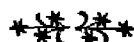


Readings on the Epistle  
to the  
GALATIANS

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## Readings on the Epistle to the GALATIANS

(Chap. 1: 1-5.)

**I**F the epistle to the Romans is a divinely-authorized treatise on the gospel of God—an unfolding of its nature and character—the epistle to the Galatians has the nature of a polemic; that is, it is a defense of the gospel against its perversion.

In our study of the epistle it will be necessary to keep in mind that it is a divinely-authorized defense. It was *as an apostle* the author of it wrote. The epistle is not the fruit of the mind of man reasoning on its subject. It is the mind of God about it, and it is the mind of God authoritatively declared.

This is strongly affirmed in the very first verse. Paul begins the epistle by insisting that he is an apostle by the authority of "Jesus Christ and God the Father;" that he is not writing under an authority derived from *man*, or that man has been the channel through which it was conferred upon him. Jesus, raised from the dead by the power of God the Father and exalted and made Lord and Christ, is the *source* of the authority by which he writes.

A communication by such authority demanded the strict attention of the churches of Galatia. Are we less bound to give heed to it? Is not their obligation ours? If by divine authority Paul could claim the ear of the Galatian saints, we are likewise re-

sponsible to listen to his communication. The Lord grant us, then, to hear what the Spirit has said by one divinely authorized to speak.

But the authority by which he writes is not the apostle's only appeal. Strong and incontestable as it is, he yet adds another to it. This too is a forcible plea. In verse 2 the Galatians are reminded that "all the brethren that are with" him are in full sympathy with the communication he, with divine authority, is sending them. They are thus made to feel that in their defection from the apostolic gospel they are out of harmony with the common Christian faith. It is a serious question for saints everywhere to ask, Is the form of the gospel I hold and adhere to the apostolic form? Is the form of the gospel I maintain that which has been divinely authorized, or is it a defection from it—a perversion of it? Let every one answer in the fear of God.

In verse 3 the apostle expresses the desire of his heart for them—"Grace and peace from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ." But while wishing this for them, he reminds them (verse 4) that Jesus Christ "gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from the present age of evil." We need to consider this well, not only because it is a direct blow at the error into which the Galatians had been led, but because, through misapprehension, the verse has been used in the interest of other errors.

"The present age of evil" will be understood aright only as we consider that there was once here upon earth an age of *good*. The age was a brief one, but while it lasted there was *no* evil. God could

say, as He looked upon the condition of things His own hand had set up, "Behold, it is very good" (Gen. 1: 31).

But an enemy has set up another condition of things—a condition of things characterized by evil. The time of the continuance of *this* condition of things is "the present age of evil." It began with the fall of Adam, the first man. It will end when the Second Man sets up a condition of things that will be characterized by *righteousness*. Just as there is an age of evil, so there is to be an age of righteousness.

In the age of good, man was in the image and likeness of God. He stood here on the earth with the impress of God upon him. He was a being capable of knowing and enjoying the scene in the midst of which he was, dominion over which had been given to him. He was also a being capable of enjoying God in the measure in which it was his to know Him.

When the age of evil came in, man did not cease to be in the image of God. Gen. 9: 6 is sufficient to show this. It is true the image became defaced, but it was not lost. He did not lose his capability of knowing and enjoying the things with which he was surrounded, though that capability was seriously marred. He did not lose his capacity for knowing and enjoying God in the measure of his knowledge of Him. He *did* lose the enjoyment of God, for God and sin cannot be enjoyed together; but though without the enjoyment of God, he was still a being *capable* of enjoying Him.

Now here we must inquire, In what does man's

participation in the age of evil consist? Is it evil for him to know what God has given him to know and enjoy? Is it evil for him to seek the knowledge of the things God has put into his hands and clothed him with authority to use and control? Surely not. The pursuit of knowledge—the knowledge of the things of man—is not evil; though, being fallen and under the dominion of sin, man may put his knowledge to a sinful use. It is not in the pursuit of what God has authorized, but *by his sins* that man participates in the present evil age. It is as fallen and having a sinful nature that he belongs to the age of evil. It is *in sinning* that he is *practically* taking his part in it. Of course, I do not need to insist that every child of Adam belongs to the age of evil, and takes his part practically in it. I am here only defining what that part is, and distinguishing it from what belongs to man properly and rightly by the simple facts of his constitution and the trust committed to him.

It is wrong then to teach that Satan is the *author* of the knowledge that properly belongs to man. It is wrong to say that he is man's instigator in his pursuit of such knowledge, though it is quite true that he is his instigator in the sinful use to which he puts his knowledge.

But now we must inquire as to the ways of God with man as belonging to the age of evil. His first step was to proclaim His purpose to provide a deliverance. This we get in His declaration that He would, by the woman, bring in a Man to conquer Satan, and that this victory over Satan and deliverance for men would be accomplished at personal cost to

the Man He would provide (Gen. 3:15). Furthermore, it is made evident that the deliverance to be provided for men would be appropriated by faith. To Adam, believing that the woman was to be the channel of life, God appropriated the skins of the animals which had surrendered their lives to provide them. We have thus announced at the very first "salvation by grace through faith."

But man needs to learn how utterly he is shut up to "salvation by grace through faith." Hence for long ages God put man on trial as to his ability to recover himself. The question man was set to solve was: Can I deal with respect to my sins (my part in the age of evil) so as to deliver myself out of that age? Is it possible for man to do with his sins what will entitle him to remove himself out of the condition of things characterized by evil? The story of Cain and Abel witnesses to the utter impossibility. The story of all the patriarchs bears testimony to the same thing. The redemption of the children of Israel out of Egypt is a forceful illustration of it.

But the question of man's capacity to take himself out of the age of evil is systematically and fully gone into in connection with the law. In the very nation of Israel, redeemed out of Egypt and put under law, the question of man's capability of taking himself out of a condition of things that is characterized by evil is thoroughly worked out. The result of Israel's trial under law is that there is no removal of sins. The yearly remembrance of sins declares this. Under the law there was no deliverance from the age of evil. True, here and there an individual stood

out in bright contrast with the great mass, counting on the grace that had been announced, convinced of their need of it; but that was faith. Yet even though they were children of faith, their sense of the grace they trusted in was necessarily defective, because it was not yet fully manifested, and they were in bondage to what was the principle of God's ways with the nation to which they belonged.

Now, while in the nation of Israel God was working out the question of man's capacity to take himself out of the age of evil, He was working it out in another way among the Gentiles, and especially among the Greeks. What specially characterized the Greeks was the pursuit of wisdom. But whatever wisdom they attained to, whether knowledge properly so called, or mere speculative knowledge, which might not be genuine knowledge after all, they never were able by their knowledge to remove their sins, and thus take themselves out of the age of evil.

But Christ has provided a removal of sins. He died for that purpose. He died with respect to our sins. He has *thus* in His hands the right to deliver out of the present age of evil. The deliverance which He has procured and has the right to bestow He appropriates to those who in heart bow the knee to Him.

It is "the will of God and our Father" that we should be thus delivered (verse 4). No wonder the apostle adds, in verse 5, "To whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen."

I have said that the apostle's statement as to

Christ giving "Himself for our sins in order to deliver us out from the present age of evil" is a direct blow at an error the Galatians had been led into. They had been led to add Judaism to Christianity, to join law to grace. By doing so they were denying the distinctive character of Christianity. Christianity accepts as a fact the demonstration of man's incompetency to deliver himself; it proclaims that the power to deliver is in Him whom God has raised from the dead and exalted to His throne. The Galatians had been influenced to accept as truth that man's deliverance out of evil depended on himself—that obedience to the law was to accomplish this deliverance.

The apostle denies in the most absolute way the position they have taken. He takes one which is diametrically the opposite of theirs. Theirs is that of maintaining that man must by works of law deliver himself from the age of evil; his, that Christ, having given Himself with respect to our sins, being risen and exalted to the place of power, is the Deliverer. Which position is right? Which is according to the mind and will of God?

Remembering that the apostle is the exponent of the truth—of the will and mind of God, his discussion of the question is not subject to appeal. The conclusions he gives are final. The answer to the question he makes is authoritative and binding on the faith of all saints.

May the Lord guide us in following the apostle's argument. May He give us anointed eyes to see the truth; with subject minds and hearts to bow to, receive, and enjoy it.



The apostle had visited Galatia twice before he wrote this epistle. The record of his first visit is in Acts 16: 6, which was early in his second missionary journey, when Christianity was first introduced in the province of Galatia. It was probably on the occasion of that visit that the greater part of the believers there, who were now the objects of so much solicitude and concern to Paul, were called into the grace of Christ. This was by the means of the gospel he had preached among them.

We know what that gospel was (1 Cor. 15: 3, 4). It proclaimed a work undertaken and accomplished by Jesus Christ in order to establish His righteous title to deliver guilty sinners, upon their repentance, from the age that is characterized by evil. Having heard and believed the gospel that the apostle preached, they became participants in the deliverance it announced. They realized and enjoyed it.

His second visit is recorded in Acts 18: 23. This was at the beginning of his third journey—probably not more than three or four years after the first visit. The apparent object of this second visit was to strengthen and confirm in the truth of Christianity the churches formed during his former one. How their souls must have been enlarged in the salvation by grace through faith of which they were partakers, as he, with apostolic authority and spiritual power, unfolded it to them!

It was probably not more than three or four years after the second visit that this epistle was written. In this short interval of time a very serious defection from the gospel they had received from him had taken place. A gospel of a different type, of a dif-

ferent character altogether, had been introduced among them. It was the gospel of the legalist. It was not the gospel of *grace*, but of *works*. It is needful that we should realize the difference between the gospel the apostle preached and the gospel proclaimed by those who had risen up among the Galatians, if indeed they had not come to them from elsewhere.

The two gospels are mutually antagonistic. The gospel which Paul authoritatively proclaimed, of which he was the exponent, was a plan of salvation in which there was no allowance whatever of the principle of self-help. It addressed itself to men as being victims of sin, as being in a bondage out of which deliverance is absolutely impossible by self-effort. The new gospel that had come among the Galatians since the apostle's last visit was in contrast with this. It was a gospel of works. It insisted on self-help and the value and merit of human effort.

The Galatians, in giving their adherence to this gospel, were accepting as truth a system of salvation that God had exposed as false. He had shown by the law of Moses that any system whose underlying principle is self-help is weak through the flesh (Rom. 8: 3); that every such system is devised by fallen, sinful man; and that it cannot secure deliverance out of the age of evil. It was the fundamental element in the system of Cain. It is the fundamental element in every plan *man* has ever devised by which to effect his redemption.

Self-effort therefore is a human principle—a principle of the world; a principle common to all classes of men. It is the principle on which all men act

wherever they do not abandon themselves to the bondage of sin or to despair as to escaping it. Now God Himself has in the law of Moses taken up this human element of self-help, this foundation-principle which is not of God, but of the world (Gal. 4: 3), and He has demonstrated what a weak and beggarly principle it is (Gal. 4: 9). He has proved its weakness and unprofitableness (Heb. 7: 18).

In giving their adherence to this gospel of works, the Galatians had abandoned the system which is of God for that which is of the world—of man. It was taking up a system which God had proved to be weak and unprofitable, and had cast off. It was a fall from the ground of God's grace to that of man's works.

Paul realized the seriousness of this defection. It raised questions in his mind. Were they in fact Christians? "I stand in doubt of you," he tells them. He is perplexed in his mind about them (chap. 4: 20). He fears the labor he had bestowed on them was in vain (chap. 4: 11). It was impossible for him to come to that conclusion however. He remembers the way they received his gospel at the beginning, and he cannot think that they are not children of God. In spite of his perplexities as to them, he still calls them brethren and his children.

But even so, even if he can still regard them as being sons of God (chap. 4: 6), he feels how seriously their apprehension of the grace in which they really stand is affected by their defection from the truth—from the true gospel. While Christ had given them liberty, they were not subjectively standing fast in

it. They had lost the inward realization of it. They needed to have Christ formed in them; to have established in their souls the apprehension of the true character of His grace.

To this end the apostle is laboring in writing to them. He is seeking the recovery in their souls of the sense of their deliverance from the present age of evil which Christ, by the right of His death for their sins, had bestowed upon them. It will, I trust, be edifying and profitable to follow the apostle's method with them. I shall now address myself to it.

The first thing he does is to acquaint them with the consternation with which his soul was seized when he realized what had taken place among them, and how surprised he was at the suddenness with which it had occurred (verse 6). It must have been a powerful appeal to them to be accused by him of giving up the gospel they had heard from him, especially as he insists that the gospel to which they had turned was so different from his that it was not a gospel at all (verse 7).

But he knows how to account for what had so quickly taken place. He tells them the preachers to whom they have been listening are "troublers" and "perverters" of the gospel of Christ. Furthermore, he lets them know that their perversion of the gospel is not through mere weak apprehension of it, but is designed. They have a fixed purpose in doing it. They are deliberately and wilfully doing it. How keenly the apostle must have felt his Galatian converts becoming a prey to such men—men actuated with such a wicked purpose!

His soul is thoroughly roused. In verses 8 and 9 he bursts out with fiery indignation. What a solemn fulmination against these troublers! What an indignant protest against their perversion of the gospel of Christ! A burning zeal consumes him. His feeling is intense. He cannot repress the repugnance of his spirit to their evil, destructive work. He must denounce them in the strongest terms.

We must not think of the apostle as under some uncontrollable impulse. He is not speaking inconsiderately, nor using exaggerated expressions, but he writes deliberately and soberly, conscious of being exponent of the truth—of that gospel which he had preached in Galatia, of which Christ is the author and substance. He understood how serious it was not to apprehend its character; how much more serious, therefore, it was to designedly and wilfully pervert it. This was wicked and blasphemous. "Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached," is language calmly and designedly used to awaken in the Galatians (in us as well) a sense of the seriousness of the matter; "let him be anathema" is God's sentence on those carrying on the wicked and blasphemous work. It is pronounced by one authorized to speak as His mouthpiece. The repetition of it emphasizes both the seriousness and the sentence pronounced. The change in the repetition from "that which we have preached" to "that ye have received" emphasizes the fact that they *had* received the real gospel of Christ from him; that he *had* delivered it to them authoritatively, and that consequently it was their responsibility to treat the

wicked perverters of it as under the anathema of God.

Since the age of the apostles there has been no one clothed with authority to pronounce an anathema. This does not mean that wicked perverters of the gospel are not now "anathema." The apostolic pronouncement here applies to them. In treating them as being anathema (accursed) we are acting under apostolic authority. If neither the Church collectively nor the saints individually have authority to declare any one anathema, both are to be subject to the authoritative declaration of the apostle. His pronouncement should be the end of all controversy. It will be wisdom for us to accept it as such.

As one who was authorized to speak for God, and to declare His mind, the apostle's concern was to do it faithfully. He was acting on that which the Lord required of Jeremiah, "He that hath My word, let him speak My word faithfully" (Jer. 23: 28). In verse 10 Paul insists that he is not seeking the favor of men. To do that would prove him untrue to his divinely-given trust. A servant of Christ is duty-bound to be faithful. If he altered the word of God given to him—if he toned it down to suit the pleasure of men he would not speak faithfully as one called to be the exponent of the truth and the mind of God.

What reason we have to thank God for the apostle's faithfulness! Through it we have the mind and will of God in a form which is absolute. There is no uncertainty about it. God has spoken by one whom He has Himself commissioned to speak for

Him, and who has faithfully declared His word as given to him. It therefore comes to us as it came to men in apostolic times, claiming our own complete adherence, as it did that of those to whom it first came.

