



THE BOOK OF GALATIANS

Mike Glover



INTRODUCTION

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This gives us an idea of how quickly apostasy to legal justification can set into a church, as well as how persistent the teachers of such a doctrine can be. They were persistent and bold enough to walk right in behind the teaching of the apostle Paul on grace.

There is another consideration concerning the date of writing that might better enhance our understanding of the letter. Some people believe the letter was written in 48 A.D. or 49 A.D., or possibly immediately after the Jerusalem meeting in Acts 15, when Paul received word concerning the great influence of the Judaizing teachers in the Galatian churches.

If this is true, then the influence of legal justification entered the churches immediately after the establishment of the church in southern Galatia by Paul and Barnabas on Paul's first missionary journey, Acts 13-14. That might explain the unconverted character of those who came immediately out of legalistic Judaism into the fellowship of the church. This may also explain why Paul is so stern in this letter, for Judaizing teachers had come from Judea and were taking advantage of newborn babies in the Lord. Wolves had entered the flock before he could return to strengthen them in the faith.

If the letter was written immediately after their conversion, then we can understand that what Paul is teaching in this letter must be taught to new converts.

And so, the letter of Galatians is basically Paul's defence of the very foundation upon which the church is based. It's an urgent message to the early church because God knew that legalism would destroy the church in its very beginning.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The Greek name 'Galatia' refers to 'the land of the Gauls'. The region is enclosed in Asia Minor or modern-day Turkey. The area of Galatia was originally settled by the Gauls, who broke away from the main tribal groups of the Gauls in central Europe around 278 B.C.

The Romans subdued the Gauls in 189 B.C. and 25 B.C., and Augustus, Caesar of Rome, formed the area of Galatia into a Roman province. This meant that the Romans took over the principal positions of government and ruled in the province. At the time of Antiochus the Great, many Jews had moved into the Galatian area.

By the time of Paul's preaching, Judaism had really spread throughout the region and greatly influenced the culture. Paul preached in this area on his first, second and third missionary journeys, and Peter probably preached in this area after his stay in Antioch of Syria.

All the way through this letter, Paul is going to be dealing with the problem of legalism. And when it comes to the problem of legalism, Paul is going to get fighting mad, [Galatians 2:14](#) / [Galatians 5:11-12](#).

Paul is going to get fighting mad with these Jewish legalisers who were insisting that the Gentile Christians still need to observe the law and be circumcised, [Acts 15:1](#). Paul is going to remind us that a Jesus plus anything Gospel is not a Gospel at all.

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Salutation. Galatians 1:1-5
The Sanctity of the Gospel. Galatians 1:6-2:21
Freedom from the Law. Galatians 3-4
Life in the Spirit. Galatians 5:1-6:10
Closing Thoughts. Galatians 6:11-18

CHAPTER 1

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THE TEXT

“Paul, an apostle—sent not from men nor by a man, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead—and all the brothers and sisters with me, to the churches in Galatia.” Galatians 1:1-2

Paul begins by reminding his readers of the authority he has as an apostle, and he’s saying that his apostleship equals him in responsibility and authority with the original twelve apostles who were personally called by Jesus during His earthly ministry, [Galatians 1:1](#).

He’s going to remind them again of this later in this same chapter, [Galatians 1:11-12](#). In other words, Paul had the same authority as the twelve because he was called and sent out personally by Jesus, [Galatians 1:1](#).

He didn’t have the qualifications of an apostle as we find in [Acts 1:21-22](#), but he still fulfilled the qualifications of being an apostle by the personal calling of Jesus.

Remember to whom Paul was sent, Paul was a Christ-sent apostle, especially called for a mission to the Gentiles, [Acts 9:15](#). Christ sent Paul especially to preach the Gospel to all men, but especially to the Gentiles.

There were Christians in Galatia who were also claiming to have the authority of an apostle, and as we go through this letter, we’re going to see Paul defending his apostleship. He reminds them of what is at the very heart of the Gospel message, ‘Jesus rose from the dead’, [Galatians 1:1](#).

The very first Gospel message delivered to the Jews by Peter contained the heart of the Christian message, [Acts 2:22-24](#). Paul reminds us that he preached the same Gospel message as Peter did and says it’s really important to remember this message.

We need to try to understand the importance of the Gospel message; it’s not just about the death and burial of Jesus, it’s about His resurrection, [1 Corinthians 15:1-4](#). Paul understood that without this resurrection, Christianity has no real foundation that would distinguish it from other religions of the world.

Note that Paul writes to the ‘churches in Galatia’, [Galatians 1:2](#), which implies there was more than one congregation of God’s people in that region, [Acts 13:13-14:23](#) / [Acts 16:6](#) / [Acts 18:23](#).

Constable, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The churches of Galatia were probably the churches in the southern Roman province of Galatia (Iconium, Lystra, Derbe) rather than those in northern ethnic Galatia.’

Morris, in his commentary, says the following.

‘It is clear that Paul intended his words to have a wide circulation in the region of Galatia. The letter would be taken to each centre and read there, or several copies would be made, and one taken to each church.’

“Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself for our sins to rescue us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen”.

Galatians 1:3-5

After asserting his apostleship, Paul now writes a common greeting where he desired that God’s blessing of salvation by grace would bring inward contentment, Numbers 6:24-26.

Barclay, in his commentary, says the following.

‘When Paul prays for grace on his friends, it is as if he said, ‘May the beauty of the wonder of the undeserved love of God be on you, so that it will make your life lovely too.’

And because he’s about to deal with a legalistic problem, he’s gently reminding them that God’s grace brings peace between God and man, Galatians 1:3. It’s by the grace of God that sin is forgiven, and since there can be no peace between God and man as long as sin reigns in our lives, we’re all certainly in need of God’s grace.

There is also the sense that Paul is reminding these legalisers that grace or salvation can never be obtained by good works or by keeping the law, which is one of the main problems in trying to work for our salvation by keeping certain laws.

If salvation is based on our own merit, it never really brings peace of mind, simply because we never know if we’ve done enough. But for those who trust in the grace of God, they have peace of mind. Why? Because they trust in God and not in themselves.

They understand they can never do enough to earn their salvation; they understand that Jesus did more than enough for them at Calvary. That’s why Paul says that ‘the Lord Jesus Christ gave himself’, Galatians 1:4 / John 3:16. It was God’s eternal purpose and will that Jesus be offered as an atoning sacrifice for the sins of men, 1 Timothy 1:15.

This is a significant statement that Paul is beginning with here in the Galatian letter because this is what he’s going to build his argument upon against the legalisers. Paul is saying that all Christians are saved by the atonement of Jesus on the cross, not by our meritorious deeds and works of the law, Ephesians 1:3-6.

The words ‘rescue us’, Galatians 1:4, are the Greek word ‘exaireo’, and it means to actively tear out. And so, what Paul is saying is, because of the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ, Christians are torn out by obedient faith from this dark, wicked world in which we live.

Morris, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Throughout the epistle, Paul points the Galatians to the centrality of the cross. He cannot wait to make this plain, and we find a reference to it in his very first sentence.’

And who do we give the glory to? All glory must go to God, the Father, Galatians 1:4-5. The glory doesn’t go to the church or the preacher; the church and the preacher must give all the glory to God, Galatians 6:13 / Ephesians 2:8-9. Legalism promotes self-righteousness, but for those of us who understand that they’re saved by grace, they will always give the glory to God for saving them, Luke 18:4 / 2 Corinthians 9:15.

The legalist will always see the worst in other people, especially among their own brethren. This is why Paul gets fighting mad when Christians demand they’re right before God based upon the things that they do or the things they don’t do.

We need to be on our guard against anyone preaching a Jesus plus Gospel. A Jesus plus Gospel says, ‘you have to come to worship’, ‘you have to study the Bible’, or ‘you have to do good deeds’. A Jesus plus Gospel puts demands in place where God has put no such demands.

A Jesus plus Gospel demands that we change our lives, our thinking, or our attitude. And so, it comes up with a bunch of rules and regulations to make sure you keep in line with the other legalists.

Legalism says, ‘God will love us if we change,’ but the Gospel says, ‘God will change us because He loves us.’ The power to change isn’t within ourselves; it’s in the Gospel.

We worship God because we want to, we study His word because we want to, and we do good deeds because we want to. And the reason we want to is because of Christ’s coming into this world to die for each of us and give us the hope of eternal life with Him in heaven.

Rules and regulations can change people on the outside and force them to do certain things or stay away from certain things, but rules and regulations can’t change people’s hearts, [Ezekiel 36:26-27](#) / [Ephesians 1:18-23](#).

Paul says that God draws us into circumstances that require us to relate to Him through faith, trust, and complete dependence on Him. This ever-increasing state of faith, trust, and dependence comes from our hearts.

By trusting in and depending on God, and not trusting in the limited, temporal resources of the world, others, or myself, we shed the old, dead skin off our sinful nature.

This shedding process allows Christ to renew our minds through the increased presence of His Spirit, whom we are making room for in our hearts of trust and dependence.

In other words, we choose to live the way God wants us to live. We choose to come and worship Him as He asks of us, and we choose to study His word because we know we’ll draw closer to Him.

We choose to do good deeds because that’s what Jesus did, and we know that God gets pleasure when we do these things, [1 John 4:15-19](#). Just before Jesus’ final breath on the cross, His dying words recorded in [John 19:30](#) were, ‘It is finished.’ Everything to do with our sins was dealt with at the cross.

I’m sure you notice that there is no message of thanksgiving to the Galatians as Paul normally does, [Romans 1:8-15](#) / [1 Corinthians 1:4-9](#) / [Philippians 1:3-11](#) / [Colossians 1:3-8](#) / [1 Thessalonians 1:2-10](#). The lack of thanksgiving highlights the seriousness of the problem in the Galatian churches.

NO OTHER GOSPEL

“I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you to live in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel—which is really no gospel at all. Evidently, some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ.” Galatians 1:6-7

Paul expresses great astonishment and surprise about how quickly the Galatians have deserted the true Gospel, [Galatians 1:6](#). It’s almost as if Paul can’t believe what he’s heard; they’ve not long become Christians and left Judaism, and now they want to mix Judaism with Christianity. No wonder he’s going to rebuke them later, [Galatians 3:1](#).

Remember, this church was only a few years old, and Paul is amazed at how quickly they are accepting this legalistic teaching from these Judaizers, [Galatians 1:6](#). And so, Paul is trying to shock them into realising that there is a huge difference between what they are accepting and the truth of grace he had told them about.

He says they were slowly but surely turning away from the truth, and he’s writing to them to stop them from turning away from the freedom they had literally just gained in Christ, [Galatians 1:6](#). These Judaizers were presenting these Christians with a legalistic religion, and Paul was having none of it.

He deals with this kind of legalistic mindset over in Colossians, too, Colossians 2:20-23. Paul says this kind of legalistic religion looks good, sounds good, but all it does is appeal to man and his outward performance of religion, Galatians 4:8-10.

Now, this mindset, this outward performance of religion, isn't anything new; Jesus had to deal with it, Matthew 23:6-7. There is something appealing about this kind of religion, and these religionists like to create a religion that appeals to the carnal desires of men to walk ceremoniously before others.

But the problem is that it has rules and regulations in place that God hadn't stipulated. And all this religion produces is an atmosphere of judgmentalism, where we end up judging ourselves and others, not by God's standards but by our brethren's standards, Galatians 6:13-14.

In other words, because of the appeal of this different Gospel, the Galatians were chasing after what could be measured by sight and not measured by faith, Galatians 1:2. They were deceived into thinking that the performance of codes was the road to spiritual growth.

But what was it they were running from? They were running from their calling; they were running from the grace of Christ. The very thing which could save them, they were running from, and Paul knew that these legalisers were actually attacking the grace of God.

Eight times Paul uses the word 'grace' throughout this letter, and it means 'unmerited love' from God, and so, they are running from their calling; they were running from the grace of Christ.

But what exactly was it they were running towards? Paul says, 'another Gospel', Galatians 1:7. The Greek word 'heteros', which is used here, is sometimes translated as the word 'different'. And the reason this Gospel was different was that it was counterfeit, it wasn't the real deal, it was fake.

Guthrie, in his commentary, says the following.

'The modern church has become less clear about the nature of the gospel, but it would do well to ponder the importance that Paul here attaches to distinctions between the true and false gospel.'

Remember these Judaizing teachers were actually preaching the Gospel that Paul taught in reference to the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus, 1 Corinthians 15:1-4.

The problem was that they were teaching a Jesus plus Gospel. They were adding requirements to the grace of God, which in effect said that what Jesus did wasn't enough.

What Paul is saying to the Galatians is that if anything is added to or taken away from the message he first preached to them, Romans 1:16, then you need to know it's a counterfeit Gospel.

Any legalistic system of religion not only destroys the fellowship of the church and the spirituality of the believers but also destroys our relationship with God, Galatians 5:4.

Notice Paul didn't name those who were causing so much confusion, Galatians 1:7. We don't know their names, but we do know what they were doing. These people were causing tension in the church with their additions to the one true Gospel, Acts 15:1.

These teachers hadn't yet succeeded in completely leading the church astray, but Paul knew there was a real danger of that happening, Galatians 4:17. What was happening was that these false teachers were causing trouble by binding on the church those things God had never bound. Paul says they 'are perverting the true Gospel', Galatians 1:7, which means they were changing the Gospel into a legal system of justification.

When anyone adds to God's redemption of man by His grace, they are going beyond what God requires for salvation, 2 John 9-10. They are going beyond the teaching of Christ, and those who bind where God hasn't bound have gone beyond the freedom that we have in Christ, Galatians 5:1.

The legalist is working in order to earn or merit their reward, which is based on their performance of the law. The grace-centred Christian does good works and tries to please God because they know they are saved by grace, 1 Corinthians 15:10.

“But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let them be under God’s curse! As we have already said, so now I say again: If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let them be under God’s curse!” Galatians 1:8-9

There’s no mistaking how serious Paul is concerning this matter. He says, ‘Let me tell you something, if any heavenly being preaches anything which isn’t in line with what he taught, then God help them’, Galatians 1:8.

The word ‘curse’, Galatians 1:9, is interesting; in Greek, it is the word ‘anathema’, and it means to ‘ban’ or ‘excommunicate’, Deuteronomy 27. But Paul takes the meaning even further; he’s talking about total destruction, 2 Thessalonians 1:8-9.

Paul is saying that these Judaizers will suffer because they are denying the all-sufficient atonement of the cross that came by the grace of God. And he’s so serious about anyone perverting the Gospel that he tells them twice what will be their outcome, Galatians 1:8-9.

“Am I now trying to win the approval of human beings, or of God? Or am I trying to please people? If I were still trying to please people, I would not be a servant of Christ.” Galatians 1:10

Paul very quickly contests those who were accusing him of seeking the favour of human beings by preaching those things that pleased men. In other words, Paul was telling them the truth, which is something he will remind them of again later, Galatians 4:15.

Paul is not preaching in order to escape the persecution of those Judaizing teachers; he understood all too well what persecution was all about, and he was on the receiving end of it many times. But he also understood that these legalistic brethren were trying to avoid persecution, Galatians 6:12.

These unbelieving Jews followed Paul from city to city, making plots to stir up the audience against him or plots to kill him, Acts 14:19. And if Paul were preaching to please men, then he certainly wouldn’t have been enduring this constant persecution.

Paul is describing people here who profess Christ but their lives are denying what their lips are confessing, Philippians 3:18-19. He calls them enemies of the cross. Why?

Because they are walking in a way that denies the priority of pursuing Christ-likeness. Paul says here in Galatians that if he were preaching to please people, he wouldn’t be a true servant of Christ, Galatians 1:10.

If we’re not serving the one true God who gave us the one True Gospel, then it may be because we haven’t heard the True Gospel, 1 Corinthians 15:1-4. Anyone who presents a different Gospel from the Gospel we were taught, and obeyed, a Gospel that says, ‘we can be saved through trusting Jesus, but we have to do something else to merit our salvation’.

PAUL CALLED BY GOD

“I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that the gospel I preached is not of human origin. I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it; rather, I received it by revelation from Jesus Christ.” Galatians 1:11-12

Many people have been accused of many things, and the apostle Paul was no exception. The Jews, time and time again, accused Paul of not being a true apostle, and so, time and time again, Paul had to defend his apostleship, 2 Corinthians 11-13.

When it comes to legalism and legalists, they always use the same tactics, and very often they will deny God's authority in order to promote their own authority. And if they can't discredit the message we're preaching, they will try to discredit us, but when we're preaching truth, no one can argue.

These Judaizers were questioning Paul and his apostleship, and when they failed, they went on to try and discredit Paul the Christian. And so, Paul says, 'listen, my message to you was not invented by men, I didn't receive it from any man, and it wasn't taught to me by men'.

In other words, the Gospel Paul preached wasn't the invention of Paul or any man, Galatians 1:11. It wasn't the accumulated theology of men who put together their ideas to formulate religious teaching.

Morris, in his commentary, says the following.

'Paul makes a play on words when he refers to 'the gospel that I gospelled to you.'

And Paul says, contrary to what these Judaizing teachers were doing, Paul preached what was revealed to Him from God, Galatians 1:12. The true Gospel didn't originate from the oral proclamation of myths and fables, doctrines and teachings of Jewish rabbis or storytellers. It was revealed from God to man through Jesus and the apostles.

The true Gospel came to Paul through a direct revelation from God, Galatians 1:12. The word 'revelation' is the Greek word 'apokalupsis', and it means an 'uncovering, a removal of the veil, a disclosure of what was previously unknown'.

In other words, the Gospel was previously unknown to Paul until God unveiled it directly to him. And so, for Paul, this revelation 'began with Jesus' personal revelation to him on the road to Damascus, Acts 9:3-8, and it continued as more truth was revealed to Paul, possibly while he was in Arabia, Galatians 1:17.

Yes, the Galatian letter was written by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, but it contains no new revelations to the Galatians. The Galatians had been taught the revelation Paul had received concerning the truth of the Gospel, Romans 10:14-15. And through Paul, the Holy Spirit is now rebuking them not to forsake what they already know.

"For you have heard of my previous way of life in Judaism, how intensely I persecuted the church of God and tried to destroy it. I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my own age among my people and was extremely zealous for the traditions of my fathers. But when God, who set me apart from my mother's womb and called me by his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son in me so that I might preach him among the Gentiles, my immediate response was not to consult any human being. I did not go up to Jerusalem to see those who were apostles before I was, but I went into Arabia. Later, I returned to Damascus." Galatians 1:13-17

Paul's former way of life was a life in the Jewish religion, and remember when the church was first established in Jerusalem and Judea, Paul's way of life was to destroy the church, Galatians 1:13 / Acts 8:1-3 / Acts 9:1-2. And so, Paul's former way of life was something he wasn't proud of, but with the Gospel comes power, the power to change lives.

And it was through divine intervention that Paul's former way of life changed. His sincerity and the Gospel took him from being the persecutor to becoming the persecuted. He understood that the power of the Gospel can change people's lives, 1 Timothy 1:15.

By the time of the coming of Jesus and the establishment of the early church, the Jews had moved away from the true faith that was based on the law of the Old Testament.

With the addition of Jewish religious traditions, the Jews thought that their covenant relationship with God was based on the conditions that they had created after their own traditions.

And so, when the church was established, a new confrontation came on the scene. The confrontation was between those of the legal works-oriented religion of Judaism and those who trusted in God through faith.

It was those of the Jewish religion who put Jesus on the cross and persecuted the Christians who had accepted the grace of God through faith. The Jews of Judaism persecuted the Jews who were sons of God by faith, Galatians 3:26-29. The Jews who were sons of God by faith were considered liberal by the Jews who were in the bondage of their own religious institutions.

Paul came from in terms of his Jewishness; Paul says he was advancing. He was excelling way beyond his peers in learning the religious customs and laws of the Jewish religion, Galatians 1:14 / Philippians 3:5-6.

Like many Jews of his time, he was fanatical about maintaining the purity of Judaism and his growth in this religious system, Acts 9:1-2. Not anyone could just walk in and see the high priest and ask for letters; Paul was respected enough to be able to speak to the people in authority.

In other words, when Paul is writing to these Galatians, he's telling them, 'Listen, I know what I'm talking about.' In contrast to the two commands of Christ, to love God with everything you've got and love your neighbour as yourself, Matthew 22:37-39.

The Pharisees had developed a system of six hundred and thirteen laws, three hundred and sixty-five negative commands and two hundred and forty-eight positive laws. By the time Christ came, it had produced a heartless, cold, and arrogant brand of righteousness, Matthew 5:20.

Accountability to God was replaced by accountability to men. These laws reduced a person's ability to personally discern, and they created a judgmental spirit.

The Pharisees had confused personal preferences with divine law. Their law was full of inconsistencies, and they created a false standard of righteousness. It became a burden to the Jews, and it was strictly external, and Paul says, 'I've been there, I've done that, I've got the graduation papers to prove it.'

But he also says he repented of that way of life a long time ago. He repented from following a religion that had been formed after the traditions of men, a religion that assumed that obedience to the law in and of itself would justify a person before God.

Even though Paul worked hard, even though he was driven by the legal obedience of the law to get to where he was in Judaism. He says he works even harder now, not because he has to but because he's driven by grace, 1 Corinthians 15:10.

In Galatians 1:15-16, Paul is saying my life has been transformed so much that it could only happen by the fact that he had a divine encounter with the Lord Jesus.

His conversion was the result of the direct hand of God, and the change in Paul's life wasn't the result of his work. God knew what He was going to do with Paul before he was even born.

Remember that predestination isn't God taking over man's will; predestination is God determining certain things to occur ahead of time. When we read our Bible, we read about 'predestination', but it's always in relation to works that God has prepared in advance.

Paul had a choice, and he could have declined God's plan, but God never predestines anyone for salvation. And so, Paul says the Father specifically and uniquely revealed Jesus to Paul in order to call him to his apostleship for the Gentiles, Acts 9:20-22.

His call was the work of God, not man; it was by grace, not by Paul's work, 2 Corinthians 4:6. Paul's argument here was to confirm the divine origin of his message.

He was not, like the Judaizing teachers, promoting a man-made system of religion that was invented and broadcast by a group of teachers who demanded conformity to a system of belief.

Since God had directly revealed what he preached, he did not need to conform to the whims of those who sought to bind where God had not bound. And to prove his point, Paul says that he went to Arabia, Galatians 1:17.

If Paul had confided immediately with those in Jerusalem, then there would be the accusation that he received his appointment from either the apostles or false brethren who were influential Judaizers in Jerusalem, [Acts 9:22-23](#) / [Galatians 2:4](#).

But the point is, Paul was kept by God from the influence of the Jewish-oriented church in Jerusalem, by going to Arabia, [Galatians 1:17](#). He didn't go to Jerusalem until three years after his conversion, during which time he was already preaching the Gospel of grace.

We aren't told what part of Arabia he went to, or exactly why he went, and we don't know how long he stayed in the actual region of Arabia. It's possible that he went there for personal solitude and consultation with God.

The point is that Paul wants the Galatian brethren to know that he isn't proclaiming an invented religion after the traditions of men, as is the case with the former religion of Judaism that he promoted.

Lyttelton, in his commentary, says the following.

'[Galatians 1:11-17](#) constitute one of six New Testament passages that describe Paul's conversion and calling, [Acts 9:1-7](#) / [Acts 22:6-10](#) / [Acts 26:12-16](#) / [1 Corinthians 9:1-2](#) / [1 Corinthians 15:3-11](#).'

"Then after three years, I went up to Jerusalem to get acquainted with Cephas and stayed with him fifteen days. I saw none of the other apostles—only James, the Lord's brother. I assure you before God that what I am writing you is no lie. Then I went to Syria and Cilicia". [Galatians 1:18-21](#)

Paul isn't promoting a Jewish-influenced Christianity of Jerusalem. After his time of conversion, three years later, Paul went to Jerusalem, [Galatians 1:18](#). Paul's purpose for going to Jerusalem wasn't to be instructed in the truth of the Gospel. He went to become acquainted with Peter or Cephas, as the NIV has it, [Galatians 1:18](#).

He visited Jerusalem for fifteen days and moved freely in the city, boldly preaching and disputing with the Hellenist Jews, [Galatians 1:18](#) / [Acts 9:28-29](#). The Hellenist Jews were converts among the Jews who had returned to Judea after having lived abroad in the Greek world, and still spoke Greek and had adopted Greek cultural elements, [Acts 6:1](#).

Paul says that whilst he was in Jerusalem, he saw no other apostles except the Lord's physical brother James, [Galatians 1:19](#). And notice what Paul says here, he says, 'What I am writing you is no lie,' [Galatians 1:20](#). Paul wants to make it very clear that he wasn't commissioned by the Christ-sent apostles or any other man; he was sent forth directly by God. Paul wants the Galatians to clearly understand that what he has taught and what he was teaching didn't originate from any influence from Jerusalem, [Galatians 2:13-14](#).

And he wants to stop the influence of those who are moving among the churches in an effort to destroy the young churches through their system of legalistic religion.

And so, when Paul returned to his homeland on this occasion, he certainly didn't keep silent about what he had experienced during the three years in Damascus and Arabia.

Some believe that he stayed in the area of Cilicia and Tarsus for five to seven years, [Galatians 1:21](#), but again, we simply don't know how long he stayed there.

But we do know that he went back to his home country in order to announce to friends and family the grace of God that had now been poured out on mankind from a cross outside Jerusalem. It may be that while Paul was in Cilicia, he didn't comprehend the extent of his commission to the Gentiles.

