

THE BOOK OF GALATIANS

A Bible Student's Commentary

By

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In concert with dedicated Bible students
choosing to be a part of this work
and to whom it is dedicated

This study, as in all our work, is subject to revision as more is learned
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INTRODUCTION

I. The geographical setting.

Galatia was a province in what is now South Central Turkey¹, and the area the Apostle Paul traveled through three times on three of his missionary journeys.² These journeys are recorded in the Book of Acts, chapters 13-14, 15-18 and 18-21 respectively. The word Galatia comes from the term given to the Gauls/Celts. These ancient peoples from Europe were warriors who, in c. 280 B.C. poured into Greece and ravaged Delphi. At the invitation of Nicomedes I, King of Bithynia, they hired on as mercenaries to aid him in a civil war. From there they migrated east and settled in what we know as Galatia, named after them. They accommodated themselves to the Greek written script for practical reasons but spoke a broken Gallic/Greek.

Galatia became a hostile and dangerous area for strangers. But Paul's opposition was not from these people, quite the contrary, but from the Jews who not only objected to his message but attempted to kill him on his first missionary journey. Acts records these events.³

At Pisidian Antioch:

"When the Gentiles heard this, they *began* rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord; and as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed. And the word of the Lord was being spread through the whole region. But the Jews incited the devout women of prominence and the leading men of the city, and instigated a persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and drove them out of their district." 13:48-50

At Iconium:

"But the Jews who disbelieved stirred up the minds of the Gentiles and embittered them against the brethren. And when an attempt was made by both the Gentiles and the Jews with their rulers, to mistreat and to stone them, they became aware of it and fled to the cities of Lycaonia, Lystra and Derbe, and the surrounding region; and there they continued to preach the gospel." Acts 14:2, 5-7

At Lystra:

"But Jews came from Antioch and Iconium, and having won over the crowds, they stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, supposing him to be dead. But while the disciples stood

¹ This study accepts the "South Galatian" area as the area of Paul's ministry and to whom this letter is addressed. He had "preached the gospel to them" (1:11; 4:13), "labored over them" (4:11) and 4:11-16 makes it clear that Paul had been with them. There is no direct evidence of his travel to or teaching in "North Eastern Turkey" above Cappadocia which has been designated as a possible boundary for "Galatia".

² There are actually four trips through this region as Paul, after preaching to Antioch, Iconium, Lystra and Derbe, returned and re-visited those cities on his first journey.

³ A slide show displaying the ruins and geography of Paul's travels is included in this web-site.

around him, he got up and entered the city. The next day he went away with Barnabas to Derbe.” Acts 14:19-20

II. The date of the writing of this letter.

Most commentators differ regarding the date of this writing. Some place it early, before the Jerusalem conference (Acts 15) and date it around 50 A.D. This is unlikely as the Paul seems to reference the Jerusalem conference in chapter two of his letter to the churches of Galatia. Others see this epistle written sometime shortly after the Jerusalem conference before or during his second missionary journey. However, there is no mention by Luke of a conflict with the Judaisers among the churches of Galatia during any of the three journeys. Since Luke details the first journey so vividly, (though not there in person) and the persecutions therein, it stands to reason that any further conflict of this magnitude and importance would be mentioned. Luke simply says of the visit to these churches on the second journey, “And he was traveling through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches.” (Acts 15:41) Luke goes on to mention Paul’s coming into acquaintance with Timothy and Timothy joining him at this point.

It would seem odd that the churches would depart from the teachings of both Paul and the Jerusalem apostles after his second visit to them. As it was Paul’s custom to read the decision of the Jerusalem apostles to the congregations he visited, and since he visited the churches of Galatia on his second journey, this could add support for the letter being written prior to the second journey.

And on the third journey, Luke writes, “And having spent some time *there*, he left and passed successively through the Galatian region and Phrygia, strengthening all the disciples.” 18:23

Paul no doubt related the details of both journeys to Luke. If there had been the mess that caused Paul to be so angry, as seen in this letter, he would have related it to Luke since Luke made note of even minor “uproars” and “oppositions”. So it is possible that Paul did not get to this letter until into his third or even his fourth journey.⁴ On the other hand, Paul’s comment in Galatians 1:6, “I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him...” seems to suggest that the letter was written earlier than this. But it was likely written after the Jerusalem conference. If so, and it was before the second journey, then the issues were solved by the time Paul got there on the second journey and so Luke may have felt no need to mention any problems with the churches on this or the third journey.

As one carefully reads the book, one is impressed with a date after the Jerusalem conference but prior to the second journey. Paul is angry and the phrase “so quickly” teamed with his comment in 1:9, “As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to what you received, he is to be accursed!” leads one to the following possible scenario. During Paul’s first journey, (Acts 13:1-14:24) his teaching in Antioch of Pisidia, caused a division in the synagogue. Angry synagogue leaders gathered a mob (13:50) and not only drove them out of the city but followed Paul and his team all the way to Lystra where they

⁴ See this author’s “Commentary on the Book of Acts”, the excursus on Paul’s “fourth” journey.

stoned Paul leaving him for dead. On their way back the persecutors may well have forcibly insisted that these new converts ignore Paul and his message to which they gave tacit consent.

But unknown to them, Paul was alive and returned back through these same cities making it clear that the word he preached was the truth and that they ought not be persuaded by these Judaisers. His appearance and disfigurement made an impact. His courage to return back to strengthen the churches was admired. The team told each church caught between the message of Paul and the message of the Judaisers that those teaching the message of the Judaisers are not acceptable to God and that he had been commissioned by God for the proclamation of the gospel to them.

They concurred and all seemed to get back on track until the word came some months later to Paul and his companions at the church at Antioch (of Syria) that the Judaisers had persuaded these new Christians to reject Paul and his gospel and return to the tenants of Judaism. They had indeed even threatened the believers (4:17). Paul responds with the epistle to the churches of Galatia.

There was a serious issue regarding the teachings and influence of the Judaisers in Antioch just prior to the Jerusalem conference and these events actually prompted the conference. These are noted in Acts 15:1-2, and look to be reflected in Galatians 2:11-21. If he wrote the letter prior to his second journey, it would have been written from Antioch in Syria as Paul and Barnabas spent considerable time there prior to Paul leaving on the second journey with Silas (Acts 15:30-36). This would have been in c. 51-52. This false teaching and the conflict over it would have begun to spread and easily have reached the Galatian churches during those months. Paul Mentions in Galatians 1:2 “all the brethren” with him as if to suggest that the churches in Galatia may know of whom he is speaking. Since Antioch of Syria is so close to Galatia, the communication to and from Antioch could have led Paul to write it prior to the second journey. But then why not mention the letter from the apostles vindicating his authority and message? In fact, why is it not mentioned at all? There are two possibilities. One, he is defending his apostleship and does not need their endorsement and deliberately leaves it out for that purpose (Galatians 1:1; 1:18-24; 2:6, or two, he wrote this epistle prior to the Jerusalem conference. The latter is almost impossible, so the former seems to remains as the only (albeit confusing) choice. Finally, in Paul’s account – Galatians 1:15-2:21 – he discontinues recounting any journey past what only could be considered the Jerusalem conference. His point is made and he moves on to his explanation of the gospel.

True, the words “so quickly” could actually refer to any time the churches had experienced converts or had been visited by the apostles. Paul had already ministered and strengthened them on both the second and third journeys. The words “so quickly” could refer to any time after either one of these journeys as well. If Galatians was written during the second journey, it is difficult to determine where it originated. The most likely scenario is from Corinth where Paul spent over a year and a half. In this case, the date would have been around 52 to 54 A.D..

If written during the third journey, journey it was likely from Ephesus, Troas, Macedonia or Greece as “Gaius from Derbe” had now joined the group (Acts 20:1-5 ff.). Perhaps Gaius had brought Paul the disheartening news. This would have been around 55-58 A.D.

III. Why the letter was written, the “Judaisers”.

Galatians 2:14 is the only place in the New Testament where the word “Ιουδαιζειν” (You-died-zane”) “to Judaize” is used. It means to cause or influence others to conform to Judaism. From this passage we get the term “Judaiser”. The importance of Paul’s objection to Peter’s actions in this section was that it contradicted the truth of the gospel, how a man is justified or made righteous before God. The same word is used in the Septuagint⁵ solely in Esther 8:17 where it states, “...And many among the peoples of the land became Jews, for the dread of the Jews had fallen on them.” The Hebrew is “יָהַד” (ya-hahd”) meaning to “make Jewish”. But the concept was well ingrained in the minds of the people of Paul’s day as he does not have to explain it to Peter or his readers.

After Paul and the other apostles had preached to gospel to others, especially the Gentiles, there was an outcry by the Jews that these Gentiles could not be heirs of the promises to Abraham and the patriarchs without first submitting to all the Jewish rites including circumcision, Sabbath keeping, and the rest of the Jewish ceremonial and religious requirements.⁶ The objection was so great that riots resulting in threat, or murder of the apostles (especially Paul and those with him) was attempted on many occasions Note: Acts 9:23, 29; 13:45; 14:5, 19; 17:5-6; 18:5-6; 21:27-31; 23:12-14, etc..

The Jews had had the situation under control. Gentiles who believed the Old Testament Scriptures and wanted to be a part of the worship of Yahweh could do so through a variety of ways. They could become “God-fearers” which meant that they could participate in the synagogue but were not considered Jews. These “God-fearers did not fully participate in the Jewish customs, rituals regulations pertaining to the Jews except by their own choice. The next group were the proselytes who entered fully into Judaism in every way. They were still not full “Jews” however, since their lineage was not from Abraham. Therefore they were “second-class” citizens.

Those who became known as “Judaisers” in the time of Paul, were Jews who entered the new Christian congregations whether by stealth and deception or having actually become believers in Jesus as the Messiah and began to influence the new believers. Agreeing about faith in Jesus, they still insisted that both Jewish and Gentile believers must conform to the fullness of Judaistic tradition and Mosaic law as binding in order to be obedient, righteous, and justified before God. Otherwise they were in danger of losing their salvation. Not only that, but Judaism was in danger of becoming corrupted or irrelevant. This could not be allowed to happen. So, the Christians in the churches of Galatia were being persuaded to either adopt (the Gentiles) or return to (the Jews) Judaism.

They also attacked Paul in three areas. 1. They cast doubts upon Paul’s legitimacy as a true

⁵ The Greek translation of the Old Testament done in second century (possible late third) in Alexandria by scholastic Jews. Traditionally, there were seventy of these translators (based on the Moses’ council of seventy men). The Septuagint (LXX) was the exclusive version of the Scriptures used by all the New Testament writers.

⁶ Note: Acts 15:1 and 5, “ Some men came down from Judea and *began* teaching the brethren, ‘Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.’” 5: “But some of the sect of the Pharisees who had believed stood up, saying, ‘It is necessary to circumcise them and to direct them to observe the Law of Moses.’”

apostle. He was not one of the twelve, was unassociated with both Jesus and His disciples and the did not have their endorsement. Thus, 2. They discounting his teachings. Paul was infuriated at this. To compel those who had come to faith in Christ to “live as Jews” was tantamount to rejecting the gospel. To return to the tenants of the law to obtain what God provided freely through faith in Christ would leave them bereft of the grace and fellowship of Christ and the Holy Spirit since they are now attempting (again) to be saved by works rather than by God’s power and grace. To substitute the works of the flesh for the power and life of the Spirit, not to mention for the completed work of Christ on the cross on their behalf, caused Paul (in Galatians) to write his angriest epistle ever as he rebutted, but clarified the matter. 3. They called him a “man pleaser” no doubt because He proclaimed a release from the constrictions and condemnation of the law which would have appealed to many who found it oppressive, especially as rammed down their throats by self righteous Pharisees and synagogue leaders.

His message was being evaluated by the Judaisers as simply the teaching of “men”, that is cultists and heretics who were trying to introduce a foreign religion and persuade others to abandon their true faith and adopt his teachings. The “true” teachings were those they had heard for centuries taught by qualified and recognized teachers. Paul may well have made all this up himself. After all, he claimed to have received his message by revelation and not under a human pedagogue. But Paul’s responses to this cover the letter itself. One of the most poignant statements is in 4:12-16.

Their arguments seemed persuasive on the surface. The new believers were indeed caught in a quandary. Teachings similar to those of the Judaisers are still forthcoming in many, if not most churches today, especially in the United States. The quandary continues.

The epistle is intended to be circular, that is, read and either taken to other congregations in the region or copied and taken to them. Paul would know sooner or later if his epistle found respect and compliance from the churches. We know that it did as we have it with us today. Otherwise, it would have been discarded.

A CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE (CONJECTURE-SEE COMMENT*)

- c. 6-7 B.C. Jesus is born.
- c. 4 B.C. Herod The Great dies
- c. 24-25 A.D. Jesus begins His ministry.
- c. 26-28 A.D. Jesus is crucified, buried, raised and ascended.
- c. 33-35 A.D. The stoning of Stephen.
- c. 34-36 A.D. Saul persecutes the young church.
- c. 36-37 A.D. The conversion of Saul of Tarsus. (Acts 9:1-19)
- c. 37-39 A.D. Saul in Damascus/Arabia/Damascus. (Acts 9:19-22; Gal. 1:17)
- c. 39-40 A.D. Goes to Jerusalem. (Gal. 1:18; Acts 9:26-30)
- c. 41-42 A.D. Sent to Tarsus. (Acts 9:30)
- c. 42-43 A.D. Barnabas goes to Antioch. (Syrian) Acts 11:19-24
- c. 43-44 A.D. Barnabas fetches Saul from Tarsus for the church at Antioch. (Acts 11:25)
- c. 44-46 A.D. Ministry at Antioch. (Acts 11:26-30)
- c. 46-47 A.D. Relief offering taken to Elders of Judea by Barnabas & Saul. (Acts 11:29-30)
- c. 47-48 A.D. First missionary journey, Barnabas and Saul. Acts (13:1-14:28; Gal. 1:21-24)

*Comment at this point: The Galatians account, by this chronological conjecture, does not mention the lengthy ministry in Antioch, or the relief offering to the elders in Judea. Paul's comment about being unknown by sight to the churches in Judea (after delivering the offering with Barnabas) throws doubt on this table at this point. Or else, Luke's account in Acts is skewed in that perhaps the first journey detailed in Acts 13 and 14 actually took place between Acts 11:26 and 11:27.

No matter how one tries to reconcile Paul's account in Galatians with Luke's in Acts, difficulties arise as well as questions that cannot be answered in light of the information we have. The date of the relief offering above c. 44-45 A.D. is in accord with the famine occurring during the reign of Claudius.

In his Galatians account, Paul may have deliberately omitted information so he could concentrate on his point regarding his receiving the gospel through a revelation from God rather than from man. In his state of mind at the time of this writing, his focus was not on chronology, but on this point he firmly insists is true.

- c. 48-50 A.D. Lengthy ministry at Antioch. The coming of men from Judea (James) and the conflict over circumcision and the Gentiles. (Acts 14:28-15:2; Gal. 2:11-21)
- c. 50-51 A.D. The Jerusalem conference. (Acts 15:2-29; Gal.2:1-10)
- c. 51 A.D. Return to Antioch with good news. (Acts 15:30-35)

THE BOOK OF GALATIANS

CHAPTER ONE

1:1-5

1: “Paul,⁷ an apostle (not *sent* from men nor through the agency of man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised Him from the dead), 2: and all the brethren who are with me, To the churches of Galatia: 3: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, 4: who gave Himself for our sins so that He might rescue us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, 5: to whom *be* the glory forevermore. Amen.

1-2: Paul opens this epistle defensively and aggressively. The comment about his apostleship reveals that there were those in Galatia who discredited his claim to apostleship. “After all, who was he? He wasn’t one of the twelve or even a close follower of the Lord. He even opposed the church and perhaps his present teaching was just another ploy to disintegrate the church and draw it away from its true foundations.” But Paul makes it clear he not only was not an apostle because of some human agency, either of himself or someone else, but of God and the Lord Jesus Christ. His commission comes directly from God.

Further, he notes he is not alone, but has the support of “all the brethren” with him. This statement indicates that they probably had a good idea who these brethren were. There was a group of these brethren, not just one or two. This lends support to the idea that it may have been written from a city where many had gathered as a body, with many of whom the churches in Galatia may have been familiar. This could include cities like Antioch of Syria, or Ephesus. Since this letter was probably written sometime after the Jerusalem conference, he could be including such notable figures as Peter, James and John. But certainly he was including Barnabas, Silas, and possibly Timothy.⁸ In any case, he has the support and endorsement of many prominent brothers who are with him at the time of this writing.

“To the churches of Galatia”. An epistle Paul intends to be circulated among the churches designated (see introduction III).

3: “Grace and peace to you...” This had become Paul’s salutation from the beginning of his writings. This greeting is a Christian adaptation of both typical common and Jewish greetings. “Grace” includes the idea of God’s favor, benefit, joy, blessing and presence and “peace” includes the Hebrew “Shalom” but indicating more than respite from external conflict. The spiritual sense of internal rest, comfort and calmness in the midst of external conflict is the more intended meaning.

4: In an unusual sentence, but with seemingly familiar overtones, Paul directs their attention to

⁷ “Paul” is the apostle’s Roman name. He would have had this name from birth along with his Hebrew name “Saul”. It was common for Hellenistic Jews to name a child with both cultural designations easing the child’s assimilation into the mixed society. The name “Paul” means “Little”.

⁸ See introduction, part II for further discussion on this matter.

Christ whose sacrifice for “our” sins is “so that” (a purpose clause), “He might rescue us from this evil present age according to the will of God...”. The familiar overtones are regarding the idea of “rescue” from this evil age. Paul selects the word “ex-ai-reh-oh” rather than “rou-oh-mai” for “rescue” (as it is translated in the NASB, and others or “deliver” in still others).

We see the latter word and theme used in I Thessalonians 1:10; II Timothy 4:18; II Peter 2:9; and used in Matthew 27:43 where the chief priests, scribes and elders and passers by gazed upon Jesus as He hung on the cross and mocked Him, "HE TRUSTS IN GOD; LET GOD **RESCUE** *Him* now, IF HE DELIGHTS IN HIM; for He said, 'I am the Son of God.'" This word used in Matthew and in the following verses is (“rou-oh-mai”). We saw it in, I Thessalonians 1:10, "...and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, *that is* Jesus, who **rescues** us from the wrath to come." It is also found in II Timothy 4:18, "The Lord will **rescue** me from every evil deed, and will bring me safely to His heavenly kingdom; to Him *be* the glory forever and ever. amen." And we see it also in II Peter 2:9, "...*then* the Lord knows how to **rescue** the godly from temptation, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment for the day of judgment...". In each case, the meaning of the word as well as the context clearly shows that the believer does not necessarily escape these things, but that they have no ultimate effect on them either because, in the midst of it all he is “guarded”, protected” “sheltered” but finally and ultimately “delivered to God intact”.⁹ It slants itself toward a future age, when this age comes to an end and the age to come is realized but it begins in the present reality.

However, this is not the word Paul uses in Galatians. Paul chose the word “ex-ai-reh-oh”. It underscores the present situation and the effects of “this age” rather than looking to the “age to come”. This emphasis is seen in other places the word is used, especially in Acts 7:34, when Stephen quotes Exodus 3:8 to the Sanhedrin, 'I HAVE CERTAINLY SEEN THE OPPRESSION OF MY PEOPLE IN EGYPT AND HAVE HEARD THEIR GROANS, AND I HAVE COME DOWN TO **RESCUE** THEM; COME NOW, AND I WILL SEND YOU TO EGYPT.'¹⁰

This word, then, focuses on the present situation and not to a fulfillment of a future promise. Jesus died on the cross in order to “rescue” us from this present “evil age”. That is, His death “rescues” us from the destiny of those bound in this evil age, much like Israel was “rescued” from Egypt. These “rescued” are preserved for an earthly purpose. Thus, Paul parallels the idea of “rescue” with the idea of “redemption”, but without the eternal aspect the word “redemption” carries with it. Further, Paul sees the deliverance as consistent with the true message of the gospel he preached to these churches and the efforts made by the Judaisers to bring them back into bondage is condemned by Paul.

Does Paul define the will of “our God and Father” that Christ died for our sins or that it was for the purpose of rescue? It would be appropriate to deem it both. Paul may be including in his phrase “this evil age” the very people and their teachings causing the turmoil in the churches.

5. All credit (glory) goes to God for His delivering work in Christ. In the context of this epistle, the delivering work of Christ would include the release from the condemnation and bondage to the Law.

⁹ Bold italics mine throughout

¹⁰ See also: Acts 7:10; 12:11; 23:27; 23:17.