While considering the question of authority, a few further remarks may be in place. Very evidently, there is innate in the souls of men a craving for authority to which to appeal, on which to rest, with which to leave all responsibility without a question. It is this craving in the soul that leads men to rest on the word of a priest or minister; that leads people to trust in and submit to the voice of the Church. But no priest or minister, or any individual other than a prophet or apostle, has authority to define what is or is not the mind and will of God. We are responsible to judge of that by what God has given as being His mind and will through prophets or apostles authorized by Himself to speak for Him. Is what I hear according to what God has spoken by His prophets and apostles?—this to be asked always.

It is true that certain duties in connection with the administration of the kingdom of heaven are put into the hands of the disciples of the kingdom (Matt. 16: 19; John 20: 23). But these duties are strictly defined. They are in no sense legislative; they are strictly administrative. They do not include the authoritative affirmation of what is and what is not the mind of God.

There are also certain matters of administration put into the hands of the Church; but here again there is the same limitation. The Church is not

clothed with legislative power. She is nowhere authorized to teach. She is under the responsibility of administering what the authorized prophets and apostles have taught. Her administration, so far as it is according to the revealed mind of God, is sanctioned by God (Matt. 18: 18).

Neither disciples in connection with the administration of the kingdom of heaven that is committed to them, nor the Church in connection with the administrative duties given to her, have been authorized to speak as the mouthpiece of God. The usurpation of the functions of prophets and apostles is prohibited to both.

But the authority that can alone satisfy the innate craving of the soul, and forever settle and silence its questions, is found in the written word of God. Here is where God Himself speaks. He speaks the truth, and by it settles the deepest perplexities of every soul that appeals to it. It gives a sure foundation to the soul. Reliance on it will never be betrayed. When the soul is concerned as to its most momentous interests—those in relation to eternity—the *sure* word of God settles everything for it; puts everything in the light, and gives a certainty altogether divine. It is the same Word that will be the judge of men in the last day (John 12: 48).

But we must return to our consideration of the apostle's method with the Galatians in seeking to recover in their souls the sense of the true character of the grace of Christ by which they had been called, and from which they had departed.



HAVING pronounced the perverters of the gospel "anathema," the apostle next solemnly assures the Galatians that the gospel he preached was not according to man (ver. 11). The element characteristic of every remedy proposed and announced from man as a means of deliverance out of the age of evil was unknown in the gospel proclaimed by the apostle. Every system devised by men to remedy the condition of evil in which men are insists on self-effort. Man is to rise up in the assertion of his so-called better self, cast off his sins, and cultivate his better qualities.

This principle, characteristic of every human scheme for the salvation of men, has no place in Paul's gospel. The announcement he brought to men imposed no toil on them, but declared the toil of a Substitute in their behalf. His message was concerned with a work already accomplished, and accepted by God. He declared the finished work of Christ as a provision of God, a provision of grace, in the behalf of man. He announced a full and free salvation by grace, to be received in faith. Hence the gospel Paul preached was not patterned after any of the humanly-devised schemes.

We must also notice another thing. Man was not the *channel* through which Paul had received the gospel he proclaimed (verse 12). The risen Lord Jesus Christ commissioned the apostles whom He had chosen to be His witnesses to go among the Gentiles and make disciples (Matt. 28: 19). They were thus authorized directly by Himself to preach the gospel to all men (Mark 16: 15). Receiving the Holy Spirit whom He had promised to give them,

they were qualified as well as empowered to be His witnesses, not only in Jerusalem and all Judæa and Samaria, but also in all the world (Acts 1: 8). Surely they were competent to teach men the gospel—to be the channels of it *to* men. But Paul did not even receive it from them. They were not his instructors in the grace of Christ. This he learned, as he tells us here, directly from the Lord Himself. Jesus Christ on the throne of God in heaven revealed Himself to him, and thus made known to him His grace, and chose him as His instrument to preach it. It was thus he learned the gospel and received his call. The glorified Lord had taught him and sent him.

Thus the apostle Paul had divine authority for the gospel he preached. He knew its origin, its authenticity. It was an authoritative gospel. The “perverters” of it were preaching what was of man. They had not learned their gospel from God, nor from the twelve. It was as truly a perversion of what the twelve preached as of what Paul preached. It was after the pattern of the humanly-devised schemes for the salvation of men; on the principle of self-effort; without the authority of God. Thus the apostle could establish both the authenticity of his gospel and the authenticity of his call to preach it. The perverters had neither the one nor the other.

The way in which he does this is not only interesting, it is edifying. There is rich and profitable instruction in it. First, he refers to the time when he was a student in a human school—a school in which instruction was according to man. We know, for he

tells us elsewhere (Acts 22: 3), that he was instructed by the great Jewish teacher Gamaliel. He was undoubtedly well versed in that system of the interpretation of the Old Testament in which Gamaliel was a great master. He had amazingly developed in "the traditions of his fathers," and "profited beyond many of his contemporaries" in the religious system of the Jews. As proof of his wonderful development in the religious system of which he was a sincere and faithful adherent, he appeals to his zeal in persecuting and wasting the Church of God (vers. 13, 14).

The brief summary of his former manner of life shows how thoroughly he understands the characteristic principle of the system of instruction which these troublers and perverters of the gospel had introduced among the Galatian saints. As he tells us elsewhere (Phil. 3: 5, 6), it was his boast that "as touching the law" he was a Pharisee, and as touching the righteousness it required he was "blameless." Acting on the human principle of self-effort, he became a sincere *blasphemer*. He was a determined enemy of the free, sovereign grace of God. Blinded by the power of the human principle which was governing him, he resisted all testimony to the grace that had provided for men a Saviour.

It was while he was still pursuing his way of determined opposition to the free grace that had been proclaimed among men that the risen and ascended Lord showed Himself to him, revealed the gospel to him, and called him to preach it. It is this sovereign and divine call that he here insists on (vers. 15,

16). He would have the Galatians realize not only that his gospel is a divinely-authoritative gospel, but also that he himself was divinely commissioned to preach it.

But we need to consider more fully the apostle's appeal to his divine call. There is rich instruction in it. He says: "But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by His grace." Why does he refer to his natural birth? Let us consider it for a little.

God conferred on man, His creature, the power to propagate himself (Gen. 1: 28); but if the creature propagate itself by power conferred on it by God, then that power is not intrinsically, or essentially, in the creature. It is intrinsically, and essentially, in God, the creator of all things. It is *dependently* in the creature. It is by the power of God that men beget; that women conceive, and bring forth. All the so-called forces of nature are of God. The operation of every force in the material creation is by His power.

The apostle's point is that the same God who brought him into being according to His sovereign will, *of His own* will wrought in him when he was in the blindness of unbelief. Another apostle says (James 1: 18), "Of His own will begat He us with the Word of truth." That is what Paul is here affirming as to himself. By the power of divine grace God had laid hold of his soul. He had spoken, not simply *to* him, but effectually *in* his soul. There had been thus a deposit in his soul of a word of truth—a saying of God. As he had been born naturally by the power of God, so also by the power of

God had he been new-born, "not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible," by means of the living and enduring word of God (1 Peter 1: 23).

In his new birth he was the pattern of every new birth. His new birth was a sample case. It was a new creation in Christ Jesus (Eph. 2: 10). But while this is true, God had a special purpose in selecting him "to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth" (2 Thess. 2: 13). He had "beforehand" (Acts 22: 14, *Greek*) "chosen" him to "know His will," to "see that Just One," and "hear His voice." He had selected him to be the vessel of His grace to men; to be, as a personal witness of the risen and exalted Jesus, the bearer of His name, first "before the Gentiles and kings," but also "the children of Israel" (Acts 9: 15). God, in the exercise of His sovereign rights, had purposed him to be a herald of the gospel of the glory of His Son—a preacher of this gospel among the Gentiles.

What man *of himself* knows this marvelous glory? It is a glory the eye of the natural man has never seen. The report of it his ear never hears. The reality and blessedness of it never enters the natural man's heart (1 Cor. 2: 9). If then Saul, the unbelieving Saul, of his own will a hater of the name of Jesus, and an insolent persecutor of His followers, is to be transformed into His bond-slave and the devoted proclaimer of His glory, the apprehension of Him—of the glory that is His—must be wrought in his soul. It was not there naturally. The God who gave him his being, calling him by the power of His grace, effected in his soul this inward realization of the superexcellent glory of His Son. It was a work

of God in his soul; it was believing Him whom God had sent, and whom, on His rejection, He had glorified in the highest heaven.

He had, then, been divinely called to be a preacher of the gospel. He had been divinely qualified for preaching it by a divine deposit in his soul of the reality, blessedness and power of the gospel he had been called to preach. He had been preaching it (and was still) by divine authority. In insisting on his divine authorization he is exposing the culpability of the Galatians in giving up the gospel he had preached among them for a "different" gospel which the "perverters of the gospel of Christ" had since proclaimed among them.

But he carries his argument still further. He says, "Immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood." We read in Acts 9: 20, "And straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that He is the Son of God." He did this without consulting with man, and without his sanction. Nor was there any comparing of the gospel he had received from the Lord with what others preached. In vers. 17-19 he shows that the development of the gospel in his own mind was entirely without reference to others. In Phil. 3: 7, 8 he tells us that when God wrought *in* his soul "the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus" he counted as refuse what hitherto had been gain to him. This surely included the interpretation of the Old Testament Scriptures he had learnt at Gamaliel's feet. How useless he must have felt it all to be as he preached Christ in the synagogues of Damascus! How fully aware he must have been that his knowledge of them, his under-

standing of them, having left Christ and His sufferings out, had been altogether wrong!

Perhaps it was his consciousness of this that decided him to go into Arabia. There, alone in the school of God, he would, one cannot but think, be unlearning the interpretations of Gamaliel, and view afresh the Old Testament in the new light which the rejected but risen and glorified Christ, now in divine power in his soul, gave to it. As he thus read and studied the Old Testament, how his soul must have been ravished in everywhere finding that blessed face before him! How plainly he saw now that "Moses in the law and the prophets" wrote of Him! How the gospel he had heard and learned from that superexcellent Man in the glory of God expanded in his soul while thus alone with God in the desert! There he became familiar with the one only true and divinely-authorized interpretation of the Scriptures.

Thus furnished with light and knowledge, realized to be, not from man, but from God Himself, he returned to Damascus. His testimony as to Christ aroused the hatred of his fellow-countrymen, who sought to kill him. The disciples helping him to escape, "letting him down by the wall in a basket" (Acts 9: 25; 1 Cor. 11:33), he went to Jerusalem for the first time since his conversion. He tells us it was three years after, and that the object of his visit at this time was "to see Peter." But as he was now well established and confirmed in the gospel of the grace of God, as we have seen, this visit was not for the purpose of having the gospel authenticated by Peter. No human confirmation or authorization of

it was needed. He possessed this already from God Himself. The fifteen days spent with Peter were days of *communion* with a kindred soul. It was a blessed time of fellowship of heart with heart; and how their hearts must have burned within them as they communed one with another! We may surmise what the great theme of their communion was—the man-rejected, but God-exalted, Christ.

It was on this occasion, as he tells us in Acts 22: 17, that the glorified Lord again revealed Himself to him. At the time of his conversion he was told (Acts 26: 16), "I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of *these things which thou hast seen*, and of *those things* in the which I *will appear* unto thee." At the time of his conversion he was informed that the special sphere of his testimony was to be among the Gentiles. It would seem that at the time of his visit to Jerusalem to see Peter a strong desire possessed him to testify among the Jews. When the Lord appears to him, while he is praying in the temple, commanding him to depart "quickly out of Jerusalem," he reasons with the Lord against it; but he is told, "Depart: for I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles" (Acts 22: 17-21).

Now during his fifteen days' visit at Jerusalem, besides Peter, he saw none of the other apostles except James the Lord's brother (ver. 19). Evidently his opportunities for conference with those who were apostles before him were very limited. But if his authority to preach the gospel depended on apostolic sanction, this would have been a suited occasion for a conference of the apostles in regard to the matter.



There was no such conference. There was no apostolic hand laid on his head, not even Peter's.

In verse 20 he solemnly assures the Galatians that his statement of the way in which he received the gospel, and of the authority by which he preached it, was in no particular false, but in every way the truth. The apostle was not writing as lifted up with pride, or as boasting of his authority, but as being consciously before the face of God, soberly realizing the importance of what he is insisting upon, and the seriousness of the spiritual state in which the saints of Galatia were—a state which, alas, was henceforth to be a continual plague and menace to Christianity.

In the remaining verses of the chapter (vers. 21–24) he completes his statement as to the Source from which he received his gospel, and the authority by which he proclaimed it, in entire independence of man, without human sanction altogether. We notice that after his visit to Peter he went “into the regions of Syria and Cilicia” (verse 21). In Acts 9: 30 we read of his being in “Cæsarea” and “Tarsus.” It was at Tarsus that Barnabas found him some years after, and induced him to go to Antioch to take part in the work of God going on there. During this period of his stay in “the regions of Syria and Cilicia” there was no interference with his preaching the gospel in the way in which he had preached it from the first. It is true we have no records of his labors during these years. It is probable that he was quietly witnessing for Christ while waiting for the Spirit's time for him to embark on the special mission for which he had been called.

He knew what this mission was, for twice at least he had already been divinely told. But as yet he had not received the authoritative word to go. He furnishes us with an interesting example of not running before being sent. It was not until at least ten years after his conversion that the Spirit said, "Separate Me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them" (Acts 13: 2).

During these years of waiting for the special call of the Spirit he is acquiring experience, gaining wisdom, and establishing his character. It is as one having an established character as a servant of the Lord that Barnabas seeks for him and brings him to Antioch (Acts 12: 25, 26). He went to Antioch entirely untrameled, free to preach and teach under the divine authority by which already, up to this time, he had proclaimed the gospel. All these years he was "unknown by face unto the churches of Judæa," though they well knew that he who formerly persecuted them was preaching the "faith which once he destroyed" (verses 22, 23).

He was preaching it with the authority received from the glorified Lord, without the authorization of man, and with the knowledge both of those who were apostles before him and of the churches of Judæa. No objection had been offered to it, either by the apostles or the churches. They had raised no question as to the authenticity of his gospel or the authority by which he proclaimed it.

Doubtless the "troublers" and "perverters" to whom the Galatian saints had given ear, and whose spurious gospel they were receiving, questioned both, and sought to represent that they had the sympathy

and encouragement of the leaders of reputation at Jerusalem. The apostle's declarations, in this first chapter of his epistle to the churches of Galatia, definitely dispose of their representations, and expose the guilt of the saints in allowing themselves to be affected by them.

The churches of Judæa, instead of opposing him and resisting his work in entire independence of those who were leaders among them, "glorified God in him" (verse 24). There had thus been hearty fellowship with him in his work.

#### Chapter 2: 1-10

**I**T is altogether likely that the perverters of the gospel among the Christians of Galatia, claimed that the gospel which they preached was identical with that preached by those at Jerusalem whom the risen Lord had put in the apostolic office. They sought to give the impression that, in what they were teaching and insisting on as the truth, they had the full approval and sanction of those who were held in honor by the saints of Jerusalem.

