
Paul's Letter to the Galatians

Paul Sends the Letter to the Galatians ¹

It was probably already winter, when St. Paul once more beheld in the distance the lofty citadel of Corinth, towering above the isthmus which it commands. The gloomy season must have harmonized with his feelings as he approached. The clouds which, at the close of autumn, so often hang round the summit of the Acrocorinthus, and cast their shadow upon the city below, might have seemed to typify the mists of vice and error which darkened the minds even of its Christian citizens. Their father in the faith knew that, for some of them at least, he had labored in vain. He was returning to converts who had cast off the morality of the Gospel; to friends who had forgotten his love; to enemies who disputed his divine commission. It is true, the majority of the Corinthian Church had repented of their worst sins, and submitted to his Apostolic commands. Yet what was forgiven could not entirely be forgotten; even towards the penitent he could not feel all the confidence of earlier affection; and there was still left an obstinate minority, who would not give up their habits of impurity, and who, when he spoke to them of righteousness and judgment to come, replied either by openly defending their sins, or by denying his authority and impugning his orthodoxy.

He now came prepared to put down this opposition by the most decisive measures: resolved to cast out of the Church these antagonists of truth and goodness, by the plenitude of his Apostolic power. Thus he warned them a few months before (as he had threatened, when present on an earlier occasion), "when I come again, I will not spare" (2 Cor. 13:2). He declared his determination to punish the disobedient (2 Cor. 10:6). He "boasted" of the authority which Christ had given him (2 Cor. 10:8). He besought them not

to compel him to use the weapons entrusted to him (2 Cor. 10:2), weapons not of fleshly weakness, but endowed with the might of God (2 Cor. 10:4). He pledged himself to execute by hi!/ deeds when present, all he had threatened by his words when absent (2 Cor. 10:11).

As we think of him, with these purposes of severity in his mind, approaching the walls of Corinth, we are irresistibly reminded of the eventful close of a former journey, when Saul," breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord," drew nigh to Damascus. How strongly does this accidental resemblance bring out the essential contrast between the weapons and the spirit of Saul and Paul! Then he wielded the sword of the secular power he traveled as the proud representative of the Sanhedrin the minister of human cruelty and injustice: he was the Jewish Inquisitor the exterminator of heretics, seeking for victims to imprison or td stone. Now he is meek and lowly, travelling in the humblest guise of poverty, with no outward marks of pre eminence or power; he has no jailers at his command to bind his captives, no executioners to carry out his sentence. All he can do is to exclude those who disobey him from a society of poor and ignorant outcasts, who are the objects of contempt to all the mighty, and wise, and noble, among their countrymen. His adversaries despise his apparent insignificance; they know that he has no outward means of enforcing his will; they see that his bodily presence is weak; they think his speech contemptible. Yet he is not so powerless as he seems.

Though now he wields no carnal weapons, his arms are not weaker but stronger than they were of old. He cannot bind the bodies of men, but he can bind their souls. Truth and love are on his side; the Spirit of God bears witness with the spirits of men on his behalf. His weapons are" mighty to overthrow the strongholds of the adversaries;" "Thereby" he could" overthrow the reasoning of the disputer, and pull down the lofty bulwarks which raise themselves against the knowledge of God, and bring every

¹ This article is from Conybeare, W. J. and Howson, J. S, *The Life and Epistles of St. Paul, Chapter 18*

rebellious thought into captivity and subjection to Christ"

Nor is there less difference in the spirit of his warfare than in the character of his weapons. Then he" breathed out threatenings and slaughter;" he" made havoc of the Church;" he" haled men and women into prison;" he" compelled them to blaspheme." When their sentence was doubtful, he gave his vote for their destruction; he was" exceedingly mad against them." Then his heart was filled with pride and hate, uncharitableness and self will.