1:6-9

- 6: I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel; 7: which is *really* not another; only there are some who are disturbing you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. 8: But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed! 9: As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to what you received, he is to be accursed!
- 6: After giving glory to God for the deliverance they had experienced at the cost of Christ's life on the cross, the Galatians are quickly "deserting God" in favor for a "different gospel". To underscore this rebuke, Paul notes he is "amazed" (astonished, shocked, aghast). He immediately contrasts this "different gospel" with the "grace of Christ", a phrase we will see again.¹¹ Normally, after his salutation, Paul in his letters has a little section of "thanksgiving" where he gives glory to God for His work in the lives of his recipients and for the things that stand out among them in Christian faith and love. This is the only one of Paul's epistles where this section is lacking. Not once does any form of thankfulness appear. It shows Paul's agitation and anger as "he cuts to the chase" immediately. In that day and in most circles, this would be considered abrupt, if not rude. Paul wants to address the salient matters on his mind at once.
7. This "different gospel" (no doubt written with sarcasm) is no "gospel" at all because there is only one and what they are hearing is not to be associated with the true "gospel" preached by Paul and his fellow missionaries. Others have entered in "disturbing" them by "distorting" what they had heard from him. The word "disturb" is "ταρασσω" (ta-rahs-oh) and pictures soup being stirred or water boiling. The idea is that they have gone from a state of rest to turmoil. "Distort" is "μεταστρεφω" (meta-stre-pho) and literally translates "with a turn (or twist)", or "twisted", "perverted", "corrupted". What they are deserting to is a twisted, corrupted, perverted form of teaching passing itself off as the true gospel but is not so. No one would call what these Judaisers taught "the gospel" unless there was a deliberate effort to confuse the new Christians.

8. The word "but" here is the strongest form of exception or contrast in the Greek and it begins Paul's severe (almost shocking) invective against these teachers. It is suggested from the phrase "...If even an angel (messenger) from heaven..." that these Judaisers were claiming some "authority", even greater than Paul's claim of apostleship. Paul's answer suggests something like, "I don't care what authority is claimed or who is teaching these things. Even if an angel from heaven...". So the issue is not authority first and foremost, but truth.

In this case, the teachings of the Judaisers were "contrary" to the teachings of Paul. The word "contrary" carries with it the idea of something parallel or alongside passing itself off as the same but different. Paul says of anyone teaching something this "contrary", "let him be accursed". This is not "he will (or might) be accursed" but Paul uses the imperative mood, "accuse him now". This is not a suggestion or a possibility or even a probability.

The word "accursed" is "anathema". The original intent of the word described gifts dedicated to God (Luke 21:5 – from the root to place or lay up (ana-tith-e-mi). But it also came to apply to

¹¹ See: 2:21; 5:4

those who offered up something supposedly for God but the “gift” or the motive was corrupt. Thus it brought down a “curse” upon it, in the spirit spoken by Peter to Simon Magus in Acts 8:20 when he said, ““May your silver perish with you, because you thought you could obtain the gift of God with money!” Soon “anathema” simply meant “may he be eternally damned”.¹² The event involving Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5), reflects a similar consequence. Leviticus 27:28 reflects the early concept.

9: The repetition is for emphasis. But he notes that he has said this before. When? Apparently he talked about this sometime during or after his first missionary journey.¹³ On the one hand, Paul is furious and not “suggesting” anathema be the sentence, but demanding it. On the other hand, we cannot help but sense the passion and confidence Paul has in the gospel that was revealed to him (1:12).

1:10-12 (The beginning of Paul’s autobiographical section)

10. For am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God? Or am I striving to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a bond-servant of Christ. 11: For I would have you know, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. 12: For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but *I received it* through a revelation of Jesus Christ.

10: Paul, in earnest, begins the defense of his apostleship and the divine impartation of it and his message. The question is rhetorical and angry and repeated twice with him supplying the answer to what was supposed to be obvious to them. In so doing Paul is insulting their intelligence. In cursing these teachers twice, Paul cannot be a “man pleaser”, otherwise he would try to curry favor with everyone and make concessions to their “point of view”. In attacking the readers, Paul underscores this point. He hopes they get it.

Being a bond servant of Christ is contradictory to being a “man pleaser”. “Bond servant” is “δούλος” (doo-lohs or doo-ay-lohs) and indicates a volunteer servant or slave rather than an indentured or forced slave. The point Paul is making is that he is subservient to Christ and not to anyone else. He is under no other spiritual authority.

11-12: Continuing his thought, Paul desires them “to know” what he is about to tell them. For a Jew, this was not a simple mental recognition, but more like a life impact. He informs them that what he taught them did not come from the instruction or teaching of another person, Rabbi, sect, apostle, and in fact it is completely different than anything taught by any human source whatsoever. It does not exist in among the philosophies or religious instructions of anyone in history either past or present.

Paul received his gospel via a direct revelation from Jesus Christ Himself. The word “revelation” is “ἀποκαλυπτίς” (apocalypse) meaning “disclosure or appearing of that which was hidden”. This was a specific revelation to Paul and Paul was want to call it “my gospel” for that reason.¹⁴ This does not mean that it was in any way contrary to the Gospel received by

¹² See also I Corinthians 12:3 and 16:22

¹³ See 5:3 and 5:21 for similar “previous” statements.

the twelve, but was a personal revelation bringing him “up to date” but with far more understanding...an understanding a man of his education and scholarship could grasp as opposed to the twelve simple and rural men who followed Jesus. Later, those same men came to an understanding of the truth, depth and implications of what Paul taught and welcomed him as one of their own.

1:13-17

13: For you have heard of my former manner of life in Judaism, how I used to persecute the church of God beyond measure and tried to destroy it; 14: and I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries among my countrymen, being more extremely zealous for my ancestral traditions. 15: But when God, who had set me apart *even* from my mother's womb and called me through His grace, was pleased 16: to reveal His Son in me so that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately consult with flesh and blood, 17: nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me; but I went away to Arabia, and returned once more to Damascus.

13-14: Paul’s reputation (as “Saul of Tarsus”) was known to them. This may be due to Tarsus being relatively near Galatia (or Cilicia). One had to pass through Tarsus and up through the “Cilician Gates” (a high mountain pass) to get there. His life as dedicated Jew is seen in two ways, first as a persecutor and destroyer of that he deemed to be destructive to Judaism and second, his own personal zeal for ancestral traditions. “Ancestral traditions” were the writings and interpretations of the Mosaic Law done by the Rabbis since the time of Ezra (535 B.C.) over the centuries and handed down from generation to generation. This was the essential corpus of Judaism. This came to be known as the Talmud and these writings continued for another 500 years after the first century. Paul had advanced beyond other Jews in his zeal for these traditions including imposing them upon those he taught. “Advanced” (*προκοπτω*) is forging ahead against the wind or in spite of obstacles. He lists his pedigree and zeal in Philippians 3:1-6.

The idea for Paul is to set up such an impossible contrast of his past life with his present that it could only be accounted by the miraculous events God brought into his life.

15-17: The contrast is recounted here and on through chapter two. The context, remember, is found in verses 11 and 12. How this came about is now his subject. “My mother’s womb”...a direct reference to Isaiah 49:1; Jeremiah 1:5 by which Paul defines his life as well.¹⁵ From his birth God intended to set him apart for the purpose described, to “preach Him among the Gentiles.” Thus Paul underscores the Gentile focus. This revealing of “His Son in me” definitely recalls his Damascus Road experience when (as Saul of Tarsus) he was determined to bind any belonging to the “Way” and bring them back to Jerusalem (Acts 9). But he was stopped by His encounter with Christ. This is revealed by verse 18 where he says he “returned to Damascus”. While first in Damascus, he did not realize his role in the mission the Gentiles.

The phrase “in me” rather than “to me” catches one’s eye. He reflects this in 2:20 and 4:6 and in Colossians 1:25-27. The importance of a spiritual life in relationship to Christ from the inner

¹⁴ Romans 2:16; 16:25; II Timothy 2:8. See also Ephesians 3:1-13 regarding this “revelation”.

¹⁵ See: Romans 1:1 as well.

being of a person is pre-eminent, and supersedes a “religion” of Christianity based in human contrivances.

Now we face the challenge of reconciling this account of Paul’s activities with the narrative of Luke in Acts 9 onward. After recounting this startling and life altering encounter with Christ, he makes his point. He did not “immediately” confer with any human resource or authority regarding his introduction and understanding of the Gospel. This is actually certified later by the conflicts he had with the apostles over his openness to the Gentiles with the gospel. He will illustrate that shortly. According to Paul here, he left Damascus to go into Arabia and returned to Damascus. Three years after this he first visited Jerusalem. Luke, in Acts 9:25-26, omits any such trip or delay and he appears to have gone from Damascus to Jerusalem. It is possible that Acts 9:19b could refer to his return to Damascus from Arabia, but in either case, Luke omits the trip.

“Arabia” was a large territory in Paul’s day. Going east from Damascus one soon enters “Arabia”. Paul could have continued east or gone south as far as the Red Sea or north as far as the Euphrates River or anywhere in between. There were cities throughout this vast territory. His purpose for going there after escaping Damascus is not mentioned. One can only speculate that Paul desired solitude to rethink his life and his position regarding God’s plan of redemption for the world...including Gentiles. The most difficult challenge for him would be seeing the Messianic portrait (from the scriptures) as fulfilled in Jesus when everything he had ever heard or learned contradicted what had transpired through the life death and resurrection of Christ. Yet in Damascus he confounded the Jews by proving (from the Scriptures) that Jesus was indeed the Messiah (The Christ), Acts 9:22.

1:18-24

18: Then three years later I went up to Jerusalem to become acquainted with Cephas, and stayed with him fifteen days. 19: But I did not see any other of the apostles except James, the Lord's brother. 20: (Now in what I am writing to you, I assure you before God that I am not lying.) 21: Then I went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia. 22: I was *still* unknown by sight to the churches of Judea which were in Christ; 23: but only, they kept hearing, "He who once persecuted us is now preaching the faith which he once tried to destroy." 24: And they were glorifying God because of me.

18-19: After his stay in Damascus, Paul went down to Jerusalem. He was likely accompanied by some of the brothers from Antioch of Syria. He may have been about forty to forty-five years of age by then. He makes a point of noting it was after three years, after he already had the basic content of his gospel confirmed, that he conferred with any apostles.

He was able to meet with Peter (Cephas). Paul uses the name Cephas (“Kephas” in Hebrew/Aramaic meaning a “rock”). This is the name given to Simon son of John by Jesus (John 1:42; Matthew 16:18). “Peter” is the Greek equivalent. “Simon” is from the Hebrew word for “hearing” and pronounced “Shi-moan”. Paul stayed with Peter fifteen days and was able to meet with James as well. It had to be a wonderful thing to hear their account of Peter’s travels with Christ, and especially James’ experience growing up with such a prominent older brother.

No doubt Paul had already heard conflicting reports about the life and ministry of Jesus and desired to get it straight. This would be like Paul. It may have been from this meeting that Luke was able to later glean some information about Jesus birth and childhood. The rest Luke probably received directly from family members some years later when in Jerusalem for nearly two years during Paul's imprisonment at Caesarea. "James" is the Greek form of the Hebrew "Jacob" (Ya-cov).

20: The reason for this affirmation of the truth (actually an oath before God) is to offset the Judaisers who claimed his message was from the teaching of some human sect with whom Paul conferred early on, or a creation of his own making.

21: Because "Galatia" is not directly mentioned, this has caused speculation as to what Paul is referring. One thought is that Paul only taught in the region surrounding Tarsus. His numerous injuries mentioned in II Corinthians 11:23-28, especially the eight beatings, could well have taken place during this time as Luke only mentions the one beating in Philippi (Acts 16:22-24). But fourteen years in this small region? And Paul also mentions three shipwrecks in this same passage. How does one account for that in a land based ministry?

This comment by Paul could coincide with Acts 9:30, "But when the brethren learned *of it*, they brought him down to Caesarea and sent him away to Tarsus." After reaching Tarsus, Saul's stay there may have resulted in a disruption between him and his family. If still married at this time, the marriage may have been dissolved.¹⁶ He says he "suffered the loss of all things" when he came to Christ (Philippians 2:8). This juncture may also have been the prelude to his returning to Antioch and than later setting out on his first missionary journey (Galatians 1:21).

So it makes more sense to attribute Galatians 1:21 to his return to Tarsus, his return to Antioch of Syria (through the persuasion of Barnabas Acts 11:21-26) and the church there as well as the first missionary journey. Luke uses the same terms ("Syria and Cilicia") in Acts 15:41 during the second journey as he describes Paul's revisit to the churches he visited on the first journey. Why then, did not Paul mention his visit to them in this section? The answer to this must generate conjecture. 1. It is assumed from this absent note that Paul is not writing to the churches he visited but to a northern region of Galatia. 2. His focus is on the point of his not receiving the gospel from men, especially the apostles, so he keeps to that point and focuses on Jerusalem and his encounters there. This view is supported by three things. First he is in the midst of an oath regarding his account of seeing Cephas and James and no others. Second, he mentions the trip (first journey) and continues on point about his relationship with the Jerusalem based apostles for which he was not dependent upon for the content of his gospel and, Third, he has already noted that his visits and teaching to them and will do so in detail again (4:12-16).¹⁷

22-24: This indicates that churches had sprung up throughout Judea, but had not seen Paul's face at this time. The Jerusalem church is the exception, but even there, only a few had opportunity to physically see Paul (Acts 9:26-30). And so, Paul's account here in Galatians agrees with Acts. If Paul is referring to any other visit to Jerusalem, there was far more opportunity then for his face to be seen by any from the Judean churches as he docked at

¹⁶ See: My commentary on the Book of Acts that supports Paul as having been married.

¹⁷ See: "A Chronology" in the introduction to this epistle.

Caesarea each time and then traveled up to Jerusalem. He notes that these churches are “in Christ”. This is a common term for Paul,¹⁸ and suggests that their may be other gatherings of people that do not honor Christ as the risen Messiah and Lord. The word for “church” is “ekklesia”, meaning “called out” and could be attributed to any separatist group to themselves.

The Judean churches, though not seeing Paul’s face, “kept hearing” about his conversion and ministry and were giving glory and praise to God, as much, perhaps, for the release from threat and persecution as for his ministry.

CHAPTER TWO

2:1-5

1: Then after an interval of fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus along also. 2: It was because of a revelation that I went up; and I submitted to them the gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but *I did so* in private to those who were of reputation, for fear that I might be running, or had run, in vain. 3: But not even Titus, who was with me, though he was a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised. 4: But *it was* because of the false brethren secretly brought in, who had sneaked in to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, in order to bring us into bondage. 5: But we did not yield in subjection to them for even an hour, so that the truth of the gospel would remain with you.

1: Paul gives a summary of the key Jerusalem visit in 2:1-10, but then details some of the events preceding it in 11-21. 2:11-21 should be studied before 2:1-10 for a chronological picture.

“Fourteen years” in Paul’s temporal structure can only be calculated from the time of his conversion and his Damascus visit. Otherwise, it doesn’t fit. In 1:18, he speaks of “three years” and this is definitely referenced against the Damascus experience. The “fourteen years” includes the “three years”. This visit to Jerusalem is no doubt the famous “Jerusalem Conference” recorded by Luke in Acts 15. To illustrate this, we briefly review the chronology and properly correct for modern calendar error. We then have:

Herod the Great died in 4 B.C. This places Jesus birth at least two to three years previous to Herod’s death at 6-7 B.C. Jesus’ ministry began at about 30 years of age, or 24-25 A.D. His ministry lasted two to three and a half years and he faced Pilate 26-28 A.D. (Pilate was Procurator from 26-36 A.D.). Estimating 3-5 years of early church development, Stephen was stoned c. 33-35 A.D. We can place the Jerusalem conference about 50-51 A.D., some 15-16 years later. If Paul (Saul) says he is in Jerusalem 14 years after his conversion, this places his conversion at roughly 36-37 A.D. This would have been one to three years after the stoning of Stephen. If we either tighten the dates or loosen them, Paul’s “fourteen years” still fits in fine. This period leaves time for the intense persecution of the church under Saul’s leadership, for his conversion and subsequent events.

¹⁸ See for example: Romans 3:24,6:11, 6:23, 8:1-2, 8:39, 9:1, 12:5, 15:17, 16:3,16:7; I Corinthians 1:2; II Corinthians 1:21; Ephesians 1:1; Philippians 1:1; Colossians 1:2; I Thessalonians 1:1; II Thessalonians 1:1 and more.

However, if we consecutively count “fourteen years” after the “three years” plus the time spent in Antioch, Syria and Cilicia (adding at least four more years), we have his visit to Jerusalem, mentioned in Galatians, at about 57 A.D. But Paul was in the middle of his third missionary journey by then – c. 54-58 A.D. The events described in Jerusalem at anytime before or after this journey do not coincide with the events described in Galatians 2. The events described in Galatians do coincide, however, with the Jerusalem conference and attending events.

Chronologically, Galatians 2:11-21 comes prior to Galatians 2:1-10. So Galatians 2:11-21 tell the same story as Acts 15:1-2, but adds a great deal more detail. It is the information in Galatians 2:11-21 as well as 2:2 and Acts 15:2, that tells us what prompted Paul to go to Jerusalem. But prior to this trip, Peter had come to Antioch (2:11). He was apparently comfortable eating with the Gentile believers who were mingled with Jewish believers as well. It was one happy, unified family all sharing the table together.

Reports about Paul’s “gospel” had reached James’ ears and those of the other apostles. They were concerned, and apparently, did not have as much confidence in Peter as they should. Then men arrived from Judea, sent by James (2:12). These Jews were opposed to eating with the Gentiles and so they ate separately. Peter soon joined them out of fear of the “circumcision party”, those insisting that, “Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved” (Acts 15:1). These men may have been the same uninvited Jews sneaked into the assembly in Antioch under false pretenses Paul identifies in 2:4. They may have been among the men sent by James. All of this agrees with Acts 15:1-3. They came to see what was going on with the Gentiles, “spying out our liberty” as Paul puts it in 2:4. The disagreement was verbalized (2:14-21) and became heated (Acts 15:2). So it was decided to take the matter to Jerusalem and set it before the apostles (Acts 15:2-4). “Paul’s gospel” was seen as pure heresy by the Judean Jews as well as other Jews in the places Paul had evangelized. We have our introduction to the Judaisers who were rising up everywhere.

Now we come to verse 1 of chapter 2. Paul prepared to set out on this trip. Along with some brothers, Barnabas was to go also (Acts 15:2). In verse 1 of Galatians, Titus is introduced at this time as a companion of Paul. We are not told how Paul and his companions felt about this decision, but it is likely that this was a time filled with difficulty for him. He says it was “by revelation” he decided to go. Something hidden from others was revealed to Paul in a way that caused him to relax on his way to Jerusalem. Acts 15:3 says, “Therefore, being sent on their way by the church, they were passing through both Phoenicia and Samaria, describing in detail the conversion of the Gentiles, and were bringing great joy to all the brethren. The content of this “revelation” is not given to us, but considering the encounters with the Lord at Mysia, Corinth, Troas and other places, he received words or visions of direction and comfort. It may have even been that Peter came to his senses and confided to Paul that he was with him. His support of Paul at Jerusalem was a turning point of the debate.

Titus, a Gentile believer from Antioch accompanied Paul, Barnabas and other brethren to Jerusalem. Paul was somewhat able to relax on his way and they visited believers in Phoenicia and Samaria on the way and their news about the conversion of Gentiles brought great joy to these little congregations, Titus being the primary evidence (Acts 15:3). Paul still had some apprehension about the outcome of the visit as the next sentence reveals.

Paul's comment about fear of "running in vain" is important. First, he presented the work and message among the gentiles in "private" to the Jerusalem apostles (Acts 15:6), "those of reputation" (those whose names were well known outside of Jerusalem). Second, although Paul did not need the approval of the Jerusalem apostles to proclaim the gospel as he was doing to the Gentiles, their disapproval or denunciation of Paul and his gospel would have resulted in conflict between he and them and this conflict would have effectively put and end to Paul's commission from Christ. Paul's dilemma would be that if he continued to preach in the face of their opposition he would indeed be guilty of preaching a "different gospel" and either he would have faded into oblivion or a separate Christianity would have developed, one apostolic, the other Pauline. The church from that point on would have been divided, much like was to happen in Corinth a few years later. In addition, the work Paul had already accomplished would have been for naught, and this letter would have never been written. The Judaisers would have won. Today's "Christianity" would be little different than Judaism, grace being largely unknown or misunderstood. It is clear that if agreement and support was not forthcoming, Paul would have discontinued his ministry. The word vain means "uselessly", "empty" "futile". Any further work would also then, be in vain.

Paul recognized the impact the apostles had. They were those of "reputation". But as far as Paul's commission and message, they had no part in that. It was a very difficult time and Acts 15:4-5 shows the dissension Paul immediately caused when he spoke of the gospel he preached to the Gentiles. It wasn't so much that the Gentiles were not welcome to believe as it was that they had to adhere to strict Judaism as well in order to be an "heir of Abraham and the promises God had given to him and his descendants. Acts 15:6 ff. demonstrates that the apostles and elders did not see the Gentile matter the same way Paul did or they would have, 1. Said immediately, "The truth is as Paul is proclaiming it", or 2. There would have been no debate. It must be underscored that the apostles in Jerusalem were deeply involved with and concerned about how the teachings of Jesus were represented and what His ministry really meant to mankind. Their dedication, sincerity, sensitivity to God as well as their spiritual renewal must not be underestimated. They gave Paul, Barnabas and Titus a concerted effort in hearing them out. This was a vital and critical issue and they all knew it.

After much debate, it was Peter who came to the forefront with his experience among Cornelius and the gentiles at Caesarea. For Peter, the proof that Paul was correct was the Holy Spirit coming upon the gentiles there as He had upon the apostles at Pentecost. This was God's acceptance and approval as far as both Peter and the apostles came to see it. No doubt the testimony of Titus, Barnabas, as well as that of Paul (Acts 15:12) made an impact upon Peter and brought him to a difficult but final conclusion. Peter's testimony tipped the scales and the apostles and elders, led by James, agreed with Paul's message and his commission. This discussion and debate may have gone on not just for hours, but for days. The result was world changing as Paul was now free to spread his gospel throughout the empire. Those reading this letter in Galatia came to realize that the very letter itself was proof of Paul's support by the Jerusalem apostles.