Such pretensions and claims are thoroughly exposed and proven to be false in chapter 2: 1-10. Paul shows most convincingly that the leaders in the work of God among the circumcision were fully acquainted with the form in which he preached the gospel among the uncircumcised; that they had recognized his mission to the Gentiles as of God, and had unreservedly and heartily expressed their fellowship with him in the work he was doing. He

makes it perfectly plain that the men of "reputation" at Jerusalem had authoritatively declared that what he was preaching among the Gentiles was the truth of God. He very conclusively proves that those who had received their commission from the risen Lord were *not* at the back of these men, whom he has denounced as troublers: and that the gospel which *they* were preaching was in no sense identical with the gospel which the apostles and elders of Jerusalem were proclaiming.

The history of the work of God as carried on by the twelve, and as recorded in the Acts, is ample confirmation of everything the apostle Paul is here insisting on. On the day of Pentecost, in Acts 2, Peter, as one of those who, according to Luke 24: 47, were to proclaim "repentance and remission of sins in Christ's name," did *not* insist on circumcision and keeping the law of Moses. He proclaims there what the twelve had been authorized to preach among all nations. True, he was not there preaching to Gentiles directly, but indirectly he was. The great point to be observed is, they were beginning there at Jerusalem to preach the gospel which they were to preach among all the nations.

I may pause here to ask: If the risen Lord Jesus authorized His disciples to preach the gospel among all the nations, is it supposable that in committing the gospel to Paul later, whatever distinctive features might be given to it, it would be inconsistent with, or contradictory to, the gospel already authorized? No; we would expect, whatever the distinctive features of the form given to the gospel in each commission, to find perfect harmony—no disagree-

ment, no antagonism. Such is the case, as we shall see.

Returning to the record of the Acts, we may inquire, Was the gospel of "repentance and remission of sins in the name of Christ" the gospel that was preached in Samaria? It was not the apostles of Jerusalem who first carried the gospel to Samaria. In chapter 8:5 we read it was Philip who first "preached Christ" there. Now there is nothing to show that Philip had received directly from the Lord, as the twelve apostles had, a deposit of truth. However, energized by the Spirit in going to Samaria, it is evident the gospel he carried there must have been the gospel of the twelve apostles. It was, then, the gospel of "repentance and remission of sins in the name of Christ"—a gospel in which there was no insistence on circumcision and keeping the law of Moses.

But if the gospel of "repentance and remission of sins" was to be preached "in Jerusalem, and in all Judæa, and in Samaria" (Acts 1:8), it was also to be preached among the Gentiles, even to "the uttermost part of the earth." Accordingly, in chapter 10 it is recorded that Peter preaches it in the house of the Gentile centurion Cornelius. In doing so the testimony of "all the prophets" is appealed to, to show that "whosoever believes" in the crucified and risen Christ "shall receive the remission of sins." He does not therefore insist on circumcision and keeping the law of Moses. In chapter 11, when charged with going in to men uncircumcised, and eating with them (verse 3), his defense is so unanswerable that his accusers agree that God has un-

doubtedly "granted repentance unto life" to the Gentiles, and there is no forcing the Gentile converts to be circumcised, no binding upon them the yoke of the law.

In this brief summary of the record of the preaching of the gospel that was given to the twelve, and which they were to proclaim everywhere, there is absolutely nothing to show that it was identical with the perverted gospel these "troublers" were preaching in Galatia.

If now we turn to Acts 13, where we find a record of the preaching of Paul, we shall see that he too preached, as did the twelve, the remission of sins in the name of Christ (verse 38). In verse 39 we find a feature not found in the gospel as the twelve preached it—a feature distinctive of the gospel as preached by Paul. "Justification—" a judicial clearance of the very charge of sins—is not a characteristic of the gospel as preached by those who received their commission from the risen Lord while He was yet upon the earth. But even though Paul's gospel contains this new and distinctive feature, it in no way annuls the gospel of the twelve. The two commissions—theirs and his—are in no sense contradictory or antagonistic.

In Acts 15 we find there was question raised at Antioch as to the gospel that Paul was preaching among the Gentiles. Certain men from Judæa, entirely without the approval of the apostles and elders at Jerusalem, had come to Antioch and were insisting that the gospel as Paul was preaching it was defective. They thought it needed to be revised and corrected. They would have modified it to make it

include circumcision and keeping the law of Moses as an essential requirement to salvation. Paul and Barnabas earnestly contended against this. In their minds it was a blow aimed at the very fundamental character of the gospel. They therefore strenuously resisted the Judaizers.

We may well presume that these "men from Judæa" claimed to be the representatives of the apostles and elders at Jerusalem; that they were teaching as the apostles and elders taught, and were only asking Paul to make his gospel conform to theirs. They would maintain that priority belonged to the twelve. If they could not altogether deny Paul's call, they would probably maintain that his call and authority were secondary, and he ought therefore to conform his gospel to theirs—to their *perversion* of it. The questions of the divine origin of Paul's call, of his entire independence of the twelve, and the divine authority of the gospel which he was preaching, being thus raised, Paul would naturally feel the importance of an authoritative declaration on the part of the twelve, or some of them who could speak as representing them. Whether the proposal to take the matter to the apostles and elders at Jerusalem was first made by Paul or by the Judaizers, it was arranged that it should be done.

It is evident that Paul's consent to refer the questions under discussion to the apostles at Jerusalem was in no sense a concession that possibly he might be mistaken in regard to the matter. In the first place, he knew from whom he had received his commission. He could not have any doubt as to the authority under which he was preaching the gospel

among the Gentiles. Secondly, he knew he had learned the gospel directly from the Lord Himself. It would be impossible for him to doubt that he was preaching a divinely-authorized gospel. Thirdly, he had already visited Jerusalem twice since his conversion. He could appeal to the fact that during his fifteen days' visit with Peter neither Peter nor he discovered anything conflicting in the commissions they had respectively received; and he would recall that on his second visit (the record of which we find in Acts 11: 27-30; see, also, 12: 25) there was not even a whisper of any antagonism between himself and the twelve. Up to this time all was harmony—nothing but the most frank and hearty fellowship. Fourthly, as he tells us in Gal. 2: 2, God had come in, giving him a revelation, so that he was assured that God was guiding in that matter. He went up to Jerusalem, then, as counting on God to expose the pretensions and claims of the Judaizers; as expecting that the very ones who had been represented as opposed to the form of the gospel which he was preaching would give an authoritative declaration of its divine origin. It is in place to add that Paul was also encouraged by the joy of the brethren in Phenicia and Samaria, through which countries he was passing on his way to Jerusalem, as he declared to them the conversion of the Gentiles through the gospel he was preaching (Acts 15: 3).

In Acts 15: 4-29 we have the record of the consideration of the matter at Jerusalem. Paul and Barnabas were welcomed by the assembly, to whom they gave a report of the work of God among the Gentiles; also, that certain men, still undelivered



from their former pharisaism, were objecting and urging that it must be required of the Gentiles to be circumcised and keep the law of Moses.

Now the issue thus raised was a very plain one. Did the commission the Lord gave to the twelve when He authorized them to preach "repentance and remission of sins" in Jerusalem, in Judæa, in Samaria, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth, involve compelling the Gentiles to be circumcised? Did it authorize the twelve to impose the law of Moses on them? Were the elders charged (as they were with the oversight in the assembly, and their responsibility to guide in the order established by the apostles) to see to it that no Gentile be allowed full Christian fellowship *except upon the condition that he submit to being circumcised and wear the yoke of the law?* The apostles and elders therefore meet to discuss and decide this great and important question.

Now Peter, one of the twelve, emphatically insists that God puts no difference between the Jews and the Gentiles in the matter of salvation (verse 9)—a fact God Himself has demonstrated by the gift of the same Spirit to both "them" and "us." He appeals then to what the believing Jews well knew; that they themselves were not saved through circumcision and law-works, but "through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ," and urges that the Gentiles are saved after the same pattern—in the same way (verse 11, see Greek). The gospel preached by Peter, then, was *not* identical with the preaching of the Judaizers.

Paul and Barnabas then show that God has ap-

proved them and the gospel they preached by bestowing upon them the *same signs* by which He had attested the apostleship of the twelve (verse 12).

James then, another representative of the twelve, declares it is evident God is calling out from among the Gentiles a people for His name (verse 14). He further shows that the testimony of the prophets fully confirms this (verses 15-17). He then authoritatively decides that the Gentiles are not to be troubled. The deposit of truth which they have received is thus declared to involve in no way the insistence upon circumcision and works of law as a condition to a Gentile being saved. A letter to this effect is written and sent to the Gentile Christians at Antioch, in Syria and in Cilicia, assuring them that the men of Judæa who were troubling them by insisting on their being circumcised and keeping the law had no authority, and in no way their representatives. Their preaching was thus shown to be *not apostolic preaching*.

The decision of the controversy that had arisen at Antioch over the question, Shall the Gentiles be compelled to be circumcised and keep the law of Moses? left the authority under which Paul was preaching untouched. He continued his mission among the Gentiles, and preached still the same gospel, carrying it into new districts. Galatia was visited by him twice at least (Acts 16: 6 and 18: 23). He had introduced Christianity there. The Galatians had heard the gospel from his lips; they had received it as he preached it. Through believing and receiving the gospel he had brought them, much

suffering had come upon them on its account (chap. 3: 4); yet they had so realized its wondrous power that they had spoken of its "blessedness" (chap. 4: 15) until troubling Judaizers had disturbed them.

As already said, these troublers had probably pressed that Paul's gospel was defective, that it needed to be revised and corrected, that they represented those whose authority was higher than Paul's. It was necessary that their representations and claims should be exposed and disproved. To do this, the apostle narrates here (chap. 2: 1—10) a number of facts which his third visit to Jerusalem established as being beyond question. In acquainting the Galatian saints with these facts, he proved to them that all the questions these troublers were raising as to the authority and the authenticity of the gospel he preached, its recognition as of God by the twelve and their fellowship with him in his mission to the Gentiles, had been authoritatively decided. The apostle's arguments with which to convince the Galatians of their error in listening to the pretensions and in believing the claims of the Judaizers, are unanswerable. Let us look at them.

First, he assures them that when he went up to Jerusalem to discuss with the twelve these very questions, he took special pains to make the issue a very practical one. He says, "I took with me Titus"—a Gentile convert (verse 1). He took him as one whom he associated with, as entitled to full Christian fellowship. Being a believer through the gospel which Paul had preached, Titus was uncircumcised. Paul made it thus a matter of their deciding definitely whether they would allow him to be

entitled to full Christian fellowship. Thus it was not a mere theory they discussed—something they might or might not have occasion to carry out in practise. The question was, Shall Titus, an uncircumcised Gentile, be allowed full Christian and apostolic fellowship?

In the second place (verse 2), he informs the Galatians that in going thus with Titus (making it a question of deciding as to their practise) he was acting under God's guidance. This is a very important point. If *God* revealed to Paul that it was His will for him to take Titus and go and discuss with the twelve the question of his right to full Christian fellowship, it is evident that God was forcing the matter to a definite and authoritative decision. Were not the Galatians responsible to respect and abide by a decision God had forced the apostles to make? Are not we also bound to accept that decision as being God's will? It certainly was an authoritative judgment—a judgment to which the authority of God attaches. Saints who, by whatever influences, insist on law-works, on human efforts, as a condition of salvation, are antagonizing the will of God authoritatively revealed.

In the third place, Paul fully acquainted the apostles at Jerusalem with the gospel he preached among the Gentiles. He is here appealing to the fact that it cannot be truthfully said that the apostles and elders were in ignorance of his gospel. He is showing they had very precise knowledge of it; and, furthermore, that since he himself had laid the information before them their decision as to it was not based on unreliable testimony. There can be no question as

to their authority to declare whether Paul's gospel was in conflict with their own; neither can there be any question as to whether, in doing so, they were in possession of trustworthy testimony as to what Paul preached.

Fourthly, he shows that he was specially careful about making it a matter for a decision by those who could speak with authority. He was anxious not to run in vain. He did not want men who had privily crept in to spy out Christian liberty so as to the more effectually subject Christians to bondage—men who had no call from God, who had received no commission from Him, therefore without authority, to decide the matter. It was an authoritative declaration of the will of God Paul wanted. Accordingly he went to the divinely-commissioned apostles by themselves. They were the ones who had received the truth directly from the risen Lord. He made sure that the decision of the questions that had been raised as to himself and his mission should be in their hands. He did not subject himself, “not even for an hour,” to any who were not authoritative exponents of the truth, who could not appeal to the fact that they had received directly from the Lord that which it was their responsibility to maintain. The apostles realized that the Judaizers were striking a blow at the very foundations of Christianity, and felt the need of an authoritative judgment. Only so could the truth be preserved. What a strong argument to bring to bear upon the Galatians!

In the fifth place, let us notice that he informs them that Titus was not compelled to be circum-

cised (verse 3). These men of reputation at Jerusalem, with authority from the Lord, permitted Titus to associate with them as one entitled to full Christian fellowship without forcing him to be circumcised, and without subjecting him to the yoke of the law. Here the apostle is appealing to a sample of the practise of the twelve. If the troublers were telling the Galatian saints that the practise of the men of authority at Jerusalem was to circumcise the Gentile believers (which they very likely did), the apostle is showing that, of his own knowledge, he is certain the practise of the twelve has not been as was represented. Furthermore, this act of the apostles at Jerusalem, in granting to the uncircumcised Titus the privilege of full Christian fellowship, was an authoritative decision as to what Christian practise was to be. It was something more than a mere precedent; it was an act to be received as a declaration of the will of God—the establishment of a practise having God's sanction. What a complete refutation of the unfounded assumptions and claims of Judaizers, whether those of apostolic days or our own!

Sixth. In the sixth verse Paul bears witness to the fact that at this conference with the apostles at Jerusalem he had nothing to learn from them. They added nothing to him. They did not so much as suggest that his gospel was defective, or that it needed to be corrected. He was not asked to revise it in any particular. There was nothing in the truth committed to them that was not implied or involved in what he had already received from the Lord. A comparison of the message which they were com-

manded to proclaim with the message given him to declare did not reveal any antagonism at any point. There was perfect harmony; there was no demand on their part that he should at all modify the gospel which he had been preaching—a telling point; an unanswerable argument.

Seventh: they thoroughly recognized that the gospel Paul was preaching among the Gentiles had been authoritatively committed to him (verses 7 and 8), and that his apostleship stood on ground quite independent of themselves; that if they were divinely authorized apostles, so also had he been called of God and honored with the apostolic office. God had given him to do the same signs and miracles He had given them, and thus He had attested him as being one whom He had set in the place of authority. This could not be denied; nor could the significance of it be resisted. To the question, Has Paul been divinely constituted an apostle? they could only answer, It is perfectly plain that he has been. If it were asked, Has a deposit of truth been given to him? the only answer they could give was, It is very evident there has been. And if the question was raised, Must not his apostleship be subordinated to theirs? they had to admit that he was divinely appointed in absolute independence of them—and they fully recognized it.

Furthermore, in the eighth place, in verse 9, Paul points out another fact of tremendous import. He says, These pillars of the church at Jerusalem seeing that special grace had been given to me, frankly gave me the right hand of fellowship. By this act the apostles at Jerusalem declared themselves to be

in full accord with him in his special mission among the Gentiles. They thus said, We unhesitatingly give you and the mission you are carrying on the expression of our recognition, both as a divinely-called apostle, and of your gospel as what you have authoritatively received from the Lord.