But now his proud and passionate nature is transformed by the Spirit of God; he is crucified with Christ: the fervid impetuosity of his character is tempered by meekness and gentleness; his very denunciations and threats of punishment are full of love; he grieves over his contumacious opponents; the thought of their pain fills him with sadness." For if I cause you grief, who is there to cause me joy?" (2 Cor. 2:2) He implores them, even at the eleventh hour, to save him from the necessity of dealing harshly with them; he had rather leave his authority doubtful, and still remain liable to the sneers of his adversaries, than establish it by their punishment (2 Cor. 13:7 9). He will condescend to the weakest prejudices, rather than cast a stumbling block in a brother's path; he is ready to become " all things to all men," that he may" by all means save some"

Yet all that was good and noble in the character of Saul remains in Paul, purified from its old alloy. The same zeal for God burns in his heart, though it is no longer misguided by ignorance or warped by party spirit. The same firm resolve is seen in carrying out his principles to \heir consequences, though he shows it not in persecuting but in suffering. The same restless energy, which carried him from Jerusalem to Damascus that he might extirpate heresy, now urges him from one end of the world to the other,² that he may bear the tidings of

² He was at this very time intending to go first to Jerusalem, thence to Rome, and thence to Spain; that

salvation.

The painful anticipations which saddened his return to Corinth were not, however, altogether unrelieved by happier thoughts. As he approached the well known gates, in the midst of that band of faithful friends who accompanied him from Macedonia, his memory could not but revert to the time when first he entered the same city, a friendless and lonely ³ stranger. He could not but recall the feelings of extreme depression with which he first began his missionary work at Corinth, after his unsuccessful visit to Athens.

The very firmness and bold confidence which now animated him, the assurance which he felt of victory over the opponents of truth, must have reminded him by contrast of the anxiety and self distrust ⁴ which weighed him down at his first intercourse with the Corinthians, and which needed a miraculous vision (Acts 18:9) for its removal. How could he allow discouragement to overcome his spirit, when he remembered the fruits borne by labors which had begun in so much sadness and timidity? It was surely something that hundreds of believers now called on the name of the Lord Jesus, who when he first came among them had worshipped nothing but the deification of their own lusts.

Painful no doubt it was to find that their conversion had been so incomplete; that the pollutions of heathenism still defiled those who had once washed away the stains" of sin; yet the majority of the Church had repented of their offences; the number who obstinately persisted in sin was but small; and if many of the adult converts were so tied and bound by the chains

is, to travel from the eastern to the Western extremities of the civilized world. See Rom. 15:28

³ He was left at Athens along (1 Thess. 3:1) and so remained until Timothy and Silas rejoined him at Corinth.

⁴ See 1 Cor. 2:1-3

of habit, that their complete deliverance could scarce be hoped for, yet at least their children might be brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Moreover, there were some, even in this erring Church, on whom St. Paul could think with unmixed satisfaction; some who walked in the Spirit, and did not fulfill the lust of the flesh: who were created anew in Christ Jesus; with whom old things had passed away, and all things had become new; who dwelt in Christ, and Christ in them.

Such were Erastus the treasurer, and Stephanas, the first fruits of Achaia; such were Fortunatus and Achaicus, who had lately traveled to Ephesus on the errand of their brethren; such was Gaius, who was even now preparing to welcome beneath his hospitable roof the Apostle who had thrown open to himself the door of entrance into the Church of Christ. When St. Paul thought of "them that were such," and of the many others "who worked with them and labored," (1 Cor. 16:60 as he threaded the crowded streets on his way to the house of Gaius, doubtless he" thanked God and took courage"

But a painful surprise awaited him on his arrival. He found that intelligence had reached Corinth from Ephesus, by the direct route, of a more recent date than any which he had lately received; and the tidings brought by this channel concerning the state of the Galatian churches, excited both his astonishment and his indignation.⁵ His converts there, whom he seems to have regarded with peculiar affection, and whose love and zeal for himself had formerly been so conspicuous, were rapidly forsaking his teaching, and falling an easy prey to the arts of Judaizing missionaries from Palestine.

We have seen the vigor and success with which the Judaizing party at Jerusalem were at this period pursuing their new tactics, by carrying

⁵ This is on the assumption that the Epistle to the Galatians was written soon after St. Paul's arrival at Corinth on the present occasion.

the war into the territory of their great opponent, and endeavoring to counterwork him in the very centre of his influence, in the bosom of those Gentile Churches which he had so lately founded. We know how great was the difficulty with which he had defeated (if, indeed, they were yet defeated) the agents of this restless party at Corinth; and now, on his reaching that city to crush the last remains of their opposition, he heard that they had been working the same mischief in Galatia, where he had least expected it.