But whatever the reason, Barnabas went to get him and bring him to Antioch of Syria, [Acts 11:25-26](#). Paul may have been unaware of the tremendous growth of the Gentile church in Antioch.

And so, Barnabas took him to a church that reminded Paul of the great things God was doing among the Gentiles. And it was from this church that Paul would be sent forth to the Gentile world, a mission he had received about ten years before in the city of Damascus.

“I was personally unknown to the churches of Judea that are in Christ. They only heard the report: “The man who formerly persecuted us is now preaching the faith he once tried to destroy.” And they praised God because of me.”
Galatians 1:22-24

Paul was well-known for his persecution against the Lord’s church, Acts 9:1-2, but he wasn’t personally known by face to the members of the church in the area of Judea outside the city of Jerusalem, Galatians 1:22. And if anything, at least they now know that Paul is preaching ‘the faith’, Galatians 1:23. He’s not just preaching any old kind of faith but ‘the faith’, Jude 3.

Here was a man who was going places in Judaism and had a great reputation as a Jew. Here was a man who was so misguidedly zealous for the Lord, to the point where he went all over the place to find Christians and persecute them. He went from being a legalistic Jew to becoming a grace-centred Christian. No wonder the brethren in Judea praised God for Paul, Galatians 1:24.

CHAPTER 2

INTRODUCTION

“Then after fourteen years, I went up again to Jerusalem, this time with Barnabas. I took Titus along also. I went in response to a revelation and, meeting privately with those esteemed as leaders, I presented to them the gospel that I preach among the Gentiles. I wanted to be sure I was not running and had not been running my race in vain. Yet not even Titus, who was with me, was compelled to be circumcised, even though he was a Greek”. Galatians 2:1-3

PAUL ACCEPTED BY THE APOSTLES

After defending his apostleship, and everyone praised God for Paul’s conversion, Paul now goes on to speak about the time he went up to Jerusalem. Paul made several trips to Jerusalem after his conversion.

In Acts 9:26-30 and Galatians 1:18, we find that Paul went there to meet the apostles. In Acts 11:27-30, we find Paul taking famine relief to Judea. In Acts 15, he attended the Jerusalem meeting when the church dealt with the matter of legalism.

In Acts 18:22, Paul greeted the church after the second missionary journey. In Acts 21:15-23, Paul made a last evangelistic effort after the third missionary journey.

And when Paul mentions he went to Jerusalem ‘again’ here in Galatians 2:1, I believe he’s referring to Acts 15, because it’s in Acts 15, we find the occasion when the church met to deal with the threat of the Judaizing teachers. In Judea, there’s a bunch of men talking about circumcision, and what they’re saying is that no one can be saved unless they’re circumcised, Acts 15:1.

Paul and Barnabas don't agree and decide to head to Jerusalem to take up the topic with the twelve apostles and elders to get their opinion, [Acts 15:2-3](#). Some of the Christians there say that male converts need to be circumcised because a follower of Jesus still has to follow the laws of Moses, [Acts 15:5](#).

Peter stands up and tells everyone that God is good with the Gentiles, [Acts 15:7](#). If He wants to give them the Holy Spirit, He will, despite what the Jews think of the Gentiles, [Acts 15:8-9](#).

Paul and Barnabas agree and tell all kinds of stories about how faithful and Spirit-filled the new Gentile Christians are, [Acts 15:12](#). James also tells everyone that he agrees with Peter, and he decides that there are only a few things Gentiles need to avoid, [Acts 15:13](#).

They shouldn't worship idols, have sex outside of marriage, eat any animal that hasn't been ritually slaughtered, or drink animal blood, [Acts 15:19-20](#). And so, after some debate, the apostles write up a letter that Paul and Barnabas will circulate to the Gentile believers and in Antioch, everyone is glad to hear the news, [Acts 15:22-31](#).

And that's what's happening, and that's what Paul is dealing with in this chapter. He's referring to that very meeting that was held in Jerusalem.

He's dealing with the legalistic Judaizers who were saying you have to believe in Jesus for salvation, but you also need to be circumcised and follow the Law of Moses, [Acts 15:1](#).

Notice he also mentions that he took Barnabas with him, [Galatians 2:1](#). Barnabas, whose name means 'the son of encouragement', which was exactly that, an encouragement, [Acts 4:36-37](#) / [Acts 11:22](#).

He personally went with Paul to many places, and he was his travelling companion on some of his missionary journeys. Barnabas literally was an encouragement to Paul and all the saints he helped and worked with, and we still remember him today for his encouragement.

Paul says that not only was Barnabas with him, but Titus was with him too, [Galatians 2:1](#) / [2 Corinthians 2:13](#) / [2 Corinthians 8:23](#) / [Titus 1:4](#). Titus was possibly one of the converts from the Antioch of Syria church, since this is the first time we see him in the company of Paul.

We know that Paul wrote a letter to Titus, and since Paul and Barnabas returned from the first journey to Antioch, we know that Titus, this Gentile believer, accompanied Paul to Jerusalem for the meeting of [Acts 15](#).

Notice again that Paul says the message to go to Jerusalem came by 'revelation', [Galatians 2:2](#). In other words, God sent Paul to Jerusalem. The significance of the [Acts 15](#) Jerusalem meeting is seen in the fact that God instructed Paul to be present at this meeting, [Acts 15:1-2](#).

God sent Paul to Jerusalem to stop the onslaught of Jewish legalism that was invading the church. And it was while Paul was in Jerusalem, [Acts 15](#), that he explained to those present the things he's been doing among the Gentiles, [Acts 15:12](#).

He wanted the Galatians to know that he didn't go for the purpose of either receiving instruction from the apostles or being sent forth by the apostles. He went to announce his mission among the Gentiles that God had commissioned him to do. He went to inform the apostles that the message he preached wasn't a Gospel plus circumcision and works, [Galatians 2:2](#).

And look at how he described those who were accepted as leaders in the church, 'those who were held in high esteem,' [Galatians 2:6](#), 'those esteemed as pillars,' [Galatians 2:9](#).

He's obviously talking about Peter, John and James, the Lord's brother. All of whom, except Peter and John, were killed by Herod, [Acts 12:1-2](#), before that meeting in [Acts 15](#).

It's also significant to note that Paul's meeting with the apostles and elders was first in private. Why? Well, he simply wanted to make sure that the church hadn't been influenced by the Judaizing teachers before the matter was taken before the church.

Paul says he did it privately because ‘he wanted to be sure he was not running and had not been running his race in vain,’ Galatians 2:2. In other words, he wanted to make sure that he and the other apostles were in total agreement in his mission to the Gentiles, Acts 15:24.

Paul says that Titus went to Jerusalem as a representative of the Gentile Christians, Galatians 2:3. Once the legalistic Jewish brethren in the church of Jerusalem realised that he was a Gentile, they compelled him to be circumcised. In the minds of the Judaizing teachers, Titus wasn’t saved because he hadn’t been circumcised.

Paul was never going to bind anything on anyone, either culturally or religiously and make it a necessity for salvation. He simply didn’t allow these false brethren to get away with their theology of binding circumcision and Jewish ceremonies.

Guthrie, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Paul could never tolerate any presentation of Christianity which regarded it as a form of Judaism.’

WHY DID PAUL HAVE TIMOTHY CIRCUMCISED BUT NOT TITUS?

Sometimes in the Scriptures, we come across an event which appears, on the surface, to be confusing, misleading or contrary to other Scriptures. One such event is recorded in Acts 16, when the apostle Paul took his young friend Timothy and had him circumcised.

Paul knew the old covenant was nailed to the cross, Colossians 2:13-15, and he was very much aware that there’s no need for anyone to be circumcised anymore, Galatians 5:2 / Galatians 5:6, but why would Paul have Timothy circumcised?

We also know on another occasion, Paul refused to let Titus be circumcised, Galatians 2:3-5. Why was that? Was he hypocritical in his dealings with Timothy and Titus? Before we answer these questions, let’s go ahead and look at the context of both these events.

TIMOTHY

On the surface, when we read Acts 16:1-3, it appears as though Paul had Timothy circumcised because of peer pressure from the Jews, but notice that these same Jews knew that Timothy’s father was Greek.

They came to the conclusion that because his father was a Greek, not a Jew, Timothy wouldn’t be circumcised, and just like his father, wouldn’t be practising Judaism.

Of course, they may have come to the wrong conclusion about Timothy being circumcised because many people from other cultures became Jews throughout history, Joshua 5:6-7.

On this occasion, their conclusions were correct concerning Timothy, and so, in accordance with the Law of Moses, Timothy was circumcised because he had the legal right to do so.

TITUS

When we read Galatians 2:3-5, it's important to remember that Paul is dealing with legalism and false teachers throughout the Book of Galatians. These people were insisting that Jesus didn't do enough in order for people to be saved, and so, they were teaching that everyone needed to be circumcised, too.

Notice that it says the reason Titus wasn't circumcised was that it would have 'made them slaves' and 'the truth of the Gospel might be preserved.' In other words, if Paul had given in to Titus being circumcised, to please these false believers, then that would have nullified the Gospel; it would have discredited everything Jesus had taught and done.

It would have undone everything which had been taught about being right with God by faith, and enforced on others the idea of being right with God through law-keeping, i.e. circumcision.

DIFFERENT CHARACTERS

When we look at Timothy and Titus, we can see that they are both completely different characters. The first difference is that Titus had parents who were both Greek, Galatians 2:3, while Timothy had a Jewish mother and Jewish grandmother, 2 Timothy 1:5, but a Greek father, Acts 16:3.

Titus doesn't appear to have any Jewish upbringing, whilst Paul tells that Timothy had been raised by being taught the Old Testament Scriptures from childhood, 2 Timothy 3:15.

This implies that his Jewish mother, Eunice and his Jewish grandmother, Lois, brought him up as a Jew. Although we don't know, it's highly possible that Timothy's Greek father was happy for him to be raised as a Jew but refused to allow him to be circumcised.

Imagine having parents, one is a believer, and the other isn't, the father is happy for their son or daughter to go and worship God and study His Word with their mother and other Christians. However, he won't allow their son or daughter to be baptised in order to become a true Christian.

DIFFERENT CIRCUMSTANCES

When we look at the events surrounding Timothy being circumcised and Titus not being circumcised, we can see that they are both completely different circumstances.

For example, in Galatians, Paul was dealing with those false believers, those so-called Christians, who were insisting that all Christians must also be circumcised. The genuine Christians in Galatia were being pressured into being circumcised by these legalistic Christians in order to be accepted.

But notice in the Acts event, that 'the believers at Lystra and Iconium spoke well of him', that is, Timothy. In other words, there were no Christians, no legalistic Christians putting any pressure on Timothy to be circumcised, as Titus had.

WAS PAUL BEING A HYPOCRITE?

Many people believe that Paul was a hypocrite in the way he dealt with Timothy and Titus concerning their circumcision, but we must take into account that these are two different characters in two different circumstances.

Paul refused to allow Titus to be circumcised in Jerusalem, [Galatians 2:1](#), because that action would have nullified the whole Gospel, but he had Timothy circumcised simply because he was going to be travelling with Paul, and it would make his ‘outreach’ efforts to the Jews much easier.

Timothy would still be a Christian, but he would be accepted in Jewish society; therefore, this would make his ‘outreach’ efforts easier in the long term.

HOW WOULD ANYONE KNOW YOU WERE CIRCUMCISED?

A question which comes up from time to time is, how would anyone know if Timothy or Titus were circumcised in the first place? In Bible times, sharing the bathing facilities and toilet facilities was common practice, so it would be very easy for someone to notice if a person was circumcised or not.

I guess that Paul, Timothy and Titus could have bluffed their way through meetings with the Jews, but this would imply lying. The reality is that people would simply ask, kind of like what people do today when they are asked if they are a Christian.

CONCLUSION

When we look at all the evidence, it’s clear that Titus’ case was all about defending the freedom Christians find in Christ, whilst in Timothy’s case, it was all about utilising that same freedom to win more souls for Christ.

It was freedom that led Paul not to allow Titus to be circumcised, and it was freedom that led Paul to allow Timothy to be circumcised, [1 Corinthians 9:20](#) / [1 Corinthians 10:23-24](#).

“This matter arose because some false believers had infiltrated our ranks to spy on the freedom we have in Christ Jesus and to make us slaves. We did not give in to them for a moment, so that the truth of the gospel might be preserved for you”. [Galatians 2:4-5](#)

Anyone who seeks to bind their legal requirements on the church will often resort to these extreme measures in order to add support to their position. Notice Paul calls them ‘false believers’, [Galatians 2:4](#). They were the ones presenting another Gospel, [Galatians 1:6-9](#).

What they are actually trying to do is put Christians back into bondage. But Paul says throughout this letter that Christians have been set free from those bondages, [Galatians 2:4](#) / [Galatians 3:25](#) / [Galatians 4:3](#) / [Galatians 4:9](#) / [Galatians 5:1](#).

When the Bible talks about Christian freedom, it’s not talking about we’re free to do whatever we like, whenever we like. The Bible says we’re free from those old laws of bondage, [James 1:25](#).

In Christ, there is a law to direct the moral behaviour of Christians, but it’s a law of choice. God gives us the guidelines and principles, but Christians are given the liberty as to how those principles are to be applied.

In other words, the law of Christ gives liberty from the necessity of perfect law-keeping, James 2:10. Paul is saying that these Judaizing teachers were compelling believers to return to a system of law-keeping that didn't bring justification, but Paul was having none of it, neither was Barnabas nor Titus, Galatians 2:5.

They all understood that giving in to these false ideas of religion meant they would have to give up their freedom in Christ, Galatians 5:1-2. So why wouldn't they give in? Paul says in order that 'the truth of the gospel might be preserved for you', Galatians 2:5.

God's grace has delivered us from the bondage of having to keep the law perfectly in order to be justified before God or to perform meritorious deeds in order to seek atonement for our sin. This is the truth that the Gospel brings freedom to all those who are in bondage.

"As for those who were held in high esteem—whatever they were makes no difference to me; God does not show favouritism—they added nothing to my message. On the contrary, they recognised that I had been entrusted with the task of preaching the gospel to the uncircumcised, just as Peter had been to the circumcised. For God, who was at work in Peter as an apostle to the circumcised, was also at work in me as an apostle to the Gentiles. James, Cephas and John, those esteemed as pillars, gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship when they recognised the grace given to me. They agreed that we should go to the Gentiles, and they to the circumcised. All they asked was that we should continue to remember the poor, the very thing I had been eager to do all along." Galatians 2:6-10

Paul tells us the purpose of the Jerusalem visit was threefold. He wanted the Galatians to know that the leaders in Jerusalem didn't add to his message of the truth of the Gospel.

The leaders in Jerusalem gave Barnabas and him the right hand of fellowship. And finally, the Jerusalem leadership encouraged him to remember the poor, which was something the Judaizing teachers may not have been doing.

There were men of great reputation in the church of Jerusalem, men like Peter, James, Silas and John, but Paul wanted the Galatians to know that God didn't have the respect of persons that was so common among some leaders, Galatians 2:6 / Romans 2:11. In fact, God has never been more favourable to one person over another, Deuteronomy 10:17.

When Paul met with these leaders, they didn't add any new truth to what he already knew, Galatians 2:6, but more importantly, they weren't adding works of law or merit to the truth of the Gospel.

Notice that Paul uses the phrase, 'the gospel of the uncircumcised,' Galatians 2:7. Peter, James and John immediately recognised that Paul was given a mission to the Gentiles. This mission had been given to him as a specific mission in much the same way that Peter was given a specific mission to preach to the Jews.

God was working through Paul just as much as He was working through Peter, Galatians 2:7 / Romans 12:4, and God's work through both Paul and Peter was successful. And as I mentioned earlier, Peter, James and John recognised that Paul's work among the Gentiles was the work of God, Galatians 2:8-9.

And when they recognised this, they extended to Paul and Barnabas their full agreement and blessing that they continue their mission to the Gentiles, Galatians 2:9. And what was that mission? To preach the truth of the Gospel and bring people into a covenant of freedom in Christ.

George, in his commentary, says the following.

'While every Christian has an important role to play in missions and evangelism, we must never forget that Jesus himself is the great Missionary, the Son who has been sent from the Father; and the Holy Spirit is the true Evangelist, the divine One who convicts and converts.'

What Paul is doing here is arguing that Peter, James and John agreed with his mission that was given to him directly by Jesus. Because Peter, James and John resided in what seemed to be the seat of Jewish legalism in Jerusalem.

The Judaizing teachers falsely assumed that they would side with them on the matter against Paul. And so, in order to make sure that the Judaizing teachers had no support from the church in Jerusalem, the apostles, elders and the whole church sent the letter we read in [Acts 15:23-29](#).

In the letter, they stated that the legalistic Judaizing teachers had been given no such authorisation from the Jerusalem church, [Acts 15:24](#). The legalists were now on their own; they had cut themselves off from the family of believers by their teaching of binding laws where God had not bound.

Remember it wasn't Paul's mission to specifically minister to the poor; it was his mission to preach the Gospel and remember the poor, [Galatians 2:10](#). In accomplishing his mission, he was encouraged by Peter, James and John to remember that we must work together to help those who were the victims of the circumstances, [1 Corinthians 16:1-4](#). The unified teaching of both Paul and the other apostles was that they agreed concerning correct teaching, but also correct Christian benevolent behaviour. Because correct teaching will always produce unity among those who seek to do the will of the Father, [Philippians 1:27](#).

PAUL OPPOSES CEPHAS

“When Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned. For before certain men came from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles. But when they arrived, he began to draw back and separate himself from the Gentiles because he was afraid of those who belonged to the circumcision group. The other Jews joined him in his hypocrisy, so that by their hypocrisy even Barnabas was led astray”. [Galatians 2:11-13](#)

It's evident that sometime after the Jerusalem meeting in [Acts 15](#), Paul returned to Antioch. However, Peter and Barnabas had already gone to Antioch before Paul arrived. And so, the incident which we're dealing with in these verses happened before Paul arrived in Antioch.

Peter and Barnabas were withdrawing from the Gentiles because they were afraid of the Judaizing delegation from Jerusalem. And so, when Paul finally arrived, this separation had already taken place. In the eyes of the Jewish legalists of Jerusalem, the church in Antioch was not saved, [Acts 15:1](#) / [Acts 15:5](#).

They were teaching that these newly converted Gentile Christians weren't saved, and so they sent out a bunch of men to convert other churches to their beliefs, [Galatians 6:13](#).

Paul says their mission was to go from church to church, binding where God had not bound, and so go about saving the saved. And at the same time, they were sending back glorious reports about how many had been circumcised.

Paul says they zealously built relationships with young Gentile churches in order to bring them into their fellowship and so separate them from the influence of Paul, [Galatians 4:17](#).

This is what Paul is dealing with here: he's dealing with a bunch of people who want religion, but they want it done and practised their way. And the sad thing about it was that Peter and Barnabas were just as bad, if not even worse.

It's interesting that Paul uses Peter's name interchangeably depending on the context, especially here in this chapter. I don't know why he does that, but here in [Galatians 2:11](#), Paul calls him Cephas. Remember that Peter is his Greek name and Cephas is his Aramaic name.

I think it's possible that Paul is calling him Cephas here because his actions represented an Old Testament mindset regarding Gentiles. Paul has already opposed the legalists in Jerusalem, and now he's opposing them again here in Antioch.

The Greek word 'anthistemi', which is translated as 'opposed', [Galatians 2:11](#), is actually a military term that refers to resisting an attack. When anyone comes along and adds to the Gospel of Christ, they are actually attacking the Gospel of Christ. They are actually dividing the body of Christ, [1 Corinthians 3:16-17](#).

Notice how Paul opposed Cephas, ‘to his face,’ Galatians 2:11. Paul is saying that even public confrontation with a respected brother or sister in the Lord is sometimes necessary, especially if the truth of the Gospel is in danger of being compromised.

What Peter did brought him under condemnation, Galatians 2:11. Peter was yielding to the legalist’s idea of meritorious works. In other words, he was being a hypocrite, and why was he being a hypocrite?

Because he has a short memory, the great Peter, who said he would never leave the Lord, the great Peter who said he would never deny Jesus, Matthew 26:35. The great Peter who preached the very first Gospel of grace sermon in Acts 2.

The great Peter, who in Acts 10-11 received a special vision from the Lord Himself informing him that the Gentiles were to be received into fellowship without any meritorious conditions attached, Acts 11:1-18.

No wonder Paul opposed him to his face; Peter’s actions didn’t reflect what he preached. And as we will see later, Peter and those who withdrew with him were violating the fundamental teaching concerning church unity.

Peter was manifesting support for the teaching of those who denied justification by faith. He was manifesting behaviour that would bring the believers again into the bondage of the law, and so they were destroying the freedom we have in Christ.

The actions of Peter attacked the oneness of all races in Christ. The very nature of the truth of the Gospel was under attack, and the sufficiency of the grace of God was being denied. And so, if what happened in Antioch was allowed to spread throughout the world, the church would go out of existence.

Morris, in his commentary, says the following.

‘It is perhaps curious that nobody seems to have recalled that Jesus ate ‘with publicans and sinners’, Mark 7:19, which can scarcely mean that he conformed to strict Jewish practice.’

Our lives need to be a true reflection of what we believe, James 1:22-25. Paul says, Peter used to eat with the Gentiles, but when these legalists came along, he withdrew from the Gentiles because he was scared of them, Galatians 2:12. In other words, Peter’s action proclaimed a different Gospel from the one he was preaching.

Morris, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Peter perhaps felt that if the members of the embassy went back and told the Jerusalem church that he was eating with Gentiles, it would compromise his position with the leading church.’

The Gospel he preached was a Gospel of grace, and because his actions didn’t preach grace, he ended up under condemnation at this point in his life. And look at the influence these legalisers had on the church. All the Jewish brethren in Antioch, and even Barnabas, surrendered to the legalistic teaching from Jerusalem, Galatians 2:13.

Lightfoot, in his commentary, says the following.

‘It is not impossible that this incident, by producing a temporary feeling of distrust, may have prepared the way for the dissension between Paul and Barnabas which shortly afterwards led to their separation, Acts 15:39.’

Can’t you just feel the pain that our Gentile brethren must have been going through during this? Think about it, they had just been accepted by the Jewish brethren as part of the Lord’s church with no conditions attached before these legalisers came along. But now, they are all alone, those who should have known better had withdrawn from them.

I can imagine just how let down they must have felt, confused with their brethren, confused about the Gospel.

Lonely, not knowing if they are right with God or not, where do they turn to now?

“When I saw that they were not acting in line with the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas in front of them all, “You are a Jew, yet you live like a Gentile and not like a Jew. How is it, then, that you force Gentiles to follow Jewish customs?” Galatians 2:14

Paul realised that if Peter's actions became a common practice in the church, the truth of the Gospel would be destroyed. In other words, the church of the free would cease to exist.

And so, because of that, Paul begins his rebuke of Peter and the rest of the Jews in Antioch by pointing out that before the legal delegation came from Jerusalem, they had lived in close fellowship with the Gentile brethren.

Paul asks if they, the Jews, would encourage the Gentiles to live like the Jews. Earlier, we found Paul opposing Peter face-to-face, [Galatians 2:11](#), but here we find Paul opposing Peter publicly.

That's because Peter's actions and the actions of the Antioch Jews were so serious. So serious in fact, that Paul thought it was necessary to take the whole matter before the entire church, [Matthew 18:15-17](#) / [1 Timothy 5:20](#).

“We who are Jews by birth and not sinful Gentiles know that a person is not justified by the works of the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So, we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law, because by the works of the law no one will be justified.” Galatians 2:15-16

Paul began this address as a message to Peter, but he goes on to explain what he means to the Jews in general. In these first two chapters, Paul started by using historical events and the encounters he had with these Judaizing teachers. And the reason he started with those is because of what he says here.

Paul says that ‘justification comes through faith, not by works’, [Galatians 2:15-16](#). The word ‘justified’ is the Greek word ‘dikaioo’, and it means to render or regard as just or innocent. In other words, when we allow God to do the justifying, it is ‘just as if’ we’ve never sinned.

Morris, in his commentary, says the following.

‘It is a legal concept; the person who is ‘justified’ is the one who gets the verdict in a court of law. Used in a religious sense, it means the getting of a favourable verdict before God on judgment day.’

George, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Justification should not be confused with forgiveness, which is the fruit of justification, nor with atonement, which is the basis of justification. Rather, it is the favourable verdict of God, the righteous Judge, that one who formerly stood condemned has now been granted a new status at the bar of divine justice.’

Paul, as well as all the faithful Jews who believed in Jesus, realised that salvation couldn't be acquired through perfect works of law or meritorious attempts to atone for sin, [Psalm 14:1-3](#) / [Acts 13:38](#). In other words, until Jesus came on the scene, the Jews and the Gentiles knew that they couldn't really be right with God by works of law, [Romans 3:20](#).

No one can keep any law perfectly in order to justify themselves before God, and so demand salvation, [Ephesians 2:8-9](#). And so, how do we get right with God? Well, Paul tells us, he says a person is justified by having ‘faith in Jesus Christ’, [Galatians 2:16](#).

The original text is important here because it actually says, ‘faith of Christ’, which means the emphasis isn't on our faith, but on the faith of Jesus in going to the cross. Our being right with God has nothing to do with anything we have done or can do; it's all about what Jesus has done and continues to do today, [Hebrews 5:8-9](#).

It was because of the justification that came as a result of the faith of Jesus that Paul says that he, as well as all other Jews who were children of Abraham by faith, believed in Jesus. In other words, they realised that law brings condemnation, not commendation.