Finally, the apostle says, The only matter as to which these pillars at Jerusalem expressed concern was the subject of ministering to the poor. I suppose we are to see in this an expression of their conception of the character of the grace which God is bestowing on Gentiles. In their minds it did not mean license and self-indulgence. To them the free grace of God stamped its own character upon its recipients. They wished it to be understood that in commending and indorsing the gospel as a proclamation of salvation by grace through faith, to be preached everywhere without conditions attached to it, without insistence on the principle of law-works, they were doing so as maintaining that the gospel must be without the suspicion of any taint of unholiness.

That they were not exceeding their apostolic authority in so declaring their idea of the character of the gospel they were indorsing, I think, may be fully allowed. It was right and proper that as apostles they should clear themselves of any complicity with a gospel that lacks the true power of transformation.

In this light then we may regard this suggestion to Paul, that it is incumbent on him to remember the poor, as an authoritative expression of the real character of the gospel and the grace it proclaims. The need of this expression, who that has preached the gospel and realized how men naturally mistake



its character, will not recognize? Universally, unless the heart is laid hold of by the real power of grace, men turn it to license; but such license has not apostolic authority—neither that of Paul, nor of the twelve.

Now if we consider the full import of these facts so forcefully set forth by the apostle for the consideration of the Galatian Christians, it is evident that every pretension, claim, or argument, which the perverters of the gospel must have made to win the Galatians over to their cause, could have no foundation whatever. Their arguments were pure assumptions. They could not cite a single fact in demonstration of their claims. The movement in Galatia in which they were the prime actors is clearly shown to be not of God. The apostle proves it to be a work of evil, an effort of the enemy to undermine the truth in the minds of the saints. He successfully maintains his own divine call. He clearly establishes the authenticity of his gospel, and so its trustworthiness, its perfect reliability. He fully proves his thorough independency of the twelve, while making it clearly manifest that whatever the difference in the features of their respective deposits of truth, there is the most perfect agreement that there is neither opposition nor conflict at any point. Further, he shows that the twelve themselves acknowledged all this, and had frankly and heartily put the seal of their authority on his own practise in giving to Gentile converts unconditionally full Christian fellowship.

How completely he convicts the Galatians of the seriousness of their error in turning so quickly from the preaching they had received from himself, and

embracing so ardently the perverted gospel of these unaccredited, unauthorized troublers, who could not point to a single sign of their having received authority from God, or show the slightest evidence of their having the support or sanction of the twelve.

I may add that there are gospels to-day that are as unapostolic as was the gospel of these perverters—gospels which, like theirs, have for their fundamental characteristic the principle of self-effort—gospels which insist on works of man as the condition of salvation. Those who preach them are manifestly not preaching the gospel of God—the gospel He committed to the apostles, whether to the twelve or to Paul. And those who are believing and supporting such gospels are not believing and supporting the divinely-authorized gospel.

Many, no doubt, are sincere, but they are deceived. May God deliver them! May He open their eyes to see the truth that will free them from their wretched bondage to the error of salvation by their own works! May He work in their souls the sense of the grace that is in Christ!

#### Chapter 2: 11-17.

We have seen that the apostles of the circumcision had recognized, or expressed their hearty fellowship with, Paul's ministry as the apostle of the uncircumcision. It was incumbent upon him therefore that he should resist any attempt to undermine the true character of the grace of which he was the messenger. If such attempts developed among the believers, even if the apostles of the circumcision themselves should become implicated in practice not ac-

according to the truth of the gospel, it became him to withstand them.

Paul had been appointed by God to defend the gospel (Phil. 1: 17). As a faithful steward, he was to protect it against worldly wisdom, from admixture with human philosophies, and to maintain a walk and practise according to godliness. It was his prerogative and duty to withstand and rebuke any practise not according to the truth of the gospel.

It is evident the apostle is reminding the Galatian saints of this in chapter 2: 11-17. They had been enticed into a practise which was not after godliness, but contrary to the truth of the gospel, and he would have them realize that his rebuke was by the authority of God. He desires also to deliver them from the troublers who had influenced them—who came under a judgment which he had authority to declare, and from which he would save the Galatians.

Earnest in his purpose to do this, he appeals to the fact that he had already had occasion to use the authority the Lord had given him to withstand and rebuke the very practise they had been influenced to turn to. Under Judaizing influences, they had yielded to the demands that had been pressed upon them, that Gentile believers must be circumcised before they could be allowed full Christian fellowship.

And this practise of denying to uncircumcised Gentiles, although believers, participation in all the privileges of Christian fellowship, seems to have developed very rapidly after the conference at Jerusalem. Paul's account of it we have already looked at. After that conference, he and Barnabas returned

to Antioch, where for some time they continued as formerly to teach and preach the word of the Lord; many others also joining them in the work (Acts 15: 35).

While thus employed Peter visited Antioch. It is clear that at first he did not hesitate to mingle with and to recognize the uncircumcised Gentile believers as entitled to full Christian fellowship. Later, "certain came down from James." It may perhaps be going too far to say that James—the very apostle whom the Spirit of God used at the Jerusalem conference to express the will of God as to the Gentile believers—had so soon weakened and made concessions to those who were insistent on Judaizing Christianity; yet the fact that Paul says, "Certain came from James" (ver. 12), suggests the possibility that to some extent he had yielded to a movement that manifestly was gathering strength.

It is evident that Peter weakened before men come from James. He well knew the natural prejudices of the circumcision. He yielded to what he realized was a strong Jewish sentiment and opinion. Through weakness, he dissembled. While not giving up the truth of the gospel, either his own or Paul's, he undertook to conciliate the well-developed Jewish sentiment. He sought to make it appear to those who were of the circumcision that he shared in their thoughts in not allowing Gentile converts equal privilege of full Christian fellowship. He was willing to hide his real sentiments as to the truth he held from God behind a practise in conformity with the Judaizers. It was not uprightness, but dissimulation. It was not faithfulness to the truth as he

himself had preached it, and as, no doubt, he really held it in his heart.

Through Peter's dissembling, the other Jews were emboldened to submit to the growing influence of the men from James. Even Barnabas, seeing the extent to which the movement was spreading, gave in to it, thus lending his influence on the side of the Judaizers.

Now Paul, seeing the real significance of all this, and how thoroughly wanting in uprightness it was, boldly withstood the movement. He felt the responsibility of the deposit of truth entrusted to him. His apostleship gave him the prerogative of declaring the mind and will of God. As set by God for the defense of the gospel, he must rebuke the inconsistent practise—a practise not according to the truth of the gospel. The fact that one of the twelve apostles was involved in the Judaizing movement did not exempt him from the rebuke of Paul.

Paul then used the rod of his authority by openly and publicly withstanding Peter. He unmasked the dissimulation, exposing its inconsistency with the truth as known and held by Peter. The rebuke thus administered by Paul stood. Peter, though one of the twelve, had to submit to it. Truth must stand, even against an apostle, if he violates it.

The condition of affairs in Galatia was such, at the time the apostle was writing this epistle, that they needed forceful words, and the apostle's courage in the use of the rod of correction is marked. So he narrates the circumstances of the failure, and the rebuke administered to the most distinguished of the Twelve. And as the arguments he had used to con-

vict Peter applied with full force to the case of the Galatians, he also tells them what those arguments were. Let us now consider them.

First, if Peter associated with uncircumcised Gentiles on terms of equality, on the principle that "circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing"—a course of conduct which Peter himself had followed, as well known to all, it was a great wrong to take part in a movement whose object was to compel the Gentiles to Judaize. If he allowed, as his practise hitherto showed, that Gentile believers, though uncircumcised, were entitled to full Christian fellowship, then, consistently, he should not now link himself with a movement that was being carried on with a view to make circumcision the condition of equal fellowship. If it is of God that Gentile believers are of the household of faith, then to deny them practical participation in the privileges of His house is a glaring wrong.

The apostle thus is convicting the Galatians of their serious error in yielding, as Peter had done, to the claims and demands of the Judaizers. If compelling the Gentiles to be circumcised was on Peter's part inconsistent and, so, wrong, how plain a violation of the truth of the gospel it was for Gentile believers themselves to aid a movement which denied them the full blessing which the grace of God had brought them into! But let us follow the apostle's arguments with Peter further.

Secondly, he goes on to say: The believing Jews themselves know that no man, Jew or Gentile, is justified by works of law; that justification is by the faith which lays hold on Jesus Christ. This is one

of the great lessons which God had taught by the law. In giving the law to the children of Israel, God set them at the task of working out a righteousness of their own. They did not succeed in doing it, as all knew. God Himself has declared the results of their seeking to make out a righteousness of their own. He proclaims *their* failure to be a clear and fair demonstration of the fact that no man—not merely the Jew, but the Gentile also—can establish his own righteousness in the presence of God. Now this, as plainly taught in the Old Testament Scriptures, was a part of the faith of God's true children. Those who, like Abraham, believed the testimony of God, knew that no man is justified by works of law. To this knowledge, which is the possession of faith, Paul here appeals in reasoning with Peter. Having done so, he goes on to say, Even we Jews have given up seeking justification by law-works. As those who have learned the lesson the law teaches, we have sought and found justification in the way the law has shown to be the only possible way. It has abundantly pointed out, in type and prophecy, that justification must be by Jesus Christ, to whom all the sacrifices in the law pointed. He tells Peter here that, as knowing all this, "we Jews" have believed in Jesus Christ, the One to whom the law has led us in order to be justified.

The plain force of the argument is: If we Jews are not justified by law-works, we have no ground to press it upon Gentiles. If we are justified by the faith that lays hold of Christ, how can we object to a Gentile being justified in the same way? Is it right to hold and teach the doctrine (forced upon us by

the law itself) that justification is *not* by law-works, but by faith in Christ, and then turn and say to the Gentiles, You must, by keeping the law, work out a righteousness of your own?

Peter's preaching had been in agreement with the lesson taught by the law. The gospel he preached was consistent with the law's declaration that "by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified;" but his joining in with those who would deny to the believing Gentiles full Christian fellowship unless they accepted circumcision and the yoke of the law, was contrary to his doctrine. Before certain came from James he had acted consistently with the gospel he had preached; but after *their* arrival he weakly yielded to the Judaizing influence. It was double-mindedness. It was throwing the weight of his influence against the truth revealed of God. He thus rightly came under rebuke.

Thirdly, there was yet another argument used by Paul in his public exposure of Peter's blameworthy course. He says, in verse 17, Your present course implies that we Jews have sinned in seeking justification through Christ; but if it be so that we have sinned, then our sin is chargeable to Christ. It is through Christ we have ceased to go about to establish our own righteousness. Does not, then, your present course imply that Christ is the minister of sin? Does it not involve believing that Christ has wrongly brought to an end the order of things under which we were specifically required to work out a righteousness of our own?—in establishing another order of things under which righteousness is imputed to those who believe in Christ?



The apostle concludes his appeal to Peter by saying, "God forbid!" or, rather, Far away be such a revolting thought!

Chapter 2: 18-21.

The apostle has now fully met and answered every question that could be raised as to his apostleship: that he had been called by God; had received a message from Him to proclaim, in no sense inferior or secondary to theirs; and that all this had been recognized by themselves.

It remains for him now to declare with the same authority what the evil results are of the attempt to judaize Christianity. This he does in the last four verses of chapter 2. In turning to those verses I call special attention to his use of the personal pronoun "I." In his address to Peter, in verses 14-17, he says "we," because he is speaking to a fellow Jew. The "we" there is not the apostolic "we," but the "we" of believing Jews. But, in verses 18-21, he says "I" as the representative and exponent of the fully revealed Christianity. Using Paul as His chosen instrument God had completed the Christian revelation. It is important for us to remember this. Paul was "set for," or "appointed to," the defense of the full Christian gospel. As under God's authority he not only proclaimed the truth specially committed to him, but exposed and withstood every effort from whatever quarter it came to frustrate, or make void the grace of God.

To judaize Christianity is to frustrate the grace of God. An attempt was being made to do this in Galatia. Paul, therefore, as called of God for the pro-

clamation and defense of the gospel thus fully revealed, withstands the strenuous efforts of the judaizers, and exposes the full consequences of this judaistic movement. He shows that it means the complete destruction of Christianity as God has revealed it.

Let us see now how he does this. Let us remember that Paul speaks, in verse 18, as a representative Christian in saying, "For if I build again the things which I have destroyed, I make myself a transgressor." In effect, he says: For a Christian, whether he be a Jew or a Gentile, to return to any system the principle of which is self-help, after having given up that principle, is practically making himself a transgressor in having given it up.

We have seen how the apostle in his reasoning with Peter appeals to the fact that believing Jews have given up the principle of self-help—works of law—as the way of obtaining righteousness. They had sought and obtained righteousness on the principle of faith. Now there is abundant scripture to show that the Gentile is saved and justified in the same way as a Jew (Acts 15: 11, *Greek*; Rom. 3: 30). It is just as true of a believing Gentile as it is of a believing Jew that he has "destroyed" (set aside) the systems characterized by the principle of self-effort. No one ever becomes a Christian on *that* principle, except professedly. All who are really Christians become such on the principle of faith.

The Galatians had become Christians by faith, not by law-works; but Judaizers were influencing them to take it up again, and the apostle argues; That means you have concluded you went beyond

what is right when you believed the gospel. In returning to what you abandoned you are in practical effect destroying what you had turned to. Your present course in going on again with the principle of human effort is, so far as you are concerned, the destruction of Christianity in its very central and foundation principle.

The apostle's exposure of the evil consequence of judaizing Christianity is forceful; he conclusively shows that returning to the principle of law-works is destroying the fundamental character of Christianity. Christianity is founded on *faith*, not on human effort. Let us remember this is not an opinion of certain men which we are free to entertain or reject, but the mind of *God*, declared by one to whom He had given authority to declare His will. We must look at verse 18 as an authoritative interpretation of the mind of God.

In verses 19, 20 the apostle points out the two-fold way in which the judaizing of Christianity is the destruction of it. It denies, on the one side, the Christian's relation to law, i. e., the principle of self-help; and, on the other, his relation to Christ. These are points of vast importance and we must carefully look at them. In verse 19, the apostle, declares that the Christian *is dead* to law. He not only affirms it as being the fact according to God's reckoning, but shows also how it became the fact. Let us consider it.

As long as law stood as God's public method of dealing with men there was no separation of the children of God from the general mass. The children of God in Israel were thus bound to the law under

which Israel was. It was a very real bondage. The law stood there as a positive barrier in the way of their taking the full place of children. It was impossible for them to receive the adoption (the position of sons) and know and enjoy the liberty of it. In Romans 7 we are taught that this bond with the law is *now* broken. How was it broken. "*Through the body of Christ.*" Christ's death has destroyed for the children of God their *former* bond with the law. Hence the children of God *now*, since Christ's death and resurrection, *are dead* to the law.

Here, in Galatians, the apostle teaches that the Christian's death to the law has been effected by the law itself. What does the apostle mean by this? Some will tell us he refers to the working of the sentence of death in the conscience; but when he says, in verse 20, "I am crucified with Christ," he negatives that thought thoroughly. Being crucified with Christ is not the work of law in the conscience—however important and necessary that work is. Being crucified with Christ means that when Christ died for us, God *identified us with Christ in His death*, so that He looks at *that* death as being *our own death*. What then is the meaning of our being *through* law, dead to law. Simply this: that the principle of law had its full operation in Christ's death. Christ was there in death as a substitute. The law's penalty was not set aside, but *borne*. The law operated to its full extent in Christ—the Substitute, who received the full penalty of the law—death; and through that operation of law in Christ, God considers believers as *being dead to law*.