There, as in most of the early Christian communities, a portion of the Church had been Jews by birth; and this body would afford a natural fulcrum for the efforts of the Judaizing teachers; yet we cannot suppose that the number of Jews resident in this inland district could have been very large. And St. Paul in addressing the Galatians, although he assumes that there were some among them familiar with the Mosaic law, yet evidently implies that the majority were converts from heathenism. (cf. Gal. 4:8) It is remarkable, therefore, that the Judaizing emissaries should so soon have gained so great a hold over a church consisting mainly of Gentile Christians; and the fact that they did so proves not only their indefatigable activity, but also their skill in the arts of conciliation and persuasion. It must be remembered, however, that they were by no means scrupulous as to the means which they employed to effect their objects.

At any cost of falsehood and detraction, they resolved to loosen the hold of St. Paul upon the affection and respect of his converts. Thus to the Galatians they accused him of a want of uprightness, in observing the Law himself whilst among the Jews, yet persuading the Gentiles to renounce it; (Gal. 5:11) they argued that his motive was to keep his converts in a subordinate state, excluded from the privileges of a full covenant with God, which was enjoyed by the circumcised alone; (Gal. 4:16) they declared that he was an interested flatterer," becoming all things to all men," that he might make a party for himself; and above all, they

insisted that he falsely represented himself as an apostle of Christ, for that he had not, like the Twelve, been a follower of Jesus when He was on earth, and had not received His commission; that, on the contrary, he was only a teacher sent out by the authority of the Twelve, whose teaching was only to be received so far as it agreed with theirs and was sanctioned by them; whereas his doctrine (they alleged) was now in opposition to that of Peter and James, and the other "Pillars" of the Church.

By such representations they succeeded to a great extent in alienating the Galatian Christians from their father in the faith: already many of the recent converts submitted to circumcision, (Gal. 6:13) and embraced the party of their new teachers with the same zeal which they had formerly shown for the Apostle of the Gentiles; (Gal. 4:14,15) and the rest of the Church was thrown into a state of agitation and division.

On receiving the first intelligence of these occurrences, St. Paul hastened to check the evil before it should have become irremediable. He wrote to the Galatians an Epistle which begins with an abruptness and severity showing his sense of the urgency of the occasion, and the greatness of the danger. It is also frequently characterized by a tone of sadness, such as would naturally be felt by a man of such warm affections when he heard that those whom he loved were forsaking his cause and believing the calumnies of his enemies. In this letter his principal object is to show that the doctrine of the Judaizers did in fact destroy the very essence of Christianity, and reduced it from an inward and spiritual life to an outward and ceremonial system; but in order to remove the seeds of alienation and distrust which had been designedly planted in the minds of his converts, he begins by fully contradicting the falsehoods which had been propagated against himself by his opponents, and especially by vindicating his title to the Apostolic office as received directly from Christ, and exercised independently of the other Apostles. Such were the circumstances and such the objects which led him to write the

following Epistle.

Epistle to the Galatians

Galatians 1

PAUL an Apostle sent not from men nor by man but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised Him from the dead. With all the brethren in my company; To THE CHURCHES OF GALATIA.

Grace be to you and peace from God our Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ; who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of our God and Father; to whom be glory, even unto the ages of ages. Amen

I marvel that you are so soon shifting your ground, and forsaking Him who called you in the grace of Christ, for a new Glad tidings; which is nothing else but the device of certain men who are troubling you, and who desire to pervert the Glad tidings of Christ. But even though I myself, or an angel from heaven, should declare to you any other Glad tidings than that which I declared, let him be accursed. As I have said before, so now I say again, if any man is come to you with a Glad tidings different from that which you received before, let him be accursed. Think ye that man's assent, or God's is now my object? or is it that I seek favor with men? Nay, if I still sought favor with men, I should not be the bondsman of Christ.