3. The outcome of this monumental decision and proof that Paul's ministry and message was Supported and approved by Jerusalem was that Titus, a gentile, was neither asked nor compelled

to be circumcised. The impact of this was not lost on those in Galatia. Therefore, they had to conclude that the message the Judaisers were persuading them to believe was in error.

4-5. Paul now goes after the Judaisers by citing events at Antioch before the conference took place. He notes that even under the same pressure the Galatians were experiencing, he did not compromise his message in the least. They had received the “unvarnished” truth and it was not compromised. “False brethren”, see comment in 2:1 paragraph 6. “Liberty” is the unrestricted freedom to conduct one’s life outside of the constrictions and condemnation of the law. But this “liberty” is in accord with the new life in the Spirit of God and under the new desires the born again believer is now imbued with.

2:6-10

6: But from those who were of high reputation (what they were makes no difference to me; God shows no partiality)--well, those who were of reputation contributed nothing to me. 7: But on the contrary, seeing that I had been entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised, just as Peter *had been* to the circumcised 8: (for He who effectually worked for Peter in *his* apostleship to the circumcised effectually worked for me also to the Gentiles), 9: and recognizing the grace that had been given to me, James and Cephas and John, who were reputed to be pillars, gave to me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, so that we *might go* to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised. 10: *They only asked us to remember the poor*-the very thing I also was eager to do.

6. It was really the other way around. Paul and his companions contributed to them. They had nothing to add to Paul’s message or commission except to accept both as from God and to add their approval. This is not, as some conclude, a derogatory remark. It is simply Paul did not need their approval, it was the church that needed to know the apostles were in accord with Paul. Thus the letter sent by the apostles in the hand of Paul and Barnabas as they journeyed back to Antioch rejoicing. (Acts 15:23-33) “God shows no Partiality”, see comment on verse 8 below.

7: Obviously this is the more specific work the two were involved in, but both were involved in ministry to Jews and Gentiles alike.

8: Paul makes it clear that he and Peter, both being prompted by God to different but equally important work, 1. Are equal in respect to their apostleship, God approved of them both and thus is not partial to either man (verse6) and 2. Paul’s work and message among the Gentiles has, therefore, equal authority and veracity as any of the apostles, (especially Peter).

9: The reputation of James, Peter (Cephas) and John was that these three were really the pillars upon which the church was built and upon which it stood. These “pillars” recognized the “grace” given to Paul. This means that they saw, in Paul, a genuine work of God. Thus they gave their welcome and blessing upon Paul and Barnabas ostensibly giving them the status as “pillars” as well, having equally vital but different foci of ministry. This is the point Paul is making to the churches in Galatia.

10: Although this is not mentioned in Acts 15, it is clear from the offerings collected for the

poor as Paul traveled about, that this was indeed the request of the Apostles.

2:11-21

11: But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned. 12. For prior to the coming of certain men from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he *began* to withdraw and hold himself aloof, fearing the party of the circumcision. 13: The rest of the Jews joined him in hypocrisy, with the result that even Barnabas was carried away by their hypocrisy. 14: But when I saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas in the presence of all, "If you, being a Jew, live like the Gentiles and not like the Jews, how *is it that* you compel the Gentiles to live like Jews? 15: "We *are* Jews by nature and not sinners from among the Gentiles; 16: nevertheless knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law but through faith in Christ Jesus, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, so that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the Law; since by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified. 17: "But if, while seeking to be justified in Christ, we ourselves have also been found sinners, is Christ then a minister of sin? May it never be! 18: "For if I rebuild what I have *once* destroyed, I prove myself to be a transgressor. 19: "For through the Law I died to the Law, so that I might live to God. 20: "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me. 21: "I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness *comes* through the Law, then Christ died needlessly."

11: Paul could have left this section out. But he puts it in to emphasize that even Peter, caught up with the Judaisers in Antioch during his visit there prior to the Jerusalem conference, was able to ultimately see their error. Perhaps Paul is allowing the Galatians some grace in the matter, showing that, though their subjection to the persuasion of the Judaisers is understandable, their continued walk in this heresy is not. So Paul relates his face to face encounter with Peter at Antioch as an illustration of the deception and then recognition of the truth by Peter. Unless what he writes is the truth, Paul could not have written it, as he expected copies of this letter to be distributed and sooner or later , Peter would see it. Would peter be embarrassed by it? Would it cause ill feelings between he and Paul? Apparently neither of these possibilities occurred. In fact, Peter would likely confess his faux-pas for the sake of the salvation of the Gentiles. He was a gracious man and willing to admit his mistakes and faults. The ultimate recovery by Peter is the key element of this story. If Peter came to see the light and came to agree with Paul's gospel and gentile ministry, this should be compelling enough to make the Galatians take a serious look at what they are thinking and doing.

12. Paul contrasts Peter's deportment before the arrival of the men from Judea with his deportment after their arrival. The illustration is useful to show how easily it is for Jews to be persuaded back to a "anti-gentile" position through simple peer pressure. The lesson is applicable to every Christian. Fear of ridicule or of loosing friends or family is powerful.

13: Peter's greatest problem was his influence on others. He, Peter, the lead apostle and closest

to Jesus conducted himself in a manner that pressured others to the “hypocrisy” as no other personality could. Peter’s presence carried a lot of influence. Even Barnabas was carried away. So Paul confronts him with this. To admit his fault took courage for Peter. But he did it.

14: “Straight forward” is “ορθοποδεω” (or-tho-po-day-oh) from which we get the English word “orthopedic” or “orthopedic”. In the original the two words “straight” (ortho) and “foot” (pous) are combined to mean “walking straight”. But the Jews, led by Peter, had deviated from the path they had set their foot on and were now casting doubts among the brothers as to whether the former path was correct or not.

The deviation is illustrated by Paul in the latter half of this verse. Peter, a Jew, had begun to conduct his life free from the constraints of Jewish religious law and tradition. He was eating food, and living in all respects in accord to the gentile way of life. Peter’s way of compelling the gentiles to “live like the Jews” (Judaizing) was by his example and conduct in joining the Jewish separatists. Brothers in the Lord were being pulled apart leaving the gentile believers questioning what to do and why. Paul was not amused.

15-16: A very important passage. The point Paul makes is that the Jews including Paul and Peter, in spite of the ingrained, centuries old heritage, religion and law keeping, tradition and culture have come to believe and agree that a man is not justified by his works, his heritage, religious works of the law, tradition or culture but by faith in Jesus and His work of redemption for all mankind. Then, if we Jews know this, then why are we trying to turn Gentile believers back to practicing Judaism? The ground for acceptance with God is not the keeping of the law and all the practice of the Jews, but by faith in Christ who “loved us and gave Himself for us” (Galatians 1:4, 2:20; Ephesians 5:2).

“Sinners” is a Jewish designation for those who do not keep the law of Moses and is used of gentiles. Paul may well be using it sarcastically here, as all believers in the building have recognized their sin and need of a redeemer.

Paul makes it clear that every Jew in the room who believes in Christ and understands the purpose of His death on their behalf knows that it is by faith in Him not through works of the law that a man is justified. Therefore, there is no difference between Jew and Gentile – being a Jew is no longer a factor and contributes nothing. Only Peter’s separation brings that into question before the gentile onlookers.

17: Paul’s point can be illustrated by the questions (putting words in Paul’s mouth), “Has Christ put us in a position by His grace to be free of the constraints of the law and its condemnation so as to make us sinners because we no longer seek justification by works of the law?” Or, “As those justified by faith in Christ, are we now sinners because we no longer try to be justified by works of the law?” “If so, then Christ is a minister of sin. If not, then your conduct is totally out of line and misleading, not to mention confusing. It’s either one way or the other, and your life should reflect the truth. ‘Fearing the party of the circumcision’ is not an excuse for this conduct. It is also not an option. It is time for a courageous stand for the truth.”

18: Paul uses the “editorial” “I”, intending it to be the position taken by Peter, Barnabas and the other Jews who had abandoned the gentiles at the meal. This sentence can be accurately restated

as, “If I abandon justification by the works of the law and trust in Christ for my justification, then later reestablish the law as the means of justification once again, I have proved that I am a transgressor because I had abandoned obedience to the law for the interim. I am therefore, in the same position before God as the Gentiles. Now what do I do?” Both justification by the law and by faith in Christ are nullified by such an action. The grace of God provided for all mankind in Christ is made void by such as reversal.

- 19: Paul clarifies and emphasizes the point made in verse 18.
- 20: Paul’s language is a metaphor where his sins were paid for in Christ as if he himself had been crucified for them. This theme is a cornerstone of Paul’s proclamation of the (his) gospel.¹⁹ His old manner of life is contrasted with his new life in Christ, a life in the flesh not directed by the mandates of law and tradition, but by Christ who lives in him by faith.
- 21: The “bottom line”. It forces a decision based on the simple facts of the matter. Christ’s death is meaningless and useless if righteousness comes by any other means. The foolishness of this is that self righteousness is assumed to be true righteousness in God’s sight, but actually leaves God out of the picture almost entirely! There is no need then, for mercy, grace, forgiveness, or for the work of the Holy Spirit. I provide for my own salvation and God just rubber stamps it. So Paul points out this incredible foolishness in the next chapter.

CHAPTER THREE

3:1-5

1: You foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed *as* crucified? 2: This is the only thing I want to find out from you: did you receive the Spirit by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith? 3: Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh? 4: Did you suffer so many things in vain--if indeed it was in vain? 5: So then, does He who provides you with the Spirit and works miracles among you, do it by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith?

1: “*ἀνοητος*” (ah-noh-eh-tos) is the original word for “foolish. It means to have “no mind”, neither intelligence nor common sense. He is not actually saying that they have no intelligence but making it clear that it has not been activated in this case.

They have been made “fools of”. “Bewitched” is a word meaning that someone has duped them. They have been conned, tricked, seduced, by a slander about the truth cleverly presented. They have been sold a “bill of goods”. After all, Jesus was known to them as who He was and that He was crucified for them and for their sins. This was known to them as much as if it had been posted on a placard or billboard by the Romans. Little by little as will be seen as the epistle continues, Paul takes a fatherly approach to his “children” and here he berates and chastises them.

¹⁹ See: Romans 6:1-11, 7:4-6ff.; Ephesians 2:1-22; I Timothy 2:5-6; Titus 2:14-15, 3:3-9 for example.

2: In the comment in 2:21, it is noted that if those to whom Paul is writing can achieve righteousness and salvation by the efforts of their own sinful flesh, then the work of Christ and the Holy Spirit is moot. Here, Paul gets right to it with the first of several rhetorical questions. The question in verse three expects the answer, “By hearing with faith.” In Acts 13:52, it tells us that … “the disciples were continually filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.” This Came about as a result of their faith in Jesus, not as a result of their own efforts of the flesh. There is only one possible answer. Paul is forcing them to recall the truth. They cannot deny that it is faith that brought about God’s salvation, their righteous standing before God because of Christ and their faith in Him, and that the Holy Spirit’s work is included also. From this point on in Paul’s letter, he mentions the Holy Spirit sixteen times and concludes his epistle with an exposition on the fruit of the Spirit which neither flesh nor the law can provide. The “hearing with faith” makes it clear that faith involves a response to what is heard and is not an initiation some act of the mind or flesh expecting God to respond. The churches today would do well to grasp this.

3: The Greek word “foolish” is used here once again. The next rhetorical question contrasts the perfection of the work of the Spirit in their lives with the “perfection” of the work of the flesh. Paul hopes they will see how “foolish” this is. It’s ridiculous and ludicrous to assume that the work of the flesh can produce what only the Spirit can do.

4: “Suffer” is “*επαθετε*” (e-pahteh-eh-teh) from which we get our word “pathos”. It means “to experience an effect to the senses” and in this case, “suffer” fits the context Paul recalls.²⁰ “Vain” is “futility”, “nothingness”. Paul’s point is that suffering for the true gospel was unnecessary and could have been avoided by simply going along with the Judaisers in the first place. Why did they persevere and suffer only to give in? Secondarily, Paul could be referencing the spiritual experiences in which they rejoiced. In this passage focusing much on the work of the Spirit, Paul could be indicating their spiritual experiences. “If indeed it was for nothing” is Paul’s expression of hope that their experiences or suffering were not in futility and that they will return to the true gospel.

5: This question is so absurd that it borders on sarcasm. Paul’s “so then” shows the summary and conclusion of this series of rhetorical questions. This is his “bottom line”. He restates the phrase “hearing with faith” once again as an emphasis. It is impossible for the work of the Spirit to be produced by works of the flesh in keeping the Law. They cannot answer in any other way than that all this was a result of “hearing with faith” and had nothing to do with keeping the Law. This would be especially true of the Gentiles in their midst who had never been Law keepers yet had been ministered to by the spirit. This could have only occurred because they heard the truth from the apostolic team and believed. He addresses all this in the next paragraph.

3:6-9

6: Even so Abraham BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS RECKONED TO HIM AS
RIGHTEOUSNESS. 7: Therefore, be sure that it is those who are of faith who are sons of

²⁰ See Acts 14:2,5 and 22.

Abraham. 8: The Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, *saying*, "ALL THE NATIONS WILL BE BLESSED IN YOU." 9: So then those who are of faith are blessed with Abraham, the believer.

6: Using Abraham as his chief illustration (Genesis 15:6 perhaps especially for the Jews in the congregation), Paul makes it clear that it was Abraham's faith (belief) that brought about his justification or "reckoned righteousness" before God and not his obedience. Later he will note that Abraham's justification came 430 years prior to the giving of the Law, so it had to be based on his faith. The word "belief" or "faith" in the Genesis is the common word "aman" (from which we get "amen") and it is the predominant word used in the Old Testament to describe "faith" or belief".²¹

7: This is a stiff challenge to those who believe that physical lineage and compliance to circumcision and the keeping of the law demonstrates they are the true children of Abraham (and the promises) and justifies a person before God.²² In other words, the predominant view and tradition of the Jews is hereby said to be wrong by Paul. But he proves it by scripture, scripture they know and cannot deny. It forces them to reconsider their slide into legalism. Their spiritual lives are not a result of physical works.

8-9: Turning to the Gentiles Paul notes that they, like Abraham, are also reckoned righteous by faith. Provision for this is seen in Genesis 12:3. The English (NASB) translates "goy" or "goyim" as "nations" all but one time in Isaiah 9:1. The word describes descendants of Abraham as well as the development of nations other than descendant from Abraham or even Seth. Those peoples not circumcised came to be known as Gentiles, also the word "goyim".

God's promise was that through Abraham all the families of the earth would be blessed.²³ This blessing is simply that they who, like Abraham, believed in the true God and His word would be a part of the provision and promise God made to Abraham, essentially a righteous standing before God which has eternal consequences as well as temporal.

²¹ It is recognized that Abraham's name was Abram until Genesis, chapter 17, but "Abraham" will be used throughout the commentary. The same will hold true for Sarah.

²² The Jewish Apocrypha (Sirach 44:19-21), distorts the Genesis account by saying, "Abraham, the great forefather of a host of nations, no one was ever his equal in glory. He observed the Law of The Most High and entered into a covenant with Him. He confirmed the covenant in his own flesh, and proved himself faithful under ordeal. The Lord therefore promised him on oath to bless the nations through his descendants, to multiply him like the dust on the ground and to exalt his descendants like the stars; and give them the land for their inheritance, from sea to sea, from the River to the ends of the earth" This is what the Jews were taught from childhood. There is not a word referencing that it was Abraham's faith that brought this about. Though God stated to Isaac in 26:5 that Abraham "obeyed Me and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes and My laws", it is difficult to conclude that this included the law of Moses which came 430 years later. More likely it refers to Abraham's obedience to God's calling and subsequent commands and to the rite of circumcision. The book of Sirach was written c. 175 B.C. and attributed to Yeshua son of Sira. It is also called Ecclesiasticus. (Translation: Jerusalem Bible, Doubleday, 1966)

²³ "And I will make you a great nation, And I will bless you, And make your name great; And so you shall be a blessing; And I will bless those who bless you, And the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed." Genesis 12:2-3. This statement is repeated frequently. See: Genesis 17:4-6; 22:18; 26:4; 27:29; 35:11; Psalm 67, 138; Isaiah 9:1, etc.

10: For as many as are of the works of the Law are under a curse; for it is written, "CURSED IS EVERYONE WHO DOES NOT ABIDE BY ALL THINGS WRITTEN IN THE BOOK OF THE LAW, TO PERFORM THEM." 11: Now that no one is justified by the Law before God is evident; for, "THE RIGHTEOUS MAN SHALL LIVE BY FAITH." 12: However, the Law is not of faith; on the contrary, "HE WHO PRACTICES THEM SHALL LIVE BY THEM." 13: Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us--for it is written, "CURSED IS EVERYONE WHO HANGS ON A TREE"—14: in order that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we would receive the promise of the Spirit through faith."

10-11: In a stark and severe contrast, Paul moves from blessing to all peoples who by faith in God are accounted righteous, to the curse of the Law for those who believe that by keeping its ordinances the blessing would come. He quotes Deuteronomy 27:26 here (which is reflected in Jeremiah 11:3 as well).²⁴ From this point on Paul continues to contrast the provisions and promises of the Law with the provisions and promises of "faith". There is no justification under the Law, but only a condemnation of sin and the accompanying curse. The Judaisers could have used this passage to place, in the hearts of the new converts, fear of being cursed because they had abandoned keeping the law as a means of righteousness before God. But the Law does not bring righteousness before God, faith does, as Paul underscores in verse 11.

On the other hand, the questions could be raised, "What is the purpose of the Law and the commandments if they were not intended to be obeyed?" "And what about the blessings attached to keeping the Law?"²⁵ Both questions are legitimate but must be seen in light of Paul's apriori argument, that is, the issue is standing justified and righteous before God, not simply enjoying temporal blessings and protection. Paul answers the first question later in verses 19-29. Circumcision and the Law set the people (descendants of Abraham) apart from the other nations as a sign they were God's chosen people to bring blessing and redemption to the earth through Abraham's seed. But rather than be humbled at this choosing for service, they became proud and self righteous. They saw themselves as the exclusive people of God, not the one's chosen to be inclusive of the nations, a "light to the Gentiles". As for the second question, the cursings and blessings of Deuteronomy 27-28 are temporal and earthly in nature but not spiritual. There is no "spiritual life" in them, nor do they place a person in right standing with God. Paul's context is "justification" which cannot be accomplished by the Law because the law is not of "faith". It matters not how good or perfectly one keeps the Law, it still does not impute righteousness.

In verse 11, Paul quotes a portion of Habakkuk 2:4, "Behold, as for the proud one, His soul is not right within him; **But the righteous will live by his faith.**" The proper translation of this verse as well as the meaning of the word "live" is difficult. Does "live" mean "conduct oneself under the stipulations of faith"? Does it mean one will not suffer deprivation or loss of life because of "faith"? Or is it declaring something about spiritual or eternal life? In Habakkuk it is those of faith that will live and be provided for in the face of the Babylon threat, 6th century B.C.. The

²⁴ Paul, like all the writers in the N.T., uses the LXX as their reference for Biblical quotes. Here, Paul nearly duplicates the LXX, but may be quoting from memory as there are a few minor differences.

²⁵ Deuteronomy 28:1-14

people of Judah are corrupt and faithless. Their religion is a rote liturgy with neither heart nor faith toward God. They will be destroyed. Paul takes this passage and uses it in a similar fashion but presses it toward the spiritual/eternal.²⁶ The issue is a person's standing before God and the Law brings no justification or righteousness. Without "faith" in the redeemer whom God sent on their behalf, there is no justification.

12: That is, obedience to the Law is not based on faith. The citation of Leviticus 18:5 could be confusing as life is promised through the keeping of the Law. However, the context is once again the people's earthly conduct and consequence through either living by the statutes and traditions of Egypt (or Canaan) or by those from the Lord. If they conform to the ways of the heathen they will not live. "You are to perform My judgments and keep My statutes, to live in accord with them; I am the LORD your God. So you shall keep My statutes and My judgments, by which a man may live if he does them; I am the LORD." God is stating His preeminence over all other so called gods. There is no sense of imputed justification or righteousness by keeping the Law, nor any reference to faith. Paul clearly understands this verse as meaning that those who live under the Law will live in/by the Law and so be under its curse. The contrast for Paul is always law and curse against faith and righteousness.

13: This verse makes it clear how Paul understood or used Leviticus 18:5. Anyone living under the Law is under its curse. The curse came when one violated the law. Psalm 119:21 says, "You rebuke the arrogant, the cursed, who wander from Your commandments". In verse 10, Paul quoted Deuteronomy 27:26, "'Cursed is he who does not confirm the words of this law by doing them.' And all the people shall say, 'Amen.'"

Here in 13, Paul quotes a portion of Deuteronomy 21:22-23, "If a man has committed a sin worthy of death and he is put to death, and you hang him on a tree, his corpse shall not hang all night on the tree, but you shall surely bury him on the same day (for he who is hanged is accursed of God), so that you do not defile your land which the LORD your God gives you as an inheritance." Paul omits "by God" in his limited quotation and changes the tense of "cursed" from a past participle to the present tense. He is likely quoting from memory.

