critics, it was largely a slave, female religion to start with. And of course, the unity between slave women and free women in the house churches was amazing; it cut across all accepted social boundaries of separation. The *Martyrdom Of Perpetua And Felicitas* tells the story of how a Christian mistress (Perpetua) and a slave girl (Felicitas) are thrown together into the nets to be devoured by wild animals, standing together as they faced death. This was the kind of unity which converted the world. There was to be now the "household of faith", with people from all the 'other' groups now to be accepted as 'brother' and 'sister', which meant denying the natural ties to your family in the way that surrounding society expected- for to them, loyalty had to be to family above all else. Denying this and putting our bonding with Christ and *His* family first was indeed equivalent to self-crucifixion (Mk. 8:34).

6:11- see on 2 Cor. 12:7.

*See with what large letters I am writing to you with my own hand-* Apparently a reference to Paul's poor eyesight, and the fact he had written the entire letter himself rather than through a scribe, as he wrote some other letters. He mentions this because he has reminded them of how they wanted to pluck out their eyes and given them to him (4:15). He has reminded them of that in the hope that such an appeal to personal history together might provoke their loyalty to him once again, and they would accept his rebuke and return to faith in Christ. I have noted several times in these notes that Paul's approach to the Galatians seems to me rather too high pressure, as if he had overly invested in them personally to such an extent that he was willing to apply all manner of pressure to bring them back to his fold of influence. Maybe I'm being too hard on Paul, but the obvious observation is surely that they ought to be following Jesus and the word of God rather than Paul personally. Yet he is certainly here making a personal tug at heartstrings over issues which concern life and death, and deeply personal decisions about what we shall base our faith upon- law or grace. And these issues can only finally be decided between a person and their God, rather than as a function of their human relationship to a preacher.

6:12- see on Gal. 4:30.

*It is those who want to make a good showing in the flesh who would force you to be circumcised-* I suggested on 4:8 that this might mean 'To trust in circumcision'; for there are several references to the Galatians *returning* to Judaism, as if the audience was largely comprised of Jewish Christians. Paul began his letter by using this same Greek word translated "forced" in complaining that Peter had forced Gentile converts to live as the Jews; and noting that when Titus had visited the Jerusalem ecclesia, he had not been forced to be circumcised (2:3,14).

*And only in order that they may not be persecuted for the cross of Christ-* This suggests that those applying the pressure were already within the Christian movement, who were feeling keenly the abhorrence of "the cross of Christ" which was felt by both Jews and Gentiles.

6:13 *For not even they who receive circumcision do themselves fully keep the law-* This recalls Paul's argument in chapter 5 that circumcision is only one of the whole package of Laws; without completely obeying the entire Law, those under the Law would be condemned.

*But they desire to have you circumcised so they can boast about you-* This suggests that the 'boasting' about works in :4 is being said sarcastically. Salvation by works of obedience breeds pride and boasting; and such mindsets and communities typically place much boasting on how many others they have converted to their position. That was the situation in the Galatian churches.

6:14 *But far be it for me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ-* Paul's encouragement of some to boast in their works in :4 is therefore surely sarcasm. The connection with :4 suggests that Paul felt he had no works to boast about; rather he would only boast in what Christ has done for Him. This is similar to the spirit of :8; where the man who sows his works and reaps them is contrasted not with the man who sows spiritual works and reaps them- but with the Jesus who sows and reaps. It's not about us- it's all about Him.

*Through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world-* Another reference to his co-crucifixion with Christ in baptism (2:20). We are therefore crucified to the world because that is what Christ was. "The world" in the context of :13 could refer to the need humans feel to be acting well in the eyes of the world; the pride of life which is part of "all that is in the world". Paul says he was not interested in how he looked to the world, and whether his belief in the cross of Christ made him look obnoxious and led to persecution (:12). Because he was hanging there with Christ, identified with Him, and crucified thereby in the eyes of the world as Christ had been. And thereby likewise the world, the desire to be seen as smart and acceptable by our world, had been crucified to Paul.