Because when anyone violates any kind of law, condemnation is always the result. The law can't save us; keeping any law can't save us, and that's because the law was never given as a means of salvation; it was given that we might recognise our condemnation.

On the other hand, grace brings commendation, and it's under grace that a person is commended for good by God. Grace doesn't say you don't have to work; grace motivates us to work harder for the Lord, not because we have to, but because we want to, 1 Corinthians 15:10.

Some Bibles say, 'the law', Galatians 2:16, which would lead us to think Paul is talking about the Law of Moses, but the word 'the' isn't in the original text, which tells us Paul is talking about any law, any form of religious law-keeping can't make us right with God.

Now we can only imagine what's going through the minds of those Galatians who are reading this letter. But we don't have to imagine too hard because Paul is anticipating what some of the arguments against justification by faith will be.

“But if, in seeking to be justified in Christ, we Jews find ourselves also among the sinners, doesn't that mean that Christ promotes sin? Absolutely not! If I rebuild what I destroyed, then I really would be a lawbreaker.” Galatians 2:17-18

Bruce, in his commentary, says the following concerning Galatians 2:17.

‘Here he (Paul) may simply mean that when law-abiding Jews like Peter and himself cease to look to the law as the basis of their justification before God and find that justification in Christ instead, they put themselves effectively on a level with ‘sinners of the gentiles’: they have, in that sense, ‘been found sinners’-they themselves (kai autoi) as much as lesser breeds without the law. But this applies to all Jewish Christians, even to those who have not appreciated the law-free character of the gospel: by yielding faith to Christ, they have, in logic, if not in consciousness, abandoned faith in the law, and have had to take their place as sinners, utterly in need of God's justifying grace.’

Because Paul anticipates a legalistic argument, he's thinking about what the legalists would think. And their argument is basically saying, if we're made right with God simply by having faith in Christ and God's grace, then we can simply carry on sinning, Galatians 2:27. In other words, they wanted to abuse the grace of God, Galatians 5:6 / Galatians 5:13 / Jude 4.

Just because we are justified by faith and grace doesn't mean we can live our lives in any way we want to. Christians aren't under law as a meritorious code of conduct; we're under law as a direction of life.

Obedience to law isn't based on merit to obtain salvation, but obedience is based on the fact that salvation has already been obtained through faith in God's grace. In other words, Christians don't work for their salvation; they work because of their salvation.

Paul says, ‘if I rebuild what I destroyed, then I really would be a lawbreaker’, Galatians 2:18, which basically means if he goes back to a system of law-keeping, he would be found to be a transgressor of the new covenant of Christ. He says he would become a transgressor of the law of grace and faith if he went back to that system of religion. He becomes a transgressor simply because he would be giving up on God's forgiving grace in his life, Galatians 5:4. Paul says there is absolutely no way he would return to trying to be right with God through law-keeping, Philippians 3:3-9. And so, Paul continues with his argument against those who are teaching that Christians accept Jesus but still need to observe the Old Testament laws.

“For through the law I died to the law so that I might live for God. I have been crucified with Christ, and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. I do not set aside the grace of God, for if righteousness could be gained through the law, Christ died for nothing!” Galatians 2:19-21

Please note the word ‘the’ used here, in relation to law, isn't in the original text, Galatians 2:19. Paul is talking about any law in general, and he says that he died to law in the sense that he recognised that law couldn't bring justification before God, Galatians 2:19.

Any law which requires any kind of meritorious justification only brings condemnation, not life. And the reason for that is simple, we've all sinned, and sin condemns and brings death, as [Romans 3:23](#) and [Romans 6:23](#) tell us.

And so, we all have to die to law to be right with God, in order for us to 'live for God', [Galatians 2:19](#) / [Romans 7:4](#) / [Romans 7:6](#). Paul is essentially saying that all law brings death, [Romans 6:23](#), for all have sinned, [Romans 3:23](#), but Jesus brought life, for He revealed the grace of God.

When was Paul crucified with Christ? When did Christ take up residence in Paul? [Galatians 2:20](#). It was at his baptism, [Acts 9:18](#), at his baptism, he received the forgiveness of his sins, [Acts 2:38](#), and he made a commitment to God that he would live for Christ and not for himself, [Romans 6:3-6](#).

Paul isn't arguing about the importance of baptism here; he's arguing about how a Christian can live without sin in their lives because of what takes place at our baptism.

And so, when a Christian experiences God's grace at their baptism and throughout their Christian life, their life changes because change is a natural response to grace.

Notice that the 'Son of God loved me and gave himself for me', [Galatians 2:20](#). This is as personal as we can get, God so loved me that He died for me, [John 3:16-17](#).

Spurgeon, in his commentary, says the following.

'Take these blessed words of the apostle, and put them in your mouth, and let them lie there as wafers made with honey, till they melt into your very soul: 'Who loved me, and gave himself for me.'

Paul is saying that the grace of God did away with the necessity of being justified by perfect law-keeping. And he reminds us again, 'if righteousness could be gained through the law, Christ died for nothing!' [Galatians 2:21](#) / [Matthew 26:39-42](#).

Paul says if anyone wants to go backwards and try to be right with God through law-keeping, then Jesus died for nothing. Yes, Paul worked, but not for his salvation; God's grace didn't cancel works of obedience to God's will.

Paul worked because he was motivated by the love and appreciation of what God had done for him, [2 Corinthians 4:13-15](#). Under grace, Christians work because of what they have, that is, their salvation, but if a Christian wants to live under law, then that Christian is constantly working in order to receive it.

CHAPTER 3

INTRODUCTION

"You foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? Before your very eyes, Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed as crucified." Galatians 3:1

FAITH OR WORKS OF THE LAW

Paul begins by asking a series of questions to shock them into the reality concerning what they were actually doing, which was turning away from the grace of God.

Paul is amazed that they are being enticed by the Judaizing teachers to return to a covenant of condemnation, Galatians 1:6. Paul says the Galatians are so spiritually dull that he asks the question, ‘Who has bewitched you?’

This carries with it the idea of someone casting a spell over you, and in the original Greek, it literally says, ‘to give an evil eye.’ In other words, they have temporarily lost their reasoning concerning the very nature of how a person is saved.

And because some were giving them the evil eye, they were seduced into taking their eyes off Jesus, Hebrews 12:2. Paul reminds them of who they should be looking at by saying, ‘before your very eyes, Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed as crucified.’

The Galatians had taken their eyes off the Jesus that had been preached to them by Paul. They had cast their eyes upon the proposals of the Judaizing teachers and were fascinated by what they were teaching.

Paul says Christ and His crucifixion were ‘clearly portrayed’ to them. In other words, it was announced publicly. Paul had preached Jesus Christ and His crucifixion in such a vivid manner that it was as if they had personally experienced the crucifixion in Galatia.

They took their minds off Christ, Colossians 3:1-2, and started to focus on themselves, and Paul was astonished by how quickly they were turning away from the Gospel.

The word ‘fixing’ in Hebrews 12:1-2 literally means to glue, to stick, and so we need to permanently glue our eyes on Jesus because whenever we take our eyes off of Him, we can easily be led astray by the fascination of something else. After asking the first question, Paul goes on to ask another question.

“I would like to learn just one thing from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by believing what you heard?” Galatians 3:2

What does Paul mean here? Is he referring to their baptism when they received the Holy Spirit? Or is he referring to the time an apostle laid his hands upon them to receive the miraculous gifts? The simple answer is, we don’t know.

Paul worked many miracles, among them, Acts 15:12, and we know that he had established churches in this region on the first missionary journey, as well as visiting them on the second. And I’m certain that he would have laid hands on those members with whom he had personal contact.

We also need to remember Peter later went through this region and also would have laid hands on the members of the church on whom Paul hadn’t laid hands in order that they receive the miraculous gifts of the Spirit. We can’t be sure, but if Paul does have in mind the miraculous receiving of the Spirit by the laying on of his hands, then his argument is quite forceful.

He’s actually telling them that if they had received the Spirit by the laying on of the hands of those who preached the Gospel of grace, then they didn’t receive the Spirit as a result of some meritorious work they performed or by their perfect obedience to law.

Because the Spirit Himself was a free gift that came as a result of God’s grace. The authority to exercise the miraculous gifts of the Spirit was a free gift; the apostles didn’t earn the gift, and neither did the Galatians, Matthew 10:7-8 / 2 Corinthians 5:7. Paul continues and asks yet another question.

“Are you so foolish? After beginning by means of the Spirit, are you now trying to finish by means of the flesh? Have you experienced so much in vain—if it really was in vain?” Galatians 3:3-4

Paul says that they are so ‘foolish’, which in Greek means, ‘spiritually dull’, they can’t see just how foolish their actions are. The Holy Spirit initiated salvation by bringing to them the Gospel through inspired preaching.

They now assume that they can complete the work of the Spirit by adding their meritorious deeds or works of law-keeping through circumcision and ceremonies.

In the previous chapter, they were thinking that Christ didn't do enough on the cross and here in this chapter, they are thinking that the Holy Spirit didn't do enough. They forgot how their spiritual life began; it began in Christ.

And so, Paul is asking them how they can add or do anything more to complete their salvation? Galatians 3:11 / Galatians 4:9. We must be careful not to fall into the trap of thinking that observing law and keeping traditions will actually help us spiritually.

We know that when Paul was preaching in Galatia, he suffered great persecution, Acts 14:19-20, and this persecution originated from the Jews who wanted to stamp out the movement of Christianity since it was taking many from Judaism.

This persecution was certainly one motivation for the Judaizing teachers to go on their campaign to recruit the Galatian churches, Galatians 4:17. We also know that these legalisers wanted to escape the persecution their fellow Jews were receiving, Galatians 6:12.

Remember, in the early years of the beginning of the Galatian churches, there was a lot of persecution from the Jews, and so, Paul is basically asking, what was the point of going through all that persecution, if you're going to give in to them and compromise the Gospel? Paul moves on to his next question.

“So again I ask, does God give you his Spirit and work miracles among you by the works of the law, or by your believing what you heard?” Galatians 3:5

When Paul demonstrated his work among the Galatians before the Jerusalem meeting in Acts 15, the Jerusalem brethren stood silent. Paul and Barnabas had preached the cross on the first missionary journey, and the Lord confirmed their preaching by the miraculous works of the Spirit, Acts 14:3 / Acts 14:8-10 / Acts 15:12.

Jesus said this would happen, Mark 16:20, and the Hebrew writer says the same, Hebrews 2:3-4. But not only had the Spirit worked miracles through Paul and Barnabas, but also the gifts of the Spirit were given to the Galatians through the laying on of Paul's hands, Acts 19:1-6.

Paul is questioning their sensibility, and he's asking them, did the Spirit do all this miraculous work based on their meritorious law-keeping or their hearing and obeying the Gospel? Galatians 3:2. And once again, the answer is obvious: the Spirit was working in and through them because they simply obeyed the Gospel.

“So also Abraham “believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.” Understand, then, that those who have faith are children of Abraham. Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: “All nations will be blessed through you.” So, those who rely on faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith.” Galatians 3:6-9

Paul now resorts to the Judaizer's favourite Old Testament characters whom they used in their arguments to convince the Galatians to return to circumcision and the ceremonies of the Old Testament law. Paul lays out God's salvation by grace under the Old Testament law and how the obedient life of Abraham proves that we are justified before God by faith.

Morris, in his commentary, says the following.

‘It mattered a great deal to the apostle that God saves people by grace, not on the grounds of their human achievement, and he found Abraham an excellent example of that truth.’

Paul tells them that Abraham was justified, Galatians 3:6, which means being right with God before he came into a special covenant relationship with God. In other words, Paul is saying that the covenant didn't make Abraham righteous before God.

A little later, Paul is going to remind them that Abraham was made righteous even before the Old Testament Law was given, [Galatians 3:17](#). Paul's point is that neither the Old Testament law nor God's personal covenant with Abraham or Israel is now necessary for the salvation of the Galatians.

Remember, we're dealing with a bunch of legalisers who are trying to teach that Jesus didn't do enough to save us, and so, they said, we have to accept Jesus but also keep the old laws and be circumcised. But what Paul wants to do is remind them that it was Abraham's obedient faith, not his meritorious works of law, that justified him before God, [James 2:21](#).

It was Abraham's faith that moved him to obedience because without that faith, he wouldn't have acted, [Hebrews 11:17-19](#). The Hebrew writer tells us that the justifying action of offering Isaac was founded upon Abraham's faith, and he trusted that God could raise people from the dead.

And it was because of that faith, his actions and trust in God, that it was 'credited to him as righteousness,' [Galatians 3:6](#) / [Genesis 15:6](#). These words are quoted four times in the New Testament, [Galatians 3:6](#) / [Romans 4:3](#) / [Romans 4:9-10](#) / [Romans 4:22](#).

The Greek word translated as 'credited' means something is credited to the account of another. In other words, righteousness is accredited to the account of Abraham and all who walk by faith.

The accounting or accrediting doesn't happen as a result of our performance of the law in order to earn righteousness. No one is credited as a result of meritorious good works. When Abraham had no son, God made the promise that He would be the father of many nations, [Genesis 15:5](#), not just the nation of Israel.

A little later in [Genesis 17:3-5](#), God makes another promise to him and says, Gentiles, who were without the Old Testament law before the coming of Jesus, were considered sons of Abraham, not because of a special covenant-law relationship they had with God, but by faith, [Galatians 3:7-8](#).

They are justified by faith in the work of God on the cross, and salvation by faith has always been in view of the cross. Salvation by faith and grace before the cross was made possible because those who were obediently faithful were looking forward to the cross. By faith, those whom God justified in view of the cross, trusted that He would do so according to His eternal plan.

We today are justified because our faith looks back to the cross, because we trust in the blood of Christ and trust that God will redeem us from our sins, [Ephesians 1:7](#). Notice what Paul says, 'those who have faith are children of Abraham', [Galatians 3:7](#). We can just imagine the anger in the Jew's mind when he said those words.

We can imagine them thinking to themselves, 'What! Faith doesn't make you a child of Abraham! Being a Jew makes you a child of Abraham!' [Matthew 3:9](#). Remember that the Jews regarded Moses as the father of the law, and Abraham was the father of the nation.

But the problem was that the Jews forgot who Abraham really was; Abraham wasn't a Jew, he was a Gentile, [Ezekiel 16:3](#). Paul says being a spiritual child of Abraham doesn't come as a result of being born a Jew; being a spiritual child of Abraham is based on faith, [Galatians 3:7](#).

The Gentiles hadn't received the Old Testament law, nor had God established a covenant relationship with them. But Paul says, those who walked by faith during the Old Testament times were children of Abraham by faith, and therefore they were justified before God by their faith, [Galatians 3:8](#).

The spiritual nations of whom Abraham was the father have always been justified by faith. Abraham was justified by obedient faith, and so are we. The Jews were claiming to be right with God based upon their claim that Abraham was their father, [John 8:39](#).

Don't misunderstand what Paul means when he's talking about faith here. The faith which Paul is talking about is obedience to Him in whom we have faith. The saving faith which Paul is talking about is a responsive and responsible faith, [Galatians 5:6](#).

In Galatians 3:8, Paul quotes from Genesis 12:3 / Genesis 18:18 / Genesis 22:18, and tells us that Abraham was the first to hear the Gospel, and he says that all nations were blessed in the coming of Jesus for the atonement of men. The good news of justification by faith was first announced to Abraham, and God revealed to Abraham that righteousness comes through faith. And those who would follow in the steps of Abraham's faith would receive the blessing of salvation of the promise that God made to Abraham, Galatians 3:9.

In other words, those who express their trust in God for salvation by faith are blessed by the faith of Abraham. They are blessed because God promised Abraham the blessing of salvation. It was through his seed that the Redeemer came, as Genesis 12:1-3 reminds us.

Morris, in his commentary, says the following.

‘They who are of faith are those whose characteristic is faith; it is not that they sometimes have an impulse to believe, but rather that believing is their constant attitude; faith is characteristic of them.’

Notice, since the blessing came as a result of God's promise, its fulfilment didn't depend on the meritorious work of Abraham or even upon Abraham's faith. In other words, the totality of the blessing was based solely on the grace of God to save man through Jesus.

“For all who rely on the works of the law are under a curse, as it is written: “Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law.” Clearly, no one who relies on the law is justified before God, because “the righteous will live by faith.” The law is not based on faith; on the contrary, it says, “The person who does these things will live by them.” Galatians 3:10-12

When Paul says, ‘for all who rely on the works of the law are under a curse’, Galatians 3:10, he isn't talking about some kind of voodoo curse; he's talking about the difficult circumstance a person may find themselves in when they try to keep the law.

He's arguing against the Judaizers by showing them the teaching of the Old Testament concerning those who would seek justification by law-keeping. Those who choose to be justified by law-keeping must suffer the curse that law brings, Galatians 3:10.

And what is that curse? The curse of condemnation. It brings condemnation because no one can live perfectly under the law in order to be sinless, and, therefore, be justified.

But who are those who are cursed? The cursed are those who seek to use law with the illusion that they can justify themselves before God by their meritorious performance of the law.

The problem with this teaching is that if anyone wants to be right with God through law-keeping, you can't break one law; you have to keep the law perfectly, James 2:10.

And so, in Galatians 3:10, by quoting Deuteronomy 27:26, Paul argues that man has no hope of justification if he tries to be legally justified before God on the basis of his ability to keep the law.

We must note the word, ‘the’ in Galatians 3:11, in relation to law, isn't in the original Greek text, and that's important because what Paul is saying is that no one can be justified before God by the perfect keeping of any law. It was never the purpose of law to produce salvation. The purpose of law is to direct our attention to our inadequacies in reference to law, and therefore, plead for God's grace.

It's the purpose of law to manifest sin and death, and therefore, direct us toward the atonement of the cross. It's the purpose of law to direct our lives in the direction of God's grace and what He would have us do. In other words, all law directs our lives, but the grace of God through the cross takes care of our misdirections.

In Galatians 3:11, Paul quotes Habakkuk 2:4. This statement is quoted in three contexts in the New Testament, Romans 1:17 / Hebrews 10:38. In each example, the Jewish Christians were seeking to return to law-keeping as a means of salvation.

Notice what Paul is doing here; he is contrasting words. The words ‘by faith’ emphasise total reliance on God for our salvation. ‘Works’ or ‘flesh’ are words that Paul uses to emphasise the fact that there are those who trust in their own ability to keep the law and do good works.

Paul is saying that no one can save themselves, no matter how obedient they are to God and His will. Those words are offensive to the legalist, and the reason they are offensive is that they want to feel as if they are contributing in some way towards their salvation. Law in and of itself doesn’t demand faith; it doesn’t demand that we trust in God, which again isn’t a New Testament idea.

In Galatians 3:12, Paul quotes from Leviticus 18:5. Why is Paul quoting this Old Testament passage? Simply to show us that if anyone could be justified by law-keeping, then they must keep all the law perfectly. Leviticus 18:5 is quoted in Nehemiah 9:29 / Ezekiel 20:11 / Ezekiel 20:13 / Ezekiel 20:21 / Romans 10:5.

Constable, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Law and faith are as different as apples and elephants. The Law requires works, but the gospel calls for faith.’

“Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: “Cursed is everyone who is hung on a pole.” He redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus, so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit.” Galatians 3:13-14

Don’t you just love those words, ‘Christ redeemed us’? Galatians 3:13. They say it all, don’t they? Those words tell us everything we ever really need to know concerning our salvation.

Jesus ransomed us from the curse of having to live perfectly according to the law in order to be justified. He made us perfect in Him by His cleansing blood, and He became the curse by taking upon Himself that which condemned us through law, that is, our sin against law, 2 Corinthians 5:21.

There can be no salvation without the atonement of Jesus that takes care of our sin problem in relation to the law. God’s solution for our sin problem comes as a free gift to all who would submit to the obedience of the Gospel.

But what does it mean to be cursed on a tree? The NIV uses the word ‘pole’, Galatians 3:13. For most capital offences covered by Jewish Law, stoning was the form of punishment. On some occasions, the dead body would be hung in public as a deterrent to further crime, Deuteronomy 21:22-23.

Morris, in his commentary, says the following concerning Paul’s quote from Deuteronomy 21:23.

‘This passage did not refer to crucifixion (which the Jews did not practice), but to the hanging on a tree or wooden post of the corpse of a criminal who had been executed. But in the New Testament times, a cross was often called a tree, and there is no doubting that that is what Paul has in mind here.’

The apostle Paul referred to this law in relation to Jesus and His death on the cross. Paul is saying that Jesus was cursed for us, hanging on the cross as a substitute for our sins.

He’s saying that Jesus was willing to suffer the condemnation of hanging on a tree for our benefit. He took our condemnation by being condemned for us on the tree.

Jesus died in order to reaffirm the blessing of salvation by grace through faith. Salvation by faith that was promised to all nations through Abraham was fulfilled at the cross, Titus 2:11.

In other words, the Gospel is the avenue through which we must pass in order to receive the blessing of the promise of the Spirit, Galatians 3:14. In the context of this letter, Paul isn’t talking about receiving the Holy Spirit at baptism, Acts 2:38. He’s referring to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the apostles in Acts 2:1-4.

Constable, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Paul was not saying that the Mosaic Law is valueless for Christians. The Mosaic Law is a part of the Old Testament, all of which is profitable for Christians, 2 Timothy 3:16-17. He was saying that obeying the Mosaic Law never results in the justification or sanctification of anyone, Jew or Gentile.’

THE LAW AND THE PROMISE

“Brothers and sisters, let me take an example from everyday life. Just as no one can set aside or add to a human covenant that has been duly established, so it is in this case. The promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. Scripture does not say “and to seeds,” meaning many people, but “and to your seed,” meaning one person, who is Christ.” Galatians 3:15-16

Paul argues with the Judaizers by reminding them that when God makes a promise, He keeps it. Paul says that the coming of the law didn’t do away with or cancel the promise. Neither did the law become a condition upon which the promise was fulfilled or applied to our salvation, Galatians 3:15.

Paul is arguing that the promise from God to Abraham was superior to the law. In other words, God’s promise to Abraham to bring forth the blessing to all nations was unconditionally given.

Abraham didn’t earn the promise; God simply told him what He would do in the future through Abraham’s seed. Remember that the law was given through Moses, and he was told what he must do. In other words, the promise was given through grace, whereas the law was given in order to demand obedience.

The word ‘covenant’, Galatians 3:15, simply means agreement or contract, and Paul begins by reminding the Galatians of the nature of the covenants that are established between humans. He says these covenants or agreements aren’t changed after they have been approved.

A covenant is made between two parties, and only the parties involved can change the covenant. A third party can’t make changes to the covenant, nor can anyone other than the two parties cancel the covenant that has been made between the two parties.

Notice that Paul uses the word ‘promises’, Galatians 3:16, plural, but what promises is he referring to? Well, he’s referring to the promises God gave Abraham.

God gave Abraham four promises. He said Abraham would be given a land, and he would become a great nation. He would make Abraham’s name great, and he would be blessed and be a blessing to all men, Genesis 12:1-3.

Notice there are three physical promises, land, name, and nation, all of which had been fulfilled by the time of Jesus. The blessing promise was in reference to salvation and was fulfilled through the coming of the Seed, who was Jesus, Galatians 3:16.

The point Paul is making is that it was God who made the promises, and He made the promises without any meritorious conditions on the part of Abraham. God didn’t suggest any conditions to Abraham that he must keep in order to receive the promises.

And Paul says it was Christ who was the particular Seed around whom all the promises of the covenant were made, Galatians 3:16. It was through the seed or descendants of Abraham that the Seed would come into the world. In other words, it was through the seed of Abraham that God would show His grace in the world through the sacrificial blood of Jesus.

“What I mean is this: The law, introduced 430 years later, does not set aside the covenant previously established by God and thus do away with the promise. For if the inheritance depends on the law, then it no longer depends on the promise; but God in his grace gave it to Abraham through a promise.” Galatians 3:17-18

Paul’s argument to the Judaizers was that the law, which came four hundred and thirty years after God reaffirmed them to Jacob, the covenant he had made with Abraham, didn’t cancel the promise or become a condition for the fulfilment of the promise, Galatians 3:17.

The law didn’t set aside the promise by becoming a condition upon which it was to be fulfilled. Paul is saying that the fulfilment of the promise was based on God’s grace. The coming of the law didn’t offer a substitute for the promise; it only encouraged the fulfilment of the promise.

In other words, the law exemplified or displayed the sin of those to whom it was given, but the promise pointed the law-keepers toward salvation by faith and grace, Romans 4:13.

Paul is basically saying that the law drove men towards faith, and he says the promise was given as a gift to Abraham, regardless of the law. The law had nothing to do with the fulfilment of the promise; God fulfils His promises regardless of law, Galatians 3:18.

Cole, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Judaizers might quote Moses; Paul will quote Abraham. Let them quote law; he will quote promise. If they appeal to the centuries of tradition and the proud history of the law of Moses, he will appeal to the grander ‘covenant with Abraham’, older by centuries still.’

Dillow, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The inheritance of Galatians 3:18 / Galatians 4:30 is parallel not with the land promises, Canaan, but with the gift of justification to the Gentiles. This is the major passage in the New Testament used to equate the inheritance of the land of Canaan with heaven, but the land of Canaan is not even the subject of the passage!’

We can imagine those legalisers thinking to themselves, ‘Paul, you don’t know what you’re talking about, what’s the point of the law? Why did God introduce law in the first place?’ And so, Paul, anticipating their questions, answers their questions.