The Hebrew for "to curse" is רָאַר (a-rar), and means a "bitter curse or execration". The Greek (LXX) used in translating this verse from Hebrew is ἐπικατάραστος, (epi-kata-rahs-tohs), a strong word suggesting a divine "curse". Since violation of the Law is sin; (I John 3:4) and since "all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23); and that the "wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23), the bottom line of the "curse" is death. This is why Jews, both men and women felt they were "cursed" if they could bear no children. Barrenness or castration would mean the end of life for the family. No descendants meant no heritage in the promises of God.

Included in the "curse" is the alienation of people from the presence, protection and provision of God both now and eternally. The price to be redeemed from the curse is blood and the death of the one who bleeds. This is made clear by Paul's point, "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us". The price rice of redemption has always been blood, life for life. Christ redeemed us from the curse. Paul now hints at the nature of the curse as it

²⁶ See also Paul's use of this passage in Romans chapter 1 (verse 17) and its use in Hebrews 10:32-39.

took the death of Jesus to pay the curse, which is defined as “death to all who are without faith”. There are two words translated “redeem” in the New Testament. One “λυτροω” (lu-traw-oh) means to “release”, “unloose” or unbind, sometimes by paying a ransom.

Paul uses “εξαγοράζω” (ex-ah-go-radz-oh) meaning to: “buy out of the market place”. This indicates that “death” is the price to purchase our redemption from “death”. The curse is eradicated. Paul quotes Deuteronomy 21:22-23, “If a man has committed a sin worthy of death and he is put to death, and you hang him on a tree, 23: his corpse shall not hang all night on the tree, but you shall surely bury him on the same day (for he who is hanged is accursed of God), so that you do not defile your land which the LORD your God gives you as an inheritance.”

14: Christ’s death held two purposes here in Paul’s letter; 1. “in order that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles”, and 2. “so that we would receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.”

It appears that Paul wants to convince the Galatians that God is including the Gentiles in His blessings to Abraham showing this to be accomplished in Christ’s death on the cross. In other words, it’s as if he is saying that until Christ, the Gentiles had no share in the blessings God promised to Abraham. This of course is not true. There were many gentiles in the Old Testament who became heirs of Abraham by faith before the coming of Christ. Hebrews eleven even gives us some of their names. But Paul’s primary point is that if the death of Christ redeems even the Gentiles (who were neither obedient to the law nor circumcised) then the keeping of the Law is unnecessary and ineffective for salvation.

The second expression makes it clear the Holy Spirit, as He fell on both Jew and Gentile, proves that the combination of Christ’s death wiping away the curse and faith in Christ bring about new life and fellowship with God.

However, release or redemption from death, by itself, does not give life. Redemption and forgiveness neither give life nor salvation. The key element, as this verse states, is “faith”. Illustration of: 1. Christ saying “Father, forgive them”. Though forgiven, they were not saved. 2. Christ’s sacrifice was efficacious for the whole world (John 1:29; I John 2:2, 3:5, 4:14, II Corinthians 5:19).

3:15-18

15: Brethren, I speak in terms of human relations: even though it is *only* a man’s covenant, yet when it has been ratified, no one sets it aside or adds conditions to it. 16: Now the promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. He does not say, “And to seeds,” as referring to many, but rather to one, “And to your seed,” that is, Christ. 17: What I am saying is this: the Law, which came four hundred and thirty years later, does not invalidate a covenant previously ratified by God, so as to nullify the promise. 18: For if the inheritance is based on law, it is no longer based on a promise; but God has granted it to Abraham by means of a promise.

15: “Brethren” is used by Paul in a genuine sense. “We are together in Christ” it says. It reinforces, “I am not rejecting you”. Paul is announcing that he is going to use an illustration from everyday life. Literally the translation is “speaking as a man”. His point is displayed as he speaks now of “a covenant between men”. The word “covenant” includes any written document setting out the terms and conditions of an agreement, contract, or will between one party and another. The ratification is the signature of acceptance and agreement by the parties involved. Once this is done, it cannot be altered by either party.²⁷ Paul uses a clear everyday illustration as a means to understand his point.

16-17: Technically, Paul is correct in saying that the word “seed” used in the passages regarding the promise to Abraham’s descendants is singular. It is rarely plural, as it is a collective noun. In I Samuel 8:15, the Hebrew “zera” (seed) is found in a plural form. Paul’s point is that the promise culminates in Christ. Until Christ, neither the promise nor the inheritance, had been fulfilled. However, Paul has been careful to note that the promise includes all of Abraham’s descendants, not of the flesh, but of faith regardless of the fleshly lineage. But his main point here is that the Law, coming 430 years²⁸ after the promise, does not alter the provisions of the previous covenant and promises to Abraham by adding conditions and exceptions to it. It still stands as preeminent.²⁹

18: Paul’s conclusion of the argument of this chapter is that the inheritance cannot be based on both the ratified and thus unalterable promise to Abraham and the conditions and stipulations of the Law. Since it was God who granted the inheritance to Abraham through a promise, it cannot be added to or changed. Thus the Law is not a covenant assuring the inheritance to those who keep it.³⁰

3:19-29

19: Why the Law then? It was added because of transgressions, having been ordained through angels by the agency of a mediator, until the seed would come to whom the promise had been made. 20: Now a mediator is not for one *party only*; whereas God is *only* one. 21: Is the Law then contrary to the promises of God? May it never be! For if a law had been given which was able to impart life, then righteousness would indeed have been based on law. 22: But the Scripture has shut up everyone under sin, so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe. 23: But before faith came, we were kept in custody under the law, being shut up to the faith which was later to be revealed. 24: Therefore the Law has become our tutor to *lead us* to Christ, so that we may be justified by faith. 25: But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor. 26: For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. 27: For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. 28: There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither

²⁷ For a discussion of the revocability of ancient wills, see Richard Longenecker, Word Biblical Commentary, Vol. 41, Pages 128-130, Word Books, 1990.

²⁸ Paul uses the years noted in Exodus 12:40-41 rather than that of Genesis 15:13.

²⁹ See excursus at the end of this chapter.

³⁰ It is worthwhile to study the nature of the “inheritance” in both the Old and New Testaments. Other helpful terms to look up are, “promise”, “descendants”, “inherit” and “heir(s)”.

slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. 29: And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendants, heirs according to promise.

19: Paul's question is appropriate. (It was alluded to in the comment on 3:10-11, paragraph 2). If the inheritance was based upon the promise and those of the promise (faith) are the heirs, then what need was there for the Law? Are we not to obey it? Paul's answer is simple as he continues to dismantle the arguments of the Judaisers. It was added (not to the promise but to the people) because of transgressions. It was to make transgressions apparent. It was added not as a means for attaining righteousness, quite the contrary. The people were to be a "holy" people, separate unto God for His calling and purpose. Why was the giving of the Law necessary?

Remember, they had just spent 400 years in Egyptian captivity and had come to the point that they didn't even know the name of their God. They had taken on the trappings, customs and traditions of the Egyptians, intermarried, and over the centuries lost their identity.

Thus the commandments and the Law were given to make it clear who God is, who they are, and how he requires the people to honor Him. These and the remainder of the scriptures stood as an immovable and unalterable standard of holiness. As such, it made un-holiness (or transgressions) apparent. But it was not added not as a means for attaining righteousness. Quite the contrary. It was designed to humble the people so they would recognize their need of God and His mercy. They were re-identified as to who they really were and what their purpose was to be.

The people were to be a "holy" people, separate unto God for His calling and redemptive purpose. The law was ordained through the "angels" (See: Deuteronomy 33:1-2),³¹ "by the agency of a mediator" (Moses and Aaron – Leviticus 26:46; Numbers 4:37-45) until Christ (the "seed") would come. The "terminus" of the Law is when the "Seed" comes, ("seed" defined by Paul in verse 16). The covenant of promise is continual, through the law and into eternity. The Law is temporary as Paul notes shortly. Again, its purpose was to keep God's people knowledgeable of who they were and especially who their God was in the midst of a multitude of false and pagan gods until the fulfillment came in Christ.

20: Though there is considerable debate over the interpretation of this verse, Paul simply contrasts God's covenant with Abraham and God's covenant with Israel through Moses. A mediator is for more than one party. God needs no mediator as he gave an inviolable promise to Abraham and his seed. It was a one way, unconditional promise based on Abraham's faith, the commitment being God's, and the means miraculous.³² This places a predominance of the first covenant over the latter.

21: Paul precludes the objection ("The Law is contrary to God's promises") with a rhetorical

³¹ "Now this is the blessing with which Moses the man of God blessed the sons of Israel before his death. He said, "The LORD came from Sinai, And dawned on them from Seir; He shone forth from Mount Paran, And He came from the midst of ten thousand holy ones; At His right hand there was flashing lightning for them."

³² See Genesis 12:1-3, 13:12-18, 15:5 ff., 17:1-8 ff., 17:18-21.

question which he himself answers so there will be no confusion. The Law is not contrary to the promise (faith). Both have their different functions in order to keep the fulfillment of the promise possible. The promise includes “life”, “righteousness”, and “faith”. These terms are interchangeable in Paul’s teachings here. But the promises also include a “land”, “nation” and “innumerable descendants”.³³ This is understood later in terms of a “kingdom”.

There is a spiritual side of the covenant (a relationship with God lasting forever for those of faith) and a linear side of the covenant involving the physical descendants of Abraham. The “seed” is included and has also dual fulfillments, Paul noting it as fulfilled in Christ. It is as if Abraham’s “seed” (singular – verse 16) is Christ and Abraham’s descendants transfer from him to Christ for those who have faith. Therefore, faith is the key matter here, not physical lineage.

Those of faith become Christ’s descendants and heirs immediately, moving from the lineage of Adam and Abraham to Christ’s.³⁴ The confusion lies in attempting to attain spiritual, eternal promises by the works of the flesh (circumcision, the Law and lineage) rather than by faith. The Law does not and cannot impart the spiritual needs of life and righteousness. It is as if the period from Isaac to Christ is a large parenthesis employed with purpose until the time was right for Christ to be born.³⁵

22-24: First, the Law made us a prisoner to sin, the consequences being a death curse. In this state mankind resided until Christ. The law (indeed the whole of Scripture)³⁶ facilitated the fulfillment of the promise as its purpose is to confine people within a framework (Paul’s illustration being in confinement under a tutor). This was done in order to bring about the birth of the Savior who fulfills both sides of this promise in Himself, namely, fulfilling the promise of the “everlasting” covenant God made to Abraham in terms of descendants, faith, righteousness, and life. So all of Scripture glaringly illuminates the total depravity of man. He is not selecting out portions of the Law that believers are required to keep and some they are exempt from. Only by faith in Christ who fulfilled the Law can a person be saved. Paul repeats the same theme in verse 23.

Paul uses the term “shut up” twice, that is all were confined under the Law, the “tutor” until Christ (faith) came. Verses 22 and 23 are a parallelism. The terms “shut up” and “custody” are two ways of saying the same thing as the terms “faith” and “promise”. The phrase “shut up” is “συγκλειω” (soog-klee-oh) meaning to be “confined” or “locked in”. The word “custody” is “φρουρεω” (froo-reh-oh) meaning “to be protected by a guard or garrison”. The “tutor” is “παιδαγωγος” (pai-dah-go-ghos) from which we get our term “pedagogue”. It means, “an instructor of young children,” (specifically boys). The total image is one of a classroom from which no one can leave until the instruction is complete. Once the instruction is complete, there is no more need for the tutor. For example, when a student has learned to read under the tutelage of an instructor and has completed the necessary requirements, the need for the instructor has

³³ This promise was re-established with Isaac. Compare Genesis 17:1-8 with 26:2-5.

³⁴ Paul makes this same argument in Romans 2:28-5:21(Esp. 5:12-21)

³⁵ Note: Galatians 4:4-5

³⁶ See: Romans 5:12-14. Here Paul makes it clear that, “death reigned from Adam until Moses, even over those who had not sinned in the likeness of the offense of Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come.” Obviously from Moses to Christ, death also reigned as the Law exacerbated it by revealing sin and its curse.

been both fulfilled and has further been made unnecessary.

25: Freedom or release comes through faith in Christ and one is released unto righteousness and life.

The Law facilitates this cause by revealing sin in people. The recognition of sin is to bring people to a place where they realize their desperate need of mercy, life and righteousness and cry out to the only One who can give it. Jesus said, "Do not think that I will accuse you before the Father; the one who accuses you is Moses, in whom you have set your hope." John 5:45 Thus the law is not contrary to the promise, but without it and its effect, the promise cannot be fulfilled.

Jesus' parable of the tax collector and the Pharisee in the temple is the perfect illustration of the intent of the law (Luke 18:9-14). Once a person casts himself before God for mercy, his faith justifies him. David is the perfect example. Though fraught with sin, he recognized his unrighteousness and hopelessness in his own flesh and, in repentance, threw himself upon God. The fulfillment of God's promise through Abraham to David however, does not occur until Christ and His finished work. Now the fulfillment of God's promises to those of faith can occur.

26: Coming to faith in Christ fulfills the duty of the tutor, and releases one into God's family as His son or daughter by which the inheritance is given and the promise to Abraham fulfilled.

27: Those of faith entering into "baptism" in water, symbolizing the putting to death the old and rising in newness of life in the likeness of Christ's death and resurrection, demonstrate that those of faith share the resurrection life with Christ, they have "clothed themselves with Christ". They "belong" to Him.

28-29: As such, there are only those clothed with Christ. No other distinction is recognizable. All are one in Christ. There is no class difference, race difference, religious difference or gender difference. As such, by faith in Christ, they belong to Him and are the true descendants of Abraham thus heirs with Abraham.³⁷

EXCURSUS – THE “SEED” OF ABRAHAM

When one looks carefully at Paul's argument in verses 16, 20, 22-26 it is difficult not to conclude, that in essence, God's promise to Abraham had a dual intent. One is a promise of the "seed" to come through the descendants of the flesh, and the other the promise of righteousness and the inheritance thereof to come through faith.

I. The first is the promise that through the fleshly descendants of Abraham, "blessing" will come to all the nations of the earth. This is the overarching priority.

³⁷ Paul makes the argument in Romans 9:6-8

"And I will make you a great nation, And I will bless you, And make your name great; And so you shall be a blessing; And I will bless those who bless you, And the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed." Genesis 12:2-3

Paul tells us that this part of the promise involves the "seed" (Christ) and that the blessing comes from faith. This promise of blessing is for the world, (the "nations").

The word "nation" or "nations" is the word "goyim" whether it refers to Abraham and his descendants or not. It can be translated "Gentiles" and in the NASB (Isaiah 9:1) is so translated. Otherwise it is translated "nations". Where Isaiah 49:6 (in the KJV) speaks of Israel as a light to the "gentiles", the word "nations" is used in other translations. When the Bible speaks of the physical descendants of Abraham as a great nation, or that "nations" would "come from him" the word used here is also "goyim". It must be remembered that Abraham was neither an Israelite nor a Jew, but a Chaldean.³⁸

The importance of this must not be underestimated. Note the following:

1: "Now when Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to Abram and said to him, "I am God Almighty; Walk before Me, and be blameless. 2: "I will establish My covenant between Me and you, And I will multiply you exceedingly." 3: Abram fell on his face, and God talked with him, saying, 4: "As for Me, behold, My covenant is with you, And you will be the father of a multitude of nations. 5: "No longer shall your name be called Abram, But your name shall be Abraham; For I have made you the father of a multitude of nations. 6: "I will make you exceedingly fruitful, and I will make nations of you, and kings will come forth from you. 7: "I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your descendants after you. Genesis 17:1-7

The word "descendants" is the Hebrew word "שָׁרֶם" (zera) translated as "seed". This is the verse Paul refers to in verse sixteen of Galatians three. The Hebrew word is singular in form but a collective noun. The "everlasting" covenant is essential spiritual in nature as it entails God's promise to "be God to you and your descendants after you". Abraham's descendants were to be a "multitude of nations" to whom God will be their God. The fulfillment of this covenant did not occur through the physical descendants of Abraham in any consistent manner. Only those who had faith in God were counted among those included in this promise and many not of the physical line of Abraham were included as well. Among those were (as listed in Hebrews eleven) Abel, Enoch, and Noah who came before Abraham, and Sarah, "*Rahab*", as well as "*Caleb*" and "*Ruth*" who are not mentioned in Hebrews eleven, Caleb being of mixed ancestry. The "*Gentiles*" noted in italics above were not of the seed of Abraham and in Ruth's case, was in the lineage of David the king and thus in the lineage of Jesus.

Thus, as Paul points out, the promise was not simply to the physical descendants of Abraham but to the "spiritual descendants", those, who like Abraham were justified by their faith whether of Abraham's lineage or not. Since this covenant was an "everlasting" covenant, it certainly could

³⁸ Note: Genesis 11:26-31

not be fulfilled in the lives of fleshly people dying throughout history. As Hebrews 11:39-40 point out, "And all these, having gained approval through their faith, did not receive what was promised, because God had provided something better for us, so that apart from us they would not be made perfect". That better "something" comes as a result of Christ, the "seed" to whom God referred when making the promise to Abraham, as Paul underscores.

In chapter four of Galatians Paul continues the argument contrasting the two sons of Abraham, Ishmael and Isaac in an allegory. Ishmael pictures the works of the flesh while Isaac the result of faith. Though the first born son of Abraham, Ishmael, is not the one granted the inheritance, but it is Isaac, the child of promise and faith. Paul, in 4:29, says that Isaac was "*born* according to the Spirit". Therefore all those, who by faith, trust in the promise and thus the "seed" become partakers of the promise and are of the same Spirit.

Now, note Genesis 15:1-6

1: After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision, saying, "Do not fear, Abram, I am a shield to you; Your reward shall be very great." 2: Abram said, "O Lord GOD, what will You give me, since I am childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?" 3: And Abram said, "Since You have given no offspring to me, one born in my house is my heir." 4: Then behold, the word of the LORD came to him, saying, "This man will not be your heir; but one who will come forth from your own body, he shall be your heir." 5: And He took him outside and said, "Now look toward the heavens, and count the stars, if you are able to count them." And He said to him, "So shall your descendants be." 6: Then he believed in the LORD; and He reckoned it to him as righteousness.

As the years slipped by and Abraham and Sarah grew well beyond child bearing years, they conspired to have Hagar become the producer of a son for Abraham.³⁹ Thirteen years after Ishmael was born, in Genesis, chapter seventeen, God spoke to Abraham and told him the promise of the everlasting covenant. Abraham understood that these provisions would come through Ishmael. But God had other plans.

II. The fleshly descendants of Abraham

During God's discourse to Abraham, not only was an everlasting covenant made and innumerable descendants promised, but an additional covenant of the flesh was made between God and Abraham as delineated in Genesis 17:8-21,

8: "I will give to you and to your descendants after you, the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God." 9: God said further to Abraham, "Now as for you, you shall keep My covenant, you and your descendants after you throughout their generations. 10: "This is My covenant, which you shall keep, between Me and you and your descendants after you: every male among you shall be circumcised. 11: "And you shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskin, and it shall be the sign of the covenant between Me and you. 12: "And every male among you who is eight days old shall

³⁹ Genesis, chapter 16

be circumcised throughout your generations, a *servant* who is born in the house or who is bought with money from any foreigner, who is not of your descendants. 13: "A *servant* who is born in your house or who is bought with your money shall surely be circumcised; thus shall My covenant be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant. 14: "But an uncircumcised male who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin, that person shall be cut off from his people; he has broken My covenant." 15: Then God said to Abraham, "As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her name Sarai, but Sarah *shall be* her name. 16: "I will bless her, and indeed I will give you a son by her. Then I will bless her, and she shall be a *mother of nations*; kings of peoples will come from her." 17: Then Abraham fell on his face and laughed, and said in his heart, "Will a child be born to a man one hundred years old? And will Sarah, who is ninety years old, bear a *child*?" 18: And Abraham said to God, "Oh that Ishmael might live before You!" 19: But God said, "No, but Sarah your wife will bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac; and I will establish My covenant with him for an everlasting covenant for his descendants after him. 20: "As for Ishmael, I have heard you; behold, I will bless him, and will make him fruitful and will multiply him exceedingly. He shall become the father of twelve princes, and I will make him a great nation. 21: "But My covenant I will establish with Isaac, whom Sarah will bear to you at this season next year."

This covenant to be kept by Abraham and his descendants as well as all the non-family males in his household, was that of circumcision. It simply meant that a mark in the flesh of the male organ would be the sign of their covenant to have faith in the God of Abraham. This would also include their descendants as the mark was in the reproductive organ and signified its application to the generations of descendants yet to be born.⁴⁰ It was to be an "everlasting covenant".⁴¹

A part of this covenant was the promise by God saying, "I will give to you and to your descendants after you, the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God." In 15:18-21, God simply promised the land to Abraham and his descendants, with the borders extending from the Nile in Egypt to the Euphrates in Mesopotamia.⁴² Here it is an "everlasting possession" (see also: 48:4). Other than the covenant of circumcision, this promise is unconditional, and only mentioned twice.

The use of the Hebrew "olam" – "everlasting" brings to this covenant an element that transcends the physical/temporal. Never in the history of Abraham and his physical descendants was the land consistently possessed. And, of course, as the line of Abraham descended throughout the generations, this promise could never actually be fulfilled for them and has not been fulfilled to this day. Scholars debate the intent of the "everlasting" part of the promise in terms of the land. Many still look to the future for this to be fulfilled in a physical manner. But does this apply to the descendants of the flesh or of the promise? Or could it be fulfilled within Paul's view that the promise is fulfilled in Christ? Does this include the "everlasting covenant" regarding the land, placing it as a part of the ultimate faith/spiritual fulfillment?