What was once a positive hindrance to a believer

living unto God is now removed. The bond with law is broken, the believer is under no necessity of thinking of his own efforts, ever conscious of their futility; he is free to be engaged with God and His wondrous grace, to live no longer to self, but to God.

But if Christians are not under the bond of law, are dead to it, they are in a *new* bond, in a new relation. It is not the full truth to say, We are dead to law—we are crucified with Christ. If God identified us with Christ in this death, He also identifies us with Him as alive from the dead. We therefore live; yet it is not ourselves, it is Christ living in us. What springs merely from ourselves is not life in God's eyes. God looks upon all that as having been crucified with Christ. But the risen, living Christ is the source of life to us. We are alive as being in Him; and He in whom we live is the spring in us of all that God can own as being really life. Whatever is the expression of the living Christ, and only that, is what God counts as life. If, then, believers now are dead to law they nevertheless live; yet it is no longer themselves, it is Christ living in them. It is true, Christians are still living here in this present earthly life. They are still men of flesh and blood, but the *life they live* is not characterized by the principle that characterizes the life of the man who is according to the flesh. Self is the object of the mere natural man. He lives to himself. The Christ of the cross is the object of the Christian. It is the power of His love that is working in the believer. The life he lives is characterized by the power of faith, the faith that has for its object the Son of God that died in his behalf.

It is then a fundamental truth in Christianity that believers—that class of persons—are by grace dead to law; and it is also a fundamental truth that they are by grace living in a new life. I wish to be guarded, here, so as not to be misunderstood. When I say, “living in a new life,” I do not mean merely they possess a new life. That is true, of course; and Christ, the risen Christ, is the source of the new life imparted. I am however not speaking of that but of the life *lived*—of what is the normal characteristic, the practical life of a Christian—the life he lives *as* a Christian.

Now I am aware of difficulties felt by many minds, and I do not wish to ignore them. But the difficulties we feel in our efforts to grasp what God has revealed as the truth do not in any way nullify the truth. What God has revealed *is* the truth, whether it is or is not perfectly clear to our minds. We need to submit our minds to the truth He reveals. We shall find this a first essential to grasping the truth. But let us accept what He reveals as being the truth, and we shall find the difficulties disappear.

If it be said: How little is it true of Christians what the apostle says here of “Christ living in” them! It is granted; but that does not mean that it is not true of them in any measure. There is a measure in which it *is* true that Christ lives in the believer from the moment of his becoming a believer. The “engrafted word” is in his soul giving the Christian character even though it be true he may have many lessons to learn as to mortifying “his members which are upon the earth.”

Again, there are some who insist that “Christ liv-

ing in me" is the subjective realization in the soul. But here again we must not forget that the subjective work in the soul is a matter of *growth*, and it, too, begins with the very commencement of the Christian life. When the love of Christ, as displayed in the cross, lays hold of the soul and the believer prostrated by it at Christ's feet as his Saviour, that soul has *begun* the Christian life. There is already a subjective work in his soul; but that inward work, begun there and then, will enlarge as he grows in the love of God which he has found in Christ Jesus whom now he owns to be his Lord. The love of Christ has captured him and he has begun to be transformed according to the image of Christ. As that love enlarges in his soul he grows more and more after that image. It is "*from glory to glory.*"

So then "Christ living in me" is not an attainment; nor is it an advanced blessing known and enjoyed only by a certain class of Christians, but a common Christian blessing—a blessing *every* believer shares in, the measure of it varying according to the soul's growth in the knowledge of God. "Christ living in me" is indeed subjective, but this begins with His capture of the soul, with the soul's bending the knee in love to Christ. The moment Christ is submitted to as Saviour He is owned as Lord. The normal characteristic Christian life begins then and there. In this life there are babes, young men, and fathers (1 John 2: 12-27).

In verse 19, the apostle is insisting that in maintaining these two fundamental principles or truths of Christianity he is *not* frustrating the grace of God.

He very plainly implies that the Judaizers *are*. In insisting that salvation is by "circumcision and keeping the law of Moses" they were rejecting the grace of God. Such teaching is the denial that believers *are* by grace dead to law. It denies that by grace Christ *is* living in them. Christianity is based upon the grace of God. It is by the *grace of God* in Jesus Christ that the believers, whether Jews or Gentiles, are dead to law, are no longer in bondage to that principle, and are free to live to God—to live in the power of a love that has been fully displayed in the substitutionary death of the cross.

How essentially distinct in character and principle is Christianity from Judaism! Judaism demands of man his best effort. Christianity declares man condemned and helpless, and displays what God in grace has done for man. To go back to the principle of Judaism is to reject the grace of God. The apostle says, I do not do this.

Let us remember that if the Galatian saints were responsible to go with the apostle in the maintenance and practice of the truth of Christianity, so are we. It devolves on us as truly as it did on them to hold to and carry out in practice the revealed truth that believers are dead to law; and it is as incumbent on us as it was on them, not to reject the revealed truth that "Christ living in me" through the power of His love, as made known in His atoning death, is the normal characteristic of the life a Christian lives.

As confirmatory of his statement that he did not reject the grace of God, the apostle adds this declaration: "If righteousness is by law, then Christ died



without cause." Why was it necessary for Christ to die in order to provide a righteous basis on which righteousness might be reckoned to a believer, if law enabled men to produce a righteousness of their own? Is it not a serious thing to teach, as the Judaizers do, a doctrine which implies that Christ's death was needless? It is a complete nullification of the word of God! It is a direct denial of the testimony given in the law itself that "by works of law no flesh (no man) shall be justified." It thoroughly undermines the authority and reliability of the law, and so of the whole word of God.

We have then in these four verses the exposure of the evil consequences of judaizing Christianity—the attempt to mix grace with the principle of self-help. It is an authoritative statement of what Christianity is in its essential and fundamental character, showing how that character is completely destroyed by those who mix Christianity with the principle of Judaism.

Let Christians then take common ground with the apostle Paul in strenuously resisting the insidious inroads upon the Christian foundation which the enemies of the truth are constantly seeking to make. He has set us the example of defending the faith. In his defence of it he has put into our hands the means of preserving it. Modern judaizing is to be met with the same truth with which the apostle met it in his day.

THE two chapters we have considered may be called the apostle's defense of his apostleship. He completely disposes of every question raised as to it, proving that his apostleship and the gospel he preached were not of man, but of the Lord. We enter now upon a new part of the epistle.

In chapters 3—5: 6 he attacks the attitude the saints of Galatia had assumed toward Christianity, and very fully exposes its unreasonableness. He convicts them of being *in a delusion*. Having proved himself the mouthpiece of God, the Galatians were responsible to bow to his unfolding of the distinctive features of Christianity which their delusions denied. We of to-day are equally responsible. Bearing this in mind, let us turn to the consideration of the apostle's reasoning.

First, then, he vigorously denounces their folly, and charges them with having been "bewitched," or "deluded" (verse 1). There was no excuse for them, because it was a crucified Christ of whom they had heard in the gospel that had been preached among them. A crucified Christ meant the judgment and setting aside altogether of man according to the flesh. They, in submitting to circumcision, were denying the significance of the cross of Christ; they were going back to the effort "to make a fair show in the flesh"—which the Cross had judged and set aside.

Having made so serious a charge against them, he at once proceeds to demonstrate and prove it. His appeal is to the fact that in Christianity the children of God are possessors of the Spirit of God. This fact seems to have been at least generally acknowl-

edged in apostolic times. The Judaizers themselves do not appear to have questioned it, and there is nothing to show that there was any doubt about it in the minds of the saints in Galatia. Though they had given in to the perverters of the gospel, there is no evidence that they denied they had the Spirit.

As I have said, the apostle appeals to this admitted fact—the possession of the Spirit by the children of God since the introduction and establishment of Christianity. The question the Galatians were invited to consider was, On what principle had they received the Spirit? Had they become possessors of the Spirit on the principle of faith, or of works of law? (verse 2.)

Now the right answer to this question is the proof of the folly and delusion the apostle has charged against them. It will be well to give close heed to the reasoning in which Paul so convincingly demonstrates the truth of his serious accusation.

It should be evident to every one that the apostle's conception of Christianity is that it is the *beginning* of the possession of the portion promised to faith. He says, "Having *begun* in the Spirit, are ye now *made perfect* by the flesh?" (verse 3.) To this question he adds another, "Have ye suffered so many things unnecessarily?" (verse 4.) These two questions show clearly the apostle's idea of Christianity. With him, "in the Spirit," which is the distinctive characteristic feature of Christianity, faith *has begun* to possess its promised inheritance. He does not regard Christianity as *full* possession. In the sense of full possession, Christianity is not *perfection*, but the *beginning* of possession.

It may perhaps be well to elucidate this more fully. We are familiar with the thought that Abraham is God's pattern man of faith. Now, as that, he was the man with whom God began the revelation of faith's portion. When He said to Abram, Go to a land that I will show you, He had in his mind something more than the land of Canaan. When He said to him, "Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward" (Gen. 13: 14), Abram did not see all the inheritance that God had in His mind for faith. When, again, in chapter 15: 5, God said, "Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars," the full inheritance of faith was not revealed to Abraham; Abraham's revelation was a partial revelation. But even so, God was promising an inheritance to faith. It is evident to us now that God even then had in His mind the heavenly and earthly things over which Christ is to be Head (Eph. 1: 10). What was shown to Abraham was a hint of it, a partial revelation; but even so, it was a distinct promise to faith.

Now this *promise* is all that Abraham and his seed—the children of faith—had in Old Testament times. They never *possessed* the inheritance promised. They never even *began* to possess it. Hebrews 11 shows this clearly. They looked forward *to* possessing, but they never possessed.

But now, with the coming and establishment of Christianity, there has been a great change. The inheritance has been fully revealed. The portion God had in His mind for faith, of which He then gave various hints—fragmentary revelations—has been fully

disclosed. He has shown faith its land—the inheritance of Christ.

Contrasting the partial revelation of faith's possessions of the Old Testament with the full revelation of the New, we cannot fail to see that a great change has come in with the establishment of Christianity. But the full revelation of faith's blessing is not the only change that has been made for the children of faith. They now have received something more than a promise, something more than the *revelation* of their inheritance. They have received the *first-fruits* of it—a *present possessing* and foretaste of what full and final possessing will be.

The heirs of the inheritance of faith have received the Spirit of God. As One who is possessing all that Christ is Heir to, He has come down here, not only to be with the heirs, but to *indwell* them. In the Spirit who now indwells the heirs of faith, they have begun to possess their inheritance. They are not yet in full possession; but having the Spirit, they have begun possessing.

Christianity, then, is the beginning of *possession*. This is evidently the apostle's view of it. He does not, indeed, consider that believers now have fully attained, or have reached, perfection, but they have begun to possess in the Spirit.

But on what principle have the heirs of faith begun possessing the inheritance promised them? On what principle have they received the Spirit? Is it on the ground of fulfilled works prescribed by the law? Evidently not. Are the recipients of the Spirit those who have established their own righteousness? Plainly not. *Not* by circumcision and

keeping the law of Moses have they received the Spirit. It is not on the principle of law-works that the heirs of faith have begun the possession of the promise. It is on the principle, or on the ground, of their faith in Christ. But if the *beginning* of inheriting is on the principle of faith, is it possible that inheriting *in full* can be on the principle of works of law? Is perfection (that of which the Spirit is the earnest and foretaste) for those who are circumcised and keep the law? How manifest the folly of such an idea! What a delusion it is!

But this is exposed in another way. The Galatians, in receiving the gospel, had not only suffered much loss, they had exposed themselves to persecution. For the sake of Christianity they had given up what was their gain and boast. They had renounced their own righteousnesses; they had judged their own merit to be loss, refuse. For this loss they had gained (on the principle of faith) faith's earnest of her promise. What folly to make perfection (full possession) depend on what they had renounced for its present pledge and guarantee—the Spirit that now indwells the believer! What a manifest delusion!

What point and force is in the apostle's question, "Have ye suffered so many things unnecessarily?" If full, final possessing the inheritance depends on human effort—on works of law—why abandon law-works for Christianity? The apostle, of course, does not allow that their renunciation of self-effort for Christianity was unnecessary; but if it was not unnecessary, if their believing in Christ was a right thing, how manifest their present folly in taking the

ground that perfection is to be gained by taking the law as their rule of life!

If question is raised as to the divine authority for Christianity, the apostle's reference to the signs, and wonders, and miracles, by which Christianity had been demonstrated as being of God, fully answers it. There could be no successful attempt to disprove the claims of Christianity. Its introduction into Galatia had been divinely attested. In the face of the marks God had put upon it that it was of Him, it would be folly to deny its divine origin and its authoritative establishment (verse 5).

If then Christianity is of God, what folly the Galatians had fallen into! Surely they must have felt the convincing proofs of the charge the apostle had made against them. His indictment of them was very severe, and without compromise, but he fully established the truth of it.

But he has other arguments still to urge. In verse 6 he insists that this same principle of faith operates in Christianity as it did in Abraham. "Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness." Now Abraham is the pattern man of faith; hence it is evident "that *they which are of faith*, the same are the children of Abraham" (verse 7). Mark this well. Those who are of the works of law are not the children God promised *him*. Abraham himself had to learn that the children after the flesh were excluded from the children of promise (Genesis 17). But this is not all. It is also evident that God promised Abraham that his children should include children of faith among

the Gentiles. The declaration, "In thee shall all nations be blessed," means this (verse 8).

Now, as we have seen, Christianity is the beginning of the fulfilment of promise. Christians, then, are children of faith. We are heirs with Abraham to his promise—his inheritance. But if so, then it is by faith—on that principle—that we have our blessing. Whether it is the beginning of possessing as now, or the complete possessing—the perfection we are waiting for—it is on the principle of faith that we obtain it. The simple fact is, it is "they which be of faith that are blessed with believing Abraham" (verse 9). It is *believers*, and they only, who are sharers with Abraham in the promise of God. All believers now, i. e., in Christianity, are sharers in Abraham's promise so far as that promise has been fulfilled.

As we have seen, the gift of the Spirit to believers is a partial fulfilment of the promise. The heirs of the promise in these Christian times, being indwelt by the Spirit, possess as much of the promise as has been fulfilled. But it is on the principle of faith that the blessing, in the measure in which it is possessed, has been bestowed. Surely, then, the fuller measure which we are to receive cannot possibly be on the principle of human works. The thought of acquiring perfection (the fulness of blessing) through law-works is absolute folly. Those who have been induced to embrace the thought have been deluded.

This the apostle shows still more fully in verses 10-12, where he contrasts the two principles, faith and works of law, showing how diametrically oppo-



site they are. As many as have their standing before God on the principle of law-works are under the curse. Plainly so, because it is written, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to *do* them;" while, on the other hand, it is written, "The just shall live by faith." This makes it perfectly clear that "no man is justified by the law in the sight of God"—as none have kept it.

The law, as the apostle says, is not of faith. Its meaning and character proclaim the necessity of living by doing it; but that is not faith. Man being what he is, the result of making the law the rule of life is to bring him under its curse.