“Why, then, was the law given at all? It was added because of transgressions until the Seed to whom the promise referred had come. The law was given through angels and entrusted to a mediator. A mediator, however, implies more than one party; but God is one.” Galatians 3:19-20

God gave the law because He knew what was right and wrong, but we didn’t. People had already broken God’s holy standard of righteousness. The law was given so that people would know what was right and wrong and could therefore be corrected when they violated those commands.

The law was given to highlight how sinful we are, Romans 7:5-8, and in order to convince anyone of sin, there had to be a standard by which a person could self-inspect their life, James 1:22-25. The law was given to Israel, not to save those to whom it was given, but to show the need for God’s grace in the lives of those to whom it was given.

We know that the Old Testament law was given through angels to Moses, who was the mediator between Israel and God, Galatians 3:19 / Deuteronomy 33:2. And so, in effect, Israel received the law third hand, but the grace of God through Jesus was given directly to Israel from God as an offering for sin.

Paul says, though ‘God is one’, Galatians 3:20, the mediator doesn’t represent just one person. In other words, the law involved two parties; one party gave, and the other had to obey.

Paul is saying that the one God of heaven gave the promise directly to Abraham on behalf of many peoples, that is, all nations. The law required a mediator, but the promises given to Abraham didn’t need one.

We can imagine the legalisers thinking as they heard these words being read out, saying, ‘Paul, you’ve seriously lost the plot, do you really want us to believe that the law opposed the promises of God?’ And so, Paul, anticipating their questions, answers their questions.

“Is the law, therefore, opposed to the promises of God? Absolutely not! For if a law had been given that could impart life, then righteousness would certainly have come by the law. But Scripture has locked up everything under the control of sin, so that what was promised, being given through faith in Jesus Christ, might be given to those who believe.” Galatians 3:21-22

Paul says the law didn’t set aside the promises; the law didn’t work against the promises. He says the law worked to fulfil the promises, Galatians 3:21. Paul says, if anyone could have been justified by law-keeping, then certainly the Old Testament law could have done that.

And it’s not the fault of the law that men can’t keep it perfectly in order to be right before God. The fault is with men, not the law of God, but what the law did was not only highlight our sinfulness but also confined us to condemnation because of our sin.

But the good news is that because the law highlighted that we are sinners and makes us hold our hands up to our sinfulness, we see our need to trust God and His grace for us.

Paul is saying that the law drove those who were the sons of Abraham by faith to accept the promise. The promise says that salvation comes through the grace of the cross of Christ, Galatians 3:22.

Morris, in his commentary, says the following.

‘A law can lay down what people ought to do, but it cannot give them the power to overcome the temptations to do evil.’

CHILDREN OF GOD

“Before the coming of this faith, we were held in custody under the law, locked up until the faith that was to come would be revealed. So the law was our guardian until Christ came, that we might be justified by faith. Now that this faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian.” Galatians 3:23-25

Paul says that before the coming of the fulfilment of the promise, people were held in the captivity of sin because the law could not make people right with God, Galatians 3:23.

He says that the law, any law, reminds us that we’re prisoners, we’re prisoners to our own sin, and he argues that prisoners want to be released; he’s arguing that anyone who lives under any law wants release from the condemnation of that law.

Notice that Paul says the law was our ‘guardian’, Galatians 3:24. The word ‘guardian’ is an interesting word; it’s the Greek word ‘pedagogue.’ It refers to the trusted slave in Roman and Jewish culture who was given charge of the children to both lead and supervise the children who were six to sixteen years old.

Israel as a nation was entrusted to the law in order to be directed to Christ, Galatians 3:24. The discipline of the law actually showed the immaturity of those to whom it was given.

The purpose of the ‘pedagogue’ was to lead to Christ, the undisciplined and immature, but once the ‘pedagogue’ had served his purpose, he was discharged from his duties.

Morris, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The custodian was not a teacher, but a slave whose special task was to look after a child. He exercised a general supervision over the boy’s activities, and it was his responsibility to bring him to the teacher who would give him the instruction that befitted his station.’

Paul says this same idea applies to the Old Testament law, and we’re no longer under that guardian, [Galatians 3:25](#). The law was a shadow of good things to come, and when the substance of the shadow came, the law was taken away, [Hebrews 10:1](#). And what was the substance? The substance was found at the cross in the form of Jesus Christ.

“So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith, for all of you who were baptised into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise”. [Galatians 3:26-29](#)

Paul says that Christians are actually considered by God to be His children through Christ Jesus, [Galatians 3:26](#). And how are we children of God? We are His children through faith, not through law-keeping. But how does a person get into that new covenant with God? How do we get right with God if we’re not under law?

Paul says we get right with God by being ‘baptised into Christ’, [Galatians 3:27](#). Baptism is the point at which the believer comes into a covenant relationship with God, [Matthew 28:19-20](#) / [Acts 2:38](#), and therefore begins his or her journey of faith. Baptism is the point in time when a believer establishes and signs a covenant to trust in God for salvation by His grace.

And when a person’s faith moves them to respond to God’s grace, their response is an immersion into the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus, [Romans 6:3-6](#). Baptism is simply a response to grace by the believer, who at the time of immersion contacts the blood of Jesus that came as a result of the grace of God.

In other words, the believer comes into a covenant with the One through whom the blessing was shown, that is, Jesus Christ. In the following two chapters of Galatians, Paul is going to discuss in great detail what he means by ‘clothing ourselves with Christ’, [Galatians 3:27](#). Paul uses two metaphorical phrases in this passage that refer to the relationship a person establishes with Christ by obedience to the Gospel.

By being baptised in water ‘into Christ’, a person comes into a realm where they establish a spiritual relationship with Deity. And by ‘clothing ourselves with Christ’, a person takes on the spiritual nature of Deity by conforming to Christ.

Remember law tells us that we’re sinners and we need God to save us because we can’t save ourselves, no matter how good we think we are. The law created within Israel the differences and distinctions of race, class and sex but Paul says that the class distinctions of race, Jew or Greek, social class, slave or free and sex, male or female, all end in Christ, [Galatians 3:28](#).

It’s not that these distinctions end within themselves in Christ, but that salvation by grace and faith are made applicable to all. In Christ, there is equality to all in reference to salvation. These social distinctions that bring division among men in the secular world are nullified when one is baptised into Christ, [Colossians 3:11](#). All Christians are one in Christ, [Galatians 3:28](#).

Christianity isn’t linked to anyone’s culture; Jews can’t culturally claim it, and Gentiles can’t claim it. And so, because Christianity isn’t culturally linked, it can go to all cultures of the world, all Christians are one in Christ, and anyone who becomes a Christian becomes an ‘heir according to the promise,’ [Galatians 3:29](#).

Paul’s point is that being an heir of the promise didn’t depend on being a physical descendant of Abraham. It depended on being a ‘spiritual descendant’ by faith, [Galatians 3:7](#). The Jews couldn’t, because of their physical heritage through Abraham, consider themselves to have a special relationship with God, [Matthew 3:9](#).

If anyone obeys the Gospel in order to be clothed with Christ, then they are of the seed of Abraham. Abraham trusted God in His promise and looked forward to the cross of Calvary. As Christians, we look back to the cross of Calvary for our salvation.

CHAPTER 4

INTRODUCTION

“What I am saying is that as long as an heir is underage, he is no different from a slave, although he owns the whole estate. The heir is subject to guardians and trustees until the time set by his father. So also, when we were underage, we were in slavery under the elemental spiritual forces of the world”. Galatians 4:1-3

In the previous chapter, the apostle Paul introduced us to the concept of an heir of God; an ‘heir’ is someone who has been appointed to receive an inheritance. In this chapter, Paul continues with this idea by presenting an argument against the Judaizing teachers that is based on the premise of how we have received the adoption to be sons of God.

He tells them that Sonship isn’t the result of some physical identity with Abraham, but through the spiritual identity of Abraham’s faith. Paul says that although a child has a potential inheritance of his father’s estate, as a child, he is no better off in terms of relation to the inheritance than a slave, and so, in a sense, the son is kept in ‘slavery’ until the time of the inheritance, **Galatians 4:1**.

The only advantage the son has that makes him different from a slave is that he is heir to the estate. In other words, the son is after the nature of the father, but the slave isn’t. The son has a father, but the slave is under a master; the son serves the father out of love, but the slave serves out of fear.

Paul’s point is that the Galatians were trying to return to slavery at the expense of their relationship to Christ and ultimately God. And because ‘the heir is subject to guardians and trustees’, **Galatians 4:2**, this meant that the son has no rights to the possession of the inheritance until he actually inherits the estate at the time the father has designated. In our culture, the custom is that we receive an inheritance after someone dies, but in Biblical times, that wasn’t always the case. The inheritance didn’t always mean you had to wait until someone died to receive something, **Luke 15:12**.

The Christians whom Paul is addressing here were wanting to go back to the Old Testament way of life, a time when they were slaves to the law. But Paul also seems to be addressing the Gentiles, who, before Christ, were also shut up under bondage by the law unto themselves, **Galatians 4:3**. Both Jews and Gentiles were kept under the basic or elementary principles of man-made religion until the coming of Jesus.

Barclay, in his commentary, says the following, concerning ‘the spiritual forces of the world’.

‘To describe it, Paul uses the word *stoicheia*. A *stoicheion* was originally a line of things; for instance, it can mean a file of soldiers. But it came to mean the ABC, and then any elementary knowledge.’

The Gentiles were kept under the bondage of superstitious religions that haunted their minds with fear, **Galatians 4:3 / Colossians 2:8 / Colossians 2:20 / Acts 7:42**.

And although there were Gentiles who lived by faith in God before the cross, they were still in the bondage of their inability to obey any law in order to be justified before God.

Paul's point is that both Jews and Gentiles were slaves in bondage before the grace of God was revealed through Jesus. And Paul says if they return to that kind of slavery, they are actually returning to their spiritual childhood. They were rejecting the Gospel, which actually freed them from all those rules and regulations of the Old Testament.

God knew that mankind couldn't live without breaking His laws; He knew that mankind couldn't live without breaking their own manmade laws, and so, God had to intervene to make fellowship with Him possible. God had to intervene to help mankind be free.

“But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship”. Galatians 4:4-5

At the exact second in time, God set His plan to save mankind. He sent His Son Jesus into the world at the exact moment in time, **Galatians 4:4**. It was a time of peace that began with the rule of Octavius Caesar Augustus in 17 B.C.

It was a time when Rome had developed a common language, roads, economic stability and national unity throughout the Roman Empire. It was a time when the world was sociologically prepared to receive the intervention of God into the world.

Jews had been scattered throughout the world because of the Assyrian and Babylonian captivities. The stage was set for the coming of the Messiah in Jerusalem in order to be announced to the Jews in synagogues throughout the world.

It was a time when the Gospel could be announced on earth and be shared throughout the nations of the Roman Empire. And so once again, we're reminded that God works on His own timetable, not ours.

Notice something about this text: the NIV and other translations have made a real mess of this text because it should read, 'God sent his Son, born of woman, born under law'. In the original text, it doesn't say 'born of a woman, born under the law'.

This is important because some people like to believe that this is talking about the virgin birth of Jesus, but it isn't. Paul is simply saying that Jesus was born naturally, He had a human birth just like you and me.

And notice also that the word 'the' isn't in the original text when Paul talks about Jesus being born under law. He's telling us that Jesus was subject to law, all law, not just the Law of Moses.

Paul is basically asking, why would we want to return to a religious system that Jesus delivered us from? Jesus came to redeem us from the necessity of perfect law-keeping in order that we are justified by God's grace, **Galatians 4:5**.

He redeemed us from sin, which was shown in our inability to keep the law.

The word 'redeem', **Galatians 4:5**, means to buy back, and it's a metaphor that finds its earthly meaning in one of two sources or both. Israel was in Egyptian captivity from which they couldn't deliver themselves, **Exodus 6:6**, and so, God redeemed them by His grace, since they couldn't redeem themselves. During Roman times, a slave couldn't deliver himself but could find freedom if someone paid the redemption price for their freedom.

Whichever is the source of the metaphor Paul has in mind here, the thought is the same. We were in the captivity of our own sinfulness; we couldn't gain freedom by meritorious works of law or perfect law-keeping. Why?

Because all have sinned, **Romans 3:23**. Law was the problem, and we couldn't find atonement in doing good deeds. God had to send His Son to die for us, and now through the blood of Jesus, we're bought out of the captivity of sin. The Jews couldn't keep God's law perfectly, the Gentiles couldn't keep their own manmade laws perfectly, and so both were slaves to law.

But why did Jesus come to earth, according to the text? In order ‘that we might receive adoption to sonship’, **Galatians 4:5**. In Roman times, when a man wanted to adopt a son, he would go to a public place, lay his hands on the young boy and say, ‘I adopt thee’, three times. This was the legal procedure for the Romans. When a person gives their lives to Christ, believing and trusting in Him alone for salvation, God says they become part of His family, **John 1:12**. But this isn’t through the natural process of human conception, but through adoption, **Romans 8:15**.

No one is forced to adopt anyone; adoption is a choice and motivated by love, **Ephesians 1:5-6**. In other words, adoption is based upon God’s choice to adopt us and is motivated by His love. It’s based upon our faith in Jesus, not on meritorious obedience to law.

Paul is saying that the Gentiles mustn’t try to go back to their superstitions, fear and bondage. The Jews mustn’t go back to depending on law-keeping, which brought no justification.

Bondage brings fear because everyone knows that they have broken the law, but liberty brings joy and peace of mind. Just like any new convert, they’re Jesus Christ’s heirs because He died for us; we are Christ’s heirs, not through trying to be perfect but because of His grace.

“Because you are his sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, “Abba, Father.” So, you are no longer a slave, but God’s child; and since you are his child, God has made you also an heir.” **Galatians 4:6-7**

Paul says that because they were sons, the Holy Spirit was given to them. When they were baptised, they received the gift of the Holy Spirit Himself, who would take up residence in them, **Acts 2:38 / 1 Corinthians 3:16**.

It’s at our baptism that not only are our sins forgiven and we receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, **Acts 2:38**, but it’s at our baptism that we truly become a child of God.

Paul’s point is that the Holy Spirit wasn’t among them because they tried to keep the law, but through the grace of God. They didn’t earn the right to have the indwelling of the Spirit; the Spirit was freely given. If the Galatians went back to law-keeping, they would give up their right to be sons of God, and they would lose the presence of the Spirit in their lives.

The words, ‘Abba, Father’, **Galatians 4:3**, were a term of endearment used by Jewish children in reference to their physical fathers, which again reminds us that it’s all about our relationship with the Father; we can’t call God, ‘Father’ unless we truly are His children, **Mark 14:36 / Romans 8:15-16**.

Fung, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Abba is an Aramaic affectionate diminutive for ‘father’ used in the intimacy of the family circle; it passed without change into the vocabulary of Greek-speaking Christians.’

A slave doesn’t have that kind of intimate relationship with his master. Those who appreciate their salvation by grace that has been extended from the Father through the cross, cry out to the Father for direction. When we say, ‘Abba, Father,’ we’re making a plea as His sons and daughters for direction from the Father, **Mark 14:36**.

And Paul says that, as sons, the Galatians aren’t slaves in their relationship with the Father. If they return to law-keeping, they will return to the status of a slave, and so they can’t address the Father as ‘Abba.’ But, since they are sons through Jesus, then they are heirs of the promise, and they can call Him Father.

Paul says, ‘You are no longer a slave, but God’s child, and since you are his child, God has made you also an heir,’ **Galatians 4:7 / Romans 8:16**. The contrast Paul is making between being a son or slave is obvious; the son has a close relationship with the Father, and the slave doesn’t.

The son has the hope of inheritance, the slave doesn’t; the son labours in the love of the Father, and the slave labours in fear. The Son is of the nature of the Father, the slave isn’t, the Son has a father, and the slave has a master.

The Galatians wanted to leave the grace of God and turn back to law-keeping, **Galatians 1:6 / Galatians 3:1 / Galatians 4:20**. They wanted to leave that intimate relationship with the Father and go back to being slaves. In other words, they wanted to trust in their own abilities to be right with God, rather than trust in what Jesus had done for them at Calvary.

PAUL'S CONCERN FOR THE GALATIANS

“Formerly, when you did not know God, you were slaves to those who by nature are not gods. But now that you know God—or rather are known by God—how is it that you are turning back to those weak and miserable forces? Do you wish to be enslaved by them all over again?” **Galatians 4:8-9**

There was a time when the Gentiles of Galatia served those gods that they had created in their own minds, gods they had used their imagination to invent. And Paul says in the past, they didn't know the true God of heaven, **Galatians 4:8 / Matthew 7:21-23**.

He says in the past, they were foolish because they bowed down to worship idols and were scared of all the superstitions which came about because of these imaginary spirits.

And this wasn't a new problem; even God's own people fell for imaginary gods. When the prophet Jeremiah is speaking on behalf of God to His people, God is targeting the religious leaders and reminds them just how stupid this is, **Jeremiah 2:26-28**.

The beauty of Christianity is that we can become educated enough to know the difference between the One true God and any imaginary gods. We should know the difference between superstition and the One true God.

The good news is that the Galatians had obeyed the Gospel and become sons of God. In other words, they came to realise just how stupid they were and turned to the One true God. And because they turned to God, God claimed them as His sons through the redeeming blood of Jesus.

Paul asks them, how could you give up the freedom that you now enjoy in Christ in order to return to a legal system that brought you bondage and condemnation? Why would you want to go back to your imaginary gods? **Galatians 4:9**.

The Jewish Christians were in the process of returning to the legalism of meritorious law-keeping in reference to circumcision and Old Testament ceremonies.

The Judaizing teachers were taking both Jewish and Gentile Christians on a journey back to those 'weak and miserable forces', **Galatians 4:9**, of religion that produced death, not life. In other words, they were returning to 'another Gospel,' a gospel that brought death because it denied the sufficiency of grace, **Galatians 1:6-9**.

Wiersbe, in his commentary, says the following.

‘One of the tragedies of legalism is that it gives the appearance of spiritual maturity when, in reality, it leads the believer back into a ‘second childhood’ of Christian experience.’

The Judaizing teachers were inviting the Galatians to return to the religions of slavery and death. And instead of living by faith, they wanted to live by experience, emotions and feelings, **Proverbs 14:12 / 2 Corinthians 5:7**.

Paul says to these Galatian Christians, if you guys go back to Judaism, you're starting a journey that will lead you back to slavery and death. You go back to the old routines of pointless religious activities.

“You are observing special days and months and seasons and years! I fear for you, that somehow I have wasted my efforts on you.” **Galatians 4:10-11**

The Galatians were being instructed to observe Jewish feast days as legal requirements for justification, **Galatians 4:10**. Remember, even though Paul never condemned the keeping of certain days that were observed in a cultural situation, **Colossians 2:16**, he did condemn the keeping of those days as a way of working for your salvation, **Romans 14:5-6**.

Constable, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The Judaizers had urged Paul’s readers to observe the Mosaic rituals. Here, the annual feasts are in view. Paul despaired that they were going backwards and that much of his labour for them was futile. They were not acting like heirs of God.’

After teaching them the Gospel, helping them see the foolishness of their former religion, and highlighting that law-keeping alone doesn’t make anyone right with God. Paul feels like he’s just wasted his time with them, **Galatians 4:11**. He’s talking in terms of the great sufferings and trials he and Barnabas went through in the southern region of Galatia to bring them the Gospel.

Paul’s saying that all that persecution and effort was useless if they return to a system of legal justification, 1 **Corinthians 15:10**. Imagine someone setting you free from slavery and bondage only to find out that they want to go back to it! Paul’s basically saying they should hang their heads in shame even at the thought of going back, but Paul wasn’t going to give up on them that easily.

“I plead with you, brothers and sisters, become like me, for I became like you. You did me no wrong. As you know, it was because of an illness that I first preached the gospel to you, and even though my illness was a trial to you, you did not treat me with contempt or scorn. Instead, you welcomed me as if I were an angel of God, as if I were Christ Jesus himself.” **Galatians 4:12-14**

Paul pleads with them to leave this idea of going back to try and be right with God by law-keeping and good deeds. Their actions weren’t just a simple deviation from the truth of the Gospel; their actions meant they would lose their relationship with God and couldn’t be called children of God anymore, and ultimately, they would lose their salvation.

And to get his point across to the Galatians, Paul makes it personal and says, ‘if you go back, you’ll not only lose your relationship with God, but you’ll also lose the relationship you had with him’.

Paul had become all things to all men in order to win the Galatians, **Galatians 4:12**. He had identified with them in order to cross-culturally communicate the Gospel to them, but he’s pleading that they become as he is by enjoying the freedom that he has in Christ, **Galatians 4:12**.

Stott, in his commentary, says the following concerning Paul’s words to become like him, **Galatians 4:12**.

‘All Christians should be able to say something like this, especially to unbelievers, namely that we are so satisfied with Jesus Christ, with His freedom, joy and salvation, that we want other people to become like us.’

Whilst in Galatia, they did Paul no harm, but graciously received him as a messenger of God, **Galatians 4:12**. He suffered great persecution and hardship in order to evangelise the areas of Galatia. In doing so, he became ill, **Galatians 4:13 / Acts 14:19-20**.

And so, the superstitious converts in Galatia would have considered either persecution or illness to be a curse that the gods would pour out on those who were wrong.

However, those who accepted what Paul preached didn’t receive him as one who was cursed. They didn’t consider Paul’s hardships or sickness as a curse from some false god, **Galatians 4:14**.

We don’t know what illness was that Paul was suffering from, but we do know it hindered his work in Galatia. Paul’s simply saying that, despite being ill, they received him anyway.

The Galatians enthusiastically received Paul when he preached the Gospel to them. They received Paul as one sent from God, not from men, **Galatians 4:14**. Remember, on one occasion, the Galatians actually believed that Paul and Barnabas were the gods who had come down from heaven to visit them, **Acts 14:11-12**.

And so, if they could easily believe they were gods, this would explain why they would be so open to the legalistic teaching of the Judaizers. Paul wants to get to the bottom of it; he wants to know what's happened that's changed their opinion of what Paul taught them.

“Where, then, is your blessing of me now? I can testify that, if you could have done so, you would have torn out your eyes and given them to me. Have I now become your enemy by telling you the truth?” **Galatians 4:15-16**

When Paul first came to them with the Gospel, they felt greatly honoured and regarded him highly. They would have made great personal and physical sacrifices in order to help him, and as a result of their reception of Paul and his message, they also received a great blessing of joy. They were blessed by his presence, but now, their joy has subsided, **Galatians 4:15**.

When Paul speaks about the Galatians plucking out their eyes in order to give them to Paul appear to suggest that he had problems with his eyes, **Galatians 6:11**. Some believe that this was Paul's thorn in the flesh, which he asked God to remove three times, **2 Corinthians 12:7-10**.

Morris, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Obviously, a plucked-out eye would be a gift nobody could use, but Paul's point is that his converts had been ready to do anything for him in those early days.’

Paul gets straight to the point with the Galatians by asking if he has ‘become their enemy for telling them the truth’, **Galatians 4:16**. He feels that he must say the truth, even though that truth might cause great resentment against him personally.

He's willing to take the risk of losing their friendship in order that they do not lose their relationship with God as children of God, **Romans 10:14**. The thing about legalists is that they are always accusing other brethren of something, usually of being too liberal, a heretic or a false teacher.

And we can imagine them saying, ‘Oh, Paul is making salvation far too easy; we have to do something to work towards our salvation.’ What we have to do is mix Christianity with Judaism, we'll believe in Christ but make sure we'll keep the Old covenant of circumcision and observe our special days.’

In other words, they wanted to turn the Galatian church against Paul and would say anything and accuse him of everything to help them do just that. But Paul is very much aware of what's going on; he knows exactly who's behind them, wanting to turn back to those ‘weak and miserable forces’, **Galatians 4:9**.

“Those people are zealous to win you over, but for no good. What they want is to alienate you from us, so that you may have zeal for them. It is fine to be zealous, provided the purpose is good, and to be so always, not just when I am with you.” **Galatians 4:17-18**

These legalistic teachers were saying, ‘let's go out and save the saved’, and ‘let's convert these Christians to our way of religion.’ The legalist's focus is never on Jesus but always on self, and so, they go about trying to intimidate others to conform to their own rules, regulations, opinions and interpretations.

Can you see the difference? The legalists recruit people, but God converts people. The legalists hold up a bunch of rules and regulations, but Christians by faith hold up the cross.

The Judaizing teachers wanted to influence the Galatians in order to have them in fellowship with their position. But in doing so, Paul says, the Galatians would lose their fellowship with the church, and instead of having a zeal for Christ, they would end up with a zeal for them, **Galatians 4:17**.

This basically means the legalists will demand that you agree with them on all opinions and interpretations, which also means there's no room for freedom. Zeal is a good thing as long as it's controlled and guided by knowledge, **Romans 10:2**.

In other words, we shouldn't be deceived into thinking that the zeal of any religious group proves the truth of the group. Zeal doesn't guarantee that they're teaching the truth; it only confirms that the zealous firmly believe what they teach, **Galatians 4:18**.

Remember, Paul himself was a Jew filled with zeal but for all the wrong reasons, **Acts 7:58-8:4**. This was something that he could never forget, **1 Corinthians 15:9 / 1 Timothy 1:15**.

Paul says to the Galatian Christians, 'Don't be deceived into thinking that the zeal of the Judaizing teachers is evidence of truth'. People are often deceived by the zeal or by the great enthusiasm of those who are promoting their own theologies.

"My dear children, for whom I am again in the pains of childbirth until Christ is formed in you, how I wish I could be with you now and change my tone, because I am perplexed about you!" **Galatians 4:19-20**

Notice what Paul says here, Paul has moved in this letter from calling them 'foolish Galatians' in **Galatians 3:1**, to 'brothers and sisters' in **Galatians 4:12**, and now he says, 'my dear children', **Galatians 4:19**.

Paul's harshness has moved to gentleness in a last emotional plea that they wake up to what is happening. He says just like the pain experienced in a woman going through childbirth, he's experiencing the frustrations of building a church, **Galatians 4:19**.

In other words, his first efforts in Galatia were strenuous as a woman in labour; he was going through the same pain in order to help them remain children of God.

George, in his commentary, says the following.

'The Galatians who a moment ago were described as being formed in the womb were now spoken of as expectant mothers who themselves must wait for an embryonic Christ to be fully developed (morphoo, a medical term for the growth of the fetus into an infant) within them.'

They had come into Christ by being immersed into Christ, **Matthew 28:19-20 / Acts 2:38**. But sadly, they hadn't grown in the grace and knowledge of Christ so that Christ be formed in them, **Romans 8:29 / 2 Peter 3:18**.

And he says, if he were only personally present with them, he could nurture their spiritual growth and personally deal with the Judaizing teachers among them, **Galatians 4:20**.

But he isn't there personally with them, he's 'perplexed', **Galatians 4:20**, which means he's at a loss as to what to think about them. They knew the law but didn't understand it, they knew the law but misapplied it, and they wanted to swap the law of freedom for the law of slavery.

HAGAR AND SARAH

"Tell me, you who want to be under the law, are you not aware of what the law says? For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by the slave woman and the other by the free woman. His son by the slave woman was born according to the flesh, but his son by the free woman was born as the result of a divine promise". **Galatians 4:21-23**

Paul asks a question that is directed to those who are seeking to return to the law, and he challenges them to listen to what the law says, **Galatians 4:21**. He says that Abraham had two sons, both of whom came from Abraham, **Galatians 4:22**. Ishmael was born of an Egyptian slave woman named Hagar, **Genesis 16**.

We know the story where Abraham and Sarah are desperate for a child, and so Sarah comes up with the idea of Abraham sleeping with Hagar, to which Abraham agrees, **Genesis 16:3-4**.

But what they're really trying to do is help God out on their own; they're trying to bring about the fulfilment of God's promise of a son through his seed. And so, Ishmael was born through natural circumstances, but this wasn't the way God wanted it to happen.

The work of Abraham and Sarah couldn't bring about the fulfilment of the promise, why? Simply because the fulfilment of the promise must be done by the grace of God.

Isaac was born of a free woman, Sarah, **Galatians 4:22 / Genesis 21**, but it was Isaac who was born of Sarah according to the grace of God, **Hebrews 11:11**. Sarah was well past childbearing age, **Genesis 17:17**; that's why she got Hagar involved, because she couldn't have children, **Genesis 16:3-4**.

Ishmael was born as a result of man's effort to work out God's promise, but Isaac was born as a result of God's work to carry out the fulfilment of His promise to Abraham, **Galatians 4:23**.

Constable, in his commentary, says the following.

'He pointed out two contrasts between Ishmael and Isaac. First, Ishmael's mother was a slave, but Isaac's mother was free. These conditions affected the status of their sons in Abraham's household. Second, Ishmael was born naturally, but Isaac was born supernaturally in fulfilment of God's promise.'

"These things are being taken figuratively: The women represent two covenants. One covenant is from Mount Sinai and bears children who are to be slaves: This is Hagar. Now Hagar stands for Mount Sinai in Arabia and corresponds to the present city of Jerusalem, because she is in slavery with her children. But the Jerusalem that is above is free, and she is our mother. For it is written: "Be glad, barren woman, you who never bore a child; shout for joy and cry aloud, you who were never in labour; because more are the children of the desolate woman than of her who has a husband." **Galatians 4:24-27**

Paul says Hagar and Sarah are two covenants, figuratively speaking, **Galatians 4:24**. In other words, we should not take them literally.

Offer, in his commentary, says the following.

'Hagar and Sarah represent the two covenants, **Galatians 4:24**. Hagar represents the Law of Moses, and Sarah represents the gospel of Christ. Hagar represents Mt Sinai, where the Law was given, and Sarah represents Jerusalem, from where the gospel was sent out. Hagar was a slave woman. She was the servant of Abraham's wife, but Sarah was a free woman. And the two laws are in exactly the same likeness. The Law of Moses represents bondage. Those under the Law were bound by its ordinances, and the fact that it was incapable of delivering freedom from sin. On the other hand, the Law of Christ (the gospel) came by promise, came by divine intervention, and delivers freedom, freedom from the bondage of the Law, and freedom from sin.'

Ishmael represents the covenant that is from Mount Sinai, the covenant which contained the law that brought death, **Exodus 19-20**. And the reason it brought death is that no one could keep the law perfectly in order to be right with God.

Paul says all the law did was bring slavery and death, not life. The law couldn't deal with our sin problem, and the law couldn't save you. What the law did was highlight the fact that we do sin and that we're all sinners. And so, it pointed us to see that we need someone else to deal with our sin problem.

All the animal sacrifices of the world couldn't take away our sin, and so for us to be justified or be right with God, we have to look elsewhere, **Hebrews 10:1-4**. We have to look to Jesus because He was the One who showed us God's grace by offering Himself upon the cross as the sacrificial Lamb of God. In other words, He took our sin upon Himself, He made us right with God, and it's because of Jesus that we now stand justified, just as if we hadn't sinned.

Paul says that this covenant and law that were established on Mount Sinai were represented by Jerusalem, **Galatians 4:25**, which stood at the time Paul wrote the letter. And it seems that Jerusalem was still the centre of religious reference for the Judaizing teachers.

Paul's point is that there's a huge difference between the covenant and the law which was given on Mount Sinai, and this law that the Judaizers were promoting.

The Jews had been drifting away from the law for years. In fact, by the time Jesus came on the scene, the Jews had introduced hundreds of extra laws which were nowhere to be found within the Old Testament.

That's why Jesus was always having a go at the religious leaders for teaching the traditions of men. The Jewish religious leaders had added numerous practices to the original Old Testament laws in order that the laws of the Old Testament be strictly kept, **Mark 7:1-4**.

The Pharisees had developed a system of six hundred and thirteen laws, three hundred and sixty-five negative commands and two hundred and forty-eight positive laws, but by the time Christ came, it had produced a heartless, cold, and arrogant brand of righteousness.

This was the religion that Paul came from, and he thought at one time that if he kept all these ceremonial laws and the law of Moses, then he could be saved, **Philippians 3:4-7**.

But he came to understand that he was wrong in his theology, but it took a visit from Jesus Himself on the road to Damascus for him to come to that realisation. These brethren are doing the very thing that Paul said we shouldn't do, which goes beyond what was written, **1 Corinthians 4:6**.

Paul continues and says that Isaac represents the covenant that we now have with God. This covenant relationship originated because of the grace of God, and this covenant relationship brings freedom, not slavery. It's the heavenly Jerusalem that is the focal point of worship for those who are born of the freewoman by faith, **Galatians 4:26**.

Constable, in his commentary, says the following.

'Hagar also represents old Jerusalem, enslaved under Rome and the Mosaic Law, which Paul did not mention in **Galatians 4:26**. Sarah represents the heavenly city of Jerusalem, the final destiny of departed believers, which is free.'

Those of the freewoman don't find their authority in the physical Jerusalem of Palestine, but in the heavenly Jerusalem from where Paul received the Gospel. And to further make his point, in **Galatians 4:27**, Paul quotes **Isaiah 54:1**, where Isaiah depicted the desolate city of Jerusalem, which would be restored to bring forth children once again.

In other words, the children of Abraham by faith are far more than the children of Abraham through physical lineage. When God promised Abraham that he would be the father of many nations, **Genesis 17:5**, there was more to the promise than his physical descendants. Both Jews and Gentiles who were of the faith of Abraham were also the spiritual descendants of Abraham, **Romans 4:15-18**.

"Now you, brothers and sisters, like Isaac, are children of promise. At that time, the son born according to the flesh persecuted the son born by the power of the Spirit. It is the same now. But what does Scripture say? "Get rid of the slave woman and her son, for the slave woman's son will never share in the inheritance with the free woman's son. Therefore, brothers and sisters, we are not children of the slave woman, but of the free woman." **Galatians 4:28-31**

Remember that Isaac was born because of the grace and work of God in the lives of Abraham and Sarah. And we, too, are Christians today because we were also born because of the grace and work of God, **Galatians 4:28**.

Abraham and Sarah didn't work in order to earn the fulfilment of the promise, and neither can we. Salvation always was and always will be the gift of God through His grace, **Ephesians 2:8-9**.

Abraham didn't doubt that God could fulfil the promise, and despite Sarah being well past the time for childbearing, by faith Abraham trusted in God. Ishmael was the only son of Abraham for fourteen years before Isaac was born, but when Isaac was born, Ishmael had a rival and went on to persecute Isaac, **Galatians 4:29 / Genesis 21:10**. And because he persecuted Isaac, he limited his own stay in the house of Abraham.

Paul is saying that just like Ishmael persecuted Isaac, the same thing was going on in the Galatian church, **Galatians 4:29**. These Judaizing teachers were persecuting the true sons of Abraham by faith, and because Paul was preaching the truth of the Gospel, he too was being persecuted by those who were of the slave woman. In **Galatians 4:30**, Paul uses the Old Testament example of Hagar and her son, 'get rid of them both,' he says, **Genesis 21:10**. Offer, in his commentary, says the following.

'The prophecy of scripture, **Genesis 21:8-13**. When Isaac was weaned at about 2 years old, Ishmael was about 17 years old. Ishmael began mocking his half-brother Isaac, and Sarah demanded that Hagar and her son Ishmael, be thrown out of the house, and that they would never share in the inheritance with Isaac. Because these two sons represent the two covenants, then the implication is that the law of Moses was to be thrown out, and that it would never share with the inheritance that we have from being 'in Christ'.'

Paul is saying that the Galatians need to get rid of those who were sons of legalism and those who were bringing them back into slavery again. These legalisers were trying to bring God's free children under their own legalistic umbrella. They were trying to put demands on Christians that God never demanded. They wanted them to follow commandments that God never commanded.

And Paul says, 'get rid of them, they'll just make you slaves again, they'll just bring you under condemnation again', **Romans 8:1-2**. Paul concludes that we're no longer under slavery, but under the grace of God that brings freedom, **Galatians 4:31**.

CHAPTER 5

INTRODUCTION

"It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery." **Galatians 5:1**

FREEDOM IN CHRIST

In this chapter, we find Paul concluding his argument with the Judaizers that we're saved by grace and not by some legal performance of the law. He talks a lot about freedom, especially being free in Christ. He tells them they need to stop allowing anyone from distorting God's grace, which will ultimately turn them away from God's grace, **Acts 15:10**.

In other words, God's grace through Jesus has set us free from the burden of trying to keep the law perfectly in order to be right with God, **John 8:34-36**. Just before Jesus died on the cross, He said, 'It is finished,' **John 19:30**, that's His way of saying, 'freedom'.

Freedom from the power of death, freedom from the power of sin, freedom from being justified by law. We're free from the bondage of sin because we're free from the bondage of justification by perfect law-keeping and meritorious works.

Christians are set free by being created in Christ to be new creatures, **2 Corinthians 5:17**. Christians are set free in order to serve, **Ephesians 2:10**. We don't have to obey God, but we choose to obey Him and obey Him freely. Throughout their history, the Jews had on many occasions been in either the political or national bondage of some nation. They had gone into Assyrian bondage and Babylonian bondage. They were living in a possessed land by the Romans, even while this letter was being written.

And when Paul says, 'do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery'. This would have been a very sensitive issue with them. He's asking them, 'Do you Gentile Christians want to be burdened with slavery the Jews had for many years?'

Paul says don't let these people intimidate you, don't let them make slaves of you like they are. All they'll do is get you circumcised, all they'll do is bind you to a law-keeping kind of religion.

"Mark my words! I, Paul, tell you that if you let yourselves be circumcised, Christ will be of no value to you at all. Again, I declare to every man who lets himself be circumcised that he is obligated to obey the whole law." Galatians 5:2-3

Paul doesn't mix his words and tells them straight: if you allow yourself to be circumcised, you're committing yourself to full obedience to the law, and more importantly, Christ and the grace He offers will be worth nothing at all, **Galatians 5:2**.

These Judaizers wanted to take part in the Old Testament law and part of the law of Christ in order to form a legal system of justification. Paul says we can't have it both ways; it's either law or grace, **Romans 7:1-4**.

It is either grace plus law, or grace in and of itself with total dependence on God to save us as a result of our obedient response to His law, **Galatians 5:3 / James 2:9-11**.

"You who are trying to be justified by the law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace. For through the Spirit we eagerly await by faith the righteousness for which we hope. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value." Galatians 5:4-6

Paul says if you want to return to perfect law-keeping, to be right with God, then you have been cut off from Christ and when a person is cut off from Christ, they are cut off from the grace of Christ, **Galatians 5:4**. They have fallen from grace, **Luke 8:13 / 1 Timothy 4:1 / 2 Thessalonians 2:3 / Hebrews 6:4-6 / 2 Peter 2:20-21**.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following concerning falling from grace.

'The present tense in this verse must be read as indicating that some of the Galatians had actually defected from Christianity in the manner indicated, with the result that they had 'fallen from grace.'

Paul is saying that anyone who would turn the law of Christ into some kind of legalised religious system to keep right with God will be lost, not saved, **Galatians 2:16**.

Paul goes on and says, it's through the Spirit, as opposed to the performance of the flesh, that we wait for our final redemption to heaven, **Galatians 5:5**. Do you know why? Paul says that no amount of meritorious work of either deeds or law will account for one being righteous before God.

Lightfoot, in his commentary, says the following.

'Circumcision is the seal of the law. He who willingly and deliberately undergoes circumcision enters upon a compact to fulfil the law. To fulfil it, therefore, he is bound, and he cannot plead the grace of Christ; for he has entered on another mode of justification.'

What is necessary is a faith that works through love, **Galatians 5:6**. The work that we do is produced by faith, our labour is prompted by love, **1 Thessalonians 1:3**.

In other words, when we finally realise that our salvation is a free gift of grace from God, we'll quit trying to work for our salvation and start working because of our salvation. This spiritual growth that Paul is talking about comes from the heart, not from the outside with a bunch of rules and regulations to keep us in check.

"You were running a good race. Who cut in on you to keep you from obeying the truth? That kind of persuasion does not come from the one who calls you. "A little yeast works through the whole batch of dough." **Galatians 5:7-9**

Now notice the word 'were', it's past tense, Paul says the Galatians started off the race great because they had the right goal in their sights, **Galatians 5:7**. And who was in their sight?

The crucified Christ was in their sight, **Galatians 3:1**. At this point, they took their eyes off Jesus and were heading on a dead-end road that would only lead to destruction. You ask any athlete, and they will tell you the worst thing you can do in a race is look behind you; you have to stay focused on the finish line, **Hebrews 12:2-3**.

Paul knew all too well what he was talking about, and just before he died, he wrote to his young friend Timothy about it. Paul saw life as a race, not in the sense of finishing first but in terms of completing the race, **2 Timothy 4:6-8**. Paul says the Galatians started off great, they were running a good race, but something happened, someone has cut in on you, **Galatians 5:7**.

Again, we can picture athletes running in a stadium, and as they're running, someone cuts in on another runner. Paul says the Galatians had been cut in on by someone who had pushed them out of their running lane.

They were now headed in the wrong direction and would be disqualified if they continued on their present course. But who was it who cut in and hindered them in their race? **Galatians 5:8**. It was those legalistic Judaizing teachers who had infiltrated the fellowship of the church.

These teachers were diverting the churches toward their own beliefs. These legalisers were in the church, and they were hindering the spiritual growth of the church, **Acts 20:29-30**.

Paul reminds them that God had called them through the Gospel, **2 Thessalonians 2:13-14**. Paul wanted them to know that they were now being called into something where neither the calling nor the teaching originated from God.

The figurative use of leaven is sometimes used in the Bible to refer to the influence of good, but here Paul uses it in terms of something bad, really bad, **Galatians 5:9**. He says that the influence of a few Judaizing teachers who were in the churches was actually influencing the members to follow their legalistic doctrine.

And if their influence wasn't stopped, it would flood the entire church of southern Galatia. We know how leaven works; it's slow but persistent, and it's the same with the influence of legalism among Christians; it's slow but persistent.

These legalisers were putting on a show, look how often I pray, look at how often I fast, I know the Bible better than you do, and they took pride in their religious performances.

Manmade rules and regulations don't produce anything in us, whereas grace works on the heart in order to produce the fruit of the Spirit, **Romans 7:4**. And so, because Paul knew how the leaven of legalism works and causes so much damage to churches, he tells the Galatians to stop it from spreading.

This is exactly what Peter was condemned for when he was in Antioch. He was intimidated by legalistic brethren, and because of fear, he submitted to their influence, **Galatians 2:11-14**. Now the Galatians may have started off well and slowly gone off course, but Paul has some good news.

"I am confident in the Lord that you will take no other view. The one who is throwing you into confusion, whoever that may be, will have to pay the penalty." **Galatians 5:10**

Notice whom Paul put his confidence in, ‘the Lord’. In other words, Paul recognised the power of the word of God, and because of that power found within the Word of God, he encouraged them to stick to what God’s Word says.

What Paul is doing here is what he would eventually do with the elders of the church in Ephesus, that is, commend them to the word of God that would build them up, **Acts 20:32**.

Paul had confidence in the church of Galatia that they would respond to the letter he was writing. He had confidence that they would reject the influence of the legalistic teachers in their midst.

Legalistic religion arises in the church only when other Christians don’t know their Bibles well enough to see the difference between the Bible and opinion, or the Bible and traditions.

Notice the warning Paul gives to those false teachers, he says, ‘they have a penalty to pay’, **Galatians 5:10**. Anyone who leads the sheep astray and gets them to follow them, by intimidating the sheep to believe that his opinion or interpretation is the only and correct opinion or interpretation.

Those who would steal the sheep of God in that way will receive their just judgment, **Matthew 18:6**. And what is their judgment? Their judgment will be destruction from the presence of God, **2 Thessalonians 1:7-9**.

Those who cause trouble in the church with their divisive opinions and legal demands will be troubled by God in the end. That’s one reason why all preachers and teachers must be very cautious about how and what they teach, **James 3:1**.

“Brothers and sisters, if I am still preaching circumcision, why am I still being persecuted? In that case, the offence of the cross has been abolished. As for those agitators, I wish they would go the whole way and emasculate themselves!” **Galatians 5:11-12**

What exactly were these legalisers saying about Paul? They were saying that Paul was still preaching the need for circumcision. And to bring this accusation to a halt, Paul simply asks them a rhetorical question: if he were preaching the doctrine of getting right with God by works, then why was he being persecuted by those who were teaching the same thing? **Galatians 5:11**.

Paul says the offence of the cross is that we must reject the notion that we can save ourselves by the outward religious things that we do. This is exactly what these legalistic Jewish Christians were struggling with. Instead of relying on the cross for salvation, they were relying on their own religious system.

The Greek word for ‘stumbling block’ used in **1 Corinthians 1:23** is the word ‘skandelon’, which is where we get our word ‘scandal’ from. The whole idea of a crucified God was scandalous to the Jews, and they would regularly persecute anyone who thought that salvation comes by grace and faith and not human works.

Paul says these teachers were agitators who continually caused tension in the church, **Galatians 5:12**. And because they were causing such disturbance in the church, Paul used graphic words here in order to explain what should happen.

He said, ‘I wish they would go the whole way and emasculate themselves!’ **Galatians 5:12**. In other words, he wished that there would be a slip of the circumcision knife and that they would mutilate or emasculate themselves.

According to the law, these people wouldn’t be permitted to enter the assembly of the Lord, **Deuteronomy 23:1**. The word ‘emasculate’ is the word ‘apokopto’, which means to amputate, mutilate, to castrate.

In other words, they must be ‘cut off’ from the fellowship of the church, in order that their leaven stops spreading among the faithful. They must be cut off in order to restore peace and harmony among those who trust in the grace of the cross.

These are the kind of people Paul writes about to the church in Rome, **Romans 16:17-18**. These are the kind of people whom John writes about, **2 John 9-10**. In other words, these legalistic Judaizers were going beyond what was written, **1 Corinthians 4:6**.

Paul got fighting mad when people started to add to or take away from the Gospel of salvation. He got fighting mad when he saw people cutting in on those faithful Christians who were running a good race. He got fighting mad because these legalists were stealing souls and leading them to destruction.

LIFE BY THE SPIRIT

“You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love. For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: “Love your neighbour as yourself.” If you bite and devour each other, watch out, or you will be destroyed by each other.” Galatians 5:13-15

Paul reminds the Galatians that they have been rescued by God out of the bondage of legal justification. They’re now free from trying to be right with God through law-keeping and meritorious deeds, which also implies that they shouldn’t allow anyone else to come along and put the shackles of law-keeping that Jesus removed from them back on them.

Paul knew all too well that some Christians would take advantage of their freedom from the law as an excuse to sin, **Galatians 5:13**. He knew all too well that some Christians would sin in order to supposedly increase the grace of God in their lives, **Romans 6:1-4**.

We know this was a problem for the early church, **Jude 4**. As Christians, we have been set free from trying to be right with God through law-keeping, but we aren’t free from the law of Christ, **1 Corinthians 8:9 / Romans 6:1-2 / 1 Peter 2:16**.

As Christians, we’re not under the Old Testament laws, but we’re still under the law of Christ. We obey God and His commandments not because we have to but because we want to.

And we want to please God because of His grace; it’s His grace that motivates us to do things. It’s our love for God that motivates us to submit to His will and His ways. Paul is saying, grace doesn’t produce a license to sin.

Paul says, the very foundation upon which law stands is love, **Galatians 5:13-14**. In other words, law governs our interaction with one another. Loving our neighbour motivates us to act in a lawful manner, whether it be in our relationships with one another as a church or with society as a whole.

Paul says the problem with legalism is that everyone ends up ‘biting and devouring each other,’ **Galatians 5:15**.

Instead of loving each other, the church ends up divided because everyone’s having a go at each other, **James 4:1-2**.

The devil will use anything he can to destroy the Christian, even if that means using Christians to cause division. No wonder Paul says, ‘watch out, or you will be destroyed by each other,’ **Galatians 5:15**. Paul knew where this legalistic mindset would end up; it would be disastrous.

Morris, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The loveless life is a life lived on the level of animals, with a concern only for oneself, no matter what the cost to other people.’

“So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever you want. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.” Galatians 5:16-18

How do we walk by the Spirit? If we live in a spiritual manner, then we’re living in the way the Holy Spirit wants us to live, Galatians 5:22-25.

Morris, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Walking is a metaphor used from time to time in Scripture to denote spiritual progress. People in the first century could not travel as fast as we do, with our cars, planes, trains and the like, but even so, for them as for us, walking

was the slowest way of going places. But even though walking was slow and unspectacular, walking meant progress. If anyone kept walking, she or he would certainly cover the ground and eventually reach the destination. So for the apostle, walking was an apt metaphor. If any believer was walking, that believer was going somewhere.'

And how do we know how He wants us to live? We have to read the Word, the Bible, **Hebrews 4:12**. We wouldn't even know that the Holy Spirit existed if He didn't reveal Himself to us through the Word. Likewise, Christians wouldn't have a clue about how to live godly lives if we didn't have the Bible.

Paul says, the legalist is motivated by the flesh but the free Christian is motivated by grace and he says, the life that is directed by the Spirit is opposed to the life that has been given over to fulfil the desires of the flesh, **Galatians 5:17**. In other words, we all have a choice to make, will we live to please God or will we live to please ourselves?

And Paul knew all too well what he meant when he talked about this choice, and he understood that it takes self-discipline to please God, **1 Corinthians 9:27**. In other words, it's all too easy to live life to satisfy our own desires, but it takes time and self-discipline to live our lives in a way that pleases God.

And so, Paul says, Christians aren't only to 'walk by the Spirit' but must be 'led by the Spirit', **Galatians 5:18**. The word 'led' is interesting because it carries with it the idea of being driven. Paul is saying, through God's Word, we need to let the Holy Spirit lead us.

Boice, in his commentary, says the following.

'Being led by the Spirit does not imply passivity but rather the need to allow oneself to be led. Responding to the Spirit is described by three mutually interpreting words in **Galatians 5:16** / **Galatians 5:18** / **Galatians 5:25**, 'walk' (RSV), 'led,' and 'live.'

Paul is contrasting a life led by the Spirit and a life led by the flesh. These legalists were focusing so much on being right with God through law-keeping that the whole emphasis ended up being on the flesh and performance. But those who seek a spiritual relationship with God will seek God's direction through the inspired word of God.

When Paul says, 'you are not under the law,' **Galatians 5:18**, the word 'the' isn't in the original Greek text; it should read 'not under law'. What difference does that make? It helps understand that Paul isn't just talking about the Law of Moses, but law in general, any law.

His point is that anyone who's trying to be right with God, through any kind of legal requirement, is still under bondage. But those who trust in the grace of God for their salvation and have faith in Christ and what He did at Calvary are not under bondage.