⁴⁰ See the comment at 3:13, paragraph three.

⁴¹ God, however, was and is far more interested in the heart than in fleshly obedience as seen in many verses, Jeremiah 4:4 an example, "Circumcise yourselves to the LORD And remove the foreskins of your heart, Men of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem, Or else My wrath will go forth like fire And burn with none to quench it, because of the evil of your deeds."

⁴² Genesis 15:18-21

But what of the physical descendants? What exactly was their purpose and was it fulfilled? Because God's promise was to Abraham and his "seed" (the "seed" being Christ), it was God's plan in the promise to have the "seed" come from the loins of Abraham. The purpose of this plan was to bring the "blessing" to the world. This was reiterated to Isaac. Note Genesis 26:1-5:

1: Now there was a famine in the land, besides the previous famine that had occurred in the days of Abraham. So Isaac went to Gerar, to Abimelech king of the Philistines. 2: The LORD appeared to him and said, "Do not go down to Egypt; stay in the land of which I shall tell you. 3: "Sojourn in this land and I will be with you and bless you, for to you and to your descendants I will give all these lands, and I will establish the oath which I swore to your father Abraham. 4: "I will multiply your descendants as the stars of heaven, and will give your descendants all these lands; and by your descendants all the nations of the earth shall be blessed; 5: because Abraham obeyed Me and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes and My laws."⁴³

Years earlier, in God said to Abraham, "Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, where they will be enslaved and oppressed four hundred years. But I will also judge the nation whom they will serve, and afterward they will come out with many possessions" (Genesis 15:13-14).

The deliverance of Israel from Egypt was critical in order for the promised "seed" to be born. Had Israel, (especially all the males) been destroyed in Egypt, the birth of Christ could not have occurred in accordance with God's word. But during the four-hundred year Egyptian sojourn, captivity and enslavement, much of the identity of Israel was lost. Even Moses was raised in "all the ways of the Egyptians". They spoke Egyptian, had married Egyptians, and worshipped Egyptian gods. Few, including Moses and Aaron, even knew who God was. Their history, religion and culture had been largely displaced by that of Egypt. They were no longer circumcising their males children. All of this had to be re-introduced to Israel through Moses.

Once deliverance was accomplished by the great "Passover", God through Moses re-trained Israel in their identity and purpose and secured them under the Law. Their tendency to stray is well known. God's strict rule over them, even to the point of death for disobedience was imposed. His mercy allowed them to offer sacrifices for their sins but only under His specific directions. Paul calls this the time of the "tutor", in force until the "seed" should come to whom the promise was made. Israel was "under guard".

This makes it clear that Israel's purpose was simply to be the means to bring about the birth of the "seed" (Christ).⁴⁴ As such, they had to be preserved. Many Bible interpreters teach that the focus of the redemptive history and prophecy is on the physical nation of Israel. They even teach that the "church" is only a parenthesis in God's plan, but that the real story is found in God's dealing with the nation of Israel and all of promise and prophecy is to be interpreted in light of this temporal and physical history. But I submit, based on Paul's revelation in Galatians three, that the entire history of "Israel" from Abraham forward to Christ is the true parenthesis, and that

⁴³ See footnote 20 above.

⁴⁴ See: Isaiah 9:1-2

the real story is the story of the “seed”, promise and faith.⁴⁵

For one thing, Israel certainly failed to bring “light” to the world (“nations”, “Gentiles”). In fact, after Canaan was conquered and the temple built, Israel came to believe that they were exclusively God’s people. Their designation as “a chosen people” was distorted from being the agency of blessing to the world to being chosen as God’s exclusive people. That is, all others (Gentiles) were excluded rather than included in the promise and inheritance God made to Abraham. In spite of the prophets clear message regarding the purpose for Israel’s calling and choosing, Israel persisted in rejecting it.⁴⁶ To illustrate this, walls were built to keep the Gentiles from the temple grounds proper. Paul makes it clear that this was an error both in Galatians 3:23-29 and in Ephesians 2:11-22 which says,

11: “Therefore remember that formerly you, the Gentiles in the flesh, who are called “Uncircumcision” by the so-called “Circumcision,” *which is* performed in the flesh by human hands—12: *remember* that you were at that time separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. 13: But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. 14: For He Himself is our peace, who made both *groups into* one and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall, 15: by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, *which is* the Law of commandments *contained* in ordinances, so that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, *thus* establishing peace, 16: and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, by it having put to death the enmity. 17: AND HE CAME AND PREACHED PEACE TO YOU WHO WERE FAR AWAY, AND PEACE TO THOSE WHO WERE NEAR; 18: for through Him we both have our access in one Spirit to the Father. 19: So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household, 20: having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner *stone*, 21: in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, 22: in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit.

In spite of Israel’s supreme effort to set aside their true purpose regarding their mission to the world, and exclude others from God’s promise and presence, God brought it about anyway - in Christ, the “seed” of Abraham whose mission included all peoples of the world. God used their very stubborn disobedience and rejection of His covenant to bring about their ultimate subjection to His purpose and the fulfillment of His promise. Paul points this out in Romans 11:11-15 when he says, “I say then, they did not stumble so as to fall, did they? May it never be! But by their transgression salvation *has come* to the Gentiles, to make them jealous. 12: Now if their transgression is riches for the world and their failure is riches for the Gentiles, how much more

⁴⁵ This is borne out by Deuteronomy 7:6-8 and many other passages and reveals the basis of the distortion of the word “chosen” that soon came to pass. 6: “For you are a holy people to the LORD your God; the LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for His own possession out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth. 7: “The LORD did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any of the peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples, 8: but because the LORD loved you and kept the oath which He swore to your forefathers, the LORD brought you out by a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.” The fulfillment of the oath made to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob could only occur through Israel’s deliverance from certain destruction.

⁴⁶ See: Psalm 72:17-19; Isaiah 42:6-7, 49:6, 51:4-5, 60:3; Jeremiah 4:1-2, Daniel 7:13-14.

will their fulfillment be! 13: But I am speaking to you who are Gentiles. Inasmuch then as I am an apostle of Gentiles, I magnify my ministry, 14: if somehow I might move to jealousy my fellow countrymen and save some of them. 15: For if their rejection is the reconciliation of the world, what will *their* acceptance be but life from the dead?"

For another thing, there is an important and unusual designation used of Israel that is often overlooked. Only used a few times, God calls Israel His "first born son". Note Exodus 4:21-23,

21: "The LORD said to Moses, "When you go back to Egypt see that you perform before Pharaoh all the wonders which I have put in your power; but I will harden his heart so that he will not let the people go. 22: "Then you shall say to Pharaoh, 'Thus says the LORD, "Israel is My son, My firstborn. 23: "So I said to you, 'Let My son go that he may serve Me'; but you have refused to let him go. Behold, I will kill your son, your firstborn.'""

In many other places the people are called the "sons" of God, but seldom is Israel personified as the "Son of God". In Hosea 11:1 we read, "When Israel *was* a youth I loved him, And out of Egypt I called My son." The event points obviously the Exodus. The chapter goes on to bear this out. But Matthew quotes this verse and attributes it to Jesus at the departure of Him and His parents out of Israel under the threat of Herod. "So Joseph got up and took the Child and His mother while it was still night, and left for Egypt. He remained there until the death of Herod. *This was* to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet: "OUT OF EGYPT I CALLED MY SON." Matthew 2:14-15

Could it be that these early Christian writers saw the lineage of Abraham and the history of Israel as the history of Jesus? In other words, when Jesus was born, He became both the personification of Israel and it's fulfillment? Is this what He meant when He said, "You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; it is these that testify about Me; and you are unwilling to come to Me so that you may have life." John 5:39-40

Earlier we read, "Philip found Nathanael and said to him, "We have found Him of whom Moses in the Law and *also* the Prophets wrote--Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." John 1:45

Luke 24:27 notes of Jesus, "Then beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures."

Luke 24:44-45 also contributes, "Now He said to them, "These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled." Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures...".

If indeed Jesus is the focus of the Old Testament, how can we understand this? This can be understood in terms of the Jewish tradition and Biblical teaching of the solidarity of the family, a concept we do not share in western culture and tradition. Simply put, Jesus existed in the loins of Abraham nearly 2000 years before His actual birth. Thus, the history of Abraham onward is the history of Jesus and so the writers of the New Testament and Jesus himself saw it. For example, in Hebrews 7:9-10 Levi, Abraham's great grandson, is credited with "works" of his

great grandfather because he was "In the loins" of Abraham. "And, so to speak, through Abraham even Levi, who received tithes, paid tithes, for he was still in the loins of his father when Melchizedek met him." The tie between mankind and Adam, the sins of the father's and the son's, and so on are all explained through this concept. The break between the physical and the spiritual comes at the point of faith.

In this light, prophecy can certainly be seen in a new way. For example, Jeremiah 31:7-36 can be seen as focusing on being fulfilled at Christ's coming just as easily as understood only as a prophecy about physical nation of Israel.

7: For thus says the LORD, "Sing aloud with gladness for Jacob, And shout among the chief of the nations; Proclaim, give praise and say, 'O LORD, save Your people, The remnant of Israel.' 8: "Behold, I am bringing them from the north country, And I will gather them from the remote parts of the earth, Among them the blind and the lame, The woman with child and she who is in labor with child, together; A great company, they will return here. 9: "With weeping they will come, And by supplication I will lead them; I will make them walk by streams of waters, On a straight path in which they will not stumble; For I am a father to Israel, And Ephraim is My firstborn." 10: Hear the word of the LORD, O nations, And declare in the coastlands afar off, And say, "He who scattered Israel will gather him And keep him as a shepherd keeps his flock." 11: For the LORD has ransomed Jacob And redeemed him from the hand of him who was stronger than he. 12: "They will come and shout for joy on the height of Zion, And they will be radiant over the bounty of the LORD-- Over the grain and the new wine and the oil, And over the young of the flock and the herd; And their life will be like a watered garden, And they will never languish again. 13: "Then the virgin will rejoice in the dance, And the young men and the old, together, For I will turn their mourning into joy And will comfort them and give them joy for their sorrow. 14: "I will fill the soul of the priests with abundance, And My people will be satisfied with My goodness," declares the LORD. 15: Thus says the LORD, "A voice is heard in Ramah, Lamentation *and* bitter weeping. Rachel is weeping for her children; She refuses to be comforted for her children, Because they are no more." 16: Thus says the LORD, "Restrain your voice from weeping And your eyes from tears; For your work will be rewarded," declares the LORD, "And they will return from the land of the enemy. 17: "There is hope for your future," declares the LORD, "And *your* children will return to their own territory. 18: "I have surely heard Ephraim grieving, 'You have chastised me, and I was chastised, Like an untrained calf; Bring me back that I may be restored, For You are the LORD my God. 19: 'For after I turned back, I repented; And after I was instructed, I smote on *my* thigh; I was ashamed and also humiliated because I bore the reproach of my youth.' 20: "Is Ephraim My dear son? Is he a delightful child? Indeed, as often as I have spoken against him, I certainly *still* remember him; Therefore My heart yearns for him; I will surely have mercy on him," declares the LORD. 21: "Set up for yourself road marks, Place for yourself guideposts; Direct your mind to the highway, The way by which you went. Return, O virgin of Israel, Return to these your cities. 22: "How long will you go here and there, O faithless daughter? For the LORD has created a new thing in the earth-- A woman will encompass a man." 23: Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, "Once again they will speak this word in the land of Judah and in its cities when I restore their fortunes, 'The LORD bless you, O abode of righteousness, O holy hill!' 24: "Judah and all its cities will dwell together in it, the farmer

and they who go about with flocks. 25: "For I satisfy the weary ones and refresh everyone who languishes." 26: At this I awoke and looked, and my sleep was pleasant to me. 27: "Behold, days are coming," declares the LORD, "when I will sow the house of Israel and the house of Judah with the seed of man and with the seed of beast. 28: "As I have watched over them to pluck up, to break down, to overthrow, to destroy and to bring disaster, so I will watch over them to build and to plant," declares the LORD. 29: "In those days they will not say again, 'The fathers have eaten sour grapes, And the children's teeth are set on edge.' 30: "But everyone will die for his own iniquity; each man who eats the sour grapes, his teeth will be set on edge. 31: "Behold, days are coming," declares the LORD, "when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, 32: not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them," declares the LORD. 33: "But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days," declares the LORD, "I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. 34: "They will not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them," declares the LORD, "for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more." 35: Thus says the LORD, Who gives the sun for light by day And the fixed order of the moon and the stars for light by night, Who stirs up the sea so that its waves roar; The LORD of hosts is His name: 36: "If this fixed order departs From before Me," declares the LORD, "Then the offspring of Israel also will cease From being a nation before Me forever."

New Testament writers see this ultimately fulfilled in Christ.⁴⁷ Other prophecies can also be viewed again to see if they have this element in them.⁴⁸

But going back to the promise/covenant God made regarding the “everlasting possession” of the land by Abraham and His descendants. Is it possible that this fulfillment takes place in terms of the “kingdom of God”? When one enters the kingdom of God through faith in Christ, there are many things attributed to this. To begin, a “kingdom” has three elements, a king, a land or place, and a people who are subjects of the king. In Christ, all three are evident, all are “everlasting” and all are mentioned in prophecy. Other attributes, in summary, include the invulnerability to the presence of evil, power over all the negative elements of creation including death, and over creation itself. The positive elements include eternal life, love, joy, peace, the presence of God and the “Lamb” and so on. The scriptures are too numerous to list. But Paul summarizes some aspects by saying, “Therefore do not let what is for you a good thing be spoken of as evil; for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.” Romans 14:16-17

Both Jesus and the apostles had the proclamation of “The Kingdom of God” at the center of their preaching and teaching. During the forty days Jesus was with His apostles after His resurrection, Luke notes in Acts that Jesus, “...presented Himself alive after His suffering, by many

⁴⁷ See: Hebrews 8:8-13, 9:15; II Corinthians 3:1-18; and Jesus Himself said, "This cup which is poured out for you is the new covenant in My blood." Luke 22:20

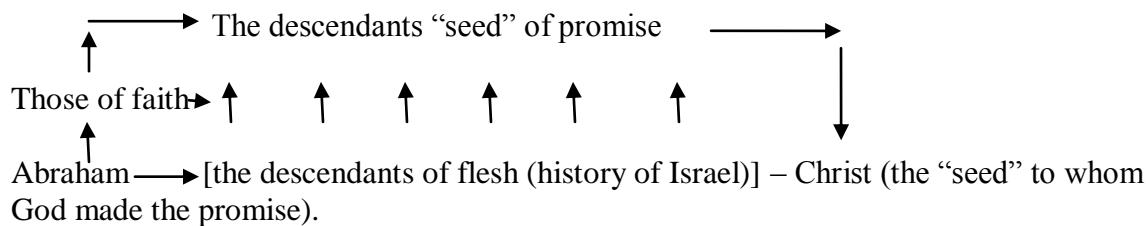
⁴⁸ See for example: Isaiah 54:1-17; Jeremiah 33:14-26 (Note I Peter 2:5,9); Ezekiel 16:60-63, 36:17-38, 37: 1-28; Zechariah chapters 13 and 14; Amos 9:8-15 etc.

convincing proofs, appearing to them over *a period of* forty days and speaking of the things concerning the kingdom of God.” In Matthew 5:1-12, Jesus describes attributes of the kingdom of God⁴⁹ and how blessed are those who enter it. In these verses all three elements of the kingdom are mentioned. Interestingly enough, Luke quotes Jesus at the “last supper” as saying of the entire Passover, “I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer; for I say to you, I shall never again eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God.” Luke 22:15-16 Further, both Jesus and the apostles note that in His coming, the kingdom of God had arrived in His person and that the prophecies regarding the Messiah and the kingdom of God had found fulfillment and continue to be fulfilled as citizens are added by faith until the time is complete.

In Christ then, the fulfillment for Israel’s call, choosing and purpose is complete as is the purpose for the giving of the Law. Both have fulfilled God’s purpose.

In addition, those of faith prior to the birth of Christ enter the kingdom by their faith as well. They move from the physical line to the line of promise in which both the physical lineage of Abraham and the nations have access by faith. Conversely, those not of faith, whether of the physical line of Abraham or not, are excluded.

The following diagram can assist in understanding.



Those of faith are Abraham’s descendants, in Christ, heirs according to the promise (Galatians 3:29)

Paul makes it crystal clear that all who are of the fleshly line are not Abraham’s descendants, even if they are circumcised and keep the Law. Therefore, as Paul explains in Romans, neither are they all “Israel”, that is the “Israel” of promise since the Israel of promise is of the “seed”, that is of Christ (Romans 9:1-8).

In two places in Romans, Paul points out that it is not the fleshly descendants who are the heirs, but the descendants of the promise attained through faith. First is Romans 9 through 11. In these three chapters Paul states that it is only those of faith that are the heirs. Paul uses the term

⁴⁹ Though Jesus is quoted using the term “kingdom of Heaven”, it is clear the this term and “kingdom of God” are interchangeable in spite of teaching to the contrary. Matthew’s use of “Heaven” is a courtesy to his Jewish audience some of whom might be shocked or offended at another Jew using the name “God”. Occasionally Matthew uses this designation, but only where it is appropriate and necessary. Luke, the gentile, has no such scruples, and the other gospel writers do not count Jews as their primary audience. Matthew alone uses “heaven”. A multitude of verses in Matthew using “Heaven” are duplicated in the other gospels using “God”.

“vessels of mercy” to describe them in 9:23-24, “...*even* us, whom He also called, not from among Jews only, but also from among Gentiles. Only a remnant of “Israel” (by the flesh) “will be saved” (9:27) and only by faith as also the “Gentiles” (9:30-32). Those who pursue righteousness by the fleshly works of the law do not arrive at that righteousness, but indeed stumble over the true source which is Christ (9:33-10:4). Faith alone is how one attains righteousness whether Jew or gentile, the righteousness of Christ imputed to them (10:5-21).

It is not as if God has simply rejected all the fleshly line of Abraham out of hand, but indeed receives all who by faith come to Him (11:1-10). This is the remnant, a part of the “true Israel”, the “redeemed” God ordained from the beginning, even as reflected in Genesis 3:15.⁵⁰ So the fleshly descendants of Abraham did not “stumble as to fall” because God was able to bring the blessing promised to Abraham to fulfillment in Christ in spite of their transgression (11:11-12). Ancient Israel was not ignorant of the provisions of the promise for either them or the Gentiles. In fact, as Gentiles came to faith, they became a means of illustrating to Israel the true provisions of God’s promise (10:16-21, 11:7-10). Even in the midst of their transgressions, God saw to it that the Messiah would come as promised through the physical line of Abraham (11:12-14).⁵¹

The illustration of the olive tree in Romans 11:17-24 shows that the “true Israel of God” is comprised of both those who are physical descendants of Abraham and those who are not (Gentiles). It is an olive tree of those of “faith” and any who are not of faith will be broken off away. In other words, “pretenders” will not last long. Ultimately, this tree comprised of both “Jew” and Gentile, the true Israel of God is that which will be saved, thus all “Israel” will be Saved (11:26). This does not mean that all the fleshly descendants of Abraham will be saved, but only that which God deems as “Israel” by the promise.

END OF EXCURSUS

CHAPTER FOUR

4:1-7

1: “Now I say, as long as the heir is a child, he does not differ at all from a slave although he is owner of everything, 2: but he is under guardians and managers until the date set by the father. 3: So also we, while we were children, were held in bondage under the elemental things of the world. 4 But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, 5: so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.” 6: Because you are sons, God has sent forth the

⁵⁰ To the serpent God said, “And I will put enmity between you and the woman, And between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, And you shall bruise him on the heel.” It will be the “seed” of the woman who bruises the serpent on the head. A study on “The Seed of The Serpent” is available upon request.

⁵¹ See comment on page 34, “In spite of...”

Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!" 7: Therefore you are no longer a slave, but a son; and if a son, then an heir through God.

1-2: Paul uses an illustration to amplify his previous point and adds a specific time element to it. In a household the children are the heirs, but not until a certain time. This time is set forth by the father. Until that time, the child is under guardians and managers. This corresponds to verses 22-25 of chapter three where everyone is under the custody of a tutor until Christ (faith) comes. Paul's point is that though Israel considered themselves "chosen" and the true children of Abraham by the flesh they, in reality, differed not from "slaves" and in fact are not really the children of the household at all by the flesh. Paul may also be alluding to Gentiles here (verse 3, "so also we" – along with the Gentiles?). In any case, even the children (those of faith) must wait to be heirs until the date appointed by the father.

3: Paul makes it clear that the Law is the "guardian and manager" in his previous discourse. He augments this noting that they were also under the "bondage under the elemental things of the world". Literally this is translated, "...while immature like a child, we were (*ignorant*) slaves under the world's system". The word translated "elemental things" is "*στοιχειον*" (stoi-kay-on) which means "to set in a row or in order" and can be used of many things from the rules of government, to military order, to the stars, to mathematics, to items previously mixed up and so on. The context tells us that it refers to the order of the world, specifically political order and rule. Thus the translation: "world's system". But until faith comes, one is bound up, imprisoned and in bondage and enslavement to both the Law and its pointed finger at one's unrighteousness and to the world's system and its destiny.