The Lord's death was *so that* He might deliver us from this present evil world (Gal. 1:4); because of the Lord's crucifixion, Paul saw himself as crucified unto the world, and the world unto him (Gal. 6:14). The Lord Jesus looked out across the no man's land between the stake and the crowd; He faced the world which crucified Him. We simply *cannot* side with them. To not separate from them is to make the cross in vain for us; for He died to deliver us out of this present world. The pull of the world is insidious; and only sober reflection upon the cross will finally deliver us from it. It's a terrifying thought, that we can make the power of the cross invalid. It really is so, for Paul warned that preaching the Gospel with wisdom of words would make "the cross of Christ... of none effect" (1 Cor. 1:17). The effect of the cross, the power of it to save, is limited in its extent by our manner of preaching of it. And we can make "Christ", i.e. His cross, of "none effect" by trusting to our works rather than accepting the gracious salvation which He achieved (Gal. 5:4).

The life of self-crucifixion, daily carrying a stake of wood to the place where we will be nailed to it and left to die a tortuous death...day by day living in the intensity of a criminal's 'last walk' to his death; how radical and how demanding this really is can easily be lost upon us. And it can be overlooked how totally unacceptable was the idea of dying on a cross in the context of the first century. In Roman thought, the cross was something shocking; the very word 'cross' was repugnant to them. It was something only for slaves. Consider the following writings from the period.

- Cicero wrote: "The very word 'cross' should be far removed not only from the person of a Roman citizen but from his thoughts, his eyes and his ears. For it is not only the actual occurrence of these things or the endurance of them, but... the very mention of them, that is unworthy of a Roman citizen and a free man... your honours [i.e. Roman citizenship] protect a man from... the *terror of the cross*".

- Seneca the Elder in the *Controversiae* records where a master's daughter marries a slave, and she is described as having become related to *cruciarum*, 'the crucified'. Thus 'the crucified' was used by metonymy for slaves. The father of the girl is taunted: "If you want to find your son-in-law's relatives, **go to the cross**". It is hard for us to appreciate how slaves were seen as less than human in that society. There was a stigma and revulsion attached to the cross.

- Juvenal in his *6th Satire* records how a wife ordered her husband: "Crucify this slave". "But what crime worthy of death has he committed?" asks the husband, "no delay can be too long when a man's life is at stake". She replies: "What a fool you are! Do you call a slave a man?". The sense of shame attached to the cross was also there in Jewish perception of it. Whoever was hung on a tree was seen as having been cursed by God (Dt. 21:23). Justin Martyr, in *Dialogue with Trypho*, records Trypho (who was a Jew) objecting to Christianity: "We are aware that the Christ must suffer... but that he had to be *crucified*, that he had to die a death of such shame and dishonour- a death cursed by the Law- prove this to us, for we are totally unable to receive it". Justin Martyr in his *Apology* further records: "They say that our

madness consists in the fact that we place a *crucified* man in second place after the eternal God". The Romans also mocked the idea of following a crucified man. One caricature shows a crucified person with an ass's head. The ass was a symbol of servitude [note how the Lord rode into Jerusalem on an ass]. The caption sarcastically says: "Alexamenos worships God".

Yet with this background, "the preaching of the cross" won many converts in the first century. "The Jews require a sign and the Greeks [Gentiles, e.g. Romans] seek after wisdom: But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness" (1 Cor. 1:22,23). Paul exalts that Christ "became obedient to death- even death on a cross!" (Phil. 2:8 NIV). Those brethren and sisters must have endured countless taunts, and many times must have reflected about changing their message. But the historical reality of the crucifixion, the eternal and weighty importance of the doctrine of the atonement, as we might express it today... this was of itself an imperative to preach it. We cannot change our message because it is apparently unattractive. The NT suggests that the cross was not just something shocking and terrible, but a victory, a triumph over sin and death which should be gloried in and thereby preached to the world in joy and hope (Gal. 6:14). We may look at the world around us and decide that really, there is no way at all our message will convert anyone. We are preaching something so radically different from their world-view. But the preaching of a crucified King and Saviour in the first century was just as radical- and that world was turned upside down by that message! People *are* potentially willing to respond, even though in the stream of faces waiting for transport or passing along a busy street, we might not think so. It will be our simple and unashamed witness which will be used by the Father to convert them; we needn't worry about making our message acceptable to them. There was nothing acceptable in the message of the cross in the first century- it was bizarre, repulsive and obnoxious. But the fact men and women gave their lives to take it throughout the known world shows the power of conviction which it has. And that same power is in the Gospel which we possess. If we believe it rather than merely know it, we will do the same with it.