For I certify you, brethren, that the Glad tidings which I brought you is not of man's devising. For I myself received it not from man, nor was it taught me by man's teaching, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ. For you have heard of my former behavior in the days of my Judaism, how I persecuted beyond measure the Church of God, and strove to root it out, and outran in Judaism many of my own age and nation, being more exceedingly zealous for the traditions of my fathers. But when it pleased Him, who set me apart from my mother's womb and called me by His grace, to reveal His Son in me, that I might proclaim His Glad tidings among the Gentiles, I did not take counsel with flesh and blood, nor yet did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were Apostles before me, but I

departed immediately into Arabia, and from thence returned to Damascus. Afterwards, when three years had passed, I went up to Jerusalem, that I might know Cephas and with him I remained fifteen days; but other of the Apostles saw I none, save only James, the brother of the Lord. (Now in this which I write to you, behold I testify before God that I lie not.) After this I came into the regions of Syria and Cilicia ; but I was still unknown by face to the Churches of Christ in Judea: tidings only were brought them from time to time, saying," He who was once our persecutor now bears the Glad tidings of that Faith, which formerly he labored to root out." And they glorified God in me.

Galatians 2

Then fourteen years after, I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and took Titus with me also.

At that time I went up in obedience to a revelation, and I communicated to the brethren in Jerusalem the Glad tidings which I proclaimed among the Gentiles; but to the chief brethren I communicated it privately, lest perchance my labors, either past or present, might be fruitless. Yet not even Titus, my own companion (being a Greek), was compelled to be circumcised. But this communication [with the Apostles in Judea] I undertook on account of the false brethren who gained entrance by fraud, for they crept in among us to spy out our freedom (which we possess in Christ Jesus) that they might enslave us under their own yoke. To whom I yielded not the submission they demanded; no, not for an hour; that the truth of the Glad tidings might stand unaltered for your benefit.

But from those who were held in chief reputation it matters not to me of what account they were, God is no respecter of persons those (I say) who were the chief in reputation gave me no new instruction; but, on the contrary, when they saw that I had been charged to preach the Glad tidings to the uncircumcised, as Peter to the circumcised (for He who wrought in Peter for the Apostleship of the circumcision, wrought also in me for the Gentiles), and when they had learned the grace which had

been given me, James, Cephas, and John, who were accounted chief pillars, gave to me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, purposing that we should go to the Gentiles, and they to the Jews; provided only, that we should remember the poor,⁶ which I have accordingly endeavored to do with diligence. But when Cephas came to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he had incurred reproach; :for before the coming of certain [brethren] from James, he was in the habit of eating with the Gentiles; but when they came, he began to draw back, and to separate himself from the Gentiles, for fear of the Jewish brethren. And he was joined in his dissimulation by the rest of the Jews [in the Church of Antioch], so that even Barnabas was drawn away with them to dissemble in like manner. But when I saw that they were walking in a crooked path, and forsaking the truth of the Glad tidings, I said to Cephas before them all," if thou, being born a Jew, art wont to live according to the customs of the Gentiles, and not of the Jews, how is it that you constrain the Gentiles to keep the ordinances of the Jews ? We are Jews by birth, and not unhallowed Gentiles; yet, knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, we ourselves also have put our faith in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the Law; for by the works of the Law "shall no flesh be justified." (Psalm 143:2)

But what if, while seeking to be justified in Christ, we have indeed reduced ourselves also to the sinful state of unhallowed Gentiles? Is Christ then a minister of sin? God forbid!

For if I again build up that [structure of the Law] which I have overthrown, then I represent myself as a transgressor. Whereas I, through the operation of the Law, became dead to the Law, that I might 20 live to God. I am crucified with Christ; it is no more I that live, but Christ is living in me; and my outward life which still remains, I live in the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and

⁶ Namely, the poor Christians in Judea.

gave Himself for me. I frustrate not God's gift of grace [like those who seek righteousness in the Law]; for if the Law can make men righteous, then Christ died in vain.