James says if a person breaks one law, they are guilty of breaking all the law, **James 2:10**. But in contrast, the real Christian will depend solely upon God for their salvation. Why?

Because they know that they can't keep the law perfectly, they know they will mess with us and fail, and they see their need for grace, **1 John 1:8-10**. In other words, perfect law-keeping demands obedience to law, but grace motivates obedience to law.

We're still under law, but it's God's New Testament law. James calls it a law of liberty, **James 1:25**. Later, James tells us that we will be judged by the law which gives us freedom, **James 2:12**. The point is, you're free from the Old Testament way of being right with God through law-keeping.

ACTS OF THE FLESH

"The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God." **Galatians 5:19-21**

Paul says these acts of the flesh are obvious; they are no longer hidden from society today but encouraged in society.

ADULTERY

Note that the KJV has adulterers first. Adulterers, ‘moichos’ were those who practised unlawful intercourse with the spouse of someone else. These were the Christians who broke their marriage vows to stay faithful to their husbands or wives by having sexual intercourse with anyone else other than their husband or wife, **Matthew 5:27-28 / Matthew 5:32 / Mark 10:11**. Anyone who practices adultery won’t inherit the kingdom of God.

SEXUAL IMMORALITY

The sexually immoral, ‘ pornos’, are those people who practice illicit sexual intercourse; this refers to all sexual sin, **Galatians 5:19-21 / Ephesians 5:4-5 / Revelation 21:8**.

The people who practice this sin think only of themselves; they only think about fulfilling their own sexual desires and pleasures, **Matthew 5:32 / Matthew 19:9 / Acts 15:20 / Acts 15:29 / 1 Corinthians 5:1 / Ephesians 5:3 / Colossians 3:5 / 1 Thessalonians 4:3**. Anyone who practices sexual immorality won’t inherit the kingdom of God.

IMPURITY

Impurity, ‘akatharsia’, are those who live an impure life. These were the Christians whose hearts and minds were filled with filth, **Titus 1:15**. In the Old Testament, they would be classed as being ceremonially unclean before God, **Leviticus 7:19-21**. Anyone with an impure heart or mind won’t inherit the kingdom of God.

DEBAUCHERY

Debauchery, ‘aselgeia’, are those who have immoral conduct or practice harmful things or do offensive things. There were the Christians who selfishly thought about themselves and didn’t care if they offended others by their actions or by the way they dressed.

This would include sexual dancing, drunkenness and sexual immorality, **2 Corinthians 12:21 / Ephesians 4:19 / 1 Peter 4:3**. Anyone who practises debauchery won’t inherit the kingdom of God.

IDOLATRY

Idolaters, ‘eidololatries’ were simply those who worshipped idols. These were the Christians who created their own religion and their deities in order to fulfil their own desires, 1 Corinthians 10:14 / Colossians 3:5 / 1 Peter 4:3 / Revelation 21:8 / Revelation 22:15. Anyone who practices idolatry won’t inherit the kingdom of God.

WITCHCRAFT

Witchcraft, ‘pharmakeia’, were those who used drugs to put people under their influence. Later, they became known as witches, sorcerers, wizards and witch-doctors.

These were the Christians who falsely attempted to exercise spiritual power over someone in order to control them by fear. No wonder God condemns the practice of witchcraft, Exodus 7:11 / Exodus 7:22 / Leviticus 20:6-7 / Deuteronomy 18:9-22 / Isaiah 47:9 / Isaiah 47:12 / Revelation 21:8. Anyone who practices witchcraft won’t inherit the kingdom of God.

HATRED

Hatred, ‘echthra’, is the desire to harm others for no apparent reason. These were the Christians who were intent on hurting others. They are the ones who would manipulate others against someone else, out of hatred, Titus 3:3 / 1 John 3:15. Anyone who practices hatred won’t inherit the kingdom of God.

DISCORD

Discord, ‘eris’, were those who loved to cause division amongst God’s people. These were the Christians who didn’t really love their neighbours as themselves, Mark 12:31.

They were the kind of Christians who would happily split a church over matters of opinion. In turn, other Christians are told to stay away from them, Titus 3:9-11 / Romans 2:8 / 1 Corinthians 11:16. Anyone who practices discord won’t inherit the kingdom of God.

JEALOUSY

Jealousy, ‘zelos’, were those who wanted what others possessed. These were the Christians who couldn’t bring themselves to give honour and respect where honour and respect were due; they couldn’t bring themselves to rejoice with those who rejoiced, Romans 12:15. Anyone who practices jealousy won’t inherit the kingdom of God.

FITS OF RAGE

Fits of rage, ‘thumos’, were those who couldn’t control their anger. These were the Christians who would throw themselves into temper tantrums when they didn’t get their own way; they would often get out of control. Anyone who doesn’t control their anger won’t inherit the kingdom of God.

SELFISH AMBITION

Selfish ambition, ‘eritheia’, were those who wanted all the praise for what they were doing. These were the Christians who wanted public acknowledgement for their achievements; again, it was all about ‘me’, ‘myself’ and ‘I’.

This was certainly a problem in the Ephesian church, **Ephesians 4:17 / Ephesians 6:12**. Anyone who possesses a spirit of selfish ambition won’t inherit the kingdom of God.

DISSENSIONS

Dissension, ‘dichostasia’, were those who would argue over opinions. These were the Christians who would rather create division in the church, rather than unity, over non-salvation issues, **Acts 15:1 / Acts 15:25**. Anyone who causes dissensions won’t inherit the kingdom of God.

FACTIONS

Factions, ‘haireisis’, were those who taught beyond what God taught in His Word, **1 Corinthians 4:6 / 2 John 9-10**. These were the Christians who taught anything to recruit people to their traditions or opinions, **Galatians 4:17 / Galatians 6:12**.

The reason these people won’t inherit life is that they caused a lot of division in the church over their traditions and opinions. Anyone who causes factions in the church won’t inherit the kingdom of God.

ENVY

Envy, ‘phthonos’, were those Christians who felt uncomfortable with what other people have, or with other people because of who they were. These were the Christians who didn’t like anyone when they had more possessions than them and they didn’t like anyone who was in a higher position of power, **Proverbs 14:30 / Matthew 27:18 / 1 Timothy 6:4 / Titus 3:3 / 1 Peter 2:1**. Anyone who is envious of others or what others have won’t inherit the kingdom of God.

DRUNKENNESS

Drunkenness, ‘methe’, were those Christians who loved alcohol more than God. These were the Christians who loved alcohol so much that it affected their behaviour, and they lost control of their senses, **1 Corinthians 11:21 / 1 Timothy 3:3 / 1 Timothy 3:8**. Anyone who loses control through drinking alcohol won’t inherit the kingdom of God.

ORGIES

Orgies, ‘komos’, are those Christians who are involved in ungodly sexual relations with others. These were the Christians who enjoyed having sex with many people at the same time, whilst enjoying a banquet afterwards; this was very popular in idol worship. Anyone who gets involved in orgies won’t inherit the kingdom of God.

THE LIKE

Paul’s list of sins here in Galatians are sins of the flesh, but his list isn’t exhaustive, as he says and ‘the like’. This simply means that any sin which concerns the flesh will cost someone their salvation.

Anyone who gets involved in any kind of sin of the flesh won’t inherit the kingdom of God, **1 Corinthians 6:9-10 / Ephesians 5:3-5 / Revelation 21:8 / Revelation 22:15**. And to contrast the acts of the flesh, Paul goes on to speak about the fruit of the Spirit.

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.” Galatians 5:22-23

Now notice that Paul speaks about the ‘fruit’ of the Spirit, not the ‘fruits’. In other words, there is one fruit that produces nine attributes in the Christian life. And the reason we have nine attributes is that during the miraculous age in the New Testament, there were nine miraculous gifts, **1 Corinthians 12:8-10**, but the nine miraculous gifts were temporary, while these nine attributes of the Spirit are permanent.

Paul is saying that those who have turned from depending on themselves for salvation have turned to depend on the direction of God. In other words, the fruit of the Spirit is brought forth in the lives of those who seek direction from God for moral attitudes and behaviour.

Paul’s list of the fruit of the Spirit is the proof that we are Christians, and notice the first characteristic of the Christian who is living the Christian life, it’s love. The fruit of the Spirit is the product that the Spirit produces by or through the Word which the Spirit has given us. This singular ‘fruit’ is contrasted to the multiple facets of ‘the works of the flesh.’

These aren’t separate fruits but are characteristics of the one ‘fruit of the Spirit.’ A person may speak about a juicy red apple. We recognise that juicy and red are characteristics of this apple. These characteristics describe this fruit. Thus, the same is true with ‘the fruit of the Spirit’, and the first descriptive characteristic which Paul ascribes to this marvellous fruit is ‘love.’

LOVE

As Paul describes the fruit of the Spirit, he begins with the most prevalent characteristic. It stands loftily above the others. Love, ‘agape’, stands in the heights because it directly stems from God, **1 John 4:16**. Furthermore, love stands exalted because all the other traits of this beautiful fruit stem from this first attribute, ‘love’.

In Koine Greek of the first century, there were four different words for ‘love’. The word used in **Galatians 5:22** is ‘agape.’ This love is a sacrificial love that seeks the highest good for its object.

It is more than just mere emotions and affections, for it is projected from the intellect. While mere emotions and affections are extinguished because of hatred, sin, and wickedness, this love is willing to give of itself, **Romans 5:8**. Thus, it is a love not simply of words and tongue, but of deeds and truth, **1 John 3:18**. The best definition of this word is found in **1 Corinthians 13:4-8**. From **Matthew 22:36-39**, we learn there are ‘three proper recipients of love’.

1. We are to love ‘God’.

‘We love him, because he first loved us,’ **1 John 4:19**. Earlier in the same chapter, John explained how God manifested His love towards us, **1 John 4:9**. Certainly, this isn’t the only way God demonstrates His love. He has given us life, breath, and our very beings. We are because of Him.

He has also given us His word that we might know how to gain eternal life and how to live a happy and fulfilled life in this world. Because God has given us so much, and because we are fully dependent upon Him, we should love Him above all else, **Mark 12:29-30**.

In this context, the heart is the centre of our emotions. Love is an emotion, and our love for God should reflect our deepest emotion. The soul is a person’s spiritual nature, his inner being, his self. Our love for God should stem from our innermost being.

The mind is the centre of our intellect. Though love is an emotion, it is more than just an emotion. Our love toward God is actions based upon our knowledge of God and His will.

Finally, the strength is a person’s physical being. Our bodies are used in our various expressions of love, and in expressing our love to God, we use ‘the fruit of our lips’ to offer the sacrifice of praise, **Hebrews 13:15**, our holy hands are lifted up in prayer, **1 Timothy 2:8**, and our feet takes us into all the world to preach the Gospel, **Matthew 28:18-19 / Romans 10:15**. All in all, Jesus commands all mankind to love God with our entire being.

2. We are to love our ‘neighbour’.

One of the most obvious questions that arises is ‘Who is my neighbour?’ To answer this question, Jesus told the story of the Samaritan, which, incidentally, Jesus or the Bible never calls ‘good’, who helped a man who fell into the hands of thieves and was left half dead, **Luke 10:29-37**. While lying there, a priest and a Levite saw him but passed him by on the other side.

Thankfully, a benevolent Samaritan saw him, helped him, and provided for him. To answer the question, Jesus asked a very pointed question in **Luke 10:36**, ‘Which of these three do you think was a neighbour to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?’

And the answer was in **Luke 10:37**, ‘The one who had mercy on him.’ In the end, we learn that a neighbour was one who showed mercy. In application, Jesus said, ‘Go, and do likewise.’

Thus, a neighbour would include our enemies, **Matthew 5:44**, our fellow man, **Ephesians 5:1-2**, and our brethren, **1 John 4:20**. In fact, love should be a distinctive mark of God’s people, **John 13:35**.

This is a serious matter! **1 John 4:8**. In context, John is writing about our love for one another and makes this application, ‘Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another,’ **1 John 4:11**.

3. Finally, we are to ‘love ourselves’.

Though some have placed too much emphasis here, the principle is still taught. Certainly, we must be on guard not to love ourselves more than we should and not to love ourselves above others, **Philippians 2:3-4**. Nevertheless, we cannot love our neighbour as ourselves without loving ourselves.

In **Ephesians 5:29**, Paul wrote a general principle: generally speaking, a person doesn't hate his own body. Paul applies this general principle to marriage. Men ought to love their wives as their own bodies, **Ephesians 5:28 / Ephesians 5:33**, and the man who neglects his wife, neglects himself.

Instead of hating one's own body, a person nourishes and cherishes it. The word 'nourish' means to nurture or bring up. This is the same word translated 'nurture' in **Ephesians 6:4**. The word 'cherish' means to warm or keep warm, to foster with tender care. Thus, we should love ourselves by nourishing and cherishing ourselves.

1. Love is the great 'motivator'.

Because of God's love, He sent His Son to this world to die for our sins, **1 John 4:19**.

2. His love should motivate us to 'obey Him'.

Jesus said, 'If you love me, keep my commandments,' **John 14:15**. Furthermore, Paul wrote that a working faith is to be motivated by love, **Galatians 5:6**. In fact, anything that a person does, if it isn't motivated by love, it is empty and profitless to oneself, **1 Corinthians 13:1-3**.

The greatest expression of love is for 'a man lay down his life for his friends,' **John 15:13**. Surely, we all realise that Jesus was speaking about His own sacrifice for us.

Now, listen to the application, 'This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters,' **1 John 3:16**. 'He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.'

JOY

Joy, 'chara' is delight or to experience great pleasure. It is the opposite of weeping, lamenting, and sorrow, **John 16:20-22**. Some synonyms of joy are gladness and rejoicing. From the accusation made against Jesus, **Matthew 11:19**, we know that he was a man of joy.

He was, in many ways, a man of sorrow, yet, 'for the joy that was set before him,' He 'endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God,' **Hebrews 12:2**. The anticipated joy of being exalted to the right hand of God helped the Lord to overcome the sorrows He endured.

Because Christians are followers of Christ, we need His joy, a joy that will help us endure the trials of this life. When Paul wrote to the church in Philippi, they were undergoing persecution and were suffering for Christ's sake, **Philippians 1:28-30**.

Thus, Paul exhorts, 'Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord,' **Philippians 3:1**, and 'Rejoice in the Lord always: and again, I say, Rejoice,' **Philippians 4:4**. How could they rejoice when they were suffering? In the same way, Jesus rejoiced.

By pressing 'toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus' and by looking to their reward in heaven, **Philippians 3:14 / Philippians 3:20**, they could rejoice.

The anticipated joy of being with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit throughout all eternity will help us to overcome the sorrows inflicted upon us by the trials of this life.

Yes, joy can lift us above trials and tribulations, **James 1:2**. How can this be? How can we have joy while enduring various kinds of trials? Because true joy is independent of external forces. Externals can bring joy and sorrow, but they are usually short-lived.

Many of the Hebrew Christians had lost property, and yet, they joyfully accepted it because they knew that they had ‘in heaven a better and an enduring substance,’ **Hebrews 10:34**. Paul and Silas could rejoice through prayer and song with their feet in stocks in the inner prison of Philippi because they had true joy.

It is for this reason that Peter could exhort and remind his readers to rejoice, no matter how bad things got, **1 Peter 4:12-13**. Notice how this idea is further expounded upon in the Beatitudes of the Sermon on the Mount, **Matthew 5:11**. Blessings or happiness, joy, promised to the persecuted? Yes! **Matthew 5:12**.

The anticipated joy of heaven brings great joy to those who are persecuted for Christ’s sake. So, when the trials of life seem to get us down, let us remember the heavenly reward which will bring us great joy.

After exhorting the disciples to keep His word, Jesus knew that true joy comes by keeping the commandments of God, **John 15:11**. Thus, He exhorted His disciples to obey the commandments of God in order to have joy. ‘Joy’, therefore, is a natural outgrowth of keeping God’s commandments.

David knew this, all too well, **Psalm 1:1-2 / Psalm 112:1 / Psalm 19:8**.

Keep in mind, in order to properly obey God, one must know His will. In **John 15**, Jesus first instructed His disciples, then He told them the benefits of obedience, ‘that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full,’ **John 15:11**.

In the first of seven beatitudes of Revelation, John pronounced a three-fold blessing upon the reader, the hearer, and those who keep those things which are written, **Revelation 1:3**.

Instruction comes before obedience. In John’s introduction of his first epistle, he said he wrote those things ‘that your joy may be full’, **1 John 1:4**. Again, instruction comes first, obedience follows, and joy results.

The Book of Acts is sometimes called ‘the book of joy’ because within its pages we find the joy of obedience. After the church was established on the marvellous day of Pentecost, the disciples ‘did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart,’ **Acts 2:46**.

After the Ethiopian eunuch confessed and was baptised, ‘he went on his way rejoicing,’ **Acts 8:39**. After the Philippian Jailor repented and was baptised, ‘he set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house,’ **Acts 16:34**.

Also, within the pages of Acts, we find the joy of being persecuted. After the apostles were beaten and brought before the Sanhedrin, they were told not to ‘speak in the name of Jesus.’

However, the apostles ‘rejoiced’ because ‘they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name’ and ‘ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ,’ **Acts 5:40-42**.

Joy also comes when priorities are properly set. Many have probably seen the acrostic for JOY. Jesus first, others second, and yourself last. This simple acrostic illustrates the importance of properly set priorities.

When priorities are mixed or confused, the result is tragedy and sorrow, but when kept, they bring a harvest of joy. Properly set priorities begin with putting Jesus first, **Matthew 22:36-38**.

Next on God’s chain of priority is others second, **Matthew 22:39**. In application, Paul exhorted the Christians in Philippi to have the mind of Christ by esteeming others ‘better than themselves’ and looking ‘on the things of others,’ **Philippians 2:3-5**. By putting others before ourselves, we place ourselves last. This is the golden rule of **Luke 6:31**.

With these thoughts, let us heed the admonition to rejoice by following Christ’s example of overcoming suffering, by obeying God’s commandments, and by setting our priorities in order, **Romans 14:17 / Romans 15:13**.

PEACE

Peace, 'eirene', is the third characteristic of the fruit of the Spirit. From the very beginning of the Lord's ministry, we learn about peace, **Matthew 5:9**. Jesus' words would have been shocking to the Jews of Jesus' day because they were looking for a Messiah who would marshal a great army and lead them to world domination.

However, they, like the Premillennialists of our day, misunderstood the very nature of the Messiah and His kingdom, **Isaiah 9:6-7**. In an earlier prophecy, Isaiah described the peaceable nature of the Messianic kingdom in that citizens of that kingdom will turn instruments of war into instruments of peace, **Isaiah 2:4**.

Further, Isaiah described the peaceful nature of the recipients of the Gospel, the citizens of the Messianic kingdom, the church, **Isaiah 11:6-8**. In each example of Isaiah's description, the animals are natural enemies, and yet, they live in harmony. There are no signs of hostility or enmity. Such peace can be found in the kingdom of God.

During Jesus' ministry, he called twelve men to be His apostles. Within this group, there were those who would be enemies had they not been followers of Jesus. Matthew was a 'publican' or 'tax collector' for the Roman Empire, **Matthew 10:3**.

Simon was a Zealot, and a Zealot was opposed to paying taxes to the pagan emperor of Rome. Yet, despite their political differences, they were united soldiers and disciples of 'the Prince of Peace,' **Isaiah 9:6**. This, then, stands as a wonderful example of the peaceable nature of citizens of the kingdom as prophesied by Isaiah.

Another example is found in **Romans 14**. In context, Paul is dealing with eating meat, that is, meat which was clean or unclean according to Old Testament law. The church in Rome was composed of both Jews and Gentiles.

According to the law, the Jews could only eat meats which were clean.

However, the Gentiles could eat any meat, clean or unclean. It made no difference to them. Of course, the old law was taken 'out of the way' and nailed to the cross, **Colossians 2:14 / Romans 7:1-4**, but because of conscience, many Jews couldn't eat unclean meat.

Apparently, some Gentiles insisted on eating such meat even though it violated their brothers' consciences. To solve the problem, Paul charges them to 'follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another,' **Romans 14:19**. Why? Because 'the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit,' **Romans 14:17**.

Rather than offending a fellow Christian, Christians ought to seek peace in matters of conscience. A casual glance into the New Testament reveals that peace is promised to the followers of God, **John 16:33**.

To some, however, this brings up a contradiction for Jesus also said, 'Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword,' **Matthew 10:34**. So, what does Jesus mean? Within the pages of Scripture, there are three types of peace.

1. There is the absence of hostility or having no enmity.

Generally, when people call for peace, this is what they mean. They are looking for a time when there will be no wars or fighting.

2. The second type of peace is tranquillity, which is freedom from disturbance or a calm feeling.

3. The final peace is reconciliation.

When two people who have been at odds with one another are brought together, they have peace or reconciliation. Notice in **John 14:27**, Jesus refers to two types of peace, the peace the world gives and the peace that He gives. The world seeks peace, but what is meant is they seek the absence of hostility, no enmity.

The peace that Jesus promises isn't necessarily the absence of hostility; it is, as Paul describes, 'the peace of God, which passes all understanding,' **Philippians 4:7**.

The Christians in Philippi very much understood this peace because they saw it demonstrated in Paul and Silas when the Gospel was first preached in the city of Philippi. Paul and Silas were beaten and cast into prison.

Did they enjoy the world's peace, the absence of hostility? Of course not, they had been beaten. Did they enjoy the peace of Christ? Yes, and that peace was demonstrated in their praying and singing praises unto God, **Acts 16:22-25**. Christ's peace is tranquillity of mind, but it is more than just that. It is having peace with God. By 'peace with God,' we mean harmony or reconciliation with God.

In fact, the second type of peace, tranquillity of mind, stems from the third type of peace, reconciliation, that is, being reconciled unto God. The demonstration of such reconciliation is what 'passes understanding.' When a person obtains reconciliation or peace with God, he or she will have peace or tranquillity of mind, the peace that passes understanding.

From an earthly standpoint, what Paul and Silas did while in the Philippian jail rises above our thoughts. It doesn't make earthly sense to rejoice in suffering, but this is what Paul and Silas did, and this is what Peter exhorts us to do, **1 Peter 4:13**.

How can I have the peace Jesus promised? The short answer is by being reconciled to God. We are reconciled by or through the blood of the cross of Jesus, **Colossians 1:20-22 / Ephesians 2:13-16**.

We come into contact with the cleansing blood of Christ when we are obedient to the Gospel plan of salvation by believing that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, **John 8:24**, confessing that faith, **Romans 10:9-10**, repenting of our sins, **Luke 13:3 / Luke 13:5**, and being baptised into His death, **Romans 6:3-5**.

Reconciliation, however, is more than just obedience to the Gospel. We must emulate the 'God of Peace' and the 'Prince of Peace,' **2 Corinthians 13:11**. We must also follow 'the Gospel of peace', **Romans 10:15 / Ephesians 6:15** and live in the peaceable kingdom of the Lord. Let us, therefore, 'seek peace, and pursue it,' **1 Peter 3:11**, so 'the God of peace' will be with us, **Romans 15:33**.

PATIENCE

A fourth characteristic of the fruit of the Spirit is patience, 'makrothumia'. Some have defined the term as 'long on suffering.' Certainly, this is an easy way to remember the basic concept. A couple of synonyms of 'longsuffering' are forbearance and patience.

W.E. Vine wrote the following.

'Long-suffering is that quality of self-restraint in the face of provocation which does not hastily retaliate or promptly punish; it is the opposite of anger, and is associated with mercy.' Further, the concept carries with it the idea of the 'patient enduring of evil' and the 'slowness of avenging injuries'.

As Vine pointed out, long-suffering is the opposite of anger. Remember, in context, Paul is contrasting 'the fruit of the Spirit' with 'the works of the flesh.' This contrast is readily seen in long-suffering. Antonyms of longsuffering are 'hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, and strife', all 'works of the flesh,' **Galatians 5:19-21**.

'Hatred' is enmity, while 'discord' is strife and contention. 'Jealousy' is indignation, and 'fits of rage' is fierceness or outbursts of anger. All are in contrast to and opposite of long-suffering. In other words, and in application, a person doesn't portray long-suffering while holding a grudge, being contentious, or exploding in anger.

Long-suffering is an attribute of God, **Psalm 86:15**. We can all be thankful that because of God's compassion and graciousness, He is forbearing and patient with us. While we deserve death because of our sin and rebellion, He is long-suffering.

God isn't indifferent about His promise of the second coming and judgment. The reason for His apparent delay is His long-suffering. God isn't willing that any should be lost, **2 Peter 3:9**.

He desires 'all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth,' **1 Timothy 2:4**. He gives mankind opportunity and time in order for all men to come to Him in repentance.

Knowing the hard-heartedness of man, it is little wonder that Peter later wrote, 'the long-suffering of our Lord is salvation,' **2 Peter 3:15**. Noah serves as an example of the long-suffering of the Lord, **1 Peter 3:20**.

Just as God is long-suffering with us, He was long-suffering with Noah's contemporaries and gave them the opportunity to repent. Sadly, they didn't, and when judgment came, only eight souls were saved! What a sad commentary on that generation.

Could this be said of our generation? **John 5:28-29**. God is long-suffering towards us, but His long-suffering and patience will come to an end, and judgment day will be upon us. When that great and notable day comes, where will you spend eternity? Today is the day to prepare! So, be prepared. Judgment day is coming!

In the parable of the unjust judge, Jesus taught, among other principles, the long-suffering of God, **Luke 18:1-8**. In this parable, a wicked judge eventually grants the petition of a widow who continually petitioned him.

But in contrast, Jesus says God is not like that, God grants petitions, but you don't have to badger God over and over again with your petitions. If the unjust judge will grant the petition of a persistent widow, how much more will God, the righteous Judge, grant to His own faithful servants who don't have to continually ask Him for something?

Concerning longsuffering, the word translated 'bear long' in **Luke 18:7**, is the same original word and is usually translated 'longsuffering'. We, like the persistent widow, continually make requests of God, but oftentimes, we make requests over and over and over again, but this isn't necessary.

Many times, it's not because we don't believe God will grant our prayers, but because of our own weaknesses and needs, we badger God continually. In spite of such weaknesses, in spite of our failings, in spite of our lack of faith, God is long-suffering with us and grants our continual petitions.

In the midst of exposing the sin and hypocrisy of the Jews, Paul gives a ray of hope, **Romans 2:4**. Throughout their history, the Jews saw and experienced the goodness of God, but they continually rejected Him. Nonetheless, God was forbearing and long-suffering with them, desiring their repentance.

Like so many people, they were anxious to receive God's goodness, but they refused to be led down the road of repentance. All men have seen the riches of God's goodness, **James 1:17**.

Those good and perfect gifts mentioned in **James 1:17** should lead all men to repentance, but sadly, too many are like the Jews of old and reject the riches of God's goodness, forbearance, and long-suffering. Since long-suffering is an attribute of God, then we also know that Christ is long-suffering, **1 Timothy 1:16**.

When Paul was persecuting the church, when Paul was victimising Christians, when Paul was rejecting the truth, Jesus was provoked, but He restrained Himself, showing long-suffering towards Paul.

The same could be said of us! 'While we were yet sinners,' **Romans 5:8**, while we transgressed God's law, **1 John 3:4**, while we knew to do good but didn't, **James 4:17**, while we violated our own consciences, **Romans 14:23**, while we lived in unrighteousness, **1 John 5:17**, Christ was longsuffering towards us.

We deserved death, separation from God, but instead 'Christ died for us.' And now we are children of God, **1 John 3:1**. Since God and Christ are longsuffering, it is only natural that their servants be longsuffering, **Ephesians 4:1-2**.

The quality of long-suffering has its foundation in love.

Paul further wrote, 'Love is patient,' **1 Corinthians 13:4**. In other words, love is long-suffering. It keeps on suffering long. It keeps on being long-enduring. It keeps on exercising patience, forbearance, and perseverance.

If God so loved us that He is longsuffering with us, we ought also to love one another in the same way and be longsuffering with one another, **1 John 4:11 / Colossians 3:12-13**.

God and Jesus are our examples of long-suffering. The Holy Spirit tells us through the Word He inspired to be long-suffering. Let us, therefore, put on longsuffering. Let us be long-suffering towards one another and towards the world. Let us have this, another characteristic of the fruit of the Spirit.

KINDNESS

Paul now gives the fifth attribute of the fruit of the Spirit, ‘kindness’, translated ‘gentleness’ in the AV and RV. The word ‘gentleness’ comes from the Greek word ‘chrestotes’ and means goodness of the heart or kindness. It is normally associated with moral goodness.

It carries with it the idea of a ‘kindly disposition’ and is more often translated as ‘goodness’ and ‘kindness’ in the King James Version. Thus, this attribute is always sweet, kind, and full of graciousness.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said, ‘Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect,’ **Matthew 5:48**. As Christians, we are to imitate God, the Father. Thus, Jesus’ statement is brought home in application when we consider God’s goodness.

The word ‘goodness’ is the same as ‘gentleness’ in the original language, **Romans 2:4**. God is rich in goodness! **James 1:17 / Acts 17:28**. God is so good to us that ‘while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us,’ **Romans 5:8**. If we have the mindset to imitate God and live godly, then we will also be rich in goodness and gentleness. Please notice the application Paul makes in **Romans 2:2-4**. God’s goodness ought to lead us to repentance! Generally, when tragedy hits, we turn to God, or at least, it causes us to think about our souls’ destiny. It is an illness, an accident, or the death of a loved one that causes us to consider more seriously our eternal fate.

But God’s goodness ought to do the same. His kindness shown by His supply of our daily welfare, His spiritual provisions given to us through His word, His generous care as He watches over the affairs of this world, these things ought to impel us to live as God would have us to live.

One aspect of the goodness of God emphasised in Scripture is the goodness God has shown toward us through Jesus Christ. It’s through the kindness that God has shown to us through Jesus, the Christ, that we will be able to praise God throughout eternity, **Ephesians 2:7**.

Again, the word ‘kindness’ in this text is the same as in **Galatians 5:22**. Paul also makes this thought clear in **Titus 3:4**. Here’s the point: God showed His kindness and love toward mankind in the sending of His Son, Jesus Christ, to this world of woe and in the sacrifice and death of His Son for our sins.

Notice, also, God’s goodness and severity are contrasted in **Romans 11:22**. The severity of God fell upon the unbelieving Jews, while the goodness of God was shown toward the Gentiles because of their faith.

The conditional nature of salvation is under consideration. As long as the Gentiles continued in faithfulness, they would see the goodness of God, but if they became unfaithful like the Jews, they would be cut off.

The same could be said of us. Jesus ‘became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him,’ **Hebrews 5:9**. Our salvation is contingent upon our obedience to Jesus. As long as we obey, we have salvation, but when we quit obeying, we no longer have salvation.

Sadly, this was the state of affairs in Galatia. Rather than living for Jesus, some Galatian Christians turned back to the old law, and Paul assessed that they were ‘fallen from grace’, **Galatians 5:4**. Let us determine not to follow their example but be as John exhorted, ‘faithful unto death’, so that we may receive ‘a crown of life,’ **Revelation 2:10**.

Another application of this verse that needs to be made concerns the way we look at God. Our view of God must be a balance between His goodness and His severity. To consider one more than the other or one above the other leaves us with a perverted view of the Almighty.

If we only believe in the goodness of God, we are led to conclude that God will overlook all our faults, no matter if we have made any attempt to change or live as He instructs.

On the other hand, if we can only see the severity of God, then we are led to believe that God is some destructive Creator who has created us to be condemned.

Both goodness and severity are characteristics of God. We can see the goodness of God in all that He has done for us, but we ought also to understand that those who will not obey God will see His severity.

Justice, equity, and righteousness demand such. It's not fair, it's not just, and it's not righteous to reward both the obedient and the disobedient with the eternal glories of heaven.

Because of God's goodness and severity, 'they that have done good,' will be raised 'unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation,' **John 5:29**.

Not only is 'gentleness' a characteristic of God, but Jesus' life was characterised by it, **Matthew 11:28-30**. And we can see the goodness of the Lord as He received sinners, **Luke 7:37-50 / John 8:1-11**.

Because of Christ's example of gentleness, Paul, writing to the Christians in Corinth, wrote, 'Such people should realise that what we are in our letters when we are absent, we will be in our actions when we are present,' **2 Corinthians 10:1**.

Paul recognised the example of Jesus. So even though he was accused of being bold while not in their presence, he wrote with all gentleness, the gentleness of Christ. What a tremendous example for us! Even in the face of opposition, Paul acted with gentleness just as the Lord had done.

There are many facets of life in which we need to show gentleness, goodness, and kindness. The tongue is one such area. As we go into the world to evangelise, we need to show kindness, **Proverbs 16:24 / Colossians 4:6**.

Not only should we show kindness in our words, but we also ought to show it in our actions. The Samaritan is a marvellous example, **Luke 10:30-37**. Jesus testified that he was a neighbour to the man that fell among the thieves, and then He made this application, 'Go, and do likewise.'

Also, what was the difference between the sheep and goats of **Matthew 25:31-46**? The sheep did acts of kindness! They clothed the naked, visited the sick, and fed the hungry while the goats did nothing. Let us, therefore, be kind to one another, **Ephesians 4:32**.

Each morning as we get up from bed, one of the first things we do is put on our clothes. Just as we put on clothes, Paul exhorts us to put on some attributes and virtues. Among them is kindness, **Colossians 3:12-13**.

GOODNESS

The next description or sixth attribute of the fruit of the Spirit is 'goodness', 'agathosune'. In the original language, goodness is a moral quality. It is uprightness of heart and life.

Goodness is very closely associated with gentleness. Gentleness describes the kindlier quality of goodness, whereas goodness describes the sterner or disciplined aspect.

Sometimes goodness is shown by gentleness, but on other occasions, it is shown by discipline. Therefore, goodness stems from a zeal for the truth, which rebukes, corrects, and chastises.

To illustrate this definition, consider Jesus as He cleanses the temple. Consequently, He made a scourge, drove them out, poured out their money, and overturned their tables, **John 2:13-17**. Upon seeing this, His disciples remembered **Psalm 69:9**. Because of a zeal for God, Christ, in all goodness, corrected the situation in the temple. Now remember that the Jews had to take their own animal sacrifice from their own homes, **Exodus 12:5-6**, but what was happening was that the money merchants were selling animals at the temple, which were blemished to the people coming in. In other words, the sacrifices weren't personal sacrifices anymore; it was more of a convenience store. Also, consider the denouncing of the Scribes and Pharisees in **Matthew 23:13-19**. To follow after the Scribes and Pharisees was and is a very serious matter, for their ways will lead one to destruction, **Matthew 5:20**. Jesus, on the other hand, desires 'all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth,' **1 Timothy 2:4** clearly reveals to us that He willingly gave Himself on the cross.

Thus, because of Jesus' zeal for truth and true righteousness, and His desire for salvation for all men, He warned, 'Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!' **Matthew 23:13**.

A final illustration to help in our understanding of 'goodness' is found in **Hebrews 12:6**. Generally, we think about love and goodness in terms of gentleness. However, love and goodness ought also to be thought of as discipline. We as parents should understand this.

Why does the mother slap the hand of the child reaching for the top of the stove? Because she loves that child and doesn't want any harm to come to him or her. Is this goodness? Of course it is!

Why does God discipline or chasten His children? Because 'it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it,' **Hebrews 12:11**. This is God's goodness in action.

Although other forms of this word are used numerous times in Scripture, the noun form as used in **Galatians 5:22** is only used four times: **Romans 15:14** / **Ephesians 5:9** / **2 Thessalonians 1:11**.

In adjective form, this word describes being good in character and is beneficial in effect. When the rich young ruler came to Jesus, he addressed Him as, 'Good Master' or 'Good Teacher,' **Mark 10:17**.

Coupled with the fact of his kneeling before Jesus, he was saying Jesus was good in character and beneficial in effect as a teacher. In reply, Jesus pointedly asked, 'Why do you call me good?' Jesus answered. 'No one is good—except God alone,' **Mark 10:18**. The point Jesus made was this: by referring to Him as 'good,' the rich young ruler was acknowledging His divine nature.

However, there is another side to this account. The rich young ruler was obviously conceited about his own goodness. When Jesus told him to 'keep the commandments', **Matthew 19:17**, he said, 'Master, all these have I observed from my youth,' **Mark 10:20**.

Once again, the good character of Jesus is displayed. 'Jesus looked at him and loved him. 'One thing you lack,' he said. 'Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me,' **Mark 10:21**.

In kindness, Jesus invited him to be a disciple, but in goodness, Jesus was stern and candidly pointed out his shortcomings. As in the fruit of the Spirit, both qualities stem from love.

Because of His love, Jesus was direct with the rich young ruler, and in so doing, He convicted him that he was really not as good as he thought. Sadly, instead of repenting, the young man went away grieved. The opposite of goodness is evil or bad. The actions of Isaac and Jacob, whether good or evil, didn't influence God's choice, **Romans 9:11**.

God's providential plan to bless all the nations of the earth was through Abraham's and Isaac's seed. Isaac was blessed over Ishmael and Jacob over Esau, not because they were good or bad, but because they were children of promise. Thus, through the seed of Isaac and Jacob, Christ, we, too, are children of promise.

2 Corinthians 5:10 is speaking about judgement for Christians; for the service of the Christian, it's not talking about salvation. In the original language, the word 'bad' in this verse and the word 'evil' in **Romans 9:11** are the same. It means base, wrong, or wicked and refers to a person or thing that lacks those qualities they ought to possess, whether in action or thoughts, **John 5:28-29**. Those who are characterised by the fruit of the Spirit, 'goodness', will be rewarded with eternal life, and those who do evil will be rewarded with death, 'eternal separation from God' and damnation.

What does it mean to do good? Can a person simply do acts of kindness and expect to inherit eternal life? The answer is no! **Mark 10:18**. Doing good doesn't take away or 'balance the scale' concerning sin, **Romans 3:23**. Instead, the perfect blood of Christ was shed to take away sins, **Matthew 26:28** / **Ephesians 1:7**. Therefore, to have forgiveness, one must come into contact with His blood, which is a true act of goodness on man's part. In order to come into contact with the blood of Christ, one must obey the Gospel, **2 Thessalonians 1:7-9**.

FAITHFULNESS

'Faithfulness', 'pistis', is the seventh attribute of the fruit of the Spirit. Though faith should not be emphasised above the other characteristics, it's a vital and crucial topic because without faith it is impossible to please God, **Hebrews 11:6**. However, in order to please God, we must have the right kind of faith. Not just any faith pleases God, nor is this characteristic of the fruit of the Spirit.

Within the pages of the Bible, there are basically two kinds of faith: dead faith, which is the faith of devils and saving faith. The faith of devils is mere belief or knowledge of facts, **James 2:19**.

The devils have knowledge of who God is and who God's Son is. They also know and believe Jesus died for the sins of the world, but this is as far as their faith goes. They don't have saving faith, and, therefore, they tremble in fear of God and His judgment.

Saving faith is belief coupled with obedience of acts of faith, **Acts 16:19-31**. Was Paul commanding them to merely believe? I think not. Why? Because of the following verses.

In **Acts 16:32**, the text goes on to say, 'Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all the others in his house.' Their faith was being increased by the word spoken to them, **Romans 10:17**.

Why did the jailor and his family wash their stripes? **Acts 16:33**. Because they were repenting of their sin of beating Paul and Silas. By washing their stripes, they were helping the healing process and thus correcting their sin as much as humanly possible. Also, notice in this verse that they were baptised.

Finally, in **Acts 16:34**, we find them rejoicing. Why? Because their sins were washed away. At the point of mere belief? No, after they heard the word, repented, and were baptised.

Finally, notice the summary Luke gives by inspiration, 'believing in God with all his house,' **Acts 16:34**. Luke summarises all that they did in the word 'believing.' Thus, we see saving faith includes acts of obedience, **James 2:18** / **James 2:20** / **James 2:22** / **James 2:24** / **James 2:26**.

Therefore, without obedient, saving faith, it is impossible to please God. Now that we understand there are two kinds of faith, what is faith? Some would point to **Hebrews 11:1** for a definition of faith. However, this is more of a description of faith than a definition. From this verse, we learn some more qualities of faith.

Within faith, there is substance or a quality of confidence which helps a person to endure, and there is evidence which is proof. It is not some 'leap in the dark' but has its foundation in proof.

So, what is faith? The actual definition of faith is 'firm persuasion' or 'firm conviction based upon being persuaded.' However, it is used in three basic ways within Scripture.

1. The word faith is used of ‘trust’.

In **1 Corinthians 2:5**, Paul was speaking about trust. We should not put our trust in man’s wisdom but in the power of God. The Jews of old trusted in their own wisdom, and God led them into captivity.

Today, rather than trusting God and preaching His Word, many draw disciples after them by the wisdom of man with good words and fair speeches, **Romans 16:18**. Let us grow in faith by trusting God and taking Him at His word.

2. The word faith is used of ‘trustworthiness’.

When Paul wrote to Titus, the word translated ‘fully trusted’ in **Titus 2:10** could have been translated ‘faith.’ It is the same Greek word. To show ‘full trust’ is to show one’s trustworthiness, dependability, or reliability.

This is probably the specific characteristic Paul is describing in the fruit of the Spirit. When the Bible talks about the faithfulness of God, **Deuteronomy 7:9** / **1 Corinthians 1:9** / **1 Corinthians 10:13**, it is this characteristic.

When we read of those who are ‘faithful in Christ Jesus,’ **Ephesians 1:1** / **Colossians 1:2**, again, it is this characteristic. Please notice this application, in order to be faithful in Christ Jesus, one must have full trust. His or her life must be characterised by trustworthiness and dependability to God, His Word, and His people.

3. The word faith is used in reference to a scheme of ‘belief’.

By inspiration, this is generally designated as ‘the faith’ and refers to the Holy Scriptures by which we grow in faith, **Romans 10:17** / **Acts 6:7**. They were obedient to a scheme of belief or system of faith.

Again, Paul kept a system of belief, the Word of God, **2 Timothy 4:7**, and Jude was encouraged to contend for it, **Jude 3**. To defend the Gospel and to earnestly contend for the faith is the same concept, **Philippians 1:17**.

Notice further, Jude said, the faith ‘was once delivered unto the saints’, or ‘once for all delivered’. The Bible is the complete revelation of God. There is no place and no need for further revelation, for God has given ‘unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness,’ **2 Peter 1:3**.

Faith isn’t some subjective leap in the dark. It’s concrete and objective. It has its foundation in the Word of God. Since without faith it is impossible to please God, **Hebrews 11:6**, let us determine now to grow in faith. How? By reading and studying God’s eternal word, **Romans 10:17**.

Let’s do more than just maintain this marvellous attribute of the fruit of the Spirit, let’s grow in faith so that we will not have ‘little faith’, **Matthew 6:30**, but will have ‘great faith’ as the centurion, **Matthew 8:10** and the woman of Canaan, **Matthew 15:28**.

And let us be like Abraham, the father of the faithful, who was ‘not weak in faith’ but ‘was strong in faith,’ **Romans 4:18-19**. Therefore, like the apostles, we plead unto the Lord to ‘increase our faith’, **Luke 17:5**.

GENTLENESS

Gentleness, ‘praotes’, or meekness as some translations render the word, is the eighth characteristic of the fruit of the Spirit. Like the other qualities of the fruit of the Spirit, meekness mustn’t be disregarded as being unimportant.

Jesus taught this God-admired virtue in the third beatitude of the Sermon on the Mount, **Matthew 5:5**. Paul informed the young evangelist Timothy to flee covetousness and follow after meekness,’ **1 Timothy 6:11**.

Rather than adorning themselves with fancy hair-dos, gold, and costly attire, Peter instructs ladies to adorn themselves with ‘the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit,’ **1 Peter 3:4**. Thus, we see the importance of meekness.

What is gentleness or meekness? Meekness is a virtue describing an inner quality of a person. It isn’t necessarily an outward quality, though such temperaments express themselves by outward actions.

Meekness carries with it the idea of self-abasement and is the opposite of self-assertiveness and self-will. Meekness also implies submission. To be truly meek, one must be submissive.

Jesus expressed this thought in **John 10:27**. In our culture, meekness is often portrayed as weakness and is sometimes characterised by a person who is unable to help himself.

However, Jesus is meek, but as God, He is infinitely powerful. The Greeks considered animals that were tamed to be meek. The animals still had all their strength, but being tamed, their strength was under control, disciplined, and gentle. Meekness is often associated with humility.

In fact, they are so closely related that only the humble heart can possess meekness. In Jesus' invitation, notice how He joins these two qualities, **Matthew 11:28-29**. Because Jesus is meek and lowly in heart, Christian ought to be the same. Thus, these two virtues are again connected in **Ephesians 4:2**.

Finally, notice the connection in **Colossians 3:12**. Thus, in each of these instances, we see this close alliance between meekness and humility. Meekness begins with a proper attitude towards self. As we stand in the presence of the almighty God, how do we view ourselves? Are we, at least, humbled by His greatness? Meekness is void of pride. Because of our sinfulness, we have nothing of which to boast or flaunt, **James 4:6**.

Meekness continues with a proper attitude towards others. The meek are gentle, mild, and lowly. For this reason, the meek don't demand their own rights. Isn't this what Paul wrote about concerning meats sacrificed to idols and a brother's weak conscience? **Romans 14:13-23**.

There is nothing intrinsically wrong with eating such meats, but because it may cause a brother to stumble, we ought to refrain. Rather than demanding our rights, in meekness, we abstain. Meekness is also involved in our teaching and encouragement of others.

Consider the following passages in this light: **Galatians 6:1** / **2 Timothy 2:24-25** / **1 Peter 3:15**. Though there are times when it is necessary, none of us likes to be severely reprimanded.

With all the problems in the church at Corinth, Paul approached them 'in love, and in the spirit of meekness,' **1 Corinthians 4:21** and 'by the meekness and gentleness of Christ', **2 Corinthians 10:1**. Let's, therefore, be followers of Paul and humbly seek to instruct and correct one another in the spirit of meekness.

Meekness ultimately culminates in a proper attitude towards God. This is the attitude of Jesus, **John 6:38**. Also, this attitude is displayed in His prayer on the Mount of Olives, **Luke 22:42**. Today, all of God's will for all mankind is declared in His inspired Word, the Bible, **2 Timothy 3:16-17** / **2 Peter 1:3**.

How do we approach the Bible? Do we approach it like Jesus approached the will of the Father without dispute, resistance, and murmuring? With these thoughts, consider the exhortation of James, **James 1:21**. There are many good examples of meekness within Scripture. In **Genesis 13:8-9**, a dissension arose between Abraham's herdsmen and Lot's.

Abraham, however, didn't want strife to come between him and his nephew, and in meekness, he gave Lot, who was younger, the first choice of where to feed his herds and take his family.

Abraham didn't demand his rights of being the elder, but with meekness and without complaint, allowed Lot to take the better land. Moses is another powerful example. The first time the word 'meek' is used in the Bible concerns this great man of faith, **Numbers 12:3**. Even though he saw himself unable to speak, in meekness he obeyed God and led the children of Israel out of bondage.

As the writer of Hebrews records, he saw the wealth of Egypt, and what it meant to be the son of Pharaoh's daughter, yet in meekness he chose the reproach of Christ, **Hebrews 11:24-26**.

Finally, consider the example of Jeremiah. He spoke the truth as it was a burning fire shut up in his bones, **Jeremiah 20:9**. Other prophets of his day were speaking smooth things, **Jeremiah 30:10**, but Jeremiah preached the word of God.

He became unpopular, isolated, and suffered because of his stand for the truth. Still, in meekness and submission to God, he kept on preaching and teaching the truth. Yes, he was discouraged, but no, he didn't quit; he continued to meekly serve God.

One characteristic of the fruit of the Spirit is 'meekness'. If someone were describing your characteristics, would they include meekness? All of us can grow in this tremendous virtue. So, let us cultivate a spirit of meekness, **Zephaniah 2:3**.

SELF-CONTROL

The ninth and final quality of the fruit of the Spirit is self-control, 'egkrateia.' Some versions use the word temperance. 'Temperance' is self-control. In the original language, it literally means 'in strength,' that is, in the realm or in the sphere of strength. It describes the virtue of a person who masters his or her desires and passions.

In writing to the Corinthians, Paul describes the temperance a person must have in order to win a race, **1 Corinthians 9:24-27**. Truly, Christians are in a race, and God intends for us to be winners. In order to win, we must have temperance. Notice some lessons on temperance from **1 Corinthians 9:24-27**.

1. Christians must 'run to win,' **1 Corinthians 9:24**.

This is a winning attitude or disposition of mind. Attitude often determines the difference between winning and losing. An 'I can't' attitude never could. Here is the point: Christians need to be in control of their thoughts in order to obtain an incorruptible crown.

Everything a person does goes back to a heart action, **Proverbs 23:7 / Matthew 15:17-19**. If a person controls his heart, the way he thinks, then he will also be in control of his body, **Psalms 1:2 / Matthew 5:8**.

Paul gave a prescription for good mental health in **Philippians 4:8**. In order to think about such things, a person must control his thoughts. We mustn't allow ourselves to think about falsehoods, dishonourable things, unrighteousness, impurity, things associated with hatred, and wicked reports. If we allow such thoughts, they could consume our lives and make us bitter.

But if we think about things that are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, and of good report, we will have 'the peace of God, which passes all understanding,' **Philippians 4:7**.

A part of disciplining one's mind is knowing the mark and staying focused upon it. What are our desires in life? Is it material goods or is it heaven? If we desire the incorruptible crown, then heaven must be our goal.

Now that we know the mark, let's stay focused on it. Rather than allowing ourselves to be distracted by the material, physical world, let's stay focused on the heavenly reward.

Rather than being a double-minded man who is unstable in all his ways, **James 1:8**, let's fix our eyes upon the crown of life, **2 Corinthians 4:18**. Let's be like Moses, who had respect unto the recompense of reward and chose Him who is invisible over the treasures of Egypt, **Hebrews 11:23-27**.

Though men may try, the fact remains, 'You cannot serve both God and money,' **Matthew 6:24**. Therefore, discipline your mind and stay focused upon the heavenly reward.

2. Christians must discipline their bodies and bring them into subjection in order 'to obtain an incorruptible crown', **1 Corinthians 9:27**.

Rather than being a slave to the body, we must make our bodies servants for the Master. Our bodies were given to us to serve God, **Romans 6:12-13**. In order to accomplish mastery over our bodies, we must deny ourselves, take up the cross of Christ, and follow Jesus, **Matthew 16:24**. Obviously, this isn't an easy task.

In fact, to allow another to have control over us is against man's natural way of thinking, but if we desire to have life, we must bring our bodies into subjection. A major part of buffeting our bodies is controlling our tongues.

This is a major theme in the third chapter of James. He wrote that if a man is able to control this 'unruly evil,' **James 3:8**, the tongue, he 'is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body,' **James 3:2**. It almost goes without saying that many of us have brought upon ourselves a wide variety of problems because we did not 'bite our tongues.' **Proverbs 21:23**.

Not only is 'self-control' a quality of the fruit of the Spirit, but it is also listed among the qualities of fruitfulness in **2 Peter 1:6**. These qualities are built one upon another. Peter begins with faith, **2 Peter 1:5-7**. Since they build one upon another, then we can understand more about any one of these qualities by the preceding and succeeding qualities. Since temperance is built upon knowledge, something must be learned before a person can be temperate, and temperance is putting into practice what we have already learned. Furthermore, patience, 'endurance' results from temperance. Only until we learn temperance will we learn true patience.

Notice in **Acts 24:25** that temperance comes after righteousness and judgment after temperance. Righteousness is God's gift to mankind. Through the blood of Christ and our obedience to the Gospel, we are justified and made righteous. Temperance is man's response to the righteousness of God.

It's self-control in remaining or abiding in righteous living. Judgment is bringing into accountability righteousness and temperance. How did we respond to the righteousness of God? Did we live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world?

Our acceptance of the righteousness of God and our temperate abiding in righteousness will be brought into accountability and judgment. By controlling our minds and bodies, we will be temperate in all things and will obtain that incorruptible crown. The incorruptible crown is a victory crown that will not decay nor perish. It will last forever! **Hebrews 12:1-2**.

The fruit of the Spirit is made up of qualities to which all men should aspire. They are qualities that need no law, need no regulation, and need no restraint. They are godly qualities that issue from the foundational principle of love for God and for His creation. If these qualities are applied properly to our lives, they will build a good relationship with God, with family, and with friends.

Every godly person of the past was characterised by them, and every godly person of the future will be characterised by them. Let us, therefore, strive in earnestness to possess the fruit of the Spirit which is 'love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance, righteousness, and truth'.

All these characteristics are evidence of a Spirit-filled life. But Paul says, if you want to prove you're a Christian, then let the characteristics of the Holy Spirit be visible in your life.

“Against such things there is no law.” Galatians 5:23

He says, “against such things, there is no law”, in other words, if we live our lives displaying the fruit of the Spirit, we don't need any law to tell us how we should behave towards anyone.

“Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.” Galatians 5:24

Those who belong to Christ have put to death any efforts to work themselves to heaven by perfect law-keeping and meritorious deeds. In other words, anyone who is trying to be right with God through law-keeping only doesn't

belong to Christ. Christians should be trusting in God's grace, not trusting in how well they keep the law, **Romans 8:9**.

Notice that Paul reminds us that the Christian has crucified the desires and passions of the flesh. Why are we to crucify those desires and passions? Because those desires and passions actually encourage us to try and live right through our own abilities, rather than depending on God's grace.

“Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other.” Galatians 5:25-26

The Christian life is within the realm of the Spirit's direction through the word of God, and so when we live according to the direction of God's word, we are living in the Spirit.

Morris, in his commentary, says the following.

‘To be conceited, to be sure that we are always right (even if that means that other people are always wrong!) is a perennial temptation to believers. It is easy to assume that because we are Christ's, we will always say and do the right thing. Paul is warning his readers that believers can be too confident that they are right in what they are contemplating.’

It's clear that when we have this conceited attitude, we can easily provoke others, which may lead to all kinds of divisions within the body of Christ.

Gill, in his commentary, says the following concerning envy.

‘Their gifts and abilities, natural and spiritual; their rank and station in the world, or in the church. These were sins the Galatians very probably were subject to; and where they prevail, there is confusion, and every evil work, and are therefore to be watched and guarded against.’

Paul is calling on the Galatians to bring their lives into harmony with the direction of the Spirit.

CHAPTER 6

INTRODUCTION

“Brothers and sisters, if someone is caught in a sin, you who live by the Spirit should restore that person gently. But watch yourselves, or you also may be tempted.” Galatians 6:1

DOING GOOD TO ALL

As we enter the final chapter of Galatians, we find Paul writing to the church in Galatia concerning their responsibilities toward one another in Christian service. He tells them that there are things that must be done to fight against the negative impact these legalistic teachers have had within the church.

Paul says that there are times when a Christian lets their guard down, and sin can easily enter our lives and overtake us, and before we know what's happened, we become under the bondage of sin again, Galatians 5:26.

We must be on our guard as Christians against the devil and His schemes, 1 Peter 5:8. The devil, whom Peter describes as a lion, roars, not only when it's hunting but also when it's about to attack its prey.

Whose responsible for helping those who are caught up in sin? Paul says, 'you who live by the Spirit', Galatians 6:1 / Galatians 5:16 / Galatians 5:18, in other words, those who are spiritually mature.

Why would that be the case? Why wouldn't a young, immature Christian be responsible for helping those caught up in sin? It's the responsibility of the strong in the faith to watch out for the weak in the faith; that's why having spiritually mature elders is so important for a church.

This doesn't mean that the spiritually mature are beyond temptation and sin, but it means they should be mature enough to deal with the situation. They are mature enough to understand that they're dealing with spiritual things in the spiritual realms. Whereas a younger, immature Christian may not have the experience in dealing with people.

Notice how the mature Christian should go about helping someone caught up in sin, 'you who live by the Spirit should restore that person gently', Galatians 6:1. Paul says, restoring someone should be done with a spirit of gentleness, Galatians 5:22. In the context of Galatians, Paul is saying that those who have given in to the onslaught of legalism must be restored.

There were many legalists among the churches in Galatia, but not all of them were legalists; some of them knew what grace was all about, and they understood the nature of God's grace. It's the legalists who are the first to condemn and then ask for others to conform to their judgment.

Those who understand God's grace, trust in God's grace for salvation by faith, and it is those Christians that Paul is appealing to, to help those other Christians, whose lives have been devastated by legalistic teaching. And what does that tell us?

It tells us that, like newborn babies, human beings are fragile. We make a mess of trying to restore someone who's caught up in sin because we don't understand the meaning of the word 'restore'.

If I had a beautiful vase on my coffee table and someone came along and knocked it over and broke it. If I really loved that vase, I would go out of my way to have it restored, and I would place it back where it belongs on the coffee table.

Yes, you may see the cracks from where it was broken, yes, it may not look as beautiful as it once did, but the restoration isn't all about the outward looks; it's about putting that vase back where it belongs. Restore means to repair and to put back to where it was intended to be.

God is in the restoration business. We see the cracks of sin in our lives, we feel the brokenness in our souls that our sin leaves behind, but when God restores, He puts us back to where we're supposed to be.

We make a mess of it because we see that broken vase, we think we've restored it, but all we've done is leave it in the cupboard, instead of being on that coffee table where it belongs.

“Carry each other's burdens, and in this way, you will fulfil the law of Christ.” Galatians 6:2

The Greek word used here for burden is 'baros', which implies a heavy weight. Paul is speaking about Christians having sympathy and bearing each other's sorrows, due to sins or misfortunes, Romans 15:1.

The legalist wants to add to our burdens; they add the burden of their traditions and opinions on the conscience of those who are sincerely seeking to serve God. However, it's our responsibility as brothers in Christ to help one another in the faith, Romans 12:10 / James 5:16.

Christianity doesn't isolate individuals from one another. Christians must individually and collectively support one another to be faithful, Hebrews 10:23-24. The law of Christ is to love one another, and this law of Christ brings individuals together into a common bond and fellowship, John 13:34-35.

The law of the legalist doesn't do that; their law divides, and it divides by the binding of strict hair-splitting opinions and interpretations, Galatians 5:14. Loving one another means carrying each other's burdens, but you need to allow the church to do that.

God doesn't want you to suffer or struggle with anything; He provided a church family to help you carry the load. The legalists won't carry your burden; they'll add to it, and they'll give you even more to struggle with.

“If anyone thinks they are something when they are not, they deceive themselves. Each one should test their own actions. Then they can take pride in themselves alone, without comparing themselves to someone else, for each one should carry their own load.” Galatians 6:3-5

The legalist has deceived himself into thinking that his works have justified him before God.

Trapp, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The misery of most men is, that their minds are as ill set as their eyes, neither of them looks inwards.’

They don't need the grace of God; they just need to keep the rules. And all that does is promote arrogant self-deception, and it clouds our minds of the grace of God, Romans 12:3 / 1 Corinthians 10:12.

And how do we know if we're becoming a little too arrogant and self-reliant? Galatians 6:3. We know we're becoming arrogant and self-reliant when we start comparing ourselves with others.

As Christians, we must consider our own work in reference to God alone; otherwise, we start boasting about our good works and contrasting our good works against our brothers and sisters, Galatians 6:4.

Wiersbe, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Nothing reveals the wickedness of legalism better than the way the legalists treat those who have sinned.’

When we start contrasting ourselves with others, we begin to judge others by our own standards and not God's. Paul looked at his own work as a response to God's grace, 1 Corinthians 15:10. He understood he didn't work his way into God's grace, but grace has worked him into God's work of grace, Ephesians 2:8-10.

The point is that those who are of the faith of Abraham view their work in response to God's grace, but the legalist views his work in comparison to his brother. Those of the faith of Abraham work in thanksgiving, but the legalist works and compares his work with his brother.

Notice what Paul said, ‘for each one should carry their own load’, Galatians 6:5. Wait a minute, Paul, didn't you just say that we're to ‘carry each other's burdens, and in this way, we will fulfil the law of Christ,’ Galatians 6:2.

Well, as pointed out earlier, the Greek word used in Galatians 6:2 refers to a heavy burden to be borne, the bearing of each other's sorrows, due to sins or misfortunes.

The Greek word used in Galatians 6:9, for ‘burden,’ is ‘phortion’, which refers to the burden of a soldier; in other words, every soldier must carry his own pack. Paul is speaking about how everyone has to bear their own responsibility, fulfilling the purpose of his own responsibility, fulfilling the purpose of their own life.

Every Christian is responsible for carrying their own weight. We all have a load to bear, but it is comparatively light, Matthew 11:30. The burden in Galatians 6:2 is an excessive burden. The load in Galatians 6:5 is our normal burden of responsibility.

I know that we're family and we're supposed to help each other, but ultimately, we're responsible for our own relationship with God, Romans 2:6 / 1 Corinthians 3:8 / Galatians 6:4 / James 4:12.

When it comes to the final judgment, no one will be responsible for someone else's personal behaviour, 2 Corinthians 5:10. There's a real blessing when Christians share with each other and those around them.

After speaking about the importance of sharing each other's burdens, whilst at the same time carrying your own load. Paul now goes on to speak about another aspect of sharing, the sharing of our finances with the teacher or preacher of God's word.

“Nevertheless, the one who receives instruction in the word should share all good things with their instructor.”
Galatians 6:6

The word 'share' that Paul uses here is the Greek word 'koinonia', and it means to share in joint partnership. It's the same word that Luke uses in Acts 2:42, when he speaks about what the new Christians devoted themselves to; it's the word 'fellowship'.

Paul is saying that Christians have the blessing of sharing their finances to support their preachers or teachers, 1 Corinthians 9:11-12. It's a great privilege and honour to support those who teach us, but we need to be sure we're supporting the right people.

“Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. Whoever sows to please their flesh, from the flesh will reap destruction; whoever sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life.” Galatians 6:7-8

It seems that the Galatians were doing what the Corinthians were doing, that is, supporting the wrong teachers, 2 Corinthians 11:1-15. When Paul later wrote to the church in Corinth, the Corinthians were supporting those who were denying the apostleship of Paul and were teaching a whole bunch of false doctrines.

This is what the Galatians were doing too; they were supporting the Judaizing teachers who were teaching that Christians needed to be circumcised and keep the Law of Moses. And so, Paul warns them that if they do this, they will reap what they sow, Galatians 6:7 / 1 Corinthians 9:11 / 2 Corinthians 9:6-10.

In other words, if they sow by supporting those who are emphasising the works of the flesh in reference to law-keeping and meritorious works, then they will reap the results of such behaviour, but if they sow to the Spirit, they will reap the kingdom of God, Galatians 6:8.

Paul's telling them that they must stop supporting these Judaizing teachers. If we sow spiritual things, we will reap spiritual things; if we sow fleshly, we will reap what the flesh produces, Galatians 6:8 / 1 Corinthians 9:11 / 2 Corinthians 9:6-10.

In this context, Paul is basically saying that if these Galatian Christians continue to invest their money in these false teachers. These false teachers were promoting a gospel that included legalistic law-keeping.

They will ultimately reap the consequences of supporting them, 2 Thessalonians 1:8-9. God says that we will reap what we sow, not only in this life but also in that which is to come, Romans 2:6. Before we move on let me explain something that troubles me, especially when I hear Christians speaking about sowing and reaping.

KARMA

Many Christians wrongly believe in 'karma', saying that the principle of sowing and reaping and karma is the same. Karma is a belief in Hinduism and Buddhism, something that isn't mentioned anywhere in the Bible.

The Merriam-Webster dictionary says Karma is ‘the force created by a person’s actions that are believed in Hinduism and Buddhism to determine what that person’s next life will be like’ or ‘the force created by a person’s actions that some people believe causes good or bad things to happen to that person’.

In other words, karma teaches people to believe that they will always get what they deserve. If they do good, good things will naturally come their way; if they do bad, bad things will inevitably come, and so on.

While the idea of having good come around again for the good things we do. And having bad come around again for the bad things we do, sounds like the sowing and reaping principle of [Galatians 6:7](#), it really isn’t.

Karma insists on receiving the returns of what we do today in the afterlife, something like ‘if you’re a bad man today, you’ll be a dirt-eating fly in the next life.’ But the Bible gives us just one simple explanation to say what we deserve.

The Bible simply says that all of us deserve nothing good for what we’ve done and how we’ve lived, [Romans 3:10](#) / [Romans 3:23](#) / [Romans 6:23](#).

Karma says we can do good and receive our due after this life, but the Bible says there’s nothing we can do in this life to make us worthy of receiving goodness in this life and in the life to come.

What’s more, ‘karma’ says all of us will live again, to either a better or worse life based on what we do today. The Bible, however, says that we can only live if we believe in the Son of God, [John 3:16-17](#). In other words, our actions can’t win a better afterlife for us; only the blood of Jesus can.

Notice how Paul concludes with what he’s been teaching throughout the letter. He’s contrasting those who sow to the Spirit, with those who are sowing to the flesh. Paul says that those who sow to the flesh will reap the curse of God, [Galatians 1:6-9](#).

In [Galatians 5:20-21](#), after giving us a list of sins, which says if you are continually involved in these sins, you won’t inherit eternal life, which tells us if we’re not involved in those sins, we will reap eternal life. Those who sow to the works of the flesh will reap certain destruction, but those who sow to the Spirit will reap certain life.

The Greek word for ‘eternal’ is ‘aionion,’ [Galatians 5:8](#), and Paul is using it in reference to the quality of life to come. Christians have this life now as a result of God’s grace, but it will continue into the future in the presence of God.

“Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers. See what large letters I use as I write to you with my own hand!” [Galatians 6:9-11](#)

The word ‘weary’, [Galatians 6:9](#), means to be spiritless, exhausted, lose heart, or despair. The idea is not fatigue but that Christians can lose their motivation to do ‘good,’ [Ephesians 3:13](#) / [2 Thessalonians 3:13](#).

Notice that Paul includes himself in the possibility of becoming weary, by using the word ‘us’, [Galatians 6:9](#). We should not give up on our good deeds because we’re doing God’s work and He promises that we will reap a harvest, [Galatians 6:9](#). We understand that between seedtime and harvest comes a time of waiting.

After a seed is planted, the heat, moisture and pressure of the ground finally cause the outer hull to crack open. Then roots shoot up, digging their way through the ground, but it takes time for this to happen, and it takes place underground.

Above the ground, you can’t tell anything is happening, and that’s the way our lives are. After we plant, we feel like nothing is happening, but all kinds of things are happening inside where we can’t see. And like the seed that bursts through the ground with a beautiful green shoot, our seeds will finally come into a beautiful manifestation of God in our lives.

Aren't you glad that Jesus didn't give up? Aren't you glad He didn't give up on us? [Hebrews 12:3](#) / [Hebrews 12:5](#). We need to understand that God's timing is often a mystery. He doesn't do things on our timetable, but His word promises that He will not be late, not one single day, [Habakkuk 2:3](#).

God causes things to happen at exactly the right time, and our job isn't to figure out when, but to make up our minds that we won't give up until we cross the finish line. We do good works because God has prepared them for us to do, and we don't give up because Jesus didn't give up on us.

The reason we do good works is simply that God has work for us to do. God has work for us to do; it's all prepared for us, but we need to make ourselves available to do those good works, [Ephesians 2:10](#).

Doing good works isn't about us; it isn't even about those we help, it's about giving God the glory that only He deserves, [Matthew 5:16](#). We do good because we are saved, not to become saved. We do good because we are in Christ, not in order to come into Christ, [Philippians 2:12-13](#).

While Christians receive benefits and blessings in this life for doing good, God has selected a time to reward all the faithful at the coming of His Son, [Galatians 6:9](#) / [Matthew 24:36](#) / [Matthew 25:31-34](#) / [Matthew 25:46](#).

Jesus began two thousand years ago to fulfil the Father's will by His good works and His sacrifice on the cross. He delivered His message, but He wants us to finish the picture. There are good works to be fulfilled, and we need to make it our business to finish them, and so fulfilling those works He has planned for each of us.

The legalist will go to the judgment day in doubt because they have trusted in their own performance, but the sons of faith will go to the judgment day with boldness because they have trusted in the atonement sacrifice of Jesus.

Some believe we should only look after each other, but Paul says the opposite; he says Christians must 'do good to all people', [Galatians 6:10](#). Paul says to the Galatians, 'do good to all people', and to Titus, he says, 'doing good is excellent and profitable for everyone,' [Titus 3:8](#).

Why would Paul say, 'especially to those who belong to the family of believers'? They say that charity begins at home, and that's certainly true. Too many Christians, even among our own number, go unnoticed because they're too embarrassed to ask for help. Some of them won't ask for help because their pride gets in the way.

If we're so quick to help those who aren't Christians, we should be twice as quick to help our own. When we do good to those who aren't Christians, we're proclaiming to the world that Jesus is our Lord.

And when we do good to those within our church family, we're reminding them that they, too, have made Jesus their Lord. In other words, all our good works not only benefit us but also benefit the world. But the glory for doing those good works goes to God, [Psalm 115:1](#).

Paul says, 'See what large letters I use as I write to you with my own hand!' [Galatians 6:11](#). It's possible he was emphasising the seriousness of his letter, and it's possible he's emphasising a warning about what he's about to write. I personally believe he was writing with large letters because he was going blind. I believe this because Paul has already mentioned it in his letter, [Galatians 4:12-15](#). This could also be the thorn in his flesh which he asked God to remove three times, [2 Corinthians 12:7-10](#).

NOT CIRCUMCISION BUT THE NEW CREATION

"Those who want to impress people by means of the flesh are trying to compel you to be circumcised. The only reason they do this is to avoid being persecuted for the cross of Christ. Not even those who are circumcised keep the law, yet they want you to be circumcised that they may boast about your circumcision in the flesh." Galatians 6:12-13

The problem with legalists is that they always want to be recognised; they're always fighting to become popular among the saints. In other words, it's all about status, and when they get that status, they go all out to recruit other Christians to their own doctrine.

But the problem with seeking status is that it promotes pride, Romans 11:20 / 1 Corinthians 10:12. These legalistic teachers wanted some status of importance in the church in an effort to get Christians to be circumcised.

The word 'compel', Galatians 6:12, means to constrain, to persuade someone strongly or as we would say today, intimidate. These guys were using every tactic of intimidation they could think of to get others to submit to their rules and regulations.

The same kind of tactics they used on Peter and the church in Antioch, Galatians 2:11-13. They were compelling the Gentile Christians to be circumcised in order that they might make an appearance of toeing the line with the law. But the real reason behind this was to try and escape being persecuted for the sake of the cross of Christ, Galatians 6:12. What they were doing was making themselves enemies of the cross, Philippians 3:18. This is how cults start, they intimidate people to conform to their ways.

Once the new converts totally conform, the new convert goes out to intimidate others to conform. In other words, their goal is to save the saved, and they want their own group to grow, made up of people who now follow the original legalistic teaching.

Paul not only explains the motivation of the legalistic Judaizers, but he also shows their hypocrisy. He says they were zealous about keeping one part of the law, which was circumcision, Galatians 6:13.

Morris, in his commentary, says the following.

'To advocate circumcision was to align the new movement with Judaism, a religion that had official Roman sanction, and therefore one that avoided persecution. The preachers Paul was opposing may have included the cross in their proclamation, but by adding the necessity of circumcision, they avoided persecution.'

The only reason they were zealous was that they wanted to impress those around them, Matthew 23:3. These guys were hypocrites because they wanted to keep one part of the law but ignore the other parts of the law, Galatians 6:13 / James 2:10-11. In other words, Paul says these guys demand conformity to their standards but fail to measure up to perfect law-keeping; they are hypocrites.

"May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world." Galatians 6:14

Although the preaching of the cross brought persecution, Paul wouldn't stop preaching about it, Romans 1:16 / Philippians 3:3-7. Although the atonement of the cross by the grace of God was foolishness to some, 1 Corinthians 1:23, he would still proclaim that God's grace was revealed by His Son hanging on the cross outside the city walls of Jerusalem.

MacKnight, in his commentary, says the following.

'The cross of Christ crucifies Christians to the world, by inspiring them with such principles and leading them to a course of life which renders them in the eyes of the world as contemptible, and as unfit for their purposes as if they were crucified and dead.'

Legalists will always praise themselves for their own ability to keep the law, and they can always tell you about all the good deeds they've done. But Paul says that he personally would glory only in the grace that proceeds from the cross.

All that Paul had gained in the world, he had sacrificed for the grace that came from the cross, Philippians 3:4-9. His old man of sin had been crucified when he came to Jesus.

“Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything; what counts is the new creation.” Galatians 6:15

When Paul speaks about circumcision here, he’s using it in a way that stands for a legal system of religion and all that would involve. In other words, if you’re trying to be right with God solely through your good works, you’re wasting your time. He says if you’re trying to do that, then your meritorious efforts accomplish nothing.

There’s no religious significance to the act of circumcision, and so it makes no difference whether a person is circumcised or not, but what really counts and what is really important is that we become a new creation, 1 Corinthians 7:19 / 2 Corinthians 5:17.

But how do we do that? We become a new creation when we’re baptised into Christ, Acts 2:38, and we are spiritually circumcised at our baptism, Colossians 2:11-12. We become a new creation by the atoning blood of Jesus, Acts 22:16 / Galatians 3:26-28.

“Peace and mercy to all who follow this rule—to the Israel of God.” Galatians 6:16

Peace and mercy are the apostolic blessing which is invoked upon those who will walk under the Law of Christ, as distinguished from those who desire to cling to the Law of Moses.

What is this rule which Paul is speaking about here? The law of Christ, Galatians 5:1 / Galatians 5:2-4. God’s grace isn’t in vain in the life of the Christian who has given themselves to thank God through obedience, 1 Corinthians 15:10.

Christians don’t work in order to receive salvation; Christians work in order to thank God for all that was accomplished on the cross on their behalf. That’s the rule Paul is speaking about; he’s speaking about a life that just overflows with thankfulness to God for what He has done for us, and it’s demonstrated in our good works, 2 Corinthians 4:15.

When Paul speaks about the Israel of God, he’s referring to the true Jews, the true Israelites who became children of Abraham by faith, not by works of law, and all Christians are sons of Abraham by faith, Romans 2:28-29 / Romans 4:13-16 / Romans 9:6-8.

“From now on, let no one cause me trouble, for I bear on my body the marks of Jesus.” Galatians 6:17

These Judaizers were boasting about their works in relation to the law, but Paul had only the scars left by those who persecuted him for preaching the Gospel of grace and faith, 2 Corinthians 4:10.

Barclay, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Often, a master branded his slaves with a mark that showed them to be his. Most likely, what Paul means is that the scars of the things he had suffered for Christ are the brands which show him to be Christ’s slave.’

These Judaizers were boasting to their supporters concerning the mark of circumcision, but Paul only had the scars of persecution for preaching the cross in order to deliver men from the bonds of paganism, 2 Corinthians 11:24-29.

This explains why Paul was so angry with these legalists; they were stealing the work of God that had been brought forth by the grace of God and Paul’s hard work.

“The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brothers and sisters. Amen.” Galatians 6:18

It’s grace that goes with every Christian, for in it, we all must trust, 2 Corinthians 12:9. It’s in grace that we find the boldness to speak about judgment. For we will all stand before God, not on the merit of our own performance of law or meritorious good works, but on the foundation of the grace of God.

Everything we do, say and live for is because of the grace of God. Grace is what we are; we’re a living, talking example and advertisement of what grace is, 1 Corinthians 15:10.

In the closing of his letter to the Galatians, Paul calls on the favour of Jesus for the entire welfare of the Galatian church. It's Paul's prayer that Jesus shows special favour to them, 3 John 2. The word 'your' is plural in the Greek text, which means Paul is including the whole church which meets in Galatia.

Notice that the word 'spirit' isn't a capital 'S', so he's not referring to the Holy Spirit. Now you might ask, well, what difference does that make? Just as God is a triune being made up of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. God created us as triune beings, made up of a spirit, soul and body, 1 Thessalonians 5:23.