What folly on the part of a Christian whose blessing is on the principle of faith to turn to the law as the rule by which he is to live, and as the principle by which he is to attain to the completion of his blessing! What a delusion to so completely pervert the very character of Christianity! It is the denial of it as being the beginning of the fulfilment of promise. Let saints everywhere consider well what is involved in the claim that they already possess the Holy Spirit, while they deny that He is the beginning of possessing their inheritance. It is the practical denial that He is an earnest of our inheritance—a present foretaste of it.

But we must follow our apostle's argument still further. He has not yet exhausted all his reasons for arraigning them as he has done. Their adoption of the views of the Judaizers affected the truth of Christianity in many ways. There was need that this should be made clear to them. The apostle

then proceeds to the consideration of another characteristic feature of Christianity which their making the law a rule of life destroys. If the views they have accepted are the truth, then the Christian doctrine that the children of faith are redeemed from the curse is false. We must now look at what the apostle has to say in regard to this most important matter.

Chap. 3 : 13-29.

If we wish to fully appreciate the emphasis the apostle here puts on the doctrine of the believer's redemption from the curse of the law, we must consider the difference between the position of believers *under law* and that given to believers *now* under grace, under Christianity. It is needful to remember that the law was not given to Abraham's seed according to faith, but to his seed after the flesh. It was given to the nation *as an earthly nation*, looked at as composed of men according to the flesh. It raised with them the question of man's ability to live by his own righteousness. Is it possible for a man to justify himself in the sight of God by his own efforts, or works? The trial demonstrated the impossibility of it.

Now so long as the trial continued, when once it had been instituted, Abraham's children according to faith, in the midst of the nation, by virtue of their being a part of it, were as responsible as the rest to do the things required by the law. What then was the result *for them*? What was the consequence for the true children of God of their being in this way under the law—under its obligation?

Did they keep it? No more than the others.

Did they establish a righteousness of their own? No more than the others. In result they were under the same penalty of failing to do so. Having broken the law, they were under the curse of the law, having to bow to being adjudged as deserving the death to which the law cursed them. The law made no provision for exempting the children of faith.

Let it be remembered that all this has no bearing on the *eternal* issues. It does not mean that the children of faith who died while the law was in force as the method of God's dealing with man after the flesh, lost faith's final and eternal blessing. No, in no wise. But as under the order of things God had set up for man in this world, they were guilty and deserving the curse of the law.

It is also evident that their death was not that of the law's curse. They died in faith, as the 11th chapter of Hebrews makes plain. Now several questions arise demanding a satisfactory answer. How could the children of faith who died during the trial of law, and failed equally with the rest, be exempted from the law's penalty? How can the children of faith *now* be exempted from the curse of the law? There is still another: God promised Abraham heirs—children of faith from the Gentiles as well as from his own—to inherit with him his blessing. How can Abraham's blessing come upon Gentiles?

One thing answers all these questions: God has provided a Substitute to undergo the curse in behalf of the heirs, to redeem them from the curse, to buy them out from under it. The children of faith who lived under the trial of law were *anticipatively* ex-

empted from the death, or curse, of the law. Their preemption from it was on the ground of a provision that God, in grace, was going to make for them. As anticipating Christ's being made a curse on their behalf, God did not inflict the curse upon them. Their death was not a *penal* death with judgment following it. Whether we speak of death as what man is appointed to, or as the curse of the law, they who were of faith—Abraham's seed—were bought out from it; the price of the purchase having been paid by Christ by dying in their behalf.

But if the death of Christ was the basis on which the heirs who lived while the law was in force were preexempted from the law's curse, now that the anticipated substitutionary death has been accomplished, the heirs of promise—the children of faith—are in no sense involved in the curse of the law. Through Christ's death they are dead to the law. The death of Christ is God's justification for exempting believers *both then and now* from the penalty of not doing the requirements of the law.

As to the third question, Christ's being made a curse is the full carrying out of the law. The law was not set aside, it was not abrogated, but it was carried out to its full extent. It has operated *even* to the infliction of its penalty, though it was in the person of a Substitute; but *so* operating, it ends the law as God's method of dealing with men concerning their working out a righteousness of their own. "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth" (Rom. 10: 4).

Now this ending of the law as God's public way of procedure with men was necessary before God could

*fulfil* His promise to Abraham—to faith. As long as the law stood as God's method of dealing with men He could neither *in part* nor *in full* give to faith her inheritance. While the law was in force no believer among the Gentiles could possess even in part the inheritance promised. For this it was necessary to end the law as the principle of dealing with men. This should be evident—for the promise is on the principle of faith—but the law is the principle of works, not faith.

Now, as we have seen, while Christianity is not the complete fulfilment of promise, it is the *beginning* of fulfilment. God is *now* giving the heirs a part of their inheritance—the Spirit, who is a foretaste, an earnest, a present pledge, of the full portion to be received later. Gentile believers, then, as well as Jewish believers, are now, through Christ, possessing faith's promise *in part*. The law is no longer a hindrance to this (verses 13, 14).

This is of the very greatest moment. Through not seeing it, very serious errors have been made. Among them, perhaps, none is more serious than the doctrine, prevalent in many quarters, that the reception of the Spirit is dependent upon something *additional* to the faith on the principle of which we become Abraham's children. Whether we are Jews or Gentiles, we are *born* into Abraham's family, we are born *through faith*. The doctrine that some of the family, whatever the reason given for it, have not received the Spirit of God, is a practical denial of the characteristic difference between the dispensations of law and of Christianity. God *then* did not give His Spirit to indwell *any* of His children.

Now He gives Him to *all*—no less to all Gentile believers than to all Jewish believers. Every heir of faith's inheritance, in this present time of the beginning of fulfilment, is inheriting, or possessing, the present earnest—the gift of the Spirit. The law no longer being the principle of God's ways, is no longer a hindrance to the blessing of Abraham coming on Gentiles.

The error of which I am speaking is a subtle *revival* of the Galatian error. True the form differs, but the same principle underlies both. Their error was that perfection—complete fulfilment—is by attainment, by self-effort, by progress in knowledge. Call it by whatever name, even believing the gospel, it is making believing the gospel a work of merit; and that is in principle the error of the Galatians. In both an addition to faith is required, so that faith is not made the *sole* principle on which the believer possesses his blessing.

Another serious thing about it is, like the Galatian error, it denies the *full* meaning of the death of Christ; for in the measure in which something on our part is required as essential to the reception of faith's blessing, which now is the Spirit, in that measure the meaning of Christ's death is denied. The death of Christ means the end of requirement—of all self-effort.

How little the Galatians thought they were denying the meaning of Christ's death! How little the Judaizers of the present day realize they are reproducing the principle of the Galatian error! But what folly it is when looked at in the light of the apostle's doctrine of Christ's being made a curse!

What a delusion to seek to establish a claim to faith's blessing! What a misconception of Christianity!

But let us turn to verses 15-18. There were those who probably argued that the law was given after promise, and so superseded it, set it aside, made it of no effect. Paul's answer is, The promise was made, not only to Abraham, but also to a particular Seed, i. e., to Christ. Now the law, coming in between Abraham and Christ, could not disannul a promise made to Christ. Christ's inheritance it is, therefore, that was promised to Abraham on the principle of faith. Since he is the pattern, the heirs, who share the promise with him, must have it on the same principle—that of faith, not of works.

The objector may say, Why then the law? What was the good of it? The answer is, There was need of convicting of sin, of stopping all boasting. The conversion of sins into transgressions—violations of positive prohibitions—was the service the law did. The effect of its work was that every mouth was stopped (Rom. 3: 19). Not only is the unregenerated Israelite proved to have nothing to boast of; not only is the unbelieving Gentile shown to be in guilt; but even the very heirs of Abraham themselves are demonstrated by *their* transgressions to have no claim to blessing. The law thus shows that faith in the sovereign promise of God is the *one only way* of blessing—not self-effort.

The need of this lesson is the reason why law came in between promise and Christ. It was added to promise to serve the purpose of demonstrating this necessary lesson. Its place therefore was a secondary one. It was not intended by God to abide

permanently. It was His purpose that it should pass away when Christ came.

Moreover, the circumstances of its establishment were in keeping with its character as a temporary institution. It was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator. It was not like the covenant with Abraham in which God entered upon a contract where He was the *only* contracting party. In the law, it was *two* parties contracting together (verses 19, 20).

In the Abrahamic covenant God came forth in His absolute sovereignty, saying, "*I will.*" There were no limitations upon His will save those He imposed upon Himself. It was a covenant in which promise is without conditions. No requirements are made in order to its being fulfilled. No self-effort is demanded of the one to be blessed. The blessing promised is absolutely unconditional. It is of faith only therefore.

The legal covenant has not *that* character. There are two parties to it. It is not God saying, in absolute sovereignty, "I will," but God undertaking obligations the fulfilment of which is to depend on the faithfulness of the other party to the agreement. Such a contract, or covenant, as this would not be suitably administered by Christ, however fittingly it was in the hands of Moses. But if Moses declares that he is to be superseded by Christ (see Deut. 18: 15), he is witnessing that his administration must give place to the administration of the One who is greater than he. The law, then, plainly has an intermediate place between promise and Christ. With the coming of the Seed to whom the promise was confirmed, the administration of law gives place to an-



other of a very different character, unspeakably higher. Christ's administration is that of the sovereign "I will" of God.

It may be thought this view of the relations of law and Christianity makes the law to be against the promises of God. The apostle insists it is not so. He affirms that God never expected man to produce a righteousness of his own. He gave him a law that demanded it, but the life which produces it is not by the law. The question raised under law was not, On what principle does God give life? but, Can man acquire life by his own effort? Nor, On what principle will God fulfil promise? but, Can man work out a righteousness of his own? Can he claim the promise on that ground?

Scripture's answer is, All are under sin, whether under law or not, and none can show he has the slightest claim to the promise. The promise, then, is on the principle of faith. It must necessarily be so. The time arriving for the fulfilment of promise, it is given to them that believe (verses 21, 22).

Until that time the heirs under the law were like children under the watchful eyes of guardian attendants. They were on their way to Christ, waiting for the time to come to receive their promise. The law's voice to them was ever, Remember, you cannot establish your own righteousness. Christ—the coming Christ—is your righteousness. Justification is by faith, not works (verses 23, 24).

The apostle now goes on to show that with the coming of Christianity the heirs are no longer under the guardian attendant (verse 25). His work has been done, the lesson of it abides of course, but the

heirs have been given the privilege of taking a new place (see John 1: 12). In this new place they are no longer servants, and are free to be in the practical enjoyment of the sonship, or adoption, which goes with that new place. If hitherto the children of faith were servants, they are now sons. If formerly they looked for justification through Jesus Christ, they now have the liberty of sons. If they were children of faith in old times, by the same faith they now are sons (verse 26).

Christian baptism is a witness to the change that has occurred. As long as the children remained in the position of servants they were not called upon to put on Christ. Baptism, in figure, declares our identification with Christ; not now, of course, as One who is living in our earthly life, but as having died out of this life and risen up into a new place (verse 27). We are, then, in connection with Him *there*. This new place is His really, but believers now belong to Him there. They are now in Christ—the risen Christ. But in Christ the distinctions of earth and the old creation have passed away. We are all one with Him, identified not only in life and nature with Him, but also with His position (verse 28).

But if we belong to Christ risen, are connected with Him in His new position, we are Abraham's seed, i. e., we are children of faith and heirs according to promise. Even we who among the Gentiles have believed are of faith's family, and are inheritors of faith's portion (verse 29).

We have seen that now faith has begun to possess its portion. Having the Spirit is the beginning of possessing the promise.

WE have seen that believers under the law were children of God, but were not granted the right to take practically the place or position of sons. *Their* position was that of servants. They were children of God by faith, but kept in the place of servants. In contrast with this as we have seen, *we* Christians are sons as well as children. We have the right, because it has been given to us, to take practically the position of sons. This position of sons we are *born* into, for verse 26 of chapter 3 tells us, "Ye are all *sons* of God by faith in Christ Jesus."

But if we believers are now by faith in the position of sons, what is our condition? Is it the same as that in which the children were before Christianity came in? The apostle fully and clearly answers this question in chapter 4 to which I now turn. Here, we are told, that to be in the position of servants is to be in the condition of bondage. Old Testament believers were heirs to faith's portion. The children of God under the law were all heirs, but their condition differed "nothing from servants" (verse 1). The word for child in this verse is one used to express minority. The heirs *then* were in their minority. The heirs *now*, that is in Christianity, are in their majority. Minority and majority express the characteristic difference between the Mosaic dispensation and the Christian.

Under the order of the things set up by Moses the heirs, although children of God, as to their condition differed nothing from servants. God's time for His children to be in the practical enjoyment of the liberty that characterizes the position of sons had not then come. It has now. Then they were in their

minority, under "tutors and governors," in a condition of bondage to worldly or human principles (verses 2 and 3). The principles of the law are human principles. God took them up to show how they work out; and while He was doing that His children, though in reality His heirs, were involved in the necessity of complying with them. They were under them. It was a condition of bondage.

But the Father's time has now come—that "fulness of the time," when "God sent forth His Son." Now of this Son whom God has sent forth we should take particular notice two things are said: First, we are told, He was "made of a woman;" second, He was "made under the law." He needed to be not only a Man, but a Man under law in order to give to all the heirs the right to take the position of sons. To redeem from the law, or buy out the heirs that were under it, He needed to be a Man under the law. He was made so, and has effected for them their release from its claims upon them.

But He is not only the Redeemer of the heirs under the law. He is also the Redeemer of the heirs taken out from among the Gentiles; and having effected the redemption of both He gives both the right to take the position of sons. In Christianity both believing Jews and believing Gentiles *have* the adoption of sons (verse 5).

It is *because* the heirs are now given the place of sons that the Spirit is given to them. God has now sent forth the Spirit of His Son into their hearts (verse 6). Here I must remark, The teaching that we are *made* sons *by* receiving the Spirit is not according to Scripture. Nowhere does it so speak.

Here it is very expressly affirmed that because God has now made His children to be sons He has given them His Spirit. It is not He sent the Spirit of His Son into their hearts to *make* them sons, but rather to be able to realize and enjoy the liberty that belongs to the place in which they have been put. Having been given the right to take the position of sons, having been put in that place, the gift of the Spirit is God's testimony to them that they *are* in it. In bestowing the Spirit He formally acknowledges them as *being* in it. Being in it and having the Spirit they cry, Abba, Father. The cry is by the Spirit. It is by His power they realize and enjoy the liberty of their position. What a wonderful condition! How different from the condition of bondage the heirs under law were in!

Verse 7 is the apostle's summing up of this part of his argument. Believers in Christianity, even if once they were minors and in the condition of servants, are no more that. No Christian is that. All Christians are sons—in the place of sons. With the apostle this settles unquestionably the matter of heirship. Under the law the children were heirs, surely the sons of Christianity must be heirs also. We Gentile believers of Christian times may rejoice in the assurance that God in His unmeasured grace *has made* us His heirs. We are surely the heirs of God's promises to faith—heirs of faith's portion.

We have already seen how far that portion is now possessed. We have begun to possess. The Spirit given to us is the commencement of possessing, but in a day fast approaching we shall fully possess the whole inheritance promised us. Now, possessing

the Spirit, we are able to enter in faith into what shortly we shall actually inherit. We are *already* inheriting the adoption—the position of sons. We will ere long inherit the full blessing that has been promised. *Once* the heirs had promises and *saw* them afar off (Heb. 11:13). *Now* the heirs have received the adoption—the place of sons, and, being given that place, they have received the Spirit. *He* is the beginning of the fulfilment of promise—a present pledge of all that God has promised to faith, and a real foretaste of it all.