Galatians 3

O foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you? You, before whose eyes was held up the picture of Jesus Christ upon the cross. One question I would ask you. When you received the Spirit, was it from the works of the Law, or the preaching of Faith? Are you so senseless? Having begun in the Spirit, would you now end in the Flesh? Have you received so many benefits in vain if indeed it has been in vain? Whence, I say, are the gifts of Him who furnishes you with the fullness of the Spirit, and works in you the power of miracles? From the deeds of the Law, or from the preaching of Faith?

So likewise "Abraham had faith in God, and it was reckoned unto him for righteousness." (Gen. 15:6) Know, therefore, that they only are the sons of Abraham who are children of Faith. And the Scripture, foreseeing that God through Faith justifies [not the Jews only but] the Gentiles, declared beforehand to Abraham the Glad tidings, saying, "All the nations of the Gentiles shall be blessed in thee." (Gen. 12:3) So then, they who are children of Faith [whether they be Jews or Gentiles] are blessed with faithful Abraham.

For all they who rest upon ⁷ the works of the Law are under a curse; for it is written, "Cursed is every one that continues not in all things which are written in the book of the Law to do them." (Deut. 27:26) And it is manifest that no man is counted righteous in God's judgment under the conditions of the Law ; for it is written, "By faith shall the righteous live." (Hab. 2:4) But the Law rests not on Faith, but declares, "The man that hath done these things shall live therein." (Lev. 18:5).

Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become accursed for our sakes

⁷ Literally, *who have their root in the works of the Law*, or, according to the Hebrew image, *the children of the works of the Law*.

(for it is written, "Cursed is every one that hangs on a tree." (Deut. 21:23) to the end that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come unto the Gentiles; that through Faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit.

Brethren, I speak in man's language, nevertheless, a man's covenant, when ratified, cannot by its giver be annulled, or set aside by a later addition. Now God's promises were made to Abraham and to his seed; the scripture says not "and to thy seeds," as if it spoke of many, but as of one, "and to thy seed;" ⁸ and this seed is Christ. But this I say; a covenant which had been ratified before by God, to be fulfilled in Christ, the Law which was given four hundred and thirty years afterwards, cannot make void, to the annulling of the promise. For if the inheritance comes from the Law, it comes no longer from promise; whereas God has given it to Abraham freely by promise.

To what end, then, was the Law? it was added because of the transgressions of men, till the Seed should come, to whom belongs the promise; and it was enacted by the ministration of angels ⁹ through the hands of [Moses, who was] a mediator [between God and the people]. Now where a mediator is, there must be two parties. But God is one [there is no second party to His promise].

Do I say then that the Law contradicts the promises of God? that be far from me! For had a Law been given which could raise men from death to life, then would righteousness be truly from the Law. But the Scripture (on the other hand) has shut up the whole world together under sin, that from Faith in Jesus Christ the promise might be given to the faithful.

⁸ Gen. 13:15. The meaning of the argument is that the recipients of God's promises are not to be looked on as an aggregate of different individuals, or of different races, but are all one body, whereof Christ is the head.

⁹ Compare Acts 7:53.

But before Faith came, we were shut up in prison, in ward under the Law, in preparation for the Faith which should afterwards be revealed. Thus, even as the slave who leads a child to the house of the schoolmaster, so the Law has led us to [our teacher] Christ, that by Faith we might be justified: but now that Faith is come, we are under the slave's care no longer. For you are all the sons of God, by your faith in Christ Jesus: yea, whosoever among you have been baptized unto Christ, have clothed yourselves with Christ. In Him there is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor freeman, neither male nor female; for you all are one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs of the blessing by promise.

Galatians 4

Now I say, that the heir, so long as he is a child, has no more freedom than a slave, though he is owner of the whole inheritance; but he is under overseers and stewards until the time appointed by his father. And so we also [who are Israelites] when we were children, were in bondage, under our childhood's lessons of outward ordinances. But when the appointed time was fully come, God sent forth His Son, who was born of a woman, and born subject to the Law; that He might redeem from their slavery the subjects of the Law, that we might be adopted as the sons of God. And because you are the sons of God, He has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying unto Him "Father." Wherefore thou [who canst so pray] art no more a slave, but a son: and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.