4-7: "...fullness of time" corresponds with the "date set by the Father" in verse 2. The idea is that at the appointed time, after the enslavement by both the law and the world, God allowed the inheritance to be granted to the heirs. This was accomplished by Christ's redeeming work, bringing out of slavery (the marketplace) all those who by faith become sons of God by "adoption". There are several elements in these two verses deserving of comment.

A. In the teachings of the Jews and of Jesus, eschatology was simply understood as a contrast between "this age" and "the age to come". For example Jesus said,

"Whoever speaks a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it shall not be forgiven him, either in this age or in the *age to come*." Matthew 12:31

"...but that he will receive a hundred times as much now in the present age, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and farms, along with persecutions; and in the age to come, eternal life." Mark 10:30

"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Matthew 28:19-20

Paul also noted the same:

Ephesians 1:21, "...far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come."

The writer of Hebrews as well, in 6:5, "...and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come..."

"This age" (or the "present" age) is the age of wickedness and evil.⁵² The age to come is the age of the "kingdom of God".⁵³ When Paul uses the terms "date set by the Father" and "in the fullness of time" he is speaking of the transition between the two ages from the time of Jesus' birth to the time of His second coming.

B. Jesus was God's Son yet "born of a woman". Specifically, He is the promised Messiah come into the world, both fully human and fully divine. He was not born of man, nor the seed of man.

C. "Born under the Law". Jesus was fully Jewish and subject to the Law. As Luke notes, all the rites required of a first born son were carried out on Jesus' behalf by his parents. His ministry and teaching was primarily a clarification and amplification of the Law as it applied not just to the external works alone, but to the heart. In this way people could decide either for self-righteousness or mercy as a means of approaching God. Much of Jesus' teachings have been misinterpreted as a higher standard (or Law) by which Christians must live. Paul makes it clear in Galatians (and in other epistles notably Romans) that this is not the case. It is redemption from the curse of the Law that is crucial and now the Christian is to be prompted by the Spirit of God.

D. "Adoption as sons" is a phrase unique to Paul. It is found in Romans 8:15, 23, 9:4; Galatians 4:5, and Ephesians 1:5. Paul's point is that though Jesus is God's own Son, others also, whether Jew or Gentile are also sons albeit by "adoption". However, this gives the same rights and inheritance as those born in the household (verse 7).

E. Though not born of the Spirit in the same way as Jesus, as adopted children God has sent forth His Spirit into the hearts of each one redeemed by faith in Christ and now these children have an intimate relationship, indeed a familial relationship with God. "Abba" is Aramaic for "father", used by Paul to show life and relationship in the same home and family.

F. Those with such a relationship are no longer slaves (under the law - 4:24) but sons, and thus heirs.

4:8-11

8: However at that time, when you did not know God, you were slaves to those which by nature are no gods. 9: But now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, how is it that you turn back again to the weak and worthless elemental things, to which

⁵² It began at creation or, at the time of the disobedience of Adam and Eve. See: Romans 1:20-25, 2:1-5; I Corinthians 15:21-23 for example.

⁵³ See the full excursus on this topic in this author's commentary on I Thessalonians

you desire to be enslaved all over again? 10: You observe days and months and seasons and years. 11: I fear for you, that perhaps I have labored over you in vain.

8: Paul hearkens back to the comment in verse three. He speaks to both Jewish and Gentile believers. He notes that before the Gentiles came to know God they were slaves to false gods. These false “gods” include the pantheon of Greco-Roman gods and goddesses to which the Gentiles gave homage. In verse 9 he also adds the worthless Jewish rituals and observances, all of which are defined in verse 10.

9: The contrast is clearly their coming into a relationship with God (the word “know or known” indicating an intimate relationship) through faith as opposed to a completely fleshly state of mind and religious activity that was useless and worthless to accomplish what they sought.⁵⁴ In summary, Paul is asking, “Why, now that they have been delivered from bondage by God do they return to their former slavery to that which is worthless?” The term, “elemental things” is “stoi-kay-on” again (see comment on verse three), and in this context, includes primarily religious matters but does not exclude the worldly.

10: These designations are mutually applicable to both the Jew and Gentile believer. This includes all the calendared observances including the Sabbath, and the observances required under the law. The purpose for going back to these tenets of Judaism is to avoid the “curse” that comes with breaking the law. This threat of the curse was held over their heads by the Judaisers. However, Paul dispelled this fear back in chapter 3:13 where he teaches, “Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us....”

11: Having brought them to Christ and the provisions under the New Covenant by His sacrifice, Paul “fears” his work was futile and in vain since they have returned to the Old Covenant. The word “fear” is “phobos” and is not being used as a manipulation of his reader’s emotions, but as a serious matter for Paul and the source of his anger.

4:12-20

12: I beg of you, brethren, become as I am, for I also have become as you are. You have done me no wrong; 13: but you know that it was because of a bodily illness that I preached the gospel to you the first time; 14: and that which was a trial to you in my bodily condition you did not despise or loathe, but you received me as an angel of God, as Christ Jesus *Himself*. 15: Where then is that sense of blessing you had? For I bear you witness that, if possible, you would have plucked out your eyes and given them to me. 16: So have I become your enemy by telling you the truth? 17: They eagerly seek you, not commendably, but they wish to shut you out so that you will seek them. 18: But it is good always to be eagerly sought in a commendable manner, and not only when I am present with you. 19: My

⁵⁴ In verse 9 Paul corrects himself. To be “known by God” holds an importance over “knowing God”. The idea of “knowing” involves an intimacy and recalls the idea of family. In this case, the idea is recognition by the Father of those who belong to Him. For example, see: Matthew 7:22-23; 25:11-12; John 10:14, 27; II Timothy 2:19.

children, with whom I am again in labor until Christ is formed in you—20: but I could wish to be present with you now and to change my tone, for I am perplexed about you.

12: In this emotionally charged section, Paul shows the deep fear and genuine concern he has over the churches of Galatia. He sincerely appeals to them to heed what he is saying. He wishes he could be there in person (20) to once again talk with them as he once did, without the strong emotional tone. He opens this section with an appeal literally translated as, “Continue to become as I (am) since I am as you are, brothers, I beg you. You have done me no wrong (or caused me no injury).” What does he mean by this? In Christ he is free from the bondage to the Law and the world’s system. He is like them either that he has been in the midst of attack on his authority, his message and his person as they have or that he is dependant solely upon Christ as any Gentile would be having had no other means of rescue. He pleads with them to recognize that he has suffered as well, but stands firm in the truth and will not be dissuaded. It is not the Christians at Galatia who have done him wrong, but the Judaisers who seek to dismantle all he has done and for all he has suffered not to mention what Jesus had suffered and accomplished.

Through the epistle Paul has spoken of his own commitment to Christ, and to the truth of the gospel though it cost him great pain and injury. He desires the Galatian Christians to do the same regardless of the challenges they will face in doing so. This meaning of the verse is verified in the following verses.

13: Paul goes on to recall to them his sufferings on their behalf and for the gospel he brought to them at a drastic cost. This properly defines the intent of the previous verse. He notes that his preaching the gospel to them the first time was caused by his “bodily illness”. Though he does not define what this is here, the Galatians knew about it. The word “illness” can be translated even better by the words “weakness”, or “helpless” and literally means “without strength” (in my body). Paul is saying that at the first occasion of his proclamation of the gospel to them, it came about because he was in such bad shape he couldn’t travel on for a time. So his condition actually became the opportunity to stay with them. Many scholars debate what, where and when this could have happened. The only textual hint is Luke’s account of Paul’s stoning on his first missionary journey in Lystra (a city in Cilicia-Galatia - Acts 14:19-22). This passage would fit with Paul’s account in this verse. He stayed two days in Lystra, actually (by consideration of the Jewish “day”) before going on to Derbe. But he returned to Lystra spending even more time on the return trip. The ensuing verses lend credence to the fact that his “illness” was indeed a severe injury.

14-15: In fact, his injuries deformed his appearance to the point of being shocking and a “trial” (test) to the people which they passed with flying colors. Stoning would have left him with great cuts, bruises and swelling. Since he wore clothes, the shocking appearance of his face and head would be the focus. But, in spite of his physical problems they did not despise or loath him. Quite the contrary. They received him as if he were an angel from God or Jesus come to see them personally. They were gracious, receptive and hospitable, considering themselves blessed at his presence. That sense of blessing is now gone whereas at the time they would have “plucked out their eyes” and given them to Paul. His point is, what has caused the change? The reference to “plucking out their eyes” some take to simply be an expression of affection, a hyperbole, a figure of speech. Others think that this actually refers to the seriousness of Paul’s

injuries to his eyes. The words “if possible” seem to diminish the idea of hyperbole. In support of the latter understanding, Paul suggests he did incur some eye problems.⁵⁵ Other expressions or other “figures of speech” could be used to describe the devotion of the church to Paul at these first visits such as he uses with the Philippians (1:7-8, 4:10).

16: Once their dearest blessing, is he now their enemy because he told them the truth? This rhetorical question forces them to acknowledge that what he just finished relating to them was the truth and that when he was there he spoke the truth to them about the gospel, at a great cost to himself. His persistence in preaching the gospel for which he had just been stoned and persecuted is evidence that he is preaching something that is the truth, for few, if any would submit to such pain for something they knew to be a sham..

17: Literally, verse 17 reads, “They seek you (are zealous for you) not for good, but they wish to exclude you so you will be zealous for them.” Paul is speaking of the Judaisers who want to “exclude” them. Exclude them from what? There are several possibilities, all adding something to the meaning. A. They wish to keep them exclusively to themselves so only their influence will be felt. B. They wish to exclude them from the teachings and person of Paul so their influence will not be challenged. C. They want to exclude them from Christ and His provision. To some extent, all these apply, with B. the most likely.

18: “But it is always good to be zealous for (or sought out for) good” is the literal translation, “and not just when I am present with you”. The word zealous fits best here. In other words, Paul is saying that they need to be zealous for the good without his presence and not be dissuaded by these others.

19: Paul now turns back to the father figure, (see: comment at 3:1) and rather than admonishing his “children”, he is pleading with them. Then he turns to the metaphor of a woman in labor to give birth, and is in pain over them because they have not come to full life in Christ, that is,

⁵⁵ See: Galatians 5:11. It is clear that whatever Paul contracted, its effects extended to the rest of his life. It may have well been a serious attack on his eyes or eyesight as suggested in Galatians 4:15. We know that for the rest of his life, he used an amanuensis to write for him and seldom wrote a letter himself. The exceptions are greetings found in Galatians 6:11; II Thessalonians 3:17; I Corinthians 16:21; Colossians 4:18; and in the letter to Philemon, Paul notes that it is written in his own hand suggesting that he usually employs an amanuensis. Normally, he dictated his thoughts (Romans 16:22; etc.). Later on, during his second missionary journey, he persuades Luke (probably of Troas), a Gentile physician, to be his constant companion for the rest of his life. This may well indicate his need of physical help as he traveled due to physical disabilities or limitations he was experiencing. This all leads to the idea of severe consequences from the stoning at Lystra.

Whether Paul’s difficulties came as a result of the severe beating and stoning he took on this trip (14:19) or as a result of a disease causing visual impairment, we may never know, but his references to his condition lend weight to the thought that the stoning at Lystra seems to be the leading candidate for Paul’s lifelong physical impairments. We have no specific detail relating his malady with blindness or his eye trouble with an event or illness. But the litany of beatings, stoning, and shipwrecks listed in II Corinthians 11:23-30 lend support to the cause of lifelong physical difficulties. We do know, however, that Paul came to have many helpers who traveled with him. He often sent them ahead to prepare the way for him. Others “ministered” to him. He had to stop and rest or be cared for from time to time as we shall see. There are many comments in Acts and in his letters about his weak appearance in the flesh, his infirmities and so on suggesting he became dependent upon God to supply help so he could “finish his course”. Regarding his “weaknesses , see: ”I Corinthians 2:3; II Corinthians 10:10; II Corinthians 11:6, 11:30, 12:7-10

Christ has not yet been formed in them as Lord and Savior.⁵⁶ But it is Paul, not them that is in pain awaiting this “birth”.

20: Paul’s pain is partly because he is not present with them. If he were there, he could speak to them in a different tone, understand their situation and feelings more intimately, but instead he remains perplexed. This means he has “no way out” and is “at a loss’ as to what to make of them. He simply doesn’t know exactly what they are thinking or feeling. The “perplexity” stems from knowing their genuine conversion and joy on the one hand, and their turning from it on the other. He has come to a point where he cannot continue the letter for now (see following comments).

4:21-31

21: Tell me, you who want to be under law, do you not listen to the law? 22: For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by the bondwoman and one by the free woman. 23: But the son by the bondwoman was born according to the flesh, and the son by the free woman through the promise. 24: This is allegorically speaking, for these *women* are two covenants: one *proceeding* from Mount Sinai bearing children who are to be slaves; she is Hagar. 25: Now this Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia and corresponds to the present Jerusalem, for she is in slavery with her children. 26: But the Jerusalem above is free; she is our mother. 27: For it is written, "REJOICE, BARREN WOMAN WHO DOES NOT BEAR; BREAK FORTH AND SHOUT, YOU WHO ARE NOT IN LABOR; FOR MORE NUMEROUS ARE THE CHILDREN OF THE DESOLATE THAN OF THE ONE WHO HAS A HUSBAND." 28: And you brethren, like Isaac, are children of promise. 29: But as at that time he who was born according to the flesh persecuted him *who was born* according to the Spirit, so it is now also. 30: But what does the Scripture say? "CAST OUT THE BONDWOMAN AND HER SON, FOR THE SON OF THE BONDWOMAN SHALL NOT BE AN HEIR WITH THE SON OF THE FREE WOMAN." 31: So then, brethren, we are not children of a bondwoman, but of the free woman.

21: It appears that after the previous emotional appeal, Paul takes a break, perhaps for the day. One can appreciate both his emotional and physical exhaustion at this point. This can be perceived at the end of the previous discourse. After a well needed rest or sleep, it looks like he then reads over what he has written and sets forth to explain something further to those who are persuaded to fall under the persuasive teachings of the Judaisers. He begins afresh and strongly. He is reenergized, inspired. His challenge to “those who want to be under the law” is the Rabbi addressing his students. He expects them to respond to the rhetorical question with, “Yes, of course we listen to the law.”

22: “Then listen to what it says” would be the response of the Rabbi as he goes into his teaching. Paul now launches into an allegory about the two sons of Abraham to illustrate his “flesh versus promise” argument as it applies to the true descendants of Abraham and thus to the fulfillment of the promise.

⁵⁶ See also: Ephesians 4:10-16; Colossians 1:25-29.

23: Ishmael, born of the union between Abraham and Hagar, is not the son God promised. It is Abraham and Sarah's effort to "help" God fulfill His word. It is hard to blame them as Sarah was well past child bearing age. Yet God promised she would bear the son, which she did and named him Isaac.

24: At this point, Paul places the two women into an allegorical comparison. The key to grasping what Paul is saying is the women, not Abraham. Hagar represents the flesh and corresponds to the covenant of Sinai, the Law of Moses. Though Paul doesn't mention Sarah, it is easily concluded that she corresponds to the promise of God. Those who claim to be Abraham's descendants and God's children and thus heirs of the promise but whose claim is based on circumcision, lineage and the keeping of the law are actually of the flesh and are slaves – "descendants of Hagar" - as it were, not of Sarah. They may not be physical descendants of Hagar, but in terms of the real issue, they may as well be. This is why Paul uses an allegory for his illustration.

25: Hagar corresponds with the Law (Mt. Sinai)⁵⁷ and present Jerusalem, the center of Jewish law observance. Jerusalem also represents the entirety of Judaism and the slavery of the Jews under the Law. Paul states clearly that the Law put every Jew into slavery. Thus, Hagar denotes all of this as the lineage of the flesh from Abraham to the present and they all are, and have been in slavery as the phrase "with her children" denotes.

26-27: Jerusalem "above". This designation is familiar to Jewish thought. In the Jewish eschatological view contrasting "this age and the age to come",⁵⁸ a New Jerusalem is pictured in the age to come.⁵⁹ This is the hope of Israel. "She is our mother" is reflected in Isaiah 50:1 ff. and especially 54:1 ff. "Our mother" is Sarah, portrayed as the "Jerusalem above", only achievable by faith. Paul contrasts the children of promise with the children of the flesh portraying Sarah is the "barren woman" whose children are more numerous than the one who can bear with a husband.⁶⁰ Paul concludes his allegory.

28: Paul now employs simile likening the Galatians to Isaac, the child of promise. He places or retains the Galatians in this realm (the lineage of faith, promise, the Spirit and freedom) rather than in slavery again, perhaps with the hope they will reject the Judaisers and return to the truth as he taught it to them.

29: To help the Galatians see the truth of his allegory, and to assure them that they are indeed the children of promise, he notes that as Isaac and his descendants (the children of faith, promise and Spirit) were persecuted by the descendants of Ishmael⁶¹ (the children of flesh) so are they persecuted by the Judaisers (as representatives of the "flesh").

⁵⁷ Mt. Sinai was never at the tip of the Sinai Peninsula, but always in Midian, east and across the Red Sea. It has been located and identified, but access is prohibited by the Saudi government. The "traditional route" of the Exodus as displayed in most map sections in Bibles is erroneous.

⁵⁸ See comment at 1:4 and 4:4-7 A.

⁵⁹ This is foreseen in places like: Isaiah 52:8-10, 62:1-2, chapters 64-66; Joel chapter 3; Micah 4:1-2; and reflected in the New Testament in Philippians 3:20; Hebrews 12:22 and Revelation 3:12 and chapter 21.

⁶⁰ Again, Paul uses the LXX as his source and quotes it exactly.

⁶¹ See Psalm 83 in reference to this. Remember also that in the Biblical doctrine of the "solidarity of the lineage", the conduct of both the fathers and the children are attributable to each other. In Hebrews seven, Levi is given credit

30: A significant passage to quote. It is from Genesis 21:10. Including verse nine we read, "Now Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, whom she had borne to Abraham, mocking. Therefore she said to Abraham, "Drive out this maid and her son, for the son of this maid shall not be an heir with my son Isaac." Even the scripture supports that the children of the "flesh", even though of Abraham's seed, are not the heirs. Paul uses this to support that even those that are descendants of Abraham and Sarah by the flesh are only heirs if they, like Abraham and Sarah base their own righteousness on Christ (Abraham's seed to whom the promise was actually made), and do so by faith. Conversely, Paul is saying that the Judaisers are not the true descendants and heirs and perhaps subtly suggesting that they should be cast out.

31: "So then". Or, "based on what I said" those of faith are the true children of Abraham.

CHAPTER FIVE

5:1-6

1: It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery. 2: Behold I, Paul, say to you that if you receive circumcision, Christ will be of no benefit to you. 3: And I testify again to every man who receives circumcision, that he is under obligation to keep the whole Law. 4: You have been severed from Christ, you who are seeking to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace. 5: For we through the Spirit, by faith, are waiting for the hope of righteousness. 6: For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything, but faith working through love.

1: Paul underscores the entire illustration with a simple point – freedom. Freedom from the slavery and confinement of the law is his intent and the intent of the Greek – “ελευθεροω” (el-you-reh-oh) “liberation (from ceremonial and ritual). It is a “yoke”, a heavy beam used to hold a pair of oxen together in work. The law is this beam holding people securely in slavery to it. Paul tells his readers to “stand firm” and not again be burdened to this yoke. Ultimately, the freedom is simply liberation from oneself.

2. “Behold, I Paul tell you...”. This emphatic use of his name could denote one of several things. 1. That he is asserting his personal authority due to the seriousness of the declaration and its amplification in succeeding verses. 2. Paul is the only one making this clarification because others are not clear on this. 3. He knows their confusion about his authority and now he forces them to come to a decision. 4. He is reiterating that it was he who brought them the gospel in which they experienced such blessing and joy and now he is desirous to bring them back to that moment again. 5. Paul is taking personal responsibility to tell them this and is not passing this off as coming from others.

Paul is speaking to the gentile believers here. The Jews would have already undergone

for paying tithes to Melchizedek, while here Ishmael is blamed for the persecution by his descendants against Isaac (the child of promise in Paul's illustration).

circumcision. A part of the “yoke” of the law includes circumcision. Paul wants to deal with this because he has said clearly that the promise came before the law and was ratified in blood by the act of circumcision. Of course, this was all subsequent to Abraham’s response in faith to God. The Jew came to believe that this mark in the flesh was his assurance that he was heir to all the promises God gave to Abraham. The idea of faith being the real issue and the prerequisite to being an heir slowly faded away and was replaced by works of the flesh in totality. Paul is addressing this error to those who might revert back to Abraham as they agree with Paul about the law.

Paul looks to be reflecting the teachings of Jesus in John 8:31-59. The passage begins, 31: “So Jesus was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, “If you continue in My word, *then* you are truly disciples of Mine; 32: and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.” 33: They answered Him, “We are Abraham’s descendants and have never yet been enslaved to anyone; how is it that You say, ‘You will become free’?”

Jesus goes on to tell them, 34: “Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is the slave of sin. 35: “The slave does not remain in the house forever; the son does remain forever. 36: “So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed. 37: “I know that you are Abraham’s descendants; yet you seek to kill Me, because My word has no place in you. 38: “I speak the things which I have seen with *My* Father; therefore you also do the things which you heard from *your* father.”