If we consider what Christianity means as unfolded by the apostle we cannot wonder at his touching appeal to the Galatian saints whose folly and delusion he has so fully exposed. Think of *sons*—those who have received the adoption, who by the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ have the right to be in the position the grace of God has secured for them and have been supplied with the divine power needed to realize and enjoy the liberty of that position—turning away from it all in their minds and seeking to be *again* in the bondage from which they have been delivered! Surely it is great folly and those who are doing this must be under the power of a great delusion.

It may [be] asked here: Were not the 'Galatians Gentiles? Were they under the law? How can it be said of *them*, They have turned *again* to "the weak and beggarly elements?" How can they be charged with desiring to be *again* in bondage to them? The answer is simple. Self-help is a human principle. It characterizes every human system men have resorted to as a means of escaping from the

evil of this present age. God took up that principle in the law of Moses to demonstrate its weakness and unprofitableness (Heb. 7: 18). The nation of Israel was not the only nation that was under that principle. All men were really under it. The redemption that is in Christ Jesus, not only delivers believing Jews from the principle of self-help, it delivers from it also believing Gentiles—those who knew not God, had not the “form of knowledge and of the truth in the law” (Rom. 2: 20). The Galatian saints were such, yet they had become the subjects of the redemption of God. They had been delivered from the principle of self-help, though they had never been formally under the law of Moses. But in taking up the law after becoming the subjects of God’s redemption they were turning again to a principle to which they were formerly subject, the bondage of which they had been delivered from (verses 8-10).

Is it any wonder the apostle tells them, “I am afraid of you?” Does it not look somewhat as if the apostle’s labor among them had been in vain? But if, in verse 11, he raises the question of the reality of their conversion by way of rousing up the conscience, he at once lets them know that his remembrance of those days in which they heard and received the gospel of God from his own lips will not permit him to think his work among them was all for nothing.

Firm in this conviction he makes a most touching appeal to them (verses 12-18). First, he implores them to be as he himself is. He is still as he was in the days of his labor among them. If they have changed he has not. But more, he tells them their

turning in mind away from the truth has not in reality altered what they are before the face of God. It is still true, he says, that "I am as ye are." He could say this as knowing how unchangeable the gospel of God is. He could thus tell them their surrender of the truth had in no way affected what he was before God. But beside this he gives them the evidences of the reality of their conversion. He tells them he has proof of the power of the gospel in their souls. He would have them recall those days when first he preached among them. As a man, weakness characterized him. They must have remembered his infirmity—his "thorn in the flesh" (2 Cor. 12: 7), what was manifestly a very great trial to him when he sought to declare the message of God. Well, he says, such was your enjoyment of the truth I brought you, that you did not reject me on account of my infirmity, but you received me as an angel of God—even as Christ Jesus. You spoke of the blessedness of the gospel as tasting and drinking in its preciousness. Had it been possible you would gladly have plucked out your own eyes and given them to me!

All this was fresh in the apostle's mind. It was to him a clear evidence of the reality of their conversion—that they were Christ's. The evidence of it was too strong for him to question it, though he did question it to sting their conscience.

But we must notice a further argument. The apostle will leave no stone unturned in the ardor of his zeal to see his beloved converts recovered from their folly and delivered from the power of the delusion they have fallen under. He asks now, Am I become



your enemy in telling you the truth? I was not an enemy when I brought to you the gospel by which you were saved. Your reception of me and the message I declared to you is ample proof that you did not then see an enemy in me. Am I that *now*? I am insisting on what I taught you *then*. If you judge me *now* to be an enemy, what is it that makes me one?

What an irresistible argument! How the Galatian saints must have felt the force of it! Plainly the change was in *them*, not in the apostle.

But this change in their minds towards the apostle had been brought about through the influence of the perverters of the gospel. Men had come among them who sought recognition, place and authority. To secure this they had labored with great zeal. They wanted the Galatians to be subject to them—to own their authority. They wanted to destroy their confidence in Paul. They desired to separate the apostle from them in order to have them the more securely in their own power (verse 17).

These self-seeking men were taking advantage of Paul's absence to intrench themselves in the minds and affections of the Galatians. Paul, in the wisdom of the Spirit, exposes them, shows up their aims and motives. Having done this he reminds the saints of Galatia of their responsibility to continue in the same zeal by which they were characterized at the first. Their zeal then was for "a good thing"—the truth from God. He counsels them to persevere in that zeal, to suffer no man to take advantage of his absence to rob them of the truth and destroy its power in their souls (verse 18).

In verses 19, 20 he concludes his appeal by assuring them of his unchanged interest in them—how delighted he would be to be back in their midst in the same happy, blessed way in which he had mingled with them. He lets them know that he is earnestly laboring to the end that Christ may “be formed in them.” He *had* been formed in them *at the first*, but the development had been interfered with. Growth had been checked and the image of Christ had been shaded. Paul says, I want to see that image so developed that there shall be an uninterrupted reflection of it—a reflection continually increasing in the brilliancy and power of what Christ is. *That* was the apostle's desire, for that he was striving. Gladly would he be present with them to labor for it. How much happier and more blessed the positive ministry of Christ to the souls of God's people than the service of exposing the work of evil. The apostle did not shrink from this when it was necessary, but the other was more delightful. There was however a need for him to change his voice as he had done. Their folly and delusion made it necessary. Their defection from the truth was cause for real hesitation. It raised serious question. Yet he would have them know how ardently he desired to be with them with the same voice with which in former times he had served them.

**I**T is very evident the Galatian saints had been led to believe that the law and the prophets were authority for their submission to the Judaizers who said: It is incumbent on you to be circumcised and to keep the law of Moses. In this portion of our epistle, therefore, the apostle takes up the testimony of the law and the prophets as to the children of faith: In God's dealings with them, are they on the principle of His free sovereign mercy, or on the principle of law-works for blessing?

The apostle's unfolding here of the testimony of the law and the prophets on this momentous question is rich in instruction. It must have produced a powerful effect on the minds of the Galatians. Let us turn to his lucid and incontrovertible statement.

First, he raises this question: In the position which you have been influenced to take, are you listening to the voice of the law? In desiring to be under law are you heeding what the law says? (ver. 21). There can be no question as to our responsibility to give due heed to what the law says. It bears the plainest possible testimony as to whether we are heirs of God on the principle of faith or of works.

What, then, is its testimony? The apostle proceeds to give it. He says, "Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondmaid, the other by a free woman"—these facts stand out clear and plain on the page of inspiration. Furthermore, the son that was born to the bondmaid "was born according to the flesh;" the son born to the free woman "was born according to promise" (ver. 23). And what do these facts mean—being recorded as they are in the living and abiding word of God?

The apostle, speaking with God-given authority, tells us what these facts mean. He interprets them for us. In verses 24 and 25 he tells us the women stand for two contrasted covenants—one the Abrahamic, the other the Mosaic. Now the Abrahamic covenant was a covenant of *grace*—a covenant in which God was sovereignly saying, *I will*. It was an unconditional covenant. The Mosaic covenant was a covenant of *works*—with conditions therefore.

It is quite impossible to mistake the apostle's application of the recorded facts. He says, Hagar, the woman that stands for the Mosaic or legal covenant, answers to "Jerusalem, which now is, and is in bondage with her children." It is clear he is speaking of that system which we commonly call Judaism. Judaism centers in the earthly Jerusalem.

On the other hand Sarah, the woman which stands for the covenant of grace, answers to Jerusalem that is above. The heavenly Jerusalem is the city of God—the city of foundations; and the Abrahamic covenant, the covenant of *grace*, centers *there*.

Now Ishmael, the son of Hagar, represents the children of Jerusalem that now is. They are children according to the flesh. They are not children of promise, not children of the heavenly city—the city for which Abraham looked—the city which God has prepared for faith. It is Isaac, the son of Sarah, who represents the children of promise—the children of faith.

In verse 26, the apostle insists that *we Christians*, we believers of this present Christian age, are counted among the children of promise—the children

that are connected, not with the Jerusalem below, but the Jerusalem above. *She is our mother.* Furthermore, just as Sarah was the free woman, and her son Isaac was not a child of bondage, so also are the children free who are the children of promise. If law means bitter servitude and bondage, grace means, not license, but holy liberty—liberty before the face of God.

Plainly, Paul is showing the Galatian saints that in listening to the Judaizers they are not listening to the law's own voice. He makes it clear that the law declares that the children of promise are connected with the Abrahamic covenant of grace; that it is in opposition to the instruction which the law itself gives to put the children of Abraham, i. e., the children of faith, under the bondage of law to secure the blessing they are already heirs to, and the earnest and pledge of which they already possess in the Spirit which God has given them.

Now let us see how the apostle shows that the testimony of the law is fully confirmed by the prophets. To do this the prophet Isaiah is appealed to. If any question the view I here take of the apostle's interpretation and application of the recorded facts to which he refers (in order to show what the testimony of the law is in regard to the matter he has under consideration) let his appeal to Isaiah 54: 1 be well considered. A little unfolding of the prophecy will be in place. Isaiah, under the figure of two women, symbolically speaks of the same two covenants of which we have been speaking. In his thought of them, occupied as he is with the open manifested results, the covenant of grace is as a

childless, desolate widow. Grace apparently has not had children. During the period of the law God did not openly acknowledge her children. There *were* children of grace, but they were not authorized to take the place of such. Hence in the prophet's mind, formed by the Spirit, the Abrahamic covenant was apparently as a widowed, childless woman. Jehovah was, manifestly, not the husband of grace, but of law. In Isaiah 54 the prophet is anticipating the time when the then present acknowledged wife (law) will no longer be recognized, but the one which was as a desolate widow (grace) will be. As he thus anticipates the time of her recognition—her open, public, manifest recognition—he says to her, “Sing, rejoice.” In calling upon her to celebrate her manifest recognition he assures her that she shall be seen to have a vast family of children, vastly exceeding in number the children of the woman (law) which for the time being is owned as the married wife.

But this is not all. The connection of this quotation by the apostle with what he is speaking of shows that for him the children of faith and promise, whether those of Old Testament times or those of the present period of Christianity, will all be included among the children that grace will be recognized as having. That is very plainly the apostle's argument. “Jerusalem which is above is *our* mother” affirms our connection with the covenant of grace. The quotation from Isaiah 54: 1 is a justification of the affirmation. Verse 28 re-affirms it. “Now *we*, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise.” We Christians belong to the system of grace, which for a time appeared to be as a desolate, childless

widow, but notwithstanding finally rejoices in a family of countless numbers.

But if the promise of children to Abraham includes the believers of this Christian age, the antagonism between the children according to the Spirit and the children according to the flesh is the same as in the days of Sarah and Hagar. The latter contest the right of the former to belong to Abraham. How bitter the contest!

But Scripture itself decides the issue: "Cast out the bondwoman and her son: for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the free woman" (Gen. 21: 10). Scripture, then, decides that believers of the present dispensation are children of Sarah—of grace. It assures us of what our position is—that of acknowledged sons. It declares what our condition is—the liberty of sons with a Father, not the bondage of servants under a master (ver. 31).

Having completed his task of exposing the folly of the Galatian saints and showing what a delusion they had fallen under, the apostle now proceeds in chapter 5; 1 to exhort them to hold fast the ground where grace has put them, and to stand immovable in the liberty in which Christ has established them. Christ, the heir of all faith's blessing and portion, has come and freed His co-heirs from the bondage in which they were held. He has given them liberty—the liberty of sons. They should not turn back from this to the yoke of bondage—to law-keeping, or self-effort.

Paul will not close this part of his discussion without telling them plainly what turning back from

grace to law really means (vers. 2-4). He seeks to show them that they are not profiting by Christ. In being circumcised they were going back from the real circumcision to what was but a shadow of it. Believers now have in Christ the true circumcision—the real “putting off the body of the flesh” (Col. 2: 11), a circumcision not made with hands. The circumcision made with hands was but a mark or sign put on the flesh—not its cutting off. The Galatians were going back from the actual thing to what was a mere sign of it; they were not realizing the benefit of what Christ had done. The benefit was in fact theirs, but they were not enjoying it.

But more. In being circumcised they were making themselves responsible to do the whole law (verse 3). Circumcision, as a sign put on the flesh, meant that the flesh naturally was unprofitable, and that to be profitable it must be what the law required—*everything* it required. In being circumcised therefore the Galatians were assuming the responsibility of doing the whole law. Here again we see how they were not profiting by what had been done by Christ.

Now let us mark well what the apostle tells them. He does not say, Christ has not benefited them; but his idea is that, notwithstanding the benefit Christ has bestowed upon them, through their being circumcised and assuming the responsibility to do the whole law, they had given up the benefit, so that Christ had “*become* of no effect to them.” It was on their part, a *falling* from grace. They were not standing firm in the liberty Christ had given them. Christ had set them free, and they had formerly



enjoyed their liberty, but now they were not making use of it.

But, further, he points out to them the distinctive characteristic feature of Christianity that they were overlooking in turning back to law. Christianity means that *self-effort is at an end*; that Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to believers; that with the righteousness which God righteously imputes to believers goes the complete blessing He has revealed as the portion of faith. The whole blessing is not received at once. Only a part of it is for the present bestowed. The Spirit is given us; but, while we have the Spirit, we wait for the completion of the blessing that is ours. We rejoice in the hope of the glory of God (Rom. 5: 2). We do not have to acquire the glory by self-effort. It is the possession of all who are in Christ, only we wait the season of its bestowment. It is plain, therefore, that neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything. It is not human works that profit, but the faith that is energized by love—the love of God. Works there will be, no doubt—an abundance of them, for faith is fruitful—but not works for the perfecting of the flesh, which the very law itself declares to be unprofitable, and which the death of Christ proclaims irretrievable and unmendable.

Faith then is the *sole* principle on which Christians have their blessing, whether it is the blessing already received or the blessing that is still in store for us and for which by the Spirit we wait. Works of law cannot add anything to what we already are in Christ.

What a serious mistake the Galatians were making! Thousands to-day are like them. Judaizers

abound who need the stern apostolic rebuke of this epistle. There are multitudes of Christians who are not standing fast in Christian liberty, who will do well to give heed to the apostle's exposure of the folly and delusion into which they have fallen.

Chapter 5: 7-26.

WE come now to the last part of the epistle. From chapter 5: 7 to the end, the apostle is occupied with the practical side of things. He sets in striking contrast the practice that is the fruit of the gospel and the practice which results from its perversion by the admixture of the leaven of legality. In the preceding part, as we have seen, he was occupied with the truth—the doctrine of Christianity—and exposed the folly of entertaining a teaching which destroyed Christianity by nullifying its fundamental and distinctive features. He showed it to be a great delusion.

But the folly of it is no less apparent when we consider the apostle's discussion of its results in practice. His incisive characterization manifests fully the delusion which the Galatian saints had been led into. Let us follow the line of his argument.

First of all, we should notice the apostle's unqualified approval of their former walk after their conversion: "Ye *did* run well." They not only professed to have received the gospel, they lived in its power. There was a practical sanctification resulting from their reception of the message which the apostle proclaimed among them. Their walk was in reality the exemplification of the truth by which

they had been laid hold of; so truly so, that Paul warmly commends it.