But formerly, when you knew not God, you were in bondage to gods that have no real being. now, when you have gained the knowledge of God, or rather, when God has acknowledged you, how is it that you are turning backwards to those childish lessons, weak and beggarly as they are; eager to place yourselves once more in bondage under their dominion? Are you observing

days, and months, ¹⁰ and seasons, ¹¹ and years. ¹² I am fearful for you, lest I have spent my labor on you in vain. I beseech you, brethren, to become as I am, [and seek no more a place among the circumcised;] for I too have become as you ¹¹ are [and have cast away the pride of my circumcision]. You have never wronged me: on the contrary, although it was sickness (as you know) which caused me to preach the Glad tidings to you at my first visit, yet you neither scorned nor loathed the bodily infirmity which was my trial; ¹³ but you welcomed me as an angel of God, yea, even as Christ Jesus. Why, then, did you think yourselves so happy? (for I bear you witness that, if it had been possible, you would have torn out your own eyes ¹⁴ and given them to

¹⁰ The seven months.

¹¹ The seasons of the great Jewish feasts.

¹² The Sabbatical and Jubilee years. From this it has been supposed that this Epistle must have been written in a Sabbatical year. But this does not necessarily follow, because the word may be merely inserted to complete the sentence; and of course those who observed the Sabbaths, festivals, &c., would intend to observe also the Sabbatical years when they came. The plural' years' favors this view.

¹³ This was probably the same disease mentioned 2 Cor. 12:7. It is very unfortunate that the word temptation has so changed its meaning in the last two hundred and fifty years, as to make the Authorized Version of this verse a great source of misapprehension to ignorant readers. Some have even been led to imagine that St. Paul spoke of a sinful habit in which he indulged, and to the dominion of which he was encouraged (2 Cor. 12:9) contentedly to resign himself! We should add that if, with some of the best MSS., we read 'your,' it makes no very material difference in the sense; St. Paul's sickness would then be called the trial of the Galatians.

¹⁴ This certainly seems to confirm the view of those who suppose St. Paul's malady to have been some disease in the eyes. The "your" appears emphatic, as

me.) Am I then become your enemy because I tell you the truth? They [who call me so] show zeal for you with no good intent; they would shut you out from others that your zeal may be for them alone. But it is good to be zealous in a good cause, and that at all times, and not when zeal lasts only [like yours] while I am present with you. My beloved children, I am again bearing the pangs of travail for you, till Christ be fully formed within you. I would that I were present with you now, that I might change my tone; for you fill me with perplexity.

Tell me ye that desire to be under the Law will you not hear the Law? For therein it is written that Abraham had two sons; one by the bondwoman, the other by the free. But the son of the bondwoman was born to him after the flesh: whereas the son of the free woman was born by virtue of the promise. Now, all this is allegorical; for these two women are the two covenants; the first given from Mount Sinai, whose children are born into bondage, which is Hagar (for the word Hagar ¹⁶ in Arabia signifies :Mount Sinai): and she answers to the earthly Jerusalem, for she is in bondage with her children. But [Sarah is the second covenant in Christ, and answers to the heavenly Jerusalem; for] the heavenly Jerusalem is free; which is the mother of us all. And so it is written "Rejoice, thou barren that bearest not; break forth into shouting, thou that travails not; for the desolate hath many more children than she which hath the husband." (Isa. 44:1)

if he would say you would have torn out your own eyes to supply the lack of mine.

15 The Judaizers accused St. Paul of desiring to keep the Gentile converts in an inferior position, excluded (by want of circumcision) from full covenant with God; and called him, therefore, their enemy.

16 The word "Hagar" in Arabic means 'a rock,' and some authorities tell us that Mount Sinai is so called by the Arabs. The lesson to be drawn from this whole passage, as regards the Christian use of the Old Testament, is of an importance which can scarcely be overrated.

Now, we, brethren, like Isaac, are children [born not naturally, but] of God's promise. Yet, as then the spiritual seed of Abraham was persecuted by his natural seed, so it is also now. Nevertheless, what says the Scripture? "Cast out the bondwoman and her son; for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman." (Gen. 21:10) Wherefore, brethren, we are not children of the bond woman, but of the free.