Jesus is clear that though they are Abraham’s descendants by the flesh, they are enslaved to sin (by the law). The house illustration is very much like Paul’s in Galatians 4:1-7. Only the son can set them free and that comes on the basis of faith - John 8:45, “But because I speak the truth, you do not believe Me.” Faith comprises the “deeds” of Abraham, 39: They answered and said to Him, “Abraham is our father.” Jesus said to them, “If you are Abraham’s children, do the deeds of Abraham. 40: “But as it is, you are seeking to kill Me, a man who has told you the truth, which I heard from God; this Abraham did not do.”

If a person receives the ritual of circumcision as a means to being an heir of Abraham, not only \ are they not an heir, but Christ is of no value to them, as they are trusting in the works of the flesh. Circumcision becomes the symbol for the whole law. This is especially an important point for those, though inconsistent in keeping the law, (such as the “God-fearing” Gentiles) and the Jew can still claim the inheritance of Abraham because of their circumcision.

Yet even the Law speaks of the “circumcision of the heart” as the issue over circumcision of the flesh, and it is in this that God “remembers his covenant” with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. In Leviticus 26:41-42 the Lord says, “I also was acting with hostility against them, to bring them into the land of their enemies--or if their uncircumcised heart becomes humbled so that they then make amends for their iniquity, then I will remember My covenant with Jacob, and I will remember also My covenant with Isaac, and My covenant with Abraham as well, and I will remember the land.

Deuteronomy 30:6 states, “Moreover the LORD your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, to love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul,

so that you may live."

Jeremiah also made this clear to Israel.

4:4, "Circumcise yourselves to the LORD And remove the foreskins of your heart, Men of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem, Or else My wrath will go forth like fire And burn with none to quench it, Because of the evil of your deeds."

In Jeremiah 9:23-26, the Lord says, 23: "...Let not a wise man boast of his wisdom, and let not the mighty man boast of his might, let not a rich man boast of his riches; 24: but let him who boasts boast of this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the LORD who exercises lovingkindness, justice and righteousness on earth; for I delight in these things," declares the LORD. 25: "Behold, the days are coming," declares the LORD, "that I will punish all who are circumcised and yet uncircumcised—26: Egypt and Judah, and Edom and the sons of Ammon, and Moab and all those inhabiting the desert who clip the hair on their temples; for all the nations are uncircumcised, and all the house of Israel are uncircumcised of heart."

Paul is consistent with this teaching in Romans 2:28-29 saying, 28:"For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh. 29: But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that which is of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter; and his praise is not from men, but from God."

And in Colossians 2:11-14 he writes, 11: "and in Him you were also circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, in the removal of the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ; 12: having been buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised up with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead. 13: When you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions, 14: having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us, which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross."

In speaking of the "yoke of slavery" versus the freedom Christ gives, Jesus' words in Matthew 11:28-30 come to mind, 28: "Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. 29: "Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and YOU WILL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS. 30: "For My yoke is easy and My burden is light."

If they receive circumcision, the benefits Christ offers to them by faith are no longer theirs as they have chosen to trust in the works of their own flesh. The fruit of the flesh and the fruit of faith are not compatible.

3: He takes personal responsibility to "testify" to them again that this is the case (see 3:12). Paul's point here is that submission to circumcision (or the works of the flesh) as a means of righteousness obligates a person to keep the whole law. He then falls under the curse of the law if he fails in one point (James 2:10) and even so, none can be justified by the law unless he keeps

it perfectly Galatians 3:10). And since the key is the “circumcision of the heart” and since the heart of man is “desperately wicked” and “there is none righteous, no not one” and “all have sinned”, it is impossible for man to stand righteous before God by the effort of his own flesh.

4-5: “Severed from Christ” – “fallen from grace”. Does he mean they have lost their salvation? No. The original Greek uses the term, “καταργεω απο” (khat-ar-geh-oh ap-oh) meaning “uselessly removed from” or “to render inoperative”. In this case it means these who seek circumcision have removed or cut themselves off from Christ in favor of that which is useless. Christ who grants righteousness on the basis of faith by His grace is now set aside in favor of being justified by the Law, works of the flesh). This is an amplification of verse 2. Any further benefit and grace which would have been derived from faith in Christ is now forfeited because works have been substituted for faith. As Paul continues, he presses (as he has) for their restoration to the truth and to faith, freedom and life in the Spirit. It is all of Christ or none of it is.

Much of the contemporary church has made the tragic error of attempting to mix grace with law and has caused a great deal of confusion and distress for Christians under this teaching. Trying to please God and earn righteousness by the works of the flesh is different than doing good works based on one’s standing and relationship with God through faith in His Son and all that He accomplished. As such, believers, by the Spirit and apart from their works (whether circumcised or not), await “the hope of righteousness”. This means that the long awaited hope of the righteous (through faith in Christ) is yet to be revealed.⁶²

6: Faith working through love is the way a man stands righteous before God. Nothing else matters. Faith is not some mental ascent to a divine assumption, but a relationship of love between God and those who have true faith in Him and in Him alone for their hope. The works of faith are those that come from a heart of true love for God and others. This is true liberation from ones self.

5:7-12

7: You were running well; who hindered you from obeying the truth? 8: This persuasion *did not come* from Him who calls you. 9: A little leaven leavens the whole lump *of dough*. 10: I have confidence in you in the Lord that you will adopt no other view; but the one who is disturbing you will bear his judgment, whoever he is. 11: But I, brethren, if I still preach circumcision, why am I still persecuted? Then the stumbling block of the cross has been abolished.

7: This question lays the fault at the feet of the Judaisers and Paul’s tone has changed from 3:1 where he calls them foolish. The athletic field is employed by Paul on occasion I (Corinthians 9:24-26 for example) as it is here. He uses the distance run as a metaphor for the Christian life. But in the case of the Galatians, someone stepped out into the track and “hindered” them. The word hindered suggests that as the foot race was being run, one runner tripped another (a serious violation of the rules) or someone stepped out and blocked or hampered progress.

⁶² See: Romans 5:1-5; II Timothy 4:8; Colossians 1:5; I Peter 1:3.

Paul expects the Galatians to answer “they did” and think of the Judaisers in their midst and their teaching.

8: This “persuasion”, (analogous to those who “hindered” in the previous verse) is not from God. The reason it couldn’t be is that God’s call involves grace, truth, freedom, promise and life. This is provided only through faith in Christ, the “seed” to whom the promise was made. It is not provided through the works of the flesh as Paul has so fervently taught. Thus, the Galatians are again forced to choose.

9: This is a common proverb illustrating the pervasiveness of one thing within another. In this case and in Matthew 16:12 and Mark 8:15 for example, it is used of false teaching, corruption or evil. Paul is noting that the entire body of Christ in Galatia is in danger of corruption. Paul uses this phrase again in I Corinthians 5:6.

10: Paul moves from perplexity (4:20) to confidence. His confidence is based in the Lord’s ability to prompt them to see all this the same way he does. Paul refers to “the one” who is disturbing them. Normally, there is a leader among those who would persuade the church. Paul may or may not know specifically who this is by name, but assures the church that he will come under judgment. The word “disturbing” is “to stir or agitate” and the word “judgment” is “krihnōn” and reflects divine judgment.

11: “If I still...”. Most likely referring to his teachings prior to his conversion. The persecution of Paul proves he is not “preaching circumcision” as a means to a righteous standing before God and inheriting God’s promise to Abraham. If he were doing so, there would be no need for Christ at all (2:21).

5:12-15

12: I wish that those who are troubling you would even mutilate themselves. 13: For you were called to freedom, brethren; only *do not turn* your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. 14: For the whole Law is fulfilled in one word, in the *statement*, "YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF." 15: But if you bite and devour one another, take care that you are not consumed by one another.

12: Paul is wishing that the Judaisers take “circumcision” farther and totally cut off their male genitalia. The word mutilate means to “cut off” or “amputate”.

13: Paul begins a new theme. He turns from what they need to reject to what they should actually be doing. Their freedom in Christ is not for the purpose to return to the bondage of self centered works of the flesh, but to initiate love for others. This is the essence of what God is and what He does. To be true people of God, they must move to a higher level of service, that of love for others rather than self provision. If one functions in this way, the purpose of the law is not only fulfilled, but surpassed in that one moves from the realm of the flesh to the realm of the Spirit. From this point on to the end of the chapter, Paul contrasts life in the flesh with life in the Spirit.

14: Paul now contrasts one realm with the other showing the superiority of love over the law and quotes the law itself as support from Leviticus 19:15-18, "You shall do no injustice in judgment; you shall not be partial to the poor nor defer to the great, but you are to judge your neighbor fairly. You shall not go about as a slanderer among your people, and you are not to act against the life of your neighbor; I am the LORD. You shall not hate your fellow countryman in your heart; you may surely reprove your neighbor, but shall not incur sin because of him. You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the sons of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself; I am the LORD.

And, 19:33-34, "When a stranger resides with you in your land, you shall not do him wrong. The stranger who resides with you shall be to you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt; I am the LORD your God.

In Romans 13:8-10 Paul uses the same argument. "Owe nothing to anyone except to love one another; for he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled *the* law. For this, 'YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT ADULTERY, YOU SHALL NOT MURDER, YOU SHALL NOT STEAL, YOU SHALL NOT COVET,' and if there is any other commandment, it is summed up in this saying, 'YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.' Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of *the* law."

We see the same words from Jesus when He told the lawyer who asked Him the question, "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?" And He (Jesus) said to him, " 'YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND.' "This is the great and foremost commandment. "The second is like it, 'YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.' "On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets." Matthew 22:36-40

"Love" fulfills the law in this way: the very essence of the intent of the law comes to fulfillment in genuine heartfelt love for God and other people – that which God Himself loves.

15: In the churches of Galatia, rather than exhibiting love, they were biting and devouring each other. The illustration is that of fighting wild animals which, regardless of the damage inflicted continue to tear at each other until both are vanquished. This is neither an exhibition of the love God commands nor healthy for the spiritual life of the church Christ gave His life to save, redeem and set free. (See: 5:25-26)

5:16-21

16: But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. 17: For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please. 18: But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law. 19: Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, 20: idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, 21: envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

16: Paul, like John, sees the works of the flesh revealed in two ways. First is the attempt to achieve righteousness through the law by the “works” of the flesh and second is the manifestation of acts of debauchery and ungodliness often associated with carnality Paul calls the “desires of the flesh”. Both are in stark contrast with the Spirit of God. Here, Paul looks at the contrast of the desires of the flesh with the desires of the Spirit.

17: In the life of the Christian, he finds that there is a conflict within between the desires of the flesh and the will of the Spirit. The desires of the flesh attempt to thwart the influence of the Spirit and the Spirit stands to thwart the desires of the flesh. This places the believer in the midst of the two factions and one cannot simply or pleasantly live according to the desires of the flesh. The very presence and power of the Spirit inhibits a Christian from doing as he pleases in terms of living according to the desires of the flesh.⁶³

18: An unusual phrase in the context. What is Paul saying? One nuance is that Paul seems to be including within the “desires” or works of the flesh the urge to be righteous before God by the works of the Law, specifically by keeping the Law and undergoing circumcision. Another would be that Paul is saying that being “under the Law” reveals the “fleshly desires” and sinful urges and thus stimulates the effort of the flesh to be righteous by resisting these urges and trying to obey the Law. This is not how the Spirit works. To be led by the Spirit is to be free from all of this and the bondage to sin and the Law.⁶⁴ The law provides no power to help in the resistance to sin.

19-21: These “deeds or works of the flesh” are obvious. “Obvious” means that they are not of the Spirit of God and indeed stand in contrast to the “fruit of the Spirit” (those being led by the Spirit) that Paul will delineate later. Those engaging in such deeds are clearly not led by the Spirit and in fact are living in the manner of the ungodly unbeliever who will not inherit the kingdom of God.

The first three words Paul uses apply to the moral and sexual nature of the desires and deeds of the flesh. The opposites would be more in line with the Spirit.

“Immorality” is “πορνεία” (por-nay-ah), from which we get our word “pornography” and delineates sexual immorality including adultery, incest, fornication, and lust.

“Impurity” is “ακαθαρσία” (ah-kah-thar-sia), and the root is where we get our word “catharsis” meaning to “cleanse” or “purify”. The alpha prefix means the negation or opposite of the root, so “unclean”, or “impure” is the meaning. It applies to both the physical and the moral.

“Sensuality” is “ασελγεία” (ah-sel geh ia), meaning filthy, wanton and licentious.

The next two words Paul employs refer to spiritual debauchery.

⁶³ See: Romans 7:21-25

⁶⁴ Note Paul’s argument in Romans 6:1-23

“Idolatry” is “ειδωλολατρια” (i-doh-loh-lah-triah), meaning the worship of idols, or images.

“Sorcery” is “φαρμακεια” (phar-mah-keh-ah), from which we get our word “pharmaceutical” and it pertains to those who involve themselves in spiritual spells and trances using drugs or medications such as the oracles. Paul is referring to the specific use of substances to simulate spiritual experiences and divert attention from the true God. That is why it is translated “sorcery”, “witchcraft” or “magic” etc. It is not an indictment of the pharmaceutical industry in general.

The next five words have to do with divisive behavior toward other people.

“Enmities” is “εχθρα” (ek-thra), meaning “hostility”, “hatred”.

“Strife” is “ερις” (air-is) indicating “friction”, “contentiousness”.

“Jealousy” is “ζελος”, (zealous) meaning “filled with fervency or heat” toward someone or something in passion but different than anger. Could be a cause as well as a person.

“Outbursts of anger” are “θυμος”, (thu-mohs) from which we get our word “thermal” “thermos” and “thermometer”. The concept is of that of a “whirlwind of rage”.

“Disputes” are “εριθεια”, (air-rih-thi-ah) from the root meaning “a rivalry between day laborers”.

“Dissensions” are “διχοστασια”, (dix-oh-stah-cia) meaning “to stand apart” or “in disagreement”.

“Factions” are “αιρεσις”, (ai-reh-sis) meaning to hold an opinion or position one thinks is superior or higher than someone else’s.

“Envying” is “φθονος”, (fth-oh-nos)

The final two words have to do with public behavior.

“Drunkenness” is “μεθη” from which we get our prefix “meth” and indicates being under the influence of an intoxicant, usually an alcoholic beverage.

“Carousing” is “κομος” meaning public revelry and disorderly conduct.

“...of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.”⁶⁵ Paul is informing them of the consequences of this type

⁶⁵ See also: I Corinthians 6:9-10; Ephesians 5:5.

of behavior beforehand indicating those who are truly of the Spirit and those who are not. The word “practice” is “πρασσω” indicating an unrestrained and habitual life style, not “ποιεω”, an occasional slip, into carnal behavior. This is not an indicator of those who could lose their salvation but an indicator of those who actually belong to Jesus and those who do not (see verse 24).⁶⁶

5:22-23

22: But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,
23: gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

22: Paul now lists the fruit of the Spirit juxtaposed to the works of the desires of the flesh.⁶⁷ It is important to note that “The Fruit of the Spirit” are not produced by the works of the flesh or by human effort. They develop in the life of the believer as the believer sets aside all reliance in his own works for a righteous standing before God. They come from the Spirit as a result of faith and relationship with God in Christ, not as a result of human commitment, dedication, religious activity, and so on. The Fruit of the Spirit are all attributes of God as well as from God. Thus, they cannot spoil. They cannot rot. They are unaffected by any outside pestilence. They are unmovable, unchangeable, undeterred, and unshakable. Anything produced as a result of the Spirit in our lives will last eternally and any work we do that allows others to taste of His fruit will never be in vain. Therefore they are not a goal to be reached, a challenge to overcome, or attributes to be achieved.

In fact it is all this that inhibits the Fruit of the Spirit from developing (note: 5:4).⁶⁸ The Fruit of the Spirit is that which first engulfs the true believer in God’s grace in Christ and then is

⁶⁶ Appropriate are the words of Jesus when He said, "Beware of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves. "You will know them by their fruits. Grapes are not gathered from thorn bushes nor figs from thistles, are they? "So every good tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears bad fruit. "A good tree cannot produce bad fruit, nor can a bad tree produce good fruit. "Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. "So then, you will know them by their fruits. "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven *will enter*. "Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' "And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS.' Matthew 7:15-23

⁶⁷ For a full study of “How The Fruit of The Spirit Develop in The Life of The Christian”, see this author’s work so entitled.

⁶⁸ I include this prayer as a suggestion for those who wish to move into this reality. “Dearest Father in Heaven. Please remove from me all vestiges of righteousness I may have credited to myself, thinking they will gain credit with you. I empty myself of everything that I think might be of some credit to me and cast myself, empty, upon your altar. Nothing of myself I bring, only to Jesus do I cling. I give up any effort to be obedient or good based on my ideas of what that means. Cleanse my conscience once again, and allow the Spirit to give me a conscience that is reflective of Your Will alone. I pray that my thoughts, words, will and deeds would be prompted by your Spirit alone. I pray to have your Spirit develop the genuine fruit in my life only He can develop. Please let my actions be motivated by love alone. I desire and ask that You be glorified in my life because my life is being led by your Spirit and not by my own will. Yet, conform my will to the leading of the Spirit. I want to be led into all truth. I desire to be free from all that haunts me and binds me. I present my body to you as the dwelling of the Holy Spirit to live the life that you please. I wish to live my life as a believer in your dear Son, not for the benefit I might derive, but for that which the Spirit would use me to your glory.”

exhibited through the believer to others. They are also divine in nature, of a spiritual essence and origin and not human in origin. Therefore their nature and characteristics are different in many ways than how we would define them from a human perspective. Only in full reliance upon God for the creation of spiritual fruit, and in full surrender and submission to Him clearing away all impediments of religiosity is it possible for the Spirit to begin this work. The development of this Fruit may take years, even decades. Then the characteristics of each individual fruit becomes a part of the nature of the believer in such a subtle and gentle way that the believer hardly notices it. Fruit takes time to grow and its growth is not even noticed by the believer until sometime later when he or she looks back on his attitude, perspective and conduct realizing that changes have transpired over the years...changes that are not human in origin. And, since it is of the Spirit of God, it cannot be touched changed, shaken, damaged, negated, or destroyed. It can't fade away, and is eternal, infinite, everlasting and forever. The only thing a believer can do is bring grief to the Spirit or quench the Spirit.⁶⁹ But that is repairable.

"Love" is "αγαπη", (ah-gaph-ey) a self sacrificing love that is without thought of recompense or blessing. This is the nature of God Himself. It is not sympathy, empathy, affection, or dependant upon the "lovability", worthiness, or attractiveness of someone else. This kind of love loves because of the nature of the one who loves, not because of the nature or characteristics of another. Emotion does not play a primary role here, but the view of others as God sees them. It is without prejudice, judgment, condemnation, criticism, complaint, or evaluation. This love to and through the believer cannot be altered.

Here is a statement one may wish to consider. "If one is a person in whom the Spirit of God has developed the fruit of "love", then one is never offended by anything anyone does or says." You may be saddened, or even angered, but never offended.

"Offense" means that one takes offense at whatever comes one's way personally. If one is not offended, this means that when someone "offends" the Christian still feels the same about him or her, even if they lie or gossip about the Christian. One does not hold it against them but understands (with compassion) their struggle. One does not write them off, hold a grudge against them or act cordially toward them while at the same time thinking they are not worthy of it.

"Joy" is "χαρα", (cha-rah). We take the name Cara from this word and the word "charismatic" is rooted in it. But as a Fruit of the Spirit, this "joy", "delight" "gladness" and "calm delight" is actually a reality taking place deep in a person's being sustaining him in spite of the frightening and stormy circumstances one experiences in this world. It is not a shallow and momentary happiness or delight, such as when one is benefitted in some way. This joy is an inner spiritual reality transcending any earthly or temporal "joy". Thus, like all the fruit, it cannot be reduced or changed.

"Peace" is "ειπηνη", (ear-ray-nay). This is not a temporary cessation of hostilities between two parties or between a person and God. It is an inner reality like "love" and "joy", and "peace" and

⁶⁹ See: Ephesians 4:30. Grieve here means to make one heavy of heart and sorrowful. Also, I Thessalonians 5:19 where "quench" is to "extinguish" the work of the Holy Spirit by resorting to humanly based means of dealing with others.

is unaffected by any turmoil going on in the human life or the world as we know it. “Love”, “joy” and “peace” as Fruit of the Spirit, are not fruit borne by the efforts of our flesh, and can never be. Thus, because they are of the Spirit, they remain. The world only knows and expresses these things by the limits of the mind and flesh. Thus they are very shallow and easily stifled by the circumstances of human interaction and emotion. “Peace” is the true sense of well being in the midst of turmoil without or within. It is unaffected by anything this universe throws at it. Whether with God, the future, death, sadness, sickness or anything else, “peace” remains.

“Patience” is “μακροθυμία”, (mack-roh-thu-mia). The “Fruit of patience” and the phrase “Love is patient” are similar but not quite the same. However, there is some overlap. In the I Corinthians 13 “Love is patient” we see that this is applied to personal relationships rather than to situations. The Fruit of the Spirit called “Love” deals with personal relationships but “patience” with people stems from “Love”. The “Fruit of patience” is slightly different and has more to do with persevering one’s walk with the Lord. The KJV translates it “longsuffering”.

To be clear, the “Fruit of Patience” from the Spirit is not:

1. The ability by our own efforts to restrain emotional outbursts when provoked.
2. The ability to stay at a tedious task or in a disturbing relational situation without frustration.
3. The act or quality of waiting long for justice or expected good without discontent.