But a great change had taken place. They had turned aside from the path in which they formerly walked. They were no longer obeying the truth. Their practical ways were no longer the expression of the truth they had heard of him. The apostle could not commend or sanction their changed ways, and he denounces them as disobedient to the truth (ver. 7). These new ways were not learned from him (ver. 8). They had learned them of the perverters of the gospel. A different teaching had been presented to them, and by it they had been influenced to give up right practices for wrong ones.

Paul characterizes the new and different teaching as "leaven"—as evil (ver. 9). To mix error with the truth is to destroy the truth. The admixture of Christianity and legality is the nullification of Christianity. The perversion of the gospel makes it no longer the gospel. The practice of a perverted Christianity is no longer Christian practice. Once introduce leaven into the lump and it is a leavened lump.

The apostle in thus exposing how pernicious legality is—what baneful consequences result from its adoption by Christians—does not despair of the recovery of those who have been influenced to surrender their liberty in Christ and enslave themselves to the principle of law. He is fully aware of the authority of the Lord over His own. If he thinks of those who have been deluded, he has confidence the Lord will deliver them out of their delusion and restore in them the same mind by which they were

characterized when they were in obedience to the truth (ver. 10). He knows how to make a difference between the deluders and the deluded. He counts on the deliverance and recovery of the deluded, but the deluders will not escape the full responsibility of their evil work: "He that troubleth you," he says, "shall bear his judgment, whosoever he be." The apostle held the workers of evil to be accountable, and those who maintain apostolic truth and practice will do the same.

There are many who find it difficult to understand why the apostle should be so severe in his denunciation of those who, to their minds, rightly held the principle of law in high honor. Let such weigh well what the apostle says in verse 11. Circumcision, as originally given of God, was a mark put on the flesh as a shadow of the cross of Christ—which is God's judgment of the flesh. When Moses gave the law by the authority of God, he incorporated circumcision. It had still the same significance. It was still a shadow of the cross. Its message was, the flesh is no good—it is without profit. The law tells you what it (the flesh) ought to be, but as it is not what it ought to be, this mark that has been put on your flesh is a sign of the judgment of God upon it—the flesh cut off in judgment.

It is because the cross of Christ expresses God's curse upon the flesh that it was a stumbling-block to the Jew. To him circumcision was a work of merit, not a sign of the curse. The cross of Christ declares God's curse upon the flesh, and for that reason the Jew was offended. The apostle asks here, "If I yet preach circumcision, why do I yet suffer persecution?"

Has the offence of the cross ceased?" The offence of the cross had *not* ceased, and it was in enmity to the cross that circumcision was still being preached. It was the enemies of the cross of Christ that were making circumcision a work of merit. The soul of the apostle so revolts from the thought of any fellowship with these evil workers in their enmity against the cross, that in verse 12 he bursts out in expressing the desire that these perverters of the truth and troublers of the saints would cut themselves off—their work was so obnoxious, so evil!

But the apostle felt the need of convicting the Galatians of the falsity of a claim they were making. Under the leadership of these perverters of the gospel they were pleading that they were practising the law. As we have seen, Paul insists that Christians have been called into the liberty wherewith Christ makes free. Now he shows that Christian liberty does not mean liberty for the flesh (ver. 13). The Christian being a man who has the right to take before God the place of a son, is free to serve in the spirit and power of love. In serving thus, it is not as meeting a legal demand. But without being under the principle of law he is doing—practising—the very things the law demands. This is *liberty*—the liberty of grace. Under law it was bondage, because the law *requiring* love, did not give it. Under grace, the love of God fills the heart—grace produces it. Such service then, is happy, holy liberty.

In verse 15 the apostle says: While you have undertaken to practise the things the law requires, you are in reality doing the very opposite things. Instead of serving one another by love, and so fulfill-

ing the law, you are breaking it in biting and devouring one another. In attempting to practise law, the sinful passions of the flesh had been stirred into great activity. It was impossible for them to endure the thought of others being better than themselves. They were belittling one another in their ardent desire to commend and praise themselves.

How striking the contrast between Christian practice and that resulting from the attempt to practise law! What folly is thus manifested in the legalist! How great is the delusion of those who put themselves under the principle of law!

But let us proceed. In verse 16 the apostle says, "This, I say, then." Let us remember he is speaking with apostolic authority, giving the mind of *God*. What then does he give as the rule for Christian practice? It is simply this: *Walking in, or by the power of, the Spirit*. For while the law stirs up the lusts of the flesh into activity, the Spirit is the power in which love manifests itself. Walking in the Spirit, then, is the way to escape what the flesh would lead us to do.

The Spirit and the flesh are opposites. They are antagonistic the one to the other; and for this reason the Christian does not always do as he would. He is always exposed to the liability of not doing the things he would (ver. 17). But the Spirit is the Christian's leader and power—not the law (ver. 18). The Christian, then, needs to learn wherein the Spirit manifests His leadership. It should of course be plain to all that the works of the flesh, such as are listed here in verses 19-21, are the opposites of the Spirit's guidance. Those who are characterized

by these things are not inheritors of the kingdom of God. The power of the Spirit is entirely wanting to them.

But the Spirit manifests His power in producing fruit in those who are the subjects of His guidance, examples of which are given us in verse 22. Blessed fruits! We realize that no law prohibits the doing such things. How unreservedly and unqualifiedly the Christian may yield himself to the ways that are of the Spirit of God. In so doing, his practice is Christian practice, and it is Christian practice only in the measure in which he gives to the Spirit His own place and way.

Now the Christian belongs to Christ. He is of Him. He is connected with One whose crucifixion was God's judgment on man—the whole family of the fallen first man. There, in that crucifixion, God fully judged man according to the flesh—his every passion, his every lust. On being born of the water and the Spirit, a man becomes to be of Christ. Through a saying of God being deposited in his soul in the power of the Spirit, he becomes one who henceforth belongs to Christ. By the Spirit, through faith, he is forever connected with the Christ who was crucified. For him, the man after the flesh has been crucified. He has been crucified *in toto*—all he is and all his passions, all his lusts (ver. 24). He stands no longer before God as a man in Adam, in the flesh. He is in Christ. By a spiritual work, a work which can be only by the Spirit of God, He is in Christ. He lives in the Spirit. What he is before the eye of God is what the Spirit has made him.

Well, then, says the apostle, "If we live in the

Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit" (ver. 25). To take up the practice of law is to walk in the flesh, not in the Spirit; but to walk in the Spirit is to hold the flesh to be what God has judged it to be, to judge its passions as sinful, its lusts as abhorrent to God. It is to turn from it in subjection to the Spirit's reprobation of it and follow His lead in ways that are of Him and honoring to the Christ with whom we are connected.

The Christian who presumes to put himself under law, who undertakes to put that principle into practice, is making a serious mistake. It results in his doing what the apostle counsels us not to do. Christians are admonished and exhorted not to cultivate the spirit of vain glory. The practice of law will develop that spirit. Paul here tells us not to provoke one another. Through the practice of law that is what we will do. The practice of law will foster in us the spirit of strife, of contention, of envy. But such things are not Christian practice. Christian practice is the practice of love. In Christian practice we are objects of love to one another and subjects of unselfish service.

Beloved fellow-Christian, let me here exhort you to study faithfully this description of the difference between the practice of law and the practice of Christianity. It is a divinely authorized description. Its diligent study will surely result in edification and profit.

But there are still other considerations pressed by the apostle which we must turn to.



**I**N chap. 6: 1-6 the difference between the legal system and Christianity is very strikingly presented. The apostle supposes the case of a man who has been overtaken in some fault. He has made some misstep. Who will be most likely to recover that man? Will one in whom the spirit of pride and self-boasting has been fostered know how to reach the springs of that man's failure? Will he so understand the way of restoration as to be able to demonstrate it to the failing one?

It is evident the spirit of vainglory widely prevailed among the Galatians, with pretensions of great spirituality. This was the fruit of the leaven of legality which had been introduced among them.

It is to this boast of being spiritual the apostle ironically refers when he says, "Ye which are spiritual." As if to say: Here is a test for your spirituality: this man, overtaken in a fault, recover him. Will your boasts of superiority help him? Will high thoughts of self restore him? How utterly futile would all this be in such a case! How well the apostle knew it! Hence his suggestion that the recovery of a man from his fault will require real humility. There will be need of remembering one's own liability to err. It is the consciousness of this that fosters in us (men in whom sin dwells) that spirit of meekness which enables one to make the burdens or troubles of another his own. This lowliness is what Christ Himself exemplified. Christians should walk as He walked (1 John 2: 6). The leaven of legality had turned the Galatians from the ways of the life in Christ, in which the law is fulfilled. Grace alone enables for such ways.

In thinking themselves to be spiritual, the Galatians were self-deceived, and this self-deception was the fruit of legality. Had grace been the controlling principle, each one would have been concerned about their own burdens—their own responsibilities; and, instead of glorying as above those they judged to have failed, they would be rejoicing in the grace that had enabled them to meet their obligations.

It may be in place here to explain that in the original the words for burden, in verses 2 and 5, are not the same. In verse 2 it expresses the trouble of mind in which the one who has failed is, and with which, where grace, not law, is operating, one will identify himself. He will make that trouble his own in a real way. In verse 5 the word expresses responsibility. Every one is personally accountable, and must answer for himself, not for another.

In verses 6-10 the apostle contrasts the effects of legality and grace in another way. It is evident the introduction of the leaven of legality among the Galatians had resulted in the drying up of the out-flowing streams of grace. The ways in which grace expresses itself had been given up. The apostle reminds them of it and would call them back to them. Grace, the grace of the gospel which they had received, taught them to communicate in all good things to those whom God had used to instruct them in the things of God. They had formerly, we may surely believe, had their part in forwarding the apostle on his way. Now the good things they once gave so heartily they were withholding. The activities in which grace had instructed them had been to a large extent checked.

The faithful apostle warns them against being deceived. He tells them, "God is not mocked." Their pretensions, their provoking one another, their envying one another, will not pass before His eye as the fruit of the Spirit. Even in nature we may learn that the harvest will be according to what is sown; this law is no less inflexible in the spiritual sphere. If the sowing is to the flesh, the reaping must be of the flesh also, and that too, according to the law of increase.

And here I must warn against a grave mistake often made. Sowing to the flesh must not be limited to what we commonly call the vulgar and gross things. There is sowing to the flesh in connection with what is regarded as cultured and refined. It was this sort of sowing that prevailed among the Galatians. In either case the harvest is not the abiding fruits of the Spirit. Christians are characterized by the fruits of the Spirit; they are the anticipation of the joys of that time when we shall have entered upon the final and permanent condition of the life of which by grace we are participants now. Bearing these fruits is "well-doing." The apostle exhorts us not to weary in it, and assures us that there will be no disappointment in the harvest if the sowing is to the Spirit. Instead of drying up the channels in which love flows out, we are exhorted to seize upon every opportunity for the service of love. How such service shines in contrast with the drying up of love's activities through the leaven of legality!

In verses 11-14, the apostle contrasts the motives actuating himself with those governing the troub-

lers among the Galatians. Whether we read, "Ye see how large a letter," or with others, "What large letters, I have written unto you with mine own hand," it is clear Paul was seeking to impress the Galatians with what was a manifest fact, that in the intensity of his desire to communicate with them he had not waited for an amanuensis to write for him at his dictation as was his custom (2 Thess. 3: 17). A practised amanuensis could have produced a more attractive manuscript, but the apostle had not the ambition to make "a fair show in the flesh"—which, manifestly, was actuating the perverters of the gospel. The apostle faithfully exposes it.

The reasons for forcing the believing Gentiles to be circumcised were two. First, the cross of Christ, which abolishes all distinctions of men in the flesh, was an offence to the Jews. Association with the uncircumcised, though believing Gentiles, brought persecution upon them. They were anxious to avoid it. Hence they insisted strenuously on believing Gentiles being circumcised.

The second reason was their desire to be able to point to the circumcision of the believing Gentiles as a proof of their being different from the mass—better than the rest. It was not because they themselves were in reality keepers of the law. The apostle says they were *not*. Nor did they really expect the circumcised Gentiles to keep the law. Their purpose and desire was to be able to justify themselves in their association with Gentiles. They thought they could do that if they could convince the unbelieving Jew that the Gentiles they associated with were a better class of Gentiles than the rest. Their

circumcision would be a proof that they did not give to the cross the meaning in which it was an offence to the Jew—that they did not regard it as God's declaration of the utter unprofitableness of the flesh. Paul, however, insists vigorously on the true significance of the cross. With him it means God's irreversible judgment, the complete cutting off of man in the flesh. To him, who in faith took sides in it with God, it was the world's crucifixion. It was the end of the world for him. He could no more be a part of it or have any place in it. On the other hand, the cross was *his* crucifixion to the world; because of his subjection to it, the world itself linked him with the crucified One—had no more use for him than it had for the One they had crucified. The cross then in its true import measured the gulf that was between the world and Paul.

Oh that the truth of this were in our souls, beloved, in the same power as it was in the soul of the apostle. However far behind him we may be as to actual, practical realization, let us maintain the truth of it faithfully. Paul is the authoritative exponent of Christianity. It is the actuality, the verity of God. Our subjective realization of it, alas, is defective; yet, thank God, every Christian has title to proclaim and insist on the divine reality as what God Himself has established; and in its actuality it is permanent and unchangeable. Of course, no one who is before God will boast of its being subjectively realized in fulness.

Verses 15-18 are the apostle's conclusion. It is brief, but a rich and most precious statement of divine truth. Christians are in Christ Jesus, as

elsewhere taught; it is of God they are in Him (1 Cor. 1:30). How immeasurable is the grace that has laid hold of us and taken us out of our relationships with the failed first man, and established us in eternal relationship with Him who is the Second and Last Adam! What unbounded mercy to be called of God, to be connected with Him! But if our being in Christ Jesus is of God's sovereign grace, then neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything. A believer from among the circumcised is nothing more than a believer from among the uncircumcised. What counts in Christ is what God has wrought. A circumcised Jew to be in Christ has to be created anew, or born again, through faith. An uncircumcised Gentile comes to be in Christ in the same way. It is not subjection to a religious rite or a ceremonial performance, but *new creation*.

In Christ Jesus, then, there is no opportunity for boasting, except in Christ Himself, who is all—everything. What we are in ourselves is nothing. What we make ourselves to be by our own efforts to improve goes for nothing. Christ is all.

Now the apostle wishes peace to be upon all who walk after this rule. The Galatians in following the perverters were not walking after the rule of new creation; they were not walking as men who had been created anew in Christ Jesus. They were not therefore in that faith in which peace and mercy could be realized.

It is altogether likely that being connected with the nation of Israel was a matter of great importance in the eyes of the troublers, and through them the

Galatians had come to attach great importance to it also. But the apostle indicates that the important thing for an Israelite is to be an Israelite *of God*. Elsewhere he teaches that they are not all Israel that are of Israel (Rom. 9: 6). Only the believing Israelites are *real* Israelites—Israelites of God. Such are included among those upon whom Paul here wishes peace and mercy.

How forcefully he appeals to the authority under which he was writing. He says, "Henceforth let no man trouble me." If proof were needed that he was an authenticated messenger of the Lord Jesus, he was able to give it. He bore in his body the brands by which the Lord Jesus had signalized him as being His bond-servant and representative. Those scars that he had received in his many persecutions declared him to be the bearer of Christ's message to the world and the Church.

The end is abrupt. There are no salutations, no reminders of associations fondly remembered and affectionately cherished. It is simply, "Brethren, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen."