6:15 *For neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything. What counts is being a new creation-* This seems to parallel 5:6 "For in Christ Jesus, neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything, but faith working through love". Paul's argument so far has been: Faith rather than works results in an identification with the Lord Jesus as the seed of Abraham; for to him were the promises of salvation made, and not through the Law. That faith and identification with Christ is confirmed by the Spirit being sent forth into our hearts (4:5), which results in love as the fruit of the Spirit (5:22). In that way, faith works through love. The parallel to that is that "what counts is being a new creation"; in other words, being created as Christ, being created as a Son of God as Jesus was, with His spirit whereby we also cry out "Abba, Father" just as He did. So the new creation in view is that we are created to be as Christ. Hence if any man is *in Christ* he is a new creation (2 Cor. 5:17). The language of "new creation" need not call up ideas of planets and a new cosmos. The new person created is Christ. Hence "the rule" of the new creation (:16) is another way of saying "the law of Christ". The Lord Jesus is "the image of every [new] creation" (Col. 1:15); we are made / created like Him, by the agency of the Spirit. He is thus "the beginning of the creation of God" (Rev. 3:14). Hence the Gospel was preached to "every creation" (Col. 1:23), i.e. every convert. No "creation" is not open to the scrutiny of God's Word in Christ (Heb. 4:13). Clearly, "creation" was a title for believers in the early church, so common was this idea.

6:16 *And as for all who walk by this rule, peace and mercy be upon them-* See on :15. The fact we are new creations, that we are Christ, should be the *rule* by which we live. The reality

that we are new beings means that we have to learn how to live all over again. The same word is used in Phil. 3:16: "Let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing"; and Paul's great theme in Philippians is that we should take on the mind of Christ. The "same thing" we should "mind" is the mind of Christ. The rule of Christian life therefore is to be Christ, to have His mind. Christ-mindedness is therefore the rule of life in Him. To have His Spirit, which is freely given to those who believe (4:5) is therefore utterly central and critical to the Christian life.

*And upon the Israel of God-* Paul clearly saw natural Israel as not "of God".

6:17 *From now on, let no one cause me further trouble-* The reason for this is that Paul is connected with the sufferings of Christ. Those who trouble him are doing so to the crucified Christ and will suffer accordingly.

*For I bear-* This connects with the theme developed earlier in the chapter; the same word is used about bearing the burdens of legalistic obedience (:2,5- see notes there). The same word is also significantly used in Acts 15:10 about being unable to bear the burdens of the Law. Paul's parting shot is therefore that he does not bear the burden of needing to be obedient to the Law, a heavy yoke which nobody was able to bear. Instead He bears the cross of Jesus and is co-crucified with Him. And this is the whole contrast; bearing the burdens of needing to perform and be obedient to laws- or bearing the cross of Jesus through identification with Him.

*Branded on my body the marks of Jesus-* All through his life and witness, Paul was aware of how he had rebelled against his Lord. He wrote that he bore in his body the marks of the Lord Jesus. He seems to be alluding to the practice of branding runaway slaves who had been caught with the letter F in their forehead, for *fugitivus*. His whole thinking was dominated by this awareness that like Jonah he had sought to run, and yet had by grace been received into his Master's service. Paul could conclude by saying that he bore in his body [perhaps an idiom for his life, cp. the 'broken body' of the Lord we remember] the *stigmata* of the Lord Jesus. He was so clearly a slave belonging to the Lord Jesus that it was as if one could see the marks of the nails in his body. Hence all the connections Paul makes in his letters between the suffering servant / slave prophecies, and his own experience. Paul has come over throughout his letter as self-assured, confident he is in the right and others are in the wrong, clearly and persuasively arguing for faith in Christ's cross as the only way to salvation. But he closes in a very appropriate way; by again asserting that indeed his life is totally tied up in the living and dying of his Lord, but within that same statement, admitting that he had and did in a way seek to avoid it.

6:18 *Brothers, may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen-* Paul has argued throughout that those who throw themselves upon the Lord's grace will be given His spirit. His Spirit, His mind and thinking and feeling, thus becomes ours. And he concludes by wishing this to ever be, that we might have a spirit continually awed by our Lord's grace.