More on point is:

4. The suffering of afflictions, pain, toil, calamity, provocation or other evil, with a calm, unruffled temper; endurance without murmuring or fretfulness. Patience may spring from constitutional fortitude, from a kind of heroic pride, or from Christian submission to the divine will.

In this definition the human character or nature of some people is seen, as well as the spiritual development. Some people can be very patient by their own ability or training. Others, not so much. The spiritual reality is not formed by human nature, character, training or ability.

The dictionary goes on and uses another definition of patience.

5. Perseverance; constancy in labor or exertion.

This is possible both by human endowment and by spiritual endowment. However, the ability to persevere in the Lord cannot be achieved simply by human effort. It would then become religious works. No, spiritual perseverance stems from this specific Fruit of the Spirit and the Christian continues on despite everything that would try to derail, discourage, or defeat him.

Finally, patience is defined in the dictionary as:

6. The quality of bearing offenses and injuries without anger or revenge.

But this is actually, in Christ, an attribute of “love” as described in I Corinthians 13:5 “love does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered.”

“Patience” then is that deep rooted, unmovable, quality transcending and deflecting any effort or power to discourage, depress, derail, or doubt one’s security in Christ and determination to follow Him - no matter what

“Kindness” is “χρηστοτης”, (crehs-toe-tehs). This is a “kindness” that supercedes any human effort and exists even when it is being severely challenged or threatened. Again, a fruit that is not affected by anything from the outside that would spoil it. But how does this work?

As the kindness of God toward us is not thwarted by man’s efforts to dismiss it or discount it So the fruit of “kindness” is like this. The word picture is of one person stretching out his hand to another, even if the other is refusing the offer, or threatening the person making the offer. This is akin to what the Bible says of God’s kindness toward us.

“He made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him.” Ephesians 1:9

“And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest. But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly *places* in Christ Jesus, so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.” Ephesians 2:1-7

So the same “kindness” we experience from God is the same “kindness” that is to flow through us for the sake of others. It is an essential element to bring others to Christ. Those who want to be witnesses of others of Christ may be wasting their time if the “prospect” does not sense sincere “kindness” not to mention “love” from the witness. This could go a long way toward answering the questions so many have about this subject. First comes the Fruit, especially “kindness” which helps people turn to Christ from where they are. I have always believed that we must earn the right to present Christ to others, as a kind friend that they know genuinely cares for them.

“Goodness” is “αγαθωσυνη” (ah-gah-thoh-soon-eh). As with “peace”, “patience” and “kindness”, the fruit of “goodness” is not a temporary feeling, attitude or action on the part of one human being toward another. It is not life long philanthropy. Also, the fruit of “goodness” does not discriminate between who deserve “goodness” and those who don’t. The actual word Paul uses indicates an action to bring benefit to other people, without judgment or discrimination. Further, this “goodness” is not prompted by guilt, the need to repay someone’s

kindness, or by any human compulsion. The word translated “goodness” means to seek another’s benefit.

The “goodness” the Spirit of God develops in the life of a Christian is not dissuaded by anyone or anything that would indicate that goodness is not warranted or deserved. “Goodness” that is of the Spirit reaches out to others, for their benefit without thought of reciprocation. Again, this reflects how God seeks to benefit us. This gives us, once again, the insight that the fruit of “goodness” cannot be affected by anything, including evil, because it is of God. Otherwise, how can a person “overcome evil with good” as the Christian is instructed?

“Faithfulness” is “πιστις” (pis-tis). Faithfulness is the same word as faith. Faith is not obedience to dead works. It is not observance of some religious practice, nor is it simple mental ascent or belief. It is not a set of creeds, laws, rituals, requirements, standards, religious duties, sacraments, liturgies, sacrifices, service, commitments, cash outlays, charitable works, or self-sacrificing acts in the name of Christ or anyone else. It is not a mental ascent to some set of beliefs or even belief in God or Jesus and all He did. It is a living relationship, not a dead work of the body and mind. It is a product of The Holy Spirit alone and thus designated a “Fruit of the Spirit”. As the fruit of “Patience” leans toward “perseverance” in our walk with Jesus, so “faithfulness” or “faith” is different than we might first think. Some equate “faithfulness” with our steadfast walk in Christ, when it really leans toward our relationship with others. Like the other fruit it is an attribute of God not a product of human flesh or mind.

Faith or faithfulness transcends human ability. For most people, faithfulness endures until the other person is deemed to be unfaithful. Then it is damaged. But the fruit of “faithfulness” the Spirit develops, like all the other “Fruit”, is not affected by any human challenge, wickedness or circumstance. In fact, it does not even feel or notice it. And, like all the other Fruit of the Spirit, faithfulness is first ours to enjoy from God and then to share with others. It is another fruit that seeks to draw people to God in Christ because the motive for doing so is totally unselfish.

“Gentleness is “πραΰτης” (prau-tays). It is not weakness, timidity, uncertainty, apprehension, carefulness, or soft-ness. “Gentleness” does not mean that a person is unable to correct, rebuke, teach, take control, command, administer discipline or exhibit such characteristics as that. It does not describe one who cowers. It is not retiring, shy, reticent, quiet, humble, and meek. Gentleness is not the opposite of greatness. In fact it is a characteristic of greatness and spiritual strength.

The word Paul picks is unusual. Any form of this word is only used a total of 15 times in the New Testament. Those who use it are Matthew, James, Peter and Paul. The meaning of this word is seen in the picture of a person who brings a soothing balm to a burning or conflicting situation. One could compare it with a crème that takes away the pain of a burn on one’s skin. In ancient Greece, the word is used of taming or “gentling” wild animals. In the Bible it is used to convey the greatness of one’s heart in his or her ability to soothe, allay, or calm a potential or active volatile situation. This greatness of one’s heart is attributed in the Bible, to a person who has gladly submitted himself or herself to God in order to be like God. Jesus is seen in this light and sees Himself in this light.

This attribute of the Spirit, and the Fruit thereof, deals specifically then, with inter-relational

crises, especially in helping others be released of their hostility, and even taking it upon one's self. It does not become embittered or angry at what is unpleasant and is the opposite of roughness or brusqueness. It is often associated with wisdom in that it sees the situation from God's point of view and then acts as a reconciler, peacemaker, redeemer, one who understands. Therefore it is the opposite of arrogance and pride. Yet "Gentleness" can correct, rebuke or advise the lawless and disobedient even though an injustice might occur to the one doing so.

It is the Fruit of "Gentleness" that allows a Christian to be the kind of person who, rather than being caught up in the volatile matter, brings a ministry of soothing even if it requires rebuke. The godly rebuke, by the way, reveals to the one rebuked that his stand or declaration is inappropriate and is done in such a way that he himself recognizes the truth of it and is put to shame. Rebuke is not the angry attempt to impose one's own will or way upon another who is in disagreement.

"Self-control" is "εγκρατεία" (egk-rah-tay-ah). This term is only used six times in the New Testament, and only by Paul and Peter. Again, it is used in a different sense than we might imagine.

In the ancient Greek schools of philosophy, ethics and religion, "self-control" meant the virtue of having inward strength or power over one's desires and passions. This is how we define it normally today. For the Greeks, it was the discipline of denying one's drives for the sake of a goal. This goal was often to conform with a company of people of similar mindset who believed that achieving this goal would allow them to attain some sort of happiness, or recognition and honor from other people or from God. Proponents of this, in one form or another, included Socrates, Plato, Zeno (the founder of Stoicism) Philo, and so on. Their idea of self control was mostly understood in terms of self denial or "asceticism". This included the drives of the flesh such as sex, food, temperament, wealth, and so forth. So this was the Greek way for some, including the religious, and even later the Gnostics the early church fought so hard, but it was never the Christian understanding or use of "self-control". What the Greeks did eons ago we now call "will-power".

The Biblical term "self-control" does, however, carry with it the idea of "power". Having power over or in one's self. To be inwardly strong is the idea. However, this inward strength transcends normal human determination and will. It is more than humanly generated "will-power". It is a power generated by God's Holy Spirit within the human will and mind. In the six times the term is used in the New Testament by Paul and Peter, there are three applications to which the Spirit gives empowerment. The difference between the purpose of this fruit and normal will power or self-discipline is that while these latter seek for personal achievement, the Spirit develops this fruit in the critical areas of relationships for the express purpose of benefiting others.

The three applications are:

1. The fruit of "self-control" helps inner power and helps resist the temptation to sexual immorality, unless of course, a person is bent on this activity.

In advising the unmarried Paul wrote,

“But I say to the unmarried and to widows that it is good for them if they remain even as I. But if they do not have “self-control”, let them marry; for it is better to marry than to burn *with passion.*” I Corinthians 7:8-9

2. Achieving a goal, as an athlete would, but for the sake of others rather than for oneself. Paul wrote, “Everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. They then *do it* to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable.” I Corinthians 9:25

In the context, Paul is talking about conforming his life so he can speak and minister to all people for the sake of their salvation. He uses the idea of self-control as sacrificing one’s self for the benefit of others. Spiritual self-control grants power to exclude things that would detract from God’s goal of ministering to people.

3. The fruit of “Self-Control” prompts a person to submit to no other control except that of God. In other words, is to be under no other power or authority than that which is in oneself. This is why it is called “self-control”, in that the “self” is under the control or power of the Spirit. This fruit allows us to continue to be led by the Spirit and walk in the Spirit. That is, conduct our lives by the will of the Spirit and thus bear the fruit of the Spirit.

“Against such things there is no law”. Paul could be resorting to sarcasm here in that he is chiding those who are under the law and here is something they can obey. “Oh, there is no prohibition against these in the law, so they are out of luck. I guess they must come from another source, imagine that.” No part of the Law stands against these spiritual virtues. Neither can fleshly obedience to the Law produce such spiritual fruit.

5:24-25:

24: Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. 25: If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit. 26: Let us not become boastful, challenging one another, envying one another.

24: “Who belong to...” is actually “who are of”.⁷⁰ These have “crucified” the list of fleshly desires and passions Paul notes in 5: 19-21. This means that those who are of Christ wish all their personal wickedness to die an inglorious death.

Jamieson, Fausset and Brown say it this way, “They nailed it to the cross once for all when they became Christ’s, on believing and being baptized: they keep it now in a state of crucifixion so that the Spirit can produce in them, comparatively uninterrupted by it, ‘the fruit of the Spirit’”.

25: If our lives are due to the Spirit then we must conduct our lives by the leading of the Spirit which is defined by the fruit described above. There were those in Galatia, as well as in the church today, who are not alive by the Spirit and so do not conduct themselves by the Spirit and in whom the fruit of the Spirit do not exist. But for those who are alive in Christ by the Spirit,

⁷⁰ See also, I Corinthians 1:12, 3:23, 15:23; II Corinthians 10:7; Galatians 3:29

Paul commands that they “walk” – that is conduct their lives by the Spirit who is in them and who leads them. This word “walk” in verse 25 is different than in verse 15. There it means “conducting oneself in daily living”, Here, the different word (στοιχέω – “stoi-keh-oh”) means to do so in a strict, military like conformity, in step with the leading of the Spirit.

26: This verse is better as a beginning of a new theme as 6:1 continues the thought. Paul now moves to using general terms such as “anyone”, “one” “someone” and so on as he instructs all to whom the following teachings may apply. Paul is now moving to instruction in restoring and reconciling the church members with each other. First, they are to refrain from continuing to create factions by setting themselves up as superior to others and causing contention among the body of Christ (See: 6:3). If they reject the passions and desires of the flesh as well as spiritual holiness based on obedience to the Law and become bearers of the fruit of the Spirit, this provoking, challenging and envying will cease.

CHAPTER SIX

6:1-5

1: Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; *each one* looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted. 2: Bear one another's burdens, and thereby fulfill the law of Christ. 3: For if anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself. 4: But each one must examine his own work, and then he will have *reason for* boasting in regard to himself alone, and not in regard to another. 5: For each one will bear his own load.

1: Paul appeals to them using the term “brethren’ once again. Rather than engage in mutually destructive behavior (5:26) restoration and reconciliation are the goals to be sought, especially when one is caught having fallen into a sin or transgression. This is to be accomplished by those who are “spiritual” with a “spirit” of gentleness. The best way to describe those who are spiritual are those who can be described as a “breath of fresh air” in the midst of a difficult situation. The word “spirit” is rooted in the idea of “the breath of God”.⁷¹ “Gentleness” is humility and Paul uses this because everyone has sinned and none are immune from falling. Therefore, the spiritual person recognizes this and treats the other with grace and understanding in the manner that he himself would be treated by God. Of course, persistent rebellion and engagement in ungodliness is to be met with admonition and rebuke.

2: “Carry another’s weight upon your self” is the idea. Conversely, don’t stand by and let them carry the weight alone. This is the true essence of loving others which is the fulfillment of the “law of Christ”.⁷²

3: Verses 3-5 are to be taken together and hint at the attitude of the Jusaisers. The deception comes when a person thinks he is above others and will not succumb to such things. “Pride goes

⁷¹ Note: John 3:8

⁷² See: John 15:17; Romans 13:8-10; I Corinthians 16:14; Galatians 5:14; etc.

before destruction, And a haughty spirit before stumbling” is the theme of Proverbs 16:18, and “A man's pride will bring him low, But a humble spirit will obtain honor” says Proverbs 29:23.

4: Continuing this idea of superiority over others, Paul tells his readers that they are not to boast about how much better they are than someone else, but examine their own works in seeking a reason to boast about themselves. In the case of the Judaisers, Paul makes a comment about this in verse 13.

5: Those who think themselves self sufficient and better than others will not appeal to nor accept The help of others in terms of carrying his “burden”. So he will have to carry it himself. This is the consequence of pride.

6:6-10

6: The one who is taught the word is to share all good things with the one who teaches *him*.

7: Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap.

8: For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life. 9: Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary. 10: So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith.

6: A better translation would be, “But the one who is taught the word is to participate in all the good with the one who teaches.” Paul is the true teacher here. Dr. Marvin R. Vincent notes, “...that the disciple should make common cause with the teacher in everything that is morally good and that promotes salvation. The introduction at this point of the relation of disciple and teacher may be explained by the fact that this relation in the Galatian community had been disturbed by the efforts of the Judaizing teachers, notably in the case of Paul himself; and this disturbance could not but interfere with their common moral effort and life.”⁷³ The word good is “agathos” indicating that which is beneficial, kind and helpful toward other people. It is the same usage Jesus’ uses in His example, “Well done, good and faithful servant.”

7-8: These verses go together but are prefaced by 6, which is the immediate context. Verse 7 is often taken out of context and applied to everything as a general proverb. But Paul is specific here. His point begins with the phrase, “Do not be deceived”, again referencing the matter about which Paul is in conflict with the Judaisers. He is cautioning the hearers. God is not “fooled” by the claims, purposes and lives of the Judaisers so don’t be deceived that He is or can be. What is sown is what will be reaped. Sowing pictures the teaching part of one’s works. So God is not going to allowing the reaping of wheat when the seeds of weeds are sown. Corruption is defined as the crop of seed sown to one’s own flesh - that is, the works of circumcision and of the Law as a means to reap righteousness and life as was taught to the believers at Galatia. Those sowing seed to the Spirit are those who will reap eternal life, that is, those whose works are in accordance with the leading of the Spirit. Verse 7 is clearly defined by verse 8, but based in verse 6. We should be careful in how we use verse seven. It has actually been used by modern false teachers in a total reverse of its intent as they use it to promote works of the law so that God will

⁷³ Vincent’s New Testament Word Studies, 1887.

respond and the Christian will benefit.

9: Doing “good” is in accordance with the idea of “sowing to the Spirit” and is different than verses 6 and 10. Here the word “kalos” indicates virtue and beauty, that which is of the highest and finest nature. It indicates the quality of the “good” done for others. The “reaping” is that yet to come (“in due time”), perhaps in the “age to come” and is attributed to each individual. The word “time” here is “kairos” meaning at the season or opportunity for reaping. “Not lose heart”: and “not grow weary” are a parallelism.

10: The present task, then, is to take the opportunity or season (again “kairos”) and use it for “good” (agathos again). This means good deeds. Those who are the recipients are everyone, whether of faith or not. But if there are to be “good deeds” done, those of the “household of faith” must not be ignored.

6:11-18

11: See with what large letters I am writing to you with my own hand. 12: Those who desire to make a good showing in the flesh try to compel you to be circumcised, simply so that they will not be persecuted for the cross of Christ. 13: For those who are circumcised do not even keep the Law themselves, but they desire to have you circumcised so that they may boast in your flesh. 14: But may it never be that I would boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. 15: For neither is circumcision anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation. 16: And those who will walk by this rule, peace and mercy *be* upon them, and upon the Israel of God. 17: From now on let no one cause trouble for me, for I bear on my body the brand-marks of Jesus. 18: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brethren. Amen.

11: This is to let the churches know that his letter is authentic. This became a habit for Paul. When other churches were receiving letters and reports purporting to be from Paul or other apostles. He had written to the church at Thessalonica regarding this problem, “...that you not be quickly shaken from your composure or be disturbed either by a spirit or a message or a letter as if from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come. Let no one in any way deceive you...” II Thessalonians 2:2-3a. And in the same letter he noted, “I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand, and this is a distinguishing mark in every letter; this is the way I write.”
II Thessalonians 3:17

The comment about the size of his signature may refer to his failing eyesight.

12: Paul now summarizes his argument and attributes a motive for the Judaisers compelling the Gentiles to be circumcised. It is simply to avoid the severe pressure and persecution from the Jewish leadership in each city. If the Judaisers can turn the Gentiles from faith in Christ alone to being Jewish proselytes, then perhaps the heat of persecution can be avoided. Gaining proselytes from among the Gentiles was acceptable to the Jews. But they had to be circumcised and conform to the Law of Moses and all the traditions to be a true proselyte. This also included renouncing all other Gods.

13: Paul notes the hypocrisy of the Judaisers. While requiring others to be circumcised with the pretense that this fulfills the rite for righteousness, they themselves are law breakers. Their purpose is to be able to say to other Jews that they “won” over Gentiles to Judaism. This is a boasting in the flesh (circumcision) of the Gentiles. Thus, they appease their persecutors.

14: Paul’s point is that if persecution is the result of faith in Christ it matters not because Paul’s boasting is in that which is most shameful to others, the cross. It is the sign of the cursed (Galatians 3:13) which Christ bore for all who believe in him. To the Jew it was repugnant, disgusting and a stumbling block to think that God’s son, the Messiah would be crucified.

Rather than boast in his own accomplishments, Paul will boast in Christ’s,⁷⁴ indeed in the cross of Christ itself. Paul sees himself dead to the world and the world dead to him.⁷⁵ This means that all that the world attributed to him and he to the world is of no merit. All of it is of the flesh and all of it was crucified when Christ died on the cross. What is relevant now is the new creation and Paul lives now only for the new creation by the Spirit (verse 15).

15: In other words, all works of the flesh that attempt to achieve righteousness and favor with God are useless, vain and empty. What matters is the “new creation”. This is explained further in II Corinthians 5:16-17, “Therefore from now on we recognize no one according to the flesh; even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know *Him in this way* no longer. Therefore if anyone is in Christ, *he is* a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.”

16: The word “rule” is “kah-neh” from which we get the word “canon” and indicates a standard or line of proper guidance and accuracy. It is by walking accordingly to that which is a new creation by the spirit that the peace and mercy of God descends. “The Israel of God” is not historical, traditional, fleshly Israel, but those who are the redeemed by faith in Christ. Israel has always been those of faith in Paul’s eyes, the spiritual seed of Abraham. Paul wrote to the church of Rome, “That is, it is not the children of the flesh who are children of God, but the children of the promise are regarded as descendants.” Romans 9:8

17: “Cause me trouble”, literally, “find occasion to cut into me” – “any longer”. He already has the “brand marks” of Jesus. Paul uses the word “stigmata” here. He bears on his body the “stigmata” of Christ. These marks (and the word) represents the “brand of an owner upon a slave, animal, soldier, or possession indicating to whom it belongs.

18: Paul seems quite weary. He does not close his epistle with enthusiasm. He is drained and does not want any more “trouble”. He has had enough. He simply closes the epistle with the benediction that their spirit be open to, and melded with the grace of the Lord. In other words, any other work in their lives Paul is leaving to God and to them. He again encompasses them in his own circle of relationship and affection in Christ by using the term “brethren”. The word “Amen” is from the Hebrew meaning “faithfully”, “truly”, or “worthy of faith”.

⁷⁴ Paul reiterates this in Philippians 3.

⁷⁵ See: 2:19-20; 5:24; and Colossians 2:20.

We reflect this sentiment when closing our letters, “truly yours”, or “faithfully yours”.

Postscript

We do not know who took the letter to Galatia or which church first received it. We cannot be absolutely sure even when it was written. We do know that Paul visited these churches on more than three occasions over the period of his ministry. We also know that the hoped for results of this epistle to the churches in Galatia were achieved in a significant manner. The letter was received, read, understood and that the people were persuaded to return to the true gospel Paul preached and to the Lord as their only means of righteousness. Otherwise, we wouldn't have the letter today as those under the influence of the Judaisers, the letter would likely have been destroyed. But it was not. It was copied and circulated and used by the Lord to bring his people back into the truth and purity of their spiritual lives. Such remains the mission of the teachers of God's Word today and we have this magnificent epistle to show the way of truth and the way of error.

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