Galatians 5

Stand fast, then, in the freedom which Christ has given us, and turn not back again, to entangle yourselves in the yoke of bondage.

Lo, I Paul declare unto you, that if you cause yourselves to be circumcised, Christ will profit you nothing. I testify again to every man who submits to circumcision, that he thereby lays himself under obligation to fulfill the whole Law. If you rest your righteousness on the Law, you are cut off from Christ, you are fallen from His gift of grace. For we, through the Spirit [not through the Flesh], from Faith [not works], look eagerly for the hope of righteousness. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision avails anything, nor uncircumcision; but Faith, whose work is Love.

You were running the race well: who has cast a stumbling block in your way? who has turned you aside from your obedience to the truth? The counsels which you have obeyed came not from Him who called you." A little leaven leavens the whole lump." As for me, I rely upon you, in the Lord, that you will not be led astray; but he that is troubling you, whosoever he be, shall bear the blame. But if I myself also [as they say] still preach circumcision, why am I still persecuted? for if I preach circumcision, then the cross, the stone at which they stumble, is done away.

I could wish that these agitators who disturb your quiet, would execute upon themselves not only circumcision, but excision also.

For you, brethren, have been called to freedom; only make not your freedom a vantage ground for the Flesh, but rather enslave yourselves one to another by the

bondage of love. For all the Law is fulfilled in 15 this one saying, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." (Lev. 19:18) But if you bite and devour one another, take heed lest you be utterly destroyed by one another's means.

But this I say, walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the desire of the Flesh; for the desire of the Flesh fights against the Spirit, and the desire of the Spirit fights against the Flesh; and this variance tends to hinder you from doing what you wish to do. But, if you be led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law. Now, the works of the Flesh are manifest, which are such as these; fornication, impurity, lasciviousness; ¹⁷ idolatry, witchcraft; enmities, strife, jealousy, passionate anger; intrigues, divisions, sectarian parties; envy, murder; drunkenness, revellings, and such like. Of which I forewarn you (as I told you also in times past), that they who do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, trustfulness, gentleness, self denial. Against such there is no Law.

But they who are Christ's have crucified the flesh, with its passions and its lusts. If we live by the Spirit, let our steps be guided by the Spirit. Let us not become vainglorious, provoking one another to strife, regarding one another with envy.

Galatians 6

Brethren, I speak to you who call yourselves the Spiritual, even if anyone be overtaken in a fault, do you correct such a man in a spirit of meekness; and take thou heed to thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. For, if any man exalts himself,

¹⁷ The profession of magical arts. The history of the times in which St. Paul lived is full of the crimes committed by those who professed such arts. We have seen him brought into contact with such persons as Ephesus already. They dealt in poisons also, which accounts for the use of the term etymologically.

thinking to be something when he is nothing, he deceives himself with vain imaginations. Rather let every man examine his own work, and then his boasting will concern himself alone and not his neighbor; for each will bear the load [of sin] which is his own, [instead of magnifying the load which is his brother's]. Moreover, let him who is receiving instruction in the Word give to his instructor a share in all the good things which he possesses. Do not deceive yourselves, God cannot be defrauded. Every man shall reap as he has sown. The man who now sows for his own Flesh, shall reap there from a harvest doomed to perish; but he who sows for the Spirit, shall from the Spirit reap the harvest of life eternal. But let us continue in well doing, and not be weary: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all men, but especially to our brethren in the household of Faith.

Observe the size of the characters which I write to you with my own hand.

I tell you that they who wish to have a good repute in things pertaining to the Flesh, they, and they alone are forcing circumcision upon you; and that only to save themselves from the persecution which Christ bore upon the cross. For even they who circumcise themselves do not keep the Law; but they wish to have you circumcised, that your obedience to the fleshly ordinance may give them a ground of boasting. But as for me, far be it from me to boast, save only in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ; whereby the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision is anything, nor uncircumcision; but a new creation. And whosoever shall walk by this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon all the Israel of God.

Henceforth, let no man vex me; for I bear in my body the scars which mark my bondage to the Lord Jesus.

Brethren, